

Feminist Utopian Spaces Lexicon (Asli Serbest, Mona Mahall, 2018 ongoing)

Commissioned by Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart, 2018.

Open collection of feminist contributions to utopian spatial imagination (>> **Utopias**) and to the production of possible (domestic) spaces, missed, ignored or excluded by Bauhaus Modernism. The lexicon aggregates spatial works, ideas, propositions, and provocations to help reassemble a modern history and future of our shared environments, their authors, inhabitants, and discourses—with feminist tools.



Soft evidence, printed doormat. Asli Serbest, Mona Mahall (2018)

Airless Spaces

(Shulamith Firestone, 1970)

Ambient units similar to refrigerators, but rather warming than cooling, belowdeck on a (sinking) ocean liner. They replace the airless space of the female womb to provide reproduction outside the biological female body.

Airless Spaces are places where the basic social organization of the biological family is uprooted—“*the vinculum through which the psychology of power can always be smuggled.*” As they provide alternatives to pregnancy and childbirth, they not only help eliminate the sex distinction: “*genital differences between human beings no longer matter culturally.*”

- Airless Spaces contain the idea of science and technology as emancipatory not just aesthetic instruments—in contrast to the Bauhaus which includes both only as subject matter into the traditional aesthetico-social system; also, Le Corbusier, who actually recognizes the ocean liner as an organizational model for reimagining the city, does

not consider it a device to question the unit of the heteronormative nuclear family, its patriarchal structure and space.

- Airless Spaces (on a ship) expose and possibly undo the major failure of a politics of citizenship that is at the core of global contentions over cultural, legal, social, and political exclusion and inclusion. To end the inequality continuously reproduced by institutionalized substantive membership, legal status, rights, and participation within a patriarchal nation-state, Airless Spaces travel international waters, introducing not so much a possibility to choose between nationalities, but an idea of general statelessness (>> **Jinwar**).

Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970)

Shulamith Firestone, *Airless Spaces* (1998)

Alpha 7

(Jean-Claude Forest, 1962)

Spaceship used by Barbarella to travel the universe of 4000 AD, mostly in the vicinity of an uncharted planet in the Tau Ceti system. It imagines a female place in outer space that mocks gender clichés, masculinized space travel, and techno-utopian narratives. The walls of the cockpit are covered in (fake) fur, where the pilot sits in the sunken bed behind the controls. While it obviously references Adolf Loos' infamous fur bedroom, it shares almost nothing with the Bauhaus. Only a distanced view through the front of the large exterior window opens up onto SoGo (the future's abbreviated version of Sodom and Gomorrah), a modernist city of glass and steel.

The Alpha 7 is equipped with an onboard computer, Alphy, who navigates the ship, as well as a terra-screw that the ship can use to drill into a planet. It also includes a female statue communicator and a walk-in wardrobe behind a hidden door in the wall of the cockpit.

In the space capsule is hanged the famous painting *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* by painter Georges Seurat from 1884 (>> **Capsules**).

Barbarella (1968), science fiction film directed by Roger Vadim



Barbarella in the bedroom by Adolf Loos (1903), collage. Mona Mahall (2020)

The Grand Domestic Revolution

(Dolores Hayden, 1981)

First architectural theory (after 2000 years of architectural writing) occupied with domestic space, life, and its reorganization by feminist thinkers, designers, and activists from the turn of the twentieth century. One of the most important but least read books in Bauhaus Modernism.

Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution. A History of Feminist Designs For American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (1981)

Capsules

(Galina Balashova, 1957–1980)

Interior designs for the Soviet space program to make the outer space a habitable, post-domestic place for the cosmonauts. They are primarily designed as living spaces, not as metal carcasses stuffed with technical equipment. They imagine the role of space travelers beyond their mystification as techno-positivist super machos.

The capsules show Bauhaus colors and other elements, but also a green modernist sofa out of a special fabric so that the cosmonauts would not lose their jersey pants on them. Obviously, a red sofa might be preferable, but, for reason of film and photo aesthetics, the green version is favored. As green is known for its calming and stress-relieving effects, it helps matching a temperamental psycho-physiologic human (e.g., a man under the effects of adrenaline) and the complicated machine.

The space habitation modules are moreover equipped with watercolor drawings by Balashova, among others, scenes of a winter landscape and a summertime beach depicting a Black Sea city. One of the capsule spaces includes three books by three different Soviet poets, packed in primary Bauhaus colors: red, yellow, blue.

Philipp Meuser, *Galina Balashova: Architect of the Soviet Space Programme* (2015)

Cook Book

(Alice B. Toklas, 1954)

Collection of recipes and a reportage on the events of the Second World War and its effects on modern metropolitan space. As the narrative leaves and returns to the topos (place) of the kitchen—for space- and mind-expanding operations—it discovers free space between the lines of the text genre (the cookbook) and the domestic sphere of cooking. The book is a huge success, also because it includes a recipe to prepare:

“Hashish fudge (which anyone could whip up on a rainy day):

Take 1 teaspoon black peppercorns, 1 whole nutmeg, 4 average sticks of cinnamon, 1 teaspoon coriander. These should all be pulverised in a mortar. About a handful each of stoned dates, dried figs, shelled almonds and peanuts: chop these and mix them together. A bunch of cannabis sativa can be pulverised. This along with the spices should be dusted over the mixed fruit and nuts, kneaded together. About a cup of sugar dissolved in a big pat of butter. Rolled into a cake and cut into pieces or made into balls about the size of a walnut, it should be eaten with care. Two pieces are quite sufficient.”

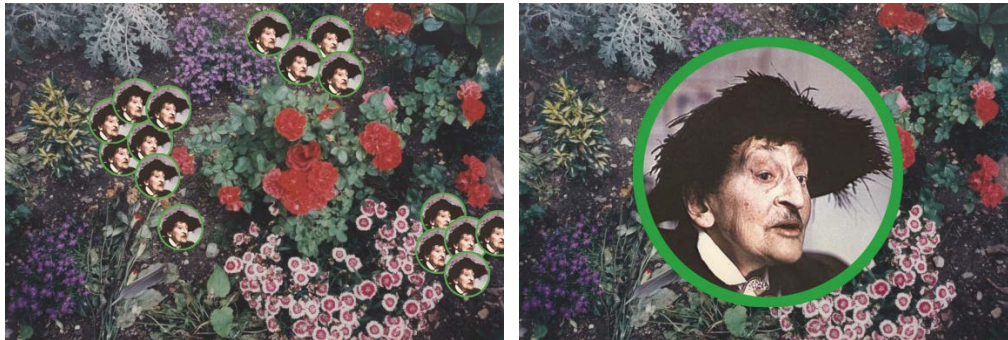
While Toklas’ cannabis cakes are reproduced in the Peter Sellers movie *I Love You, Alice B. Toklas*, she is also memorialised in the *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* (1992).

However, as with several Modernists and Bauhaus members, the story is more complex.

Toklas and her partner Gertrude Stein develop ties with the Vichy regime during the Second World War. Both Jews and lesbians, they thus manage to stay safe in France during the

occupation. After the war, Toklas sells some of her precious Picassos to finance the escape of her old friend Bernard Faÿ, an anti-Semitic Vichy collaborator and possibly Gestapo agent. Toklas dies in poverty at the age of 89 and is buried in Père Lachaise Cemetery, with her name engraved on the back of Gertrude Stein's headstone. A photograph by Felix Gonzalez-Torres from 1992, depicts its small, red, pink, and violet flowers.

Alice B. Toklas, *The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book* (1954)



Alice B. Toklas on the potograph of Gonzalez-Torres, collages. Mona Mahall (2018)

Dauerwelle

(Asli Serbest, Mona Mahall, since 2018)

1960s passenger ship turned into an agile and travelling art space, moving on inland waterways between different localities in urban or rural places, in dense or more scattered areas. It is not so much an art container that can be visited, but rather itself an act of visiting. Its name *Dauerwelle* refers to a feminist agenda (as well as to the hairstyle) that questions static and hierarchial institutional thinking, fixed spatial settings and organizational infrastructures. As the ship gets into various contacts and is based on its own time frames and rhythms, it forges new collective processes and different forms of making and perceiving things, with various human and non-human actors.

Dover Sun House

(Maria Telkes, Eleanor Raymond, 1948)

Solar-powered house (demolished), with a wedge-shaped roof to help it collect sufficient light, Boston, Massachussetts. Though being the first building based on the concept of passive solar heating, it attracts only short attention, not because of its innovative invention, but because of its authors being female. A line of eighteen windows is installed on the second floor of its south-facing wall. Behind these windows panels of glass and metal are placed to store the sun's heat, warming the air that travels between the glass and metal layers. The warmed air is blown through across enclosed, insulated storage bins included in the walls of the house. These bins are equipped with twenty-one tons of Glauber's salt. On sunny days, the salt will melt and absorb heat, cooling the air in hot weather. When the temperature falls, the salt will cool and recrystallize, giving off its stored heat. At the same time and not far away in Cambridge, Massachussetts, Gropius turns the Bauhaus into the International Style, without considering any environmental questions at all.



Eleanor Raymond and Maria Telkes. The Dover Sun House, 1948. Courtesy the Frances Loeb Library, Harvard Graduate School of Design.

Frankfurter Küche

(Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, 1926)

Kitchen designed for the minimization of kitchen work embodying the prototype of the modern built-in kitchen. It makes its architect claim: *I am not a kitchen (Ich bin keine Küche)*.

Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, *Erinnerungen aus dem Widerstand, 1938–1945* (1985)

Haus 20

(Marlene Moeschke-Poelzig, 1926)

Residential building located at Rathenaustraße 7 in Stuttgart as a part of the modernist Weißenhof-Siedlung (Weißenhof Estate). The building that is destroyed during the Second World War is structured by a clear floor plan including a veranda and a rooftop terrace with a huge textile curtain to propose a soft and flexible space in contrast to a fixed glass and steel architecture. Although Hans Poelzig has been commissioned to design the building, it is his sculptor wife who is responsible for the design, and who realizes her curtain façade simultaneously to the one of glass at the Bauhaus in Dessau.

House of the Future

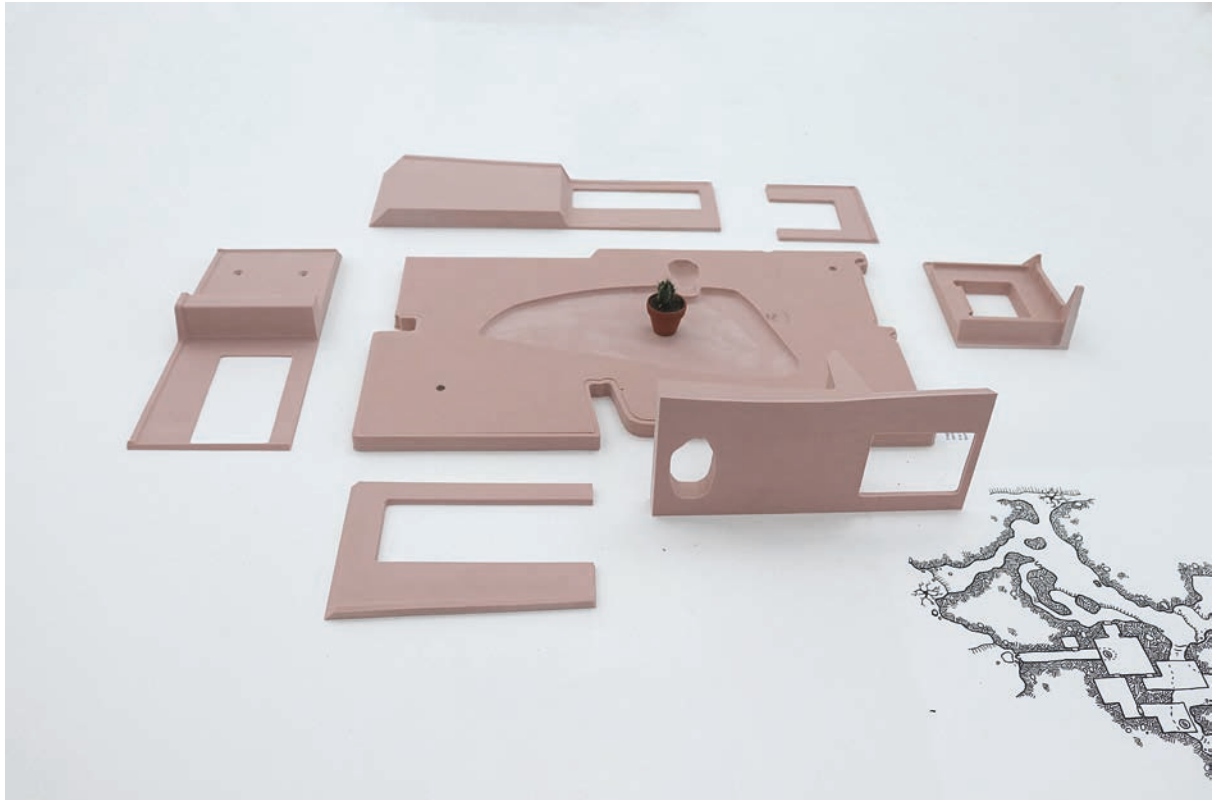
(Alison Smithson, 1956)

Ideal home project designed to anticipate the lifestyle of the future by representing the housing prototype of a plastic composite. It is a fusion of a modernist utopian version of the ancient atrium house and an interiorized atomic bunker, showing inhabitants surrounded by hi-tech devices that make life easier. It includes spatial units and gadgets to minimize housework and turn it into a “push-button game” (>> **Self-Cleaning House**).

Alison and Peter Smithson contradict the masculine Bauhaus visions in their manifesto from the same year: “Gropius wrote a book on grain silos, Le Corbusier one on aeroplanes, . . . But today we collect ads.[...] the influence on mass standards and mass aspirations of advertising is now infinitely stronger than the pace setting of avant-garde architects, and it is taking over the functions of social reformers and politicians. Already the mass production industries have revolutionized half the house - kitchen, bathroom, utility room, and garage - without the intervention of the architect, and the curtain wall and the modular prefabricated building are causing us to revise our attitude to the relationship between architect and industrial production.”

The newest technologies of the time are included in the House of the Future. The temperature, the lights, the front door, the dining room table are controlled by panels on the walls. The table and the bed can sink into the floor when not in use. There are no blankets as the bed regulates the temperature with a single heated nylon sheet for the comfort of its inhabitants—including the cat. A short-wave transmitter (proto remote control) runs everything, also the TV and the radio. A sunken plastic tub is thermostatically controlled, and the cylindrical shower includes air jets for drying.

Alison and Peter Smithson, *But Today We Collect Ads*, 1956



Plastic house of the future, Ureol model. Asli Serbest, Mona Mahall (2018)

Jinwar

Jinwar Free Women's Village (Kurdish women's movement, since 2017)

Free communal settlement, bound to Jineoloji, the science of women and free life. The ecological village is currently under construction in the center of Rojava (western Kurdistan / northern Syria).

Jineoloji goes back to Abdullah Öcalan and his reading of socialist Murray Bookchin (>>**Kitchenless House**) and develops a theory along three basic principles: democracy, ecology, and women's liberation. As a new science, it criticizes the modern connection between male hegemony, oppression, and science and aims at reinterpreting mythology, religion, philosophy, and science. As an anti-modernist political ideology, it advocates "democracy without the state," an ideal based on local self-governance, gender equality, communal economy, and cultural and religious diversity.

In the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria, Jineoloji has become an official part of the education system, being taught in schools and at Rojava University.

jinwar.org

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Kitchenless House

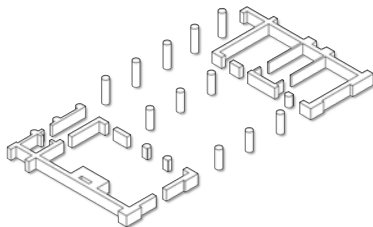
(Marie Howland, 1885 and Alice Constance Austin, 1915)

Plans for housing types in cooperative communities near Palmdale, California and Topolobampo, Mexico eliminating individual kitchens. Both communities are based on a socialist communal government advocating equality, economy of labor, materials, and space against land privatization and speculation.

The Pacific Colony in Topolobampo is structured around residential hotels, row houses, free-standing houses, and various cooperative facilities. Detailed are several blocks of twelve row-houses, with six units facing six others across a common space, that share a kitchen, dining room, laundry, parlor, and a library. While the colony is not realized because of administrative and financial issues as well as conflicts about Marie Howland's Murray-Bookchin-inspired feminism and ideas of sexual equality, the plans are published in 1885.

The kitchenless house (>> **One Manifesto Less**) in Palmdale is connected to a communal kitchen through underground tunnels. Railway cars from the center of the city bring cooked food and laundry to the basement of each house, realizing the idea to professionalize otherwise invisible and unpaid housework. The house is equipped with built-in furniture and rollaway beds to make dusting and sweeping easier. Heated tile floors replace carpets, and there are windows with decorated frames (all produced by the community) to eliminate curtains.

Both types of kitchenless houses create a communal space that is open to the neighborhood. This organization of space resets the relation between interior and exterior, private and common spheres, creating the possibility of more fluid relations than the private core family structure.



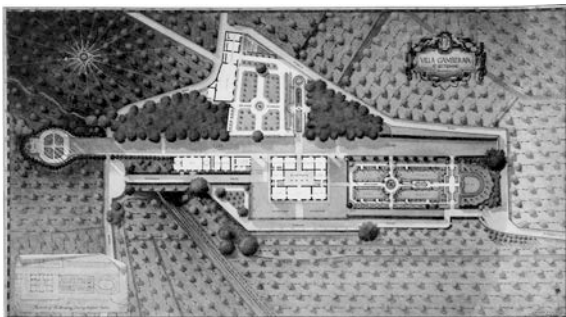
Kitchenless House, Axonometric Drawing. Asli Serbest, Mona Mahall (2018)

Lesbian Garden

(Jeanne Ghyka, from 1905)

Garden, designed by sculptor Jeanne Ghyka, as part of the Villa Gamberaia near Florence, Italy. Profiting from the change of Italian law in the 1890s that gives women property rights (and therefore destroys one of patriarchy's economic fundamentals), the rumored Romanian princess acquires the Renaissance estate together with her lover Miss Blood (a painter who styles herself as a shadow). The existing garden is turned into a sequence of planted solids and voids without a dominating sight line; formerly enclosed beds are transformed into ponds. These water parterres not just invert the former garden structure, but also question how borders between different elements are made. Instead of classical 'hard architectural' forms, e.g. stone balustrades, the ponds are outlined just by plantings, hedges and shrubs, thus laying in greens and demonstrating a modern and freer way of treating plants in garden design. The water surfaces are not only to reflect the sky in the garden but also its inhabitants and guests, along with collected objects and flowers such as lavender, iris, rose-trees and oleanders. The "domestic" garden provides a protected space for the gatherings of the lesbian community; it is a space for women to reclaim the traditional association between nature and female erotics. Through a spiral staircase disguised in a flying arch and connecting one of the bedrooms at the upper floor directly with the garden, Ghyka has dramatically erotic entries to her parties during dusk.

Yet, to call the garden "lesbian" is not just a way to describe it between sexual and social registers but also to observe it as an aesthetic practice, a means of relating to other beings (animals and plants), and a kind of emancipatory art object. At the Bauhaus, garden architecture is no topic at all.



Site plan by Edward Lawson, the first professor of landscape architecture at Cornell University, fired in 1943, after 18 years of teaching, because of his homosexuality (1916)

Mostulab

(Lillian and Frank Gilbreth, 1920s)

Domestic Motion Studio Laboratory that, in contrast to other modernist aspirations to machines for living, is not conceived in aesthetic but in operational terms. In contrast to the Frankfurt Kitchen (>>>**Frankfurter Küche**), it integrates all of the Gilbreth family's twelve children into a rigorous system of housework, with the aim of turning the large household into a machine that runs itself. Girls and boys alike have to participate and are evaluated on standing order forms, output charts, pay charts, telephone charts, bath charts, and charts recording chest expansion on inhalation.

Thus Frank Jr.'s morning routine does not allow for a minute of waste: Martha wakes him up on the hour, and he is in the bathroom by 7:01. By 7:02 he is playing German records (to practice the language) as he brushes his teeth and bathes. He weighs himself and records any change on his weight chart at 7:07, combs his hair, washes the ring out of the tub, starts the bath for Bill, and winds up the Graphophone at 7:08. By 7:10 he wakes up Bill and turns on the French records to listen as he dresses. At 7:16 he shines his shoes, and he makes his bed two minutes later, straightening his room three minutes after that. If he keeps the pace, he is

down to breakfast at 7:31. Any later, and every sibling after him is thrown off of his or her routine.

With Mostulab, the operations research approach is realized in a household environment. While it applies the processes of optimization to all spheres of life, it also shifts hierarchies, roles, and distribution of work within a family.

Julie Des Jardins, *Lillian Gilbreth: Redefining Domesticity* (2013)

Museum for Anni Albers



Satellite view of Bottrop with a museum for Anni and one for Josef Albers. Mona Mahall (2018)

N minus 1

Aesthetico-political drafts (>> **One Manifesto Less**) formulated as alternative to Modernist major projects. Opposing a tabula rasa ideology, these concepts of minor operations allow for new spatial connections and situated relations (>> **Utopias**).

One Manifesto Less

(Un manifeste de moins, Gilles Deleuze, 1979)

Text discussing the subtraction of the male authority figures from Shakespeare's play *Richard III* by Carmelo Bene (who also cuts off Romeo from *Romeo and Juliet*). The amputation that leaves Richard and the female characters on the stage is regarded as an activity directed against the original text and the power that resides within it. In Bene's version, the female becomes a creature who does not cease to appear as child, mother, wife, seductress victim, and warrior in an endless series of transformations.

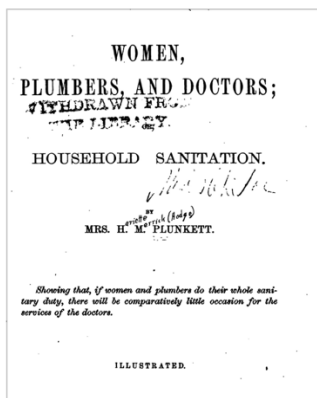
Subtraction (>> **N minus 1**), here, is a vitalist, not a negative, form: the operations of elimination and amputation, of subtractive repetition and repetitive subtraction, activate *potentialities of becoming*.

Gilles Deleuze, *One Manifesto Less*, trans. Alan Orenstein (1993)



And Juliet. Installation view at riverrun Istanbul. Asli Serbest, Mona Mahall (2018)

Plumbing



Cover of *Women, Plumbers, and Doctors: Household Sanitation* by Harriette Merrick Hodge Plunkett (1885) (>> **The Grand Domestic Revolution**)

Self-Cleaning House

(Frances Gabe, 1984)

Patented invention (patent number: 4428085) that consists of sixty-eight appliances to make the house clean and dry itself. By pressing a button, sprinklers in the ceiling of each room are activated to clean the room with detergent and water followed by hot-air drying. The building construction cleans not only the house, but also clothes, dishes, and even the doghouse. The “giant dishwasher” eliminates (mainly) women’s reproductive labor and unpaid housework, in completing the Frankfurt kitchen concept.



Model of a self-cleaning house. Various materials. Asli Serbest and Mona Mahall (2018)

Theater Hall

(Marlene Moeschke-Poelzig, 1919)

Installation for the Großes Schauspielhaus in Berlin, a former market, and conceived as a utopian space for the mystic education of people in Berlin and the Weimar Republic who call it the *Tropfsteinhöhle* (dripstone cave). Its dome and the pillars are decorated with muqarnas that resemble stalactites. The ceiling turns into a night sky when illuminated, as it is equipped with light bulbs that form a meaningful pattern of celestial constellation. It is described as *Entartete Kunst* and demolished in 1933, to introduce a Führerloge into the theater hall. The mystical pattern has been used by Moeschke-Poelzig in the city-like film set for *Golem*, a 1914 movie by Paul Wegener. The streets, buildings, and interiors are sculpted as three-dimensional forms (not as two-dimensional backdrops as typical for this time). They embody the astrological ideas that underlie the film set.

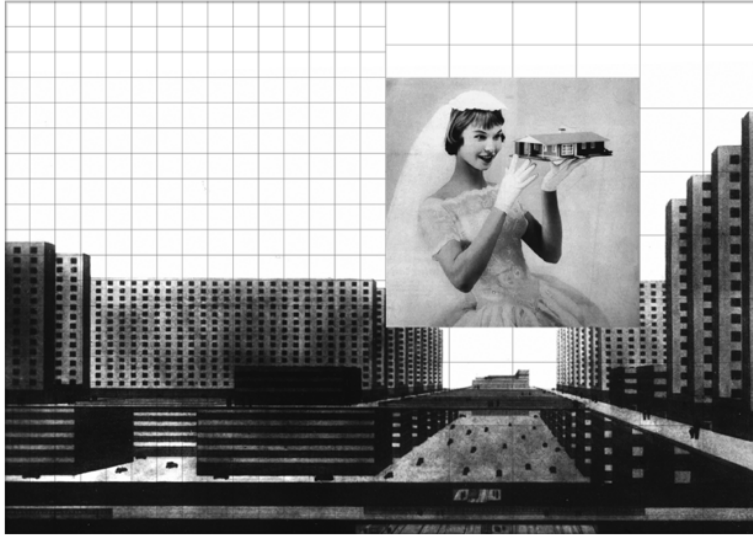


Moeschke-Poelzig's model for *The Golem* (1914)

Two Models

(Michael Hoffmann, 1996, N.N., 1956)

Scaled representation of a phallic high-rise carried and crushed by architect Michelle Pfeiffer, who trips over her own handbag in the movie *One Fine Day*.
A cardboard model of a suburban semi-detached house (with a bride) put in a context of a radically rationalized urbanity.



hilberseimer, grid, bride, 2018. Collage: Hochhausstadt von Hilberseimer (1924) / Photograph of the post-war bride from 1956 in: House Beautiful / Drawing. Asli Serbest, Mona Mahall (2018)

Unisex Uniform

(Varvara Stepanova, 1923)

Designs for white shirts and dark striped pants, with a *central core* (Judy Chicago, 1977), producing a female image of the vaginal form. The androgynous uniform minimizes natural differences between bodies and envisions a hybrid classless and genderless body. It is created as a space and organ of activity that adjusts to actions, expands with them, and constantly renews its own shape and function. Regarded as a counterpart, a coworker, a comrade (Boris Aratov, 1925) of the subject, it is a doubling of the human body without constructing a female / male difference.

The unisex uniform worked simultaneously as a thing and a utopian space, not just celebrating movement, but also mobilizing solidarity in a struggle for recognition in the public sphere.

Designed for a mass industrial production process, where a typically feminine practice of applied arts deviates into scientific constructivist and industrial technology, it is a product of an avant-garde movement that unsettles some of the gendered attributions of modernist art in general and the Bauhaus specifically.



Varvara Stepanova and Janelle Monáe in uniform, collage. Mona Mahall (2018)

Utopias

Alternative propositions to those modernist utopian aspirations attributed to men and usually seen as bound up with paternalistic, colonial, and totalitarian attitudes. Reacting to the ideological implications and effects of these grand projections of modernism, the alternative utopias produce minor concepts and a potentiality where new connections and communalities become possible and where economic, gender, and racial equality, as well as ecological justice, can evolve.

White Cube (>> Dauerwelle)

Women's Lands

(South Oregon, from 1972)

Lesbian separatist community in the rural areas between the city of Eugene, Oregon and the California border, created by (mainly white) women to lead a self-sufficient live in close connection to the natural environment. It is set up in opposition to heteropatriarchal capitalism and its ecological degradation. There, decisions are taken and land is owned collectively, nondyadic relationships are maintained, all forms of labor are shared, food is grown organically and ecological lifestyles are fostered, as well as spiritual and ritual practices. Feminist aesthetics blend with natural processes (>>**Lesbian Garden**) in the form of a vulva-shaped garden, of assorted goddesses placed in strategic locations, and of simple, low, roundish buildings, such as yurts, round houses, and hexagons. Instead of straight lines, corners, and grids, all seen as bound up with the heteropatriarchal world, a feminine formal language organizes the landscape, the low-impact agricultural and living practices.