

Zone A

1. Maria Lambru Villa - 1928
5 Popa Savu Street
 Published in *Contimporanul*, no. 79, 1929
 This is the first villa built by Iancu in the new North residential area of Bucharest.



2. Bazaltin Building - 1935
2 Charles de Gaulle Square
 Company headquarters and block of flats, ground floor and 7 upper floors.
 Built for the Bazaltin Company (which specialized in bridge and road construction) this is counted among Iancu's rare projects, as it goes beyond residential architecture. The building, which is altered today, comprised three main functional areas: the headquarters of the company, a luxurious apartment stretching over several floors on the right side, and a tenement building with two studio flats and two flats on each floor on the left side.



3. Paul Wexler Villa - 1931
36 Grigore Mora Street
 Published in *Contimporanul*, no. 102, 1932, and in Alberto Sartoris (*Gli elementi dell'architettura razionale*, Milano, 1932)
 Paul Wexler Villa was built for a rich family in the new residential district in the north area of the city. It has a functional interior space distribution with communicating living spaces and a big garden terrace and some additional rooms on the top floor. Significantly, Iancu himself chose this dwelling to be published in a work dealing with modern architecture, a major European reference book on architecture.



4. Florica Reich Villa - 1936
39 Grigore Mora Street
 Published in Alberto Sartoris (*Gli elementi dell'architettura razionale*, Milano, 1937)
 The villa belonged to the Reich family who were fur merchants. Iancu's interior design expressed his idea of incorporating the applied arts in architecture. Grigore Mora Art Gallery is now housed on the top floor of the building.



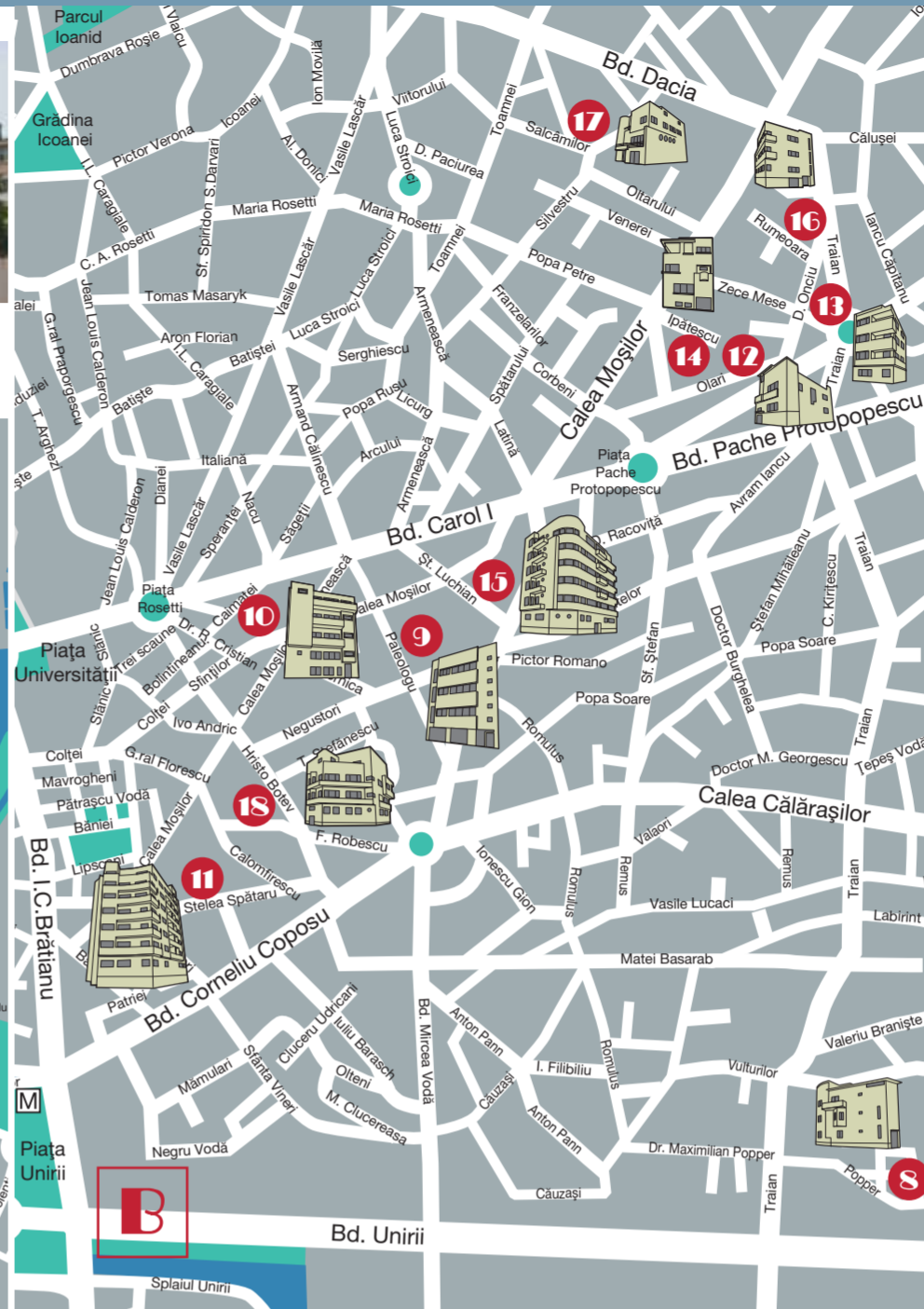
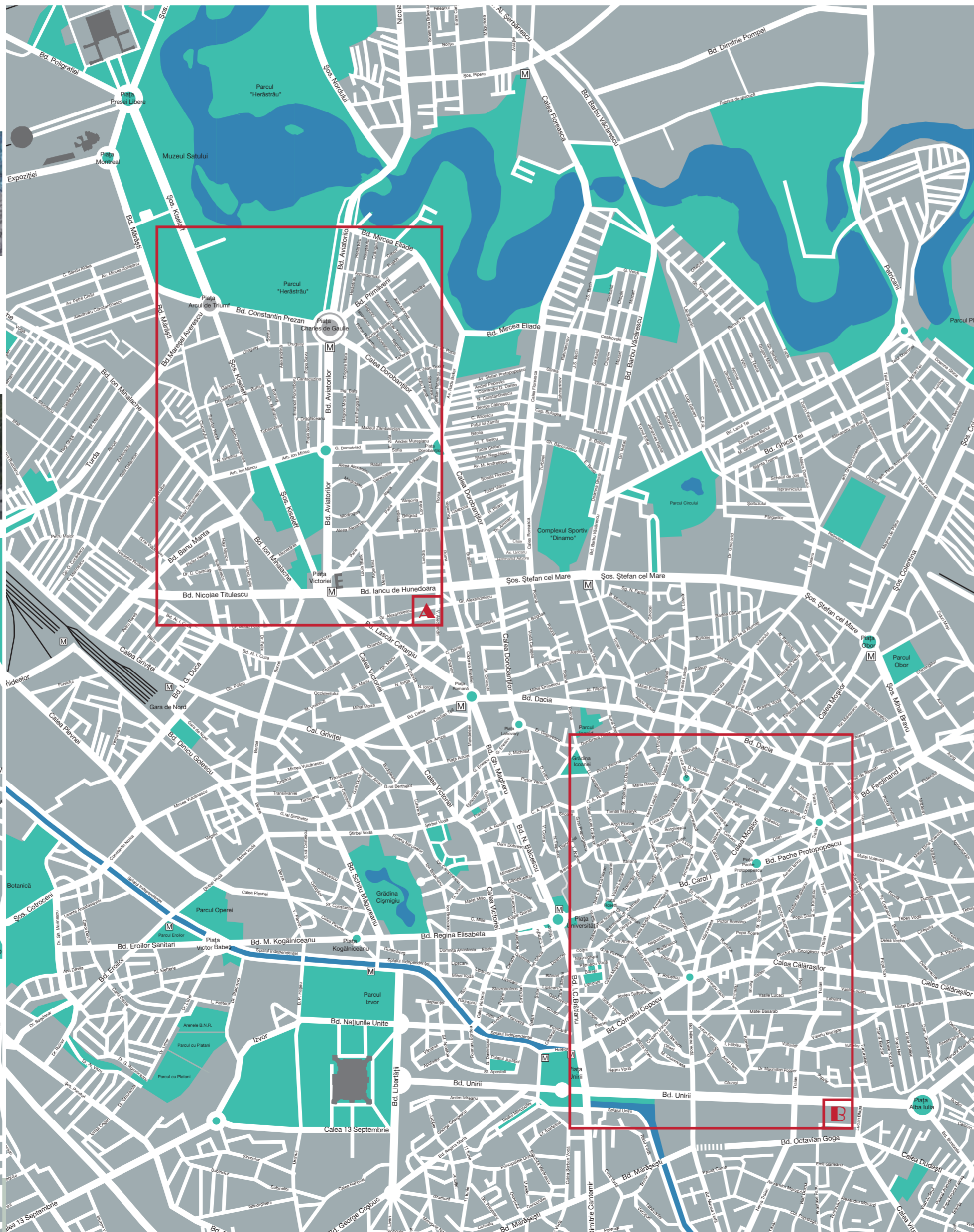
5. Florica Chihăescu Villa - 1930
49 Kiseleff Highway
 Published in *Contimporanul*, no. 96-98, 1931, and in *Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, no. 5/1934
 This building today holds the residence of the Ambassador of Venezuela.
 Built for the Chihăescu family, it is a modern interpretation of the classical villa theme based on a central plan. In front of the house there it was a sculpture by Mihaela Pătrașcu.



6. Hermina Hassner Villa - 1937
32 Pictor Icovescu Street
 This is one of the last projects that Iancu designed in Romania. It was also realized after the period in which he had commissioned tenement houses. This house commission and the banker Hassner's generous budget, allowed Iancu the freedom to experiment. He also integrated paintings, sculptures and cubist stained glass windows in the design. Above the hall fireplace was located his famous painting, *Jardin du Luxembourg* (1928), while the front door was enlivened by one of Mihaela Pătrașcu's base-reliefs; neither of these survive.



7. Emil Pătrașcu Villa - 1937
19 Pictor Ion Negulici Street
 Dwelling and sculpture studio.
 Located in the luxurious residential district of the city, Emil Pătrașcu Villa is the last villa that Marcel Iancu built in Bucharest.
 The building comprises two flats and a sculpture studio for his friend, the artist Mihaela Pătrașcu. The most interesting part of this building is the double-story studio. The wall of the studio facing the street is dominated by a huge metal-framed window, which in the initial project continued along the side façade. Mihaela Pătrașcu was an important avant-garde artist. She was active in the *Contimporanul* group and participated in art exhibitions with Marcel Iancu.



10. Clara Iancu Building - 1931
20 Caimatei Street
 Published in *Contimporanul* no. 102/1923
 The building, constructed for Marcel Iancu's wife Clara, was financed by the architect himself, and from 1931 the Iancu family lived there. The Iancu brothers' *Bureau for Modern Studies* was probably located on the top floor. There is one flat on each floor. On the ground floor - slightly sunken - there were garages and service rooms. Iancu was very interested in dynamic and sculptural façades, as in Villa Fuchs.



11. Frida Cohen Building - 1935
17 Stelea Săpataru Street
 This is the tallest building designed by Iancu and it conforms stylistically to the general direction followed by Bucharest modernism.
 It is composed of two units, each with its own main staircase. All current floors of each unit contain two flats and a studio flat. The façade overlooking the plaza is concave and narrow, the lateral façade being more planar; the particular aesthetic interest of this work resides in the effect of its applied profile.



12. Paul Iluță villa with laboratory - 1931-1935
23 Olari Street
 One-family house, ground floor and two upper floors. Laboratory - ground floor and two upper floors. The villa and its furniture were designed for one of Iancu's relatives, the pharmacist Paul Iluță. The laboratory for pharmaceutical products was built in 1935. The house has been well preserved with no alterations, which is so rare among Iancu's constructions.



13. Poldi Chapier Building - 1935
16A Dimitrie Oncu Street
 Built in the same residential area as the Chapier house, the building was obviously a real estate investment. Its aesthetics are not particularly expressive, the architect merely following a stylistic formula that conformed to the general direction of late 30's Bucharest modernism. It's interesting that the executed façade is different from the design submitted for the building permit.



14. Poldi Chapier House - 1929
4 General Ipătescu Alley
 Published in *Contimporanul*, no. 93-94-95, 1930
 The house was built for Iancu's friend, the lawyer Poldi Chapier, a former high school colleague and member of the *Simbolul* group (1912).



16. Alexandrescu Building - 1935
179 Traian Street
 Marcel Iancu was probably commissioned by Mircea Eliade (a very famous historian of religions) to design this house for his sister, Mrs. Alexandrescu. Built in the old center of Bucharest, the building has one apartment on each floor.



17. Jean Juster Villa - 1931
75 Silvestru Street
 This villa was built for Jean Juster, a banker, in the central area of Bucharest and was a very luxurious dwelling. Iancu placed the main staircase within the façade, by employing a protruding cylindrical volume that plays an essential role in its composition. The initial formula had a canopy, demolished in 1977 after the earthquake.

18. Solly Gold Building - 1934
34 Hristo Botev Street
 Built in 1934, this is a small, luxurious tenement house with four flats of different sizes. The plan of the tenement is an irregular pentagon with three of its façades aligned to the streets; the flats are placed around the main central staircase. It is probably one of the most spectacular buildings designed by Marcel Iancu.



Zone B

8. Housing in Trinității Alley
25-29 Maximilian Popper Street
 (Maior Zenovie and Vameșul Racoșeanu Streets)
 In 1922 Herman Iancu, Marcel Iancu's father, opened an alley in the old Trinității Street. Marcel Iancu built the first modernist house in Bucharest there in 1926, while the remaining part of the allotment was approved 8 years later. The Iancu brothers designed 13 buildings on this land. These are set back from the street line and include an apartment at each level. Parts of these buildings have been demolished and other sections restored.

Herman Iancu Building - 1926
55 Maximilian Popper Street
 Built for the architect's father, this building's design is unusual for two reasons. Its alignment was determined by a town hall regulation facilitating the opening of a new street, and it must also be attached to an existing structure. Marcel Iancu lived in one of the apartments until 1931, when he moved out to Caimatei Street. Marcel Iancu's studio occupied the top floor of the building, which was smaller in plan than those below, and does not appear in the construction authorization.
 The house is remarkable for its artistic qualities, the architect having exercised great freedom in a house he designed for himself. This aesthetic experiment recalls a plaster relief he created in Zurich, after 1917. The most spectacular feature of the building was the colourism of its façade. The aesthetic qualities expressed in this building, known as the first example of modern architecture in Romania, are not typical of later development of Modernism in Bucharest. Its polychrome façade and its exceptional shape would have been a confronting sight to the inhabitants of this quiet area, situated near Hala Traian. This building represents an important phase of Iancu's architecture, when his artistic interests were more noticeable.



9. Jacques Costin Building - 1933
5 Paleologu Street
 The building was commissioned by Iancu's brother in law, Jacques Costin. The lawyer Jacques Costin was a fervent member of the *Contimporanul* group. He also wrote avant-garde texts like *Exercise for the right hand* and *Don Quijote*, illustrated by Marcel Iancu and Mihaela Pătrașcu.
 The building to the right is also designed by Iancu. It seems that the building to the left was built by Iancu as well, though no evidence for this has yet been discovered. Iancu lived with his family on the first floor of the building and his studio was located on the ground floor. According to some of his contemporaries' reminiscences, the walls of his flat were covered with frescoes and the furniture was designed by Iancu himself. Finally, the façade looks entirely different from the one submitted for the authorization permit.
 This address is mentioned as the administration office of *Contimporanul* and also in building permits for the houses built by Iancu after 1934.



Marcel Iancu

The beginnings of modern architecture in Bucharest 1929 - 1938



This urban route constitutes an introduction to Bucharest's modern architecture, through the work of Marcel Iancu (1895-1984), one of its initiators. The itinerary comprises two main zones of Bucharest, the North and the Center of the city, known in the '30s as the Yellow sector and the Black sector.

This selection of buildings includes 18 houses and blocks that are emblematic of the beginning of modern architecture in Bucharest, drawing attention to this very interesting "layer" of the city. The buildings have been designed by Marcel Iancu, sometimes with the support of his brother Iuliu. Together they owned an architecture office called the *Bureau of Modern Studies*. Because most of the buildings have been changed in a major way, it is necessary to compare present images with original ones.

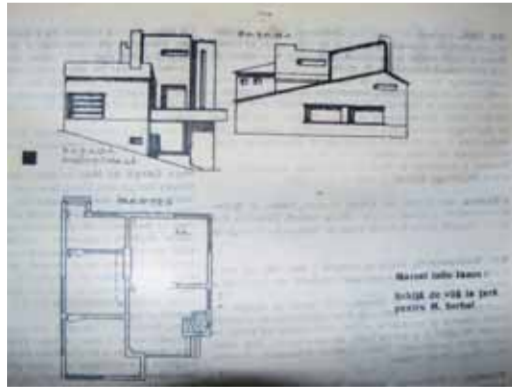


Thus, the thematic map is illustrated with drawings and documents published in periodicals of the time (1924-1938). Documents selected from the construction authorizations preserved in Bucharest's City Hall Archive and images from periodicals of the time have been added, in order to give a clearer representation of the buildings' initial aspects. An important reference was the research included in the catalogue *Marcel Iancu Centenary 1895-1995*, Simetria, Bucharest, 1996, coordinated by Anca Bocăneț, Nicolae Lascu and Ana Maria Zahariade. The route offers you a chance to explore Bucharest's urban and social history. It also provides tools to evaluate contrasts between '20s and '30s architecture, and the communist and post-communist styles.

The words of Marcel Iancu, concerning Bucharest and its utopia are still as persuasive today as they were in the past: "I feel it's imperative that Bucharest should be reconstructed; I have tried to sketch a new urban orientation that can be perceived as utopian.

In fact, urbanism is an art that should scrutinize into the future. The city builders lacking foresight will be always left behind real life." (*Towards an Architecture of Bucharest*, Bucharest, 1935). "... We undergo a stage of full recovery. The buildings in the commercial center grow higher and higher, the old and uncomfortable houses make room for central "blockhouses", while the very few courtyards and gardens vanish every minute ..."

In 1935 attitudes to Bucharest's urban future were very optimistic: "... Luckily, Bucharest is a young town, at the beginning of its urban growth, and thus spared of the exaggerated architectural development that led to unhealthy and overcrowded Western towns during the last century... Should we follow the same chain of mistakes that Western countries already have experienced and finally learnt their lesson?" "... What we can do in Bucharest today, cannot be achieved in the future. Modern style demands modern urban planning." "... Thus in 50 years, Bucharest will turn into a happy, healthy town with gardens, a garden-city with parks and palaces... Every age has its own picturesque landscape and, no matter how pathetic ruins may look, we vote for the present, colorful life and its picturesque ambience. We have no time to lament over the past; our duty is to see what we can do about the future..." In *Urbanism, by no means romanticism*, an article from 1932, published in *Orașul* (The City), Iancu underlines his trust in a visionary attitude, leaving behind the past and its nostalgias: "... Our city, the capital of our country, is summoned to take up a European form and goal... The modern house is just one facet of the new interior life organization, tightly intertwined with urbanism. The essence of the whole new architectural problem lies in the balance and coordination of exterior and interior values." (*Contimporanul*, September, 1931). At the same time as the proclamation of his esthetic program in *Contimporanul*, Iancu published many articles in periodicals such as *Orașul* (The town), *Arta și Orașul* (The Arts and



Drawings for a country house Contimporanul, 1931

the City) in which he strongly promoted modernist ideas. Iancu accentuates the connection between modern architecture and avant-garde experiments, fully aware of his own contribution to the artistic avant-garde movement: "Modern architecture followed cubism." He equally identifies strong ties with Dadaism, the esthetic movement to which he ascribes the idea of interconnections between abstract art and architecture. He paid special attention to the interior design of modern buildings; in his opinion, the characteristics of a modern interior are synonymous with the goals of "the new aesthetics". This interest in interior design is reflected in some of his works included in this thematic map. Iancu introduced a new kind of modern residential architecture to Bucharest, the modern villa, built for a bourgeoisie with progressive views. The houses benefited from a kind of comfort that "pays no tribute to wealth", as Iancu put it. Although the Villa Jean Fuchs (27 Negustori Street, 1927-1929) is severely altered, it

deserves mention because it represented Iancu's decisive step towards modernism. The Fuchs villa was also one of the very rare cases in which details concerning the architect-client relationship are known, including the latter's influence on the project. In an interview published in 1930 in *Rampa* magazine, Iancu declared: "The first modernist house in Bucharest was also the first of this kind in Romania. I built it for a wine merchant who happened to read foreign art magazines and seemed to enjoy new architecture. He told me he had one million lei and a building lot and would give me a free hand. All he wanted was a modernist house." The novelty of this design drew the public's attention and shocked many people. In the same interview Iancu recalled that: "The house I built in that area was a sensation. The priest, the policeman and the people were convinced that I had erected a laboratory which was out of place in their neighborhood". The critics, inspired by the people's reactions, were ironical and skeptical about this kind of new architecture: "The neighbors can't understand why instead of the traditional windows the house has but one window, covering the whole width of the façade, like a morgue display window. Instead of one attic window, usually placed in the roof, there are three, as if there were first class



Fuchs Villa

cabins in an ocean liner, while the garage looks like a local branch of the central crematorium." It is noteworthy that all buildings constructed before 1934 by Marcel Iancu were signed, in the building permit, with the name of another architect (usually Constantin Simionescu). Marcel Iancu only gained the right to use his own signature in 1934, when he was accepted into the Chamber of Romanian Architects. The first modernist buildings designed by the Iancu brothers were built in 1926-1927.



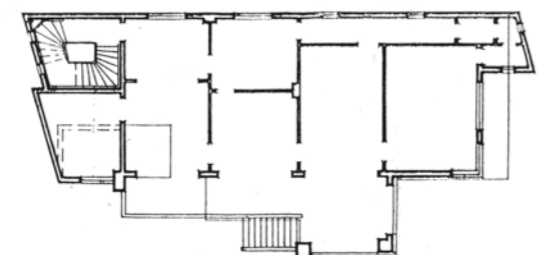
Suchard Pavilion, published in Contimporanul, 1926

After a journey to Western Europe, to Germany (where Marcel Iancu might have seen certain achievements of the Bauhaus school) and France (where he met Robert Delaunay), Iancu returned to Bucharest and designed two houses on Trinității and Ceres streets, and a pavilion for the Suchard factory at Târgul Moșilor (an old fair of Bucharest). From the early 1930s, the Iancu brothers' *Bureau for Modern Studies* received plenty of commissions. Mass media representatives and fellow architects thus began to pay attention to Iancu's architecture. In January 1931, *Contimporanul* published a letter addressed to Marcel Iancu by the young architect G. M. Cantacuzino, who had just returned from studies in Paris. This letter is a declaration of commitment from G. M. Cantacuzino and represents the first public recognition of Marcel Iancu's work voiced by an architect:

"... You were the first to turn your back on the sterile, exhausted mentality in this country. In our chaotic, town ruled by mediocre and Balkan-like chaos and "petty triviality" as the poet Tudor Arghezi said, your healthy houses come up as healthy premises for a healthy future, when vigorous activity is not hindered by idle admiration of the past." The most original aspect of Marcel Iancu's architectural work comes from his duality as a painter-architect. This feature is recognizable especially in the plastic solutions of his façades. The art critic Sandu Eliad wrote the most insightful remarks on Iancu's architecture: "None of Marcel Iancu's houses seem to look alike, though they have the same architectural basis, that is, a strict observance of the laws I have mentioned above (city regulation, physical laws of the material, technical possibilities and the economic demands). The diverse interplay of volumes, the daring rhythm of voids and compact walls, the alternation of verticals and horizontals, although derived from the arbitrary dictates of the requirements of the interior, all owe their symmetrical and asymmetrical equilibrium and architectural playfulness to his artistic sensitivity alone. Furthermore, the successful integration of the building into the atmosphere of the street and landscape is due to his being an accomplished colorist."



Drawings for Villa and Cinema



In the circle of *Orașul* (The City) publication, whose members numbered Sandu Eliad, Cicerone Theodorescu, and D. Anagnoste, Iancu was seen as: "the Romanian architect who enjoyed the most enviable reputation in the world of European modern architecture. When he returned to Romania his celebrity was already recognized. Being the leader of the avant-garde group of *Contimporanul*, Iancu remains the initiator of modern Romanian architecture, a complex artist who brings new and essential ideas. He is a real revolutionary." (*Orașul*, 1934).

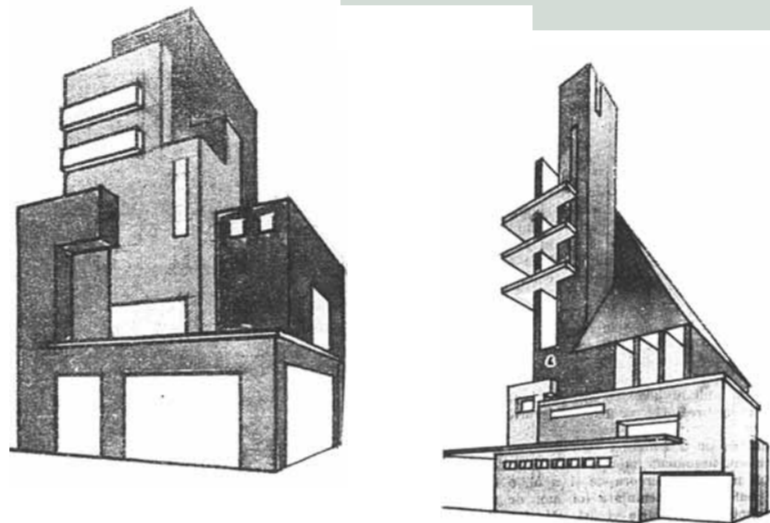
It is actually ironic that the critical ambience of Bucharest in the 1930s, when Iancu and his modernist fellows protested against deplorable systematization, is to an extent being repeated nowadays. Among the buildings that have suffered are those which were built in the period between the wars – including Iancu's houses. Many buildings situated in the areas where Marcel Iancu's houses are located were demolished during the communist period and after 1989. Many of those which were not demolished are nevertheless in a very bad state of preservation. Buildings like that designed by Iancu which is located on Pictor Ștefan Luchian Street are in urgent need of structural consolidation. Moreover, the social and legislative situations of these buildings reflect closely the historical and political events of the last 75 years. First, most of the buildings' Jewish owners suffered violent Legionary persecution (the extreme right party) around the end of the 1930s, and certain houses have witnessed bloody scenes (as Jacques Costin house). Iancu himself was forced to go into exile in Palestine, in 1941.



Marcel Iancu – Jacques Costin

After World War II and the installation of the communist regime, most of the properties were appropriated by the Communist State, through the Nationalization Law (no. 119, July 11, 1948) and the Decree of April 1950, which listed buildings to be nationalized ("buildings owned by former industrial entrepreneurs, former landed gentry, former bankers, former important business men and other elements of the high bourgeoisie"). In some situations, the owners had to accept tenants in their own houses. Most of Iancu brothers' clients belonged to this category. Their buildings consequently suffered changes brought about by the nationalization process and were also "transformed" socially. This can be observed particularly in those areas where many buildings were demolished during the communist period, for example around the Herman Iancu house, located on Maximilian Popper Street. Some houses and apartments have, in recent years, been affected by the development of legislation concerning propriety and, in keeping with the Restitution Law no. 10 of 2001, have been returned to their owners.

Architecture drawings, published in Contimporanul, 1925



Marcel Iancu was part of a group that centred on *Simbolul* (The Symbol) magazine, along with Tristan Tzara and Ion Vinea during his high school years in Bucharest (1912 to 1913).

After completing high school, Marcel Iancu left Romania for Zürich, together with his brothers Iuliu and George, in order to study architecture. He was an associate of Tristan Tzara at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zürich during World War I. The nucleus formed at Cabaret Voltaire in 1916 (along with Hugo Ball, Emmy Hennings and Hans Arp) founded



The circle of Simbolul, 1912. From left to right: Samuel Rosenstock (Tristan Tzara), unknown, Marcel Iancu, Iuliu Iancu, Poldi Chapier, Eugen Iovanaki (Ion Vinea)

Dada movement. As a member of the Dadaist group, Iancu conducted his first experiments in collage, abstract relief and sculpture. These works are considered among the most courageous and original experiments in abstract art. During this period the artist came into contact with the most important personalities of the international avant-garde of Italy, France and Germany.

Along with Hans Arp, Alberto Giacometti, Baumann, and Tauber, Marcel Iancu formed the group *Das Neue Leben* in 1918. The group held a series of exhibitions, lectures and manifest-demonstrations in the cities of Switzerland.

After a brief period spent in France, Marcel Iancu returned to Bucharest. From 1921, for ten years, together with Ion Vinea, Iancu was the editor of *Contimporanul* avant-garde magazine, in which he promoted his aesthetic ideas. *Contimporanul* was published weekly between 3 July 1922 and 7 July 1923, and monthly between April 1924 and January 1932. Mița Pătrașcu, B. Fundoianu, Felix Aderca, Ion Călugăru, Camil Petrescu, M.H. Maxy, and Victor Brauner were among frequent contributors to the magazine. Under the auspices of the publication were organized intensely promoted individual and group exhibitions. For example, a large international



Marcel Iancu – cover of Contimporanul, October 1925



Marcel Iancu – Ion Vinea

The editorial staff of *Contimporanul* magazine was housed on Imprimeriei Street, no. 53 (the building no longer exists today), and the administration was located on Trinității Street, where Marcel Iancu lived for a while (the current name of the street is Maximilian Popper).

By 1941, when he left Romania, Iancu had pursued an effervescent artistic career, both in architecture and painting. Together with his brother Iuliu he built 40 modernist houses and blocks in Bucharest. His career as architect blossomed in the '30s, when he was already very popular in avant-garde arts media, as a painter, journalist and graphic artist. He finally settled in Israel, where he founded the artists' colony of Ein Hod in 1953, devoting himself to painting. Janco Dada Museum in Ein Hod near Haifa holds an impressive collection of his works.

Text by Doina Anghel



Marcel Iancu – Hans Arp

Marcel Iancu – Mița Pătrașcu, oil on canvas, 1925-1930



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Marcel Iancu

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1929 - 1938

