

PLEASURES
and **TERRORS**
of **DOMESTIC COMFORT**

THESIS

E. van Dooren – Design tutor
S. Kousoulas – research tutor
P. Jennen – Building technology tutor

Tipp Bongers
4656636

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INTRODUCTION

During the time of industrialization, the city became methodologically constructed from a repeatable pattern based on a grid. A methodology that leads to design from the large scale towards the small scale as the grid as an outline of property. Through this the industrialization of the house brought a specific kind of representation forth. A house as a machine for living that shapes the nuclear family as the diagram on which society is based. The family apartment is still what developers are trying to provide to the market where all our habitual habits are being standardized to specific commodities. One of the issues is the fact that the home is a kind of neutralized entity that we take as common sense.

Within this infrastructure, the home/apartment is viewed as a relationship from the urban condition. From this we tend to that the outline of the house/apartment, outline of the property, is the first engagement with the city. Within the borders the home is perceived as a private domain, away from the public. A space outside time, politics, and economy. Through this the home/apartment is a composition of functions with a possible range of different configuration that follows the logic of the grid.

Within this configuration of function its inhabitants can decorate the home/apartment as a form of representation of someone who lives inside the home/apartment. Which is a range of selection of objects that fits within function of the room. The décor of the home/apartment is widely understood as a sort of memetic representation of its inhabitants, despite the obvious falsity of this. In other words, the home is a particular genre of space theoretically an infinite array of possibilities laid out, but this becomes the same through cultural appropriations.

DOMESTIC COMFORT

When we think of domestic comfort, we think of a cozy comfortable living room. A room with carpeting, with a nice cozy fireplace, with nice lighting to the side and some squishy chairs. It refers to the idea of our normal state of well-being, when we are at ease with our surrounding. It is perceived as a space that provides an anchor from where we operate into the world. This is a reflection that arises about the spaces that we inhabit, basically, the answer is directed towards the space that we occupy in our day-to-day life. There are a series of studies aimed at this great question and, in general terms, it is related to the basic comfort conditions that a space must have, that is, the sum of adequate conditions to ensure the safe stay of one or more people in a space. specific place and that leads to a satisfactory development of activities during the time of their stay. However, these types of definitions have evolved over time, because living today is no longer an act of achieving the right conditions for living, but rather of promoting perceptual acts within spaces. This means that this design exercise is quite linked and, above all, thought as an inseparable act of the person who inhabits it, so that the space should not be shaped for him but, from him. That is why architecture should not be conceived as a container for the user that fulfils a comfort function, but must be approached as a biological being endowed with its own characteristics from the user who is going to inhabit it (Granados-Manjarrés, 2003).

According to Crowley this idea of what we call domestic comfort today came into place around in the middle of the 19th century. The home performed a number of roles in this period. Primary among them it was a comforting refuge from the world of work and commerce. Penny Sparke called this the separation of spheres, the idea that the middle class men went out to work and middle class women stayed in the home. It is something that we are used to but it was a new phenomenon in that time (Sparke, 2008).

In addition the 19th century domesticity developed its own easily recognizable visual language. The spaces of the home were filled with items of comfortable upholstered furniture, textiles on every available surface, decorations on the mantel piece, patterned carpets, and potted plants. What is happening is that these elements which are disparate, they are not designed to look like one space, there is a lot of things going on simultaneously, but the combination creates an impression of a very inward looking home dedicated to comfort, self-reflection, social interaction, conversation pieces and private spirituality.



As the 19th century progressed, the domestic landscape became an idealized space. Penny Sparke called this an effort to avoid domesticity and by doing so the modernist architects and designers adopted a number of strategies. Primary among those was an effort to bring the rational values of the public sphere into what they call the dwelling. This created a shift from that 19th century interior to the modernist dwelling is dramatic and highly significant. In the image below from an interior designed by Marcel Breuer. The textiles, the colors patters and they have gone down to what might call the minimum. Just the basic requirement of an interior space, table, chairs, floor, wall, but that's it, basic lighting, it is a complete shift in the language.

And these are all things which again take away from the domesticity of the 19th century interior which was very much individualized, interiorized and less rational, I mean 19th century interior is about emotion and the psychological relationship of the inhabitant interior space. This is the opposite this is trying to assert a kind of rational relationship between inhabitant and the spaces.

So there was a shift in the idea of perceiving comfort. Le Corbusier discussed this extensively in his manifesto "Vers une architecture" for his new architectural program, roughly translated in English "towards a new kind of architecture. It is a call as the title suggest to a new architecture in the light of new advancements in technology which bring comfort in the dwelling.

It was a denial of that heavy comfortable domesticity as Le Corbusier discusses that people are no longer prepared to accept these unsatisfied conditions in which they are placed. People are exposed to new technology. The machine that they live in is terrible, which are cold, miserable, full of dust and tuberculosis. People don't spend their time at home, they would stay at home if they would have a better home. (Le Corbusier, 1931)

Le Corbusier believed that modern society with new technologies would deliver a good life for everyone. Mental, physical health, entertainment, happiness. More than just an opportunity but as a thing that one is surrounded by. So, there is this whole reinvention of the environment, both for the house and for the city. The machine that produces beauty, that produces the good live. So the house for a machine for living in was meant to be this wonderfully, comfortable, commodious place with all modern conveniences. So domestic comfort in the eyes of Le Corbusier was meant as a standard quality for living.

it was formed in the context of industrialization and enhanced social mobility. it was the rise of a new political economy, driven increasingly by consumer values, created new values for comfortable living. People viewed the “necessities” for everyday living through a cultural assumption that everyone was entitled to physical comfort.

it's a different model of the interior which is 'space' defined. If you think back to that Manchester's interiors that it was not about space, it was about stuff, it was about things, about masses of things in a space which were about identity formation and social behavior and personality. But if you see the interior as space you kind of neutralize it and you take away those characteristics.

This shows the complexity of domestic comfort in the architectural domain as it has different underpinning value through time. On the one hand there is this idea as a state of well-being with the things we surround ourselves with. It is focused on the artifact as it resides in the personal things that people bring in the home and the personal stories that comes with it. On the other hand there is this rejection of this idea of taste. it is an idea that is focused on 'space' and the necessities that the home needs to practice our daily life.



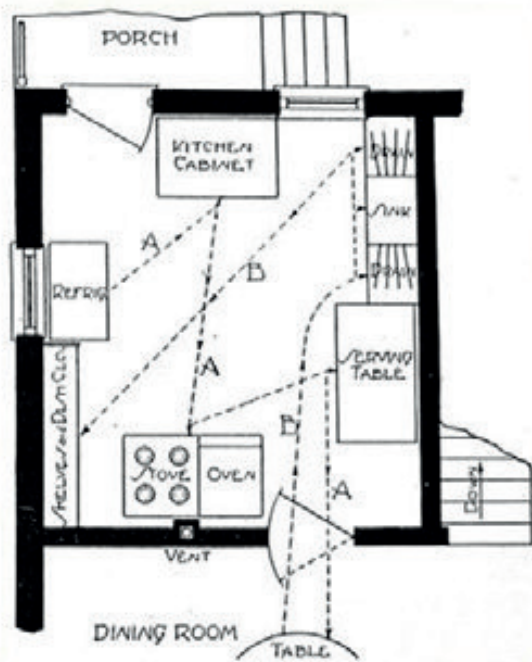
RATIONALIZATION

The search for a standard quality for living affected the domestic landscape in several ways. Primary among those strategies was an effort to bring the rational values into what they call the dwelling. Architects find those values in public interiors of the factory and the office and aligning themselves with the three basic principles of industrialization which are industrialization, rationalization, and standardization (Penny, 2008). In the early 20th century what happens in the factory and the office there was a huge effort to rationalize production. The factory was a place where rationalization occurred first. Henry Ford pushed the concepts of mass production several stages forward through the introduction of the moving assembly line which breaks down the automobile into its components parts and then introduces moving assembly lines, so you just simply produce the car in a rational way.

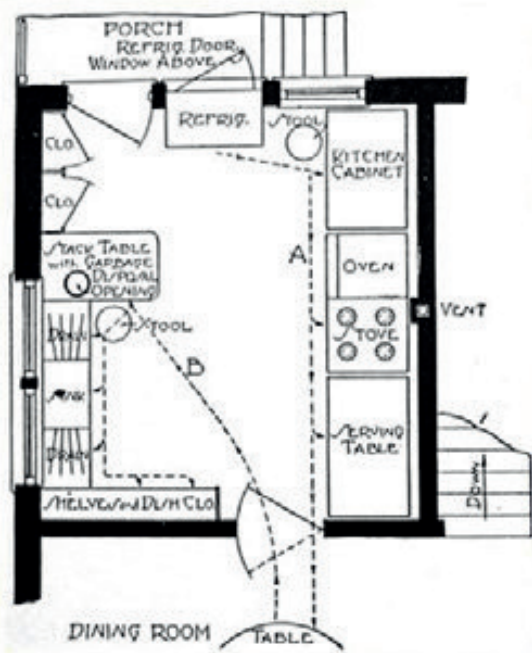
This is something that Le Corbusier picks up and is really inspired in the way the car is produced. He sees these machines as a precisely and rapidly engineered solution. He talks about it in Darwinian terms that it has undergone this incredible rapid transformation. He means that these engineered products are engineered and evolved. There is a selective pressure and the shape they have is because of the evolutionary process. It is not towards taste, it is towards a necessity. Within this the interior of the car represents the idea of the living room (Corbusier, 1931)

Around the same time Frederick Taylor develops the principles of scientific management. He was interested in implementing what later became what we call time and motion studies and to do that he was interested in the amount of steps workers took. It was not so much the rational breakdown of assembly but more how many steps do workers have to take to pick up the elements they have to use. It is rationalizing a process and breaking it down into its component's parts.

These principles of scientific rational management that have come through the factory become influential in the dwelling and affects the interior. This happened in a period in the U.S. where acquiring servants became increasingly difficult around the time of late 19th century (Penny, 2008). More and more women were having to handle their homes themselves and were seeking to professionalize their domestic activities. Comparing the work they do to that of workers in the factory and they began to engage with the principles of efficiency.



BADLY GROUPED KITCHEN EQUIPMENT



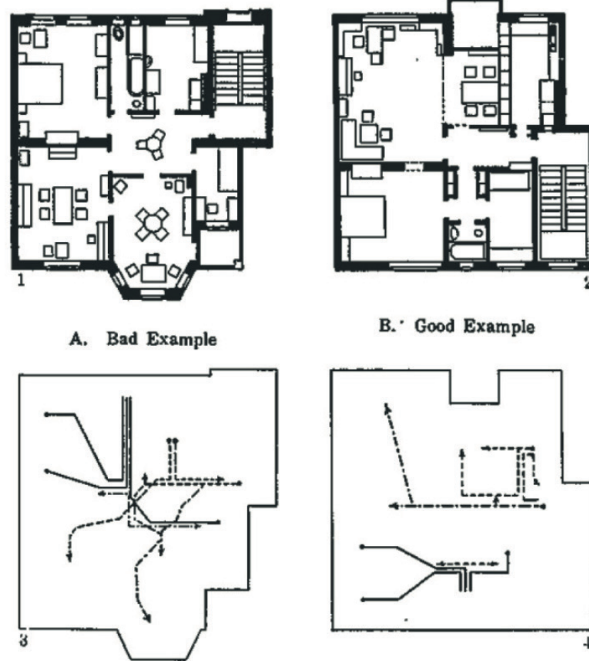
EFFICIENT GROUPING OF KITCHEN EQUIPMENT
A. Preparing route. B. Clearing away route.

Christine Frederick picks up this idea of the efficient home and starts to publish a series of articles that then become a book a couple years later called *The New House Keeping*. It is a book that describes the effect of scientific management in the domestic area and she picks up the idea of steps saving or doing your job as efficiently as possible by involving the least possible steps in the home. The image on the left shows a badly organized kitchen and the image on the right a well-organized kitchen. The lines in the images symbolizes the amount of steps that are taken in the kitchen. In here it is possible to see that that she is taken a lot more steps in the kitchen on the left to reach the sink, refrigerator and the oven. It is disorganized opposed to the kitchen on the left where the things are grouped in functional clusters and the steps are taken are a lot less. Essentially, she saw the kitchens having two main functions, one was the preparation and the serving of food and the second was the clearing up afterwards and putting things away back into storage. So this is the early factory process and taking it into the kitchen, it is not a social kitchen, it is where work is done. Inevitably this rational approach impacted most strongly in the area of the house dedicated to work rather than leisure, the kitchen, bathroom, laundry, it manifests itself there.

One of the most famous example is the Frankfurter kitchen designed by Margarete Lihotzky. It was the first fitted kitchen which can be viewed as the first modern kitchen as we see it today. Because of this it was possible to reproduce this kitchen in huge numbers and they were installed in Neues Frankfurt in over ten thousand homes. It was a complete standardized kitchen following the Frederick's principles.

It focusses on the process rather than appearance but gradually in the hands of the modernist it becomes an aesthetic (Penny, 2008). So where now familiar with this look of the early modern kitchen as a visual approach rather than perhaps understanding what underpinned it and that native simplification, rationalization that comes through the kitchen does enter the home more generally such that you begin to see the living room and the other rooms are taking it on board as well, so it does enter the rest of the house.

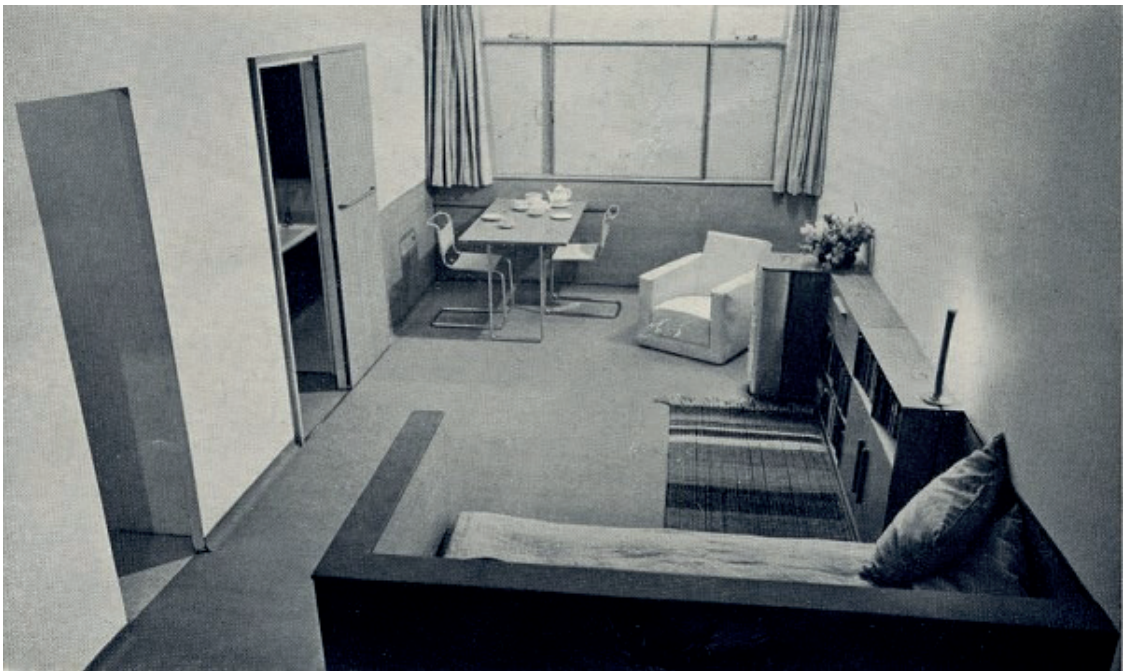




So these drawings are from Alexander Klein from 1928. So early modernism in a way introduced the idea of efficiency in the household and by the same measure a kind of functionally based layout. At the time with the ambitions of housing reform, health consciousness, etc. It made sense somehow to declutter the 19th century homes. We might question whether that still apply to us today. So in the floorplan to the right championed by Klein in 1928 as a way of avoiding conflict. You can imagine only one way of using each space and one way of accessing them. Your life was in some ways predetermined and you can argue its predetermination to the model of mainly a particular type of inhabitant.

The 19th century apartment on the left on the other hand has a collection of almost equal rooms, whose functions are maybe a bit more ambiguous and maybe even interchangeable and whose circulations happens through a kind of central nodes. If we say it in Klein's terms: a kind of space of conflict.

Another strategy modernist used to reject domesticity come not only with their engagement with rational spaces of the modern factory but also with the very principle of standardization that underpins the production which Henry ford describes in his assembly line. In the photograph above is an interior photo of a minimal flat designed by the architect Wells Coates. What they meant by the minimum flat was that you could design a simple minimal interior with all the essentials and needs that you could then duplicate. So you could have a whole block of flats and you simply duplicate this and this is a kind of mass production of the interior itself.



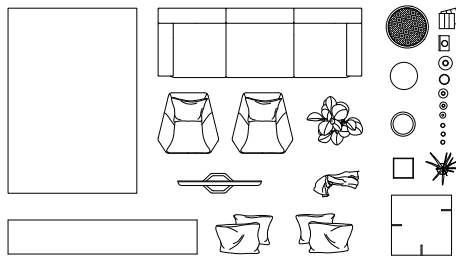
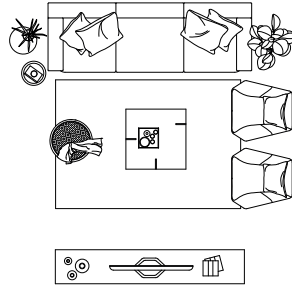
NORMAL

The home is perceived as our own comfortable environment. These “representations” have a normative understanding have assumptions and implications. According to Kant in terms what he calls “representations”, there are two cognitive perceptions that ground the knowledge about objects, either intuition or concept. Intuition relates to when the objects are given to us or we are affected by the objects and concept is understanding that we have thoughts about the objects and we are able to think about them. Further, we are in immediate relation with objects through intuition, however the relation of concept and the objects is mediated that is achieved “by means of a feature which several things may have in common” (Kant 1998, p. 399). The distinction between concept and intuition can furthermore be explained as follows; The concept is the general representation whereas the intuition is the particular representation of a single object. In this way the concept is applicable to more than one particular object; therefore, the concept belongs to the kind while it may have many instances.

A child’s drawing of a house can be used as an illustration to further clarify this distinction and to show how it relates to architecture. The drawing is a clear expression in its oversimplification of a representation of a house. Even though it is not described or shown how it looks like, there is a common understanding on the basis of similarities of different drawings of houses by children that we can compare and categorize as the same object. As these drawings have a certain truth, in reality more often than not our own house doesn’t look like the child’s drawing of a house at all.

In this context it is our sensibility and our understanding. If a subject is directly perceiving the house through senses, the relation between the subject and the object is immediate. However, when we think about a house or when we have a concept of a house, first of all we have a mediated relation with the house in which we have in mind the features that are common, more or less in all houses. However, for Kant it is necessary that the concept of an object must relate to the intuition of the object. For example, if we have the concept of the house, it is necessary that it must relate to our immediate intuition of the house in order to be the concept of the house.

Moreover, Kant believes that it is our sensibility that causes the intuition of the objects and for a subject this is the passive act to receive or be affected by the external object. For example, if we see a house, our sensibility is affected by the house and this is the passive act of the subject. On the other hand, having the concept of an object, is an active process as it is not caused by any external object. When we have the concept of a house or we think about a house, we are involved in the active process. Moreover,



LIVING ROOM

/li:vɪŋ ru:m, 'li:vɪŋ rʊm/

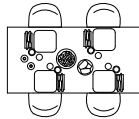
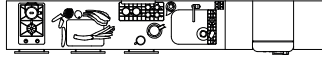
noun

the room in a house or apartment that is used for relaxing in and entertaining guests

intuition in its pure state is not the cognition of the external object; it can only have relation with the object when it comes with concept. If we remove the concept of a house from intuition, we won't have any knowledge of a house because though intuition does not enable our thinking, the sensible relation alone cannot establish the relation of representation to the objects. Further, the concepts don't have objects on their own. This leads us to understand that our knowledge of a house requires a relation between the concept of a house and the intuition of a house. The intuition of a house must be present for the concept of the house to apply to it. In the same way the concept of the house is required for the intuition of the house to have a relation with the house. This way, it can be said that the concept of the house and the intuition of the house mutually depend on each other.

Further, Kant believes objects don't exist independent of our intuition or what Kant calls 'thing in themselves' In this regard he states that "everything intuited in space or in time, hence all objects of an experience possible for us, are nothing but appearances, i.e., mere representations, which, as they are represented, as extended beings or series of alterations, have outside our thoughts no existence grounded in itself" (Kant, 1998, p. 511). Opposite to the transcendental realist view that an object in space and time can exist regardless of our sensory experience, the transcendental idealism is opposite to it and believes that the faculty to recognize the objects is only possible with intuition that what we recognize is the appearance; not the thing in itself. This notion of appearance may be defined as the "undetermined object of an empirical intuition" (Kant, 1998, p. 155). This way, it can be explained that appearance is the object of experience that is given to us through our senses and that stand opposite to the 'things in themselves'. In the case of house if it is given to us through our sensibility, it would be considered as the appearance; this means that house does not exist 'in itself' but only in our intuition. This way, what we know about house is the 'appearance' that has been made possible by the intuition and it is not the 'house in itself'. There may be 'house in itself' however, what we know about house is a mere appearance or the representation. Moreover, for Kant appearances are not the outcome of the sense perceptions because sense perceptions, in themselves, don't have the qualities that our senses perceive such as colour, material, taste etc. The appearance of house is not what our senses perceive. The qualities of house as appearance are distinct from the sensory qualities that we perceive through intuition immediately at some specific moment.

Further, Kant believes that "[...] external objects (bodies) are merely appearances, hence also nothing other than a species of my representations, whose objects are something only through these representations, but are nothing separated from them" (Kant, 1998, P. 427). This way Kant argues that appearance is the representation that may be a priori or posteriori, universal or particular and mediate and immediate. In this regard it can be understood that the concept of house that we have is universal and this concept of house is a priori. However, the knowledge that comes through our

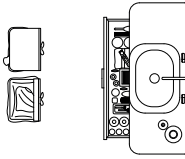
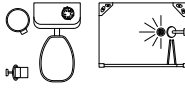


KITCHEN

/ˈkɪtʃ(ɪ)n/

noun

a room where food is kept, prepared, and cooked and where the dishes are washed.

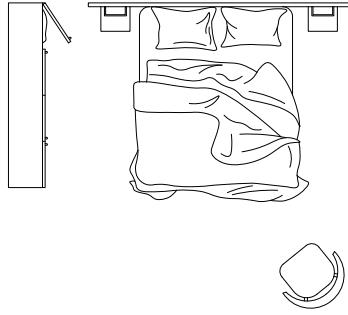


BATH ROOM

/bɑːθru:m, 'bɑːθrʊm/

noun

a room containing a bath or shower and typically also a washbasin and a toilet.



BED ROOM

/bedru:m, bedrʊm/

noun

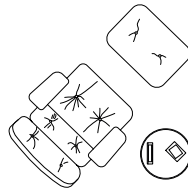
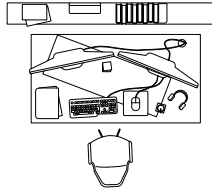
a room with a piece of furniture for sleep or rest, typically a framework with a mattress.

sensation or experience is posteriori this means that a particular house that we see at some specific time is our posteriori knowledge of house. However, this posteriori knowledge of a particular house the source of which is the intuition is mediate as it comes through senses. Nonetheless, the concept of house that is representation and that is also abstraction may have many corresponding houses that may be available to the intuition.

Further, our acknowledgment or the recognition of the house comes from our a priori concept of the house. Kant believes that a concept achieves its unity from the common mark that is perceived in the objects. This common mark in the concept adds universality to it which is achieved through comparison. It is the comparison that lets us know about the similarities and difference in the objects and brings out the identical marks that exist in the representation of many objects. This common mark that exists in the representation is what makes the things different from other things. Moreover, through reflection, that is necessary for the formation of concepts, we come to know that these common marks exist in many objects. This is the stage where we conceive the things with common marks in the same consciousness. In the last phase of abstraction we only retain the common marks in one consciousness and leave out the difference from the concept of the identical objects.

This process of concept formation is applicable to house as well. What makes this house unique or specific is the sum of common objects or acts that are found, more or less, in all houses. It can be said that, more or less, all the houses have some common marks. For example all houses have windows; this is common to all houses. Second house is the place that has those objects that are related with living. This would also be common in all houses and this 'having some or all similar objects', gives the unity and universality to the concept of house. These common marks are identified through comparison. When we compare a house with other typologies such as a museum or a library. We come to know that it is different in its structure, material, size etc. Simply, through the difference in the structure, material and size of the house we learn that it is different from other houses and identify the common marks that represent many houses. In the end through reflection, we retain the common marks that have been found in, more or less, all houses and leave out the differences. This retention of common marks in one and the same consciousness goes on to form the concept of house that is universal in its existence and applicable to all houses.

So we can see that language plays an important role in how we perceive the domestic environment. This understanding became very important during modernism, as Tom Markus points out: "language is at the core of making, using and understanding buildings". Modernist architecture, as well as being a new style of building, was also a new way of talking about architecture, instantly recognizable by a distinctive vocabulary. We claim that modernism lays behind us, the words they started to use however, are still in our



OFFICE

/ˈɒfɪs/

noun

a room or set of rooms in which business, professional duties, clerical work, etc., are carried out

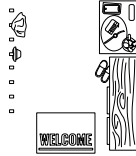
vocabulary. We still use words nowadays that have become commonplace. We do not longer think about them, examples of words are 'space', 'form', 'design', structure and 'order'. So, we are working with a kind of constructed discourse in architecture. The architectural language that is used today is still related to the modernist way of thinking (Forty, 2004).

The change in language also followed the domestic environment as the rooms started to follow its functionality and the objects they contain; livingroom, bathroom, bedroom kitchen. The house became a predefined set of rooms as words structure your perception. (Pier Vittorio Aureli and Maria S Giudici, 2015). Talking about the house there is a specific range of words that is specifically used to make the domestic environment what makes it hard to talk about it outside those words.

Besides the introduction of a new form of language characterized by prescriptive rooms, the interior itself became a design project on display on its own (Gameren, 2014). That was clearly show at the exhibition 'Wir bauen ein besseres Leben' / 'We're building a better life in 1952. In here the domestic environment was on display, it showed how the different rooms should be used and what they should contain.

So the range of words that is used within the house and its representations as well as what kind of objects it should contain made it really hard to see the domestic sphere outside its normative representations of the concept. With this, modernism has produced a specific kind of representation within the house. Therefore, we could argue that the organization of the rooms that we perceive as purposeful and intended as normal are actually really constructed.





HALLWAY

/hɔ:l.weɪ/

noun

a passageway or room between the entrance and the interior of a building

CONCLUSION

Modernism brought forth a specific kind of representation of the house. A house as a machine for living with the nuclear family as the norm of representation of society. Resulting in the normative conception of hierarchy of spaces like the livingroom, bathroom, bedroom, and kitchen. Within this configuration of function its inhabitants can decorate the home as a form of representation of someone who lives inside the home.

The home is a particular genre of space theoretically an infinite array of possibilities laid out. However this becomes the same through the categorization of words of what the home means and its particular representation of what the rooms should contain to fit within this categorization through showrooms and magazines.

Through this the home became a kind of neutralized entity that we take as common sense but actually it is a place where all our habitual habits are being standardized to specific commodities. So we could say that our perception has shaped the outline of our living conditions which therefore appropriate a specific way of interaction within the house. Within this it is the familiarization in which we seek comfort. By neglecting the conventional hierarchy of rooms, therefore neglecting the distinction between house and objects, it is possible to rethink the home and its potentials for living.

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