

## The Camera in the Kitchen: Grete Schütte-Lihotsky and Domestic Modernity

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Architecture must be thought of as a system of representation in the same way that we think of drawings, photographs, models, film, or television, not only because architecture is made available to us through these media but because the built object is itself a system of representation.<sup>1</sup>

An attractive project for a future archaeology of cinematic tropes might be the investigation of spaces the cinema visits only rarely if ever. I do not only mean the notoriously absent sites, such as places of menial or mechanical work (Harun Farocki has shown what this can yield in insights with his film-essay *Workers leaving the Factory*<sup>2</sup>), or the censored and tabooed spaces of classical Hollywood film, such as bedroom, bathroom or toilet.<sup>3</sup> I am here thinking more of the kitchen as the frequently absent centre of domestic drama. Although thanks to television's soap operas and cooking programmes, there is a danger of over-exposure, my sense is, nonetheless, that the kitchen in the cinema still awaits its definitive history. Possibly framed by Lois Weber's *The Blot* (1921), the 'Kammerspiel' films of Expressionism, the English kitchen sink films of the 1950s and Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielmann* (1976) or Martha Rosler's *Semiology of the Kitchen* (1975), this history would, in the first instance, inventorise the trope of rebelliously domesticated/domestically rebellious femininity. Admittedly, a sideways glance spanning the more grandly aristocratic or decadent kitchens from Renoir's *La Règle du Jeu* to Kubrick's *The Shining* might complicate such a genealogy. Alternatively, taking the melodramas of Vincente Minnelli (*The Long Long Trailer* [1954]) and Nicholas Ray (*Rebel without a Cause* [1955]), as benchmarks of middle class life, along with Doris Day and Jerry Lewis comedies, one could also retrace a history in which the kitchen is complicit with the emergent consumer culture of the 1950s, contributing a key location to the gender-specific mediatisation of private space.

A parallel, yet also countervailing tendency can be observed in non-fiction films, where—especially in Germany in the 1920s and early 1930s—a re-coding of domestic space took place in advertising, industrial and educational films, which at the time, however, stood as much under the sign of 'life-reform' as it served commercial interests. Although no less gender-specific, it aimed at mobilising revolutionary energies across the whole spectrum of social life, making the home as much part of the public sphere as trade unions tried to open up to inspection and visibility the factory and other places of industrial work.

If home and hearth represent sites which since the bourgeois revolutions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century have been symbols of the family and private property, whose

protection from the State's interference was heavily guarded by ideological discourse and guaranteed by law, the post-WWI reform movements initiated changes that seemed to roll back some of these rights. A shift can be discerned which put pressure on the private, domestic sphere to make it acknowledge the modern, urban space, understood as one where the city redefines identity for its inhabitants inside and outside the home. In the course of several reform-movements, all of them committed to the ideals of technology, planning and rationalisation, domestic space came under special scrutiny. Yet insofar as one can speak of a re-coding, the proposed reforms remained ambivalently poised between deciding whether to designate the domestic as a sphere of production or as one of consumption—besides confirming the home's traditional role as site of social and biological re-production.

In this process, the kitchen in particular was exposed to the impact of a modernisation that carried a double message. On the one hand, modernisation was defined by a political idea: that of socialism, and its efforts to bring housing, work, health, education and even what to eat under the control of government for and by the people. On the other hand, capitalism's own modernisation programmes were busy 'disciplining' the urban masses through consumer goods and standardising their aspirations to the 'good life' through advertising and the media. Such efforts did not stop at the entrance to the home; on the contrary, the household and the life of the housewife were especially targeted. Indeed, it is one of the clichés of cultural studies that the new mass media—at first the illustrated weeklies and monthly magazines, then radio, photography and the cinema—played a decisive role in these contradictory modernisation movements: promoting stars as role models, setting trends in fashion, leisure pursuits and domestic décor, and thus modelling individual rather than collective ideals.

In the visual discourses of Weimar Germany, reform policies, industrial mass production, technological innovation and avant-garde art competed with each other as much as they complemented each other. It often became difficult to separate efforts to educate the working people, from initiatives that indoctrinated them with propaganda, and it was sometimes hard to tell the images documenting reality from those advertising life-styles. The debates around life-reform and the modern home were conducted with passion and vigour: newspaper articles, photo-series, books and pamphlets were preoccupied with questions of hygiene and nutrition, sensible clothes and outdoor sports. At the same time, the so-called street-films and Zille-films angrily documented the miserable living conditions of the working population in the big cities, while non-fiction films tried to put forward 'solutions'. From today's perspective, these latter works were not documentaries, but ranged from agit-prop films made by left-wing artists such as Slatan Dudow (*Zeitprobleme: Wie der Arbeiter lebt*) or Piel Jutzi (*Hunger in Waldenburg*) to party-political newsreels (*Was wir schufen*) and poetic film-essays (Ella Bergmann Michel's *Erwerbslose kochen für Erwerbslose*).

In order to put the kitchen at the centre of attention, another shift was necessary: towards the industrial or advertising film. There, new labour-saving

appliances were introduced through moving image demonstrations, and films made by city authorities promoted the introduction of gas and electricity as new fuels for cooking and heating. Yet in such a context, the subject 'kitchen' could also lose its socialist-reforming impulses, and become the site of advertising products, as large industrial firms increasingly learnt to 'package' their goods in the rhetoric of reform, and even used the language of revolution. At the same time, politically progressive initiatives realised that they, too, dependent on modern advertising and graphic design to put across their 'message'.

In what follows, I want to outline a possible archaeology of these processes of visualisation, mobilisation and mediatisation, but also highlight spaces of tension and contradiction, as they affected housing and the home. In particular I want to focus on the role played by a city, a woman and her best-known work: Frankfurt, Grete Schütte-Lihotsky and the Frankfurt Kitchen: its origins, political life and media afterlife.

### **'Das Neue Bauen'**

For this I have to briefly sketch another context—that of *Das Neue Bauen*, which in the history of modern architecture occupies a special place, as the German variant of the 'international style'.<sup>4</sup> Peter Behrens, Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, Bruno Taut, Martin Wagner and Ernst May are considered to be its leading theoreticians, practitioners and propagandists. Besides Berlin it was above all the city of Frankfurt, which in the years 1925-1930 became famous throughout Europe, not least because its architects and planners promoted a new domestic environment, centred in part on the needs and aspirations of women.

The socio-historical background and political platform supporting *Das Neue Bauen* was the general housing crisis in the immediate post-WWI years (1918-1920), which in most German cities took on quite desperate proportions.<sup>5</sup> With the pre-war build up of massive industrialization, especially the working classes (recently migrated from the country-side into the cities as the new proletarian labour force for the factories) were often very poorly housed indeed, for which the notoriety of the Berlin tenement blocks (the so-called *Mietskasernen*) only provides an inadequate picture. Infant mortality, communicable diseases and domestic violence had taken on epidemic proportions, aggravated by a disastrous outbreak of influenza and widespread famine during the winter 1919/20 (the *Rübenwinter*). The four years of the war from 1914-1918 had seen no domestic building projects whatsoever, yet because of war-reparations, inflation and a breakdown of the tax system, there was, in the first post-war years, also very little incentive to start new public housing schemes. Hardly any measures that would ameliorate the situation were thus taken until the stabilization of the currency and the recovery period, starting in 1924/25.

There followed a brief period of rapid economic expansion from 1926 to the Wall Street Crash in 1929, which began to hit Germany very hard around 1930/31, with unemployment rising in 1932 to nearly four-and-a-half million. As is well known, this crisis created the political conditions and the social unrest that led to the seizure of power through Hitler and the Nazis.

It is precisely this brief golden age preceding the Crash that makes up the active life of *Das Neue Bauen*. A period of just some five to six years managed to shape architecture, city planning and the idea of urban space so decisively that it could set the agenda for the international discussion on housing and urbanisation until well into the 1970s.<sup>6</sup> In neighbouring countries less devastated by the war, notably Austria (Vienna), Switzerland (Zurich, Basle) and The Netherlands (Rotterdam and Amsterdam), social housing initiatives were actually a little ahead of the Germans, and it is characteristic that, as we shall see, nationals from these countries—Grete Schütte-Lihotsky, Hans Mayer und Mart Stam—should play an important role in Germany, and in particular, the Frankfurt experiments that concern me here.

The driving force behind the Frankfurt housing initiative was Ernst May, a Frankfurt-born architect, at that time active in Breslau (now: Wrocław, Poland), whom the newly elected mayor of Frankfurt, the social-democrat Ludwig Landmann recalled to his home city to put in charge of urban planning and to head the housing department.<sup>7</sup> May had been educated in England, studying with Raymond Unwin, one of the inventors of the concept of the garden city. As an architect, May was a convinced modernist (no bricks, but whitewashed curtain walls, small ribbon windows towards the street and large picture windows towards the garden, topped by a flat roof). Politically, he was probably further to the left than Landmann and his social democrat coalition. It is not clear whether May ever was a member of the Communist Party, however much he was vilified in the right-wing press as a cultural Bolshevik (*Kulturbolschewist*). In 1930 May left Frankfurt, with the majority of his planning staff, on the invitation of the Soviet Government, for which he and his team designed the industrial city of Magnitogorsk.<sup>8</sup> Soon disenchanted by the working conditions and the chicaneries of the Soviet planning bureaucracy, May left Moscow in 1934.<sup>9</sup> He found work by semi-exiling himself to Tanzania, then German West Africa, where he spent the war before returning to (West) Germany in 1945.<sup>10</sup>

In his plans and housing ideas for Frankfurt, May was reacting to Le Corbusier's 1922 vision of the new city, *La Ville d'aujourd'hui*, countering it with a less megalomaniac, more bottom-up socialist housing programme, which he called 'die Wohnung für das Existenzminimum' (housing for subsistence-income families), a topic on which May organized an international conference in 1927, sponsored by the CIAM—the International Congress of Modern Architects—whose second world congress this was.

Thanks to May's efforts, Das Neue Frankfurt (DNF) became a recognized brand name for design innovations, creative city planning and energetic public works schemes, doing much to win acceptance for the then still very controversial modular system of housing construction. His activities besides city planning extended not only to conferences. Under the label DNF he published an international journal (*das neue frankfurt*), promoted projects for a school of arts and design, organized trade fairs, edited catalogues of building accessories, gave public lectures, and even had a regular film club, with screenings of avant-garde works and visits by celebrities such as Joris Ivens, Dziga Vertov or Rudolf Arnheim.<sup>11</sup> Ernst

May's ability to extract maximum publicity from his ventures gave him and Das Neue Frankfurt an exceptional status within Europe, in some ways disproportionate to the actual achievements. May and his Frankfurt venture thus entered the history books as one of the most outstanding proponents of German Architectural Modernism, next to Walter Gropius' role at the Bauhaus in Dessau, and Mies van der Rohe's connection with the Weißenhofsiedlung in Stuttgart.<sup>12</sup> What interests me in this rather well known and amply documented history of Ernst May and Frankfurt, is on the one hand the place of the mass media, and on the other the role of women as participants but also implicit addressees of several of these initiatives.

### **The New Man or The New Woman?**

Thus, it is not the architectural principles of Ernst May and their revolutionary import as such that are at issue. Equally innovative seems to have been his insight that only well-planned publicity and a fully orchestrated media campaign could make these principles succeed. At whom was May's offensive directed? Certainly, in the first instance at fellow planners, architects, educators, artists, journalists, politicians and the international architectural community. But it must not be forgotten to what extent the pathos of social revolution and spiritual renewal from the immediate post-war years still reverberated. And yet, there were also contradictions, shifts of emphasis. By the mid-decade the already mentioned tension between making propaganda for a new world picture and advertising for a different life-style became re-focused in the direction not so much of (party) politics as of the politics of gender. Central to the conflicting views on modernisation was the role of the women, or rather, the respective self-image of men and women in the project of modernity. During the pre-WWI period, the so-called 'cosmic-revolutionary' phase of German Expressionism (which had inspired many of those who later became leading promoters of *Das Neue Bauen*, such as Bruno Taut and Hans Poelzig) the discourse was mainly that of 'der Neue Mensch' (the New Man): in German a generic term that made it easy not to have to gender the concept, nor to have to reflect in specific terms on how the coming revolution might impact women, or help them redefine their identity, self-image and social role. The same applied to the Communist movement, which prioritized the class struggle and the formation of the proletarian subject over the gender-specific, and thus potentially divergent interests of men and women.

Finally, even the less politically partisan and more idealist-spiritual reform movements coming out of *Neue Sachlichkeit* and the Dessau and Weimar Bauhaus did not hold to gender-divisions, insofar as they were pursuing an agenda that almost suggested the creation of a new species. Since all social conditions were to be revolutionized, it would make little sense to think about men and women as separate. In fact, so the argument ran among Dessau Bauhaus luminaries like Johannes Itten, to speak of gender-difference would be to remain imprisoned in the old (bourgeois) stereotypes.

These reformers, architects and planners, needless to say, were almost exclusively male. At the Bauhaus, for instance, the distribution of students and of subjects taught followed a fairly predictable division, with women being thought more gifted for ‘two-dimensional thinking’ (painting, weaving, printmaking) rather than ‘three-dimensional tasks’ (i.e. architecture)—they were better with their hands (pottery) than in abstract conceptual thought (design).

Yet if there was not much of a conception of the *identity* of the *new woman* based on gender, there was emphatically a notion of the *task* of the new women in the housing plans. This task was simple: it was to ‘modernize’ the home. What did this mean? Ideas on the topic seem to have remained, again, within rather traditional definitions and expectations: the woman’s place was in the home, and her role was to feed her husband and be responsible for the nurturing and education of their children. But the aspect, which was new and clearly important to architect-planners, was that her activities were to be more efficiently organized and more rationally executed. This is where modern technology and modern planning could make a difference and had to make a difference. It raised a question: how to win women for these partly utopian and revolutionary, and partly technological and market-oriented ambitions of *Das Neue Bauen*?

### **The Woman as Creative Force**

A highly informative answer to this question is offered in what is undoubtedly among the sourcebooks of Weimar gendered modernity. I am referring to the volume published by the renowned Berlin architect Bruno Taut in 1924, entitled *Die Neue Wohnung: Die Frau als Schöpferin* (The New Home: the Woman as Creator). In one respect, the book responded to the severe shortage of housemaids and day-helpers (young women preferring to work in factories rather than in bourgeois households), but in another, it is a cross between an old-fashioned guide to good behaviour (a ‘Knigge’ for the modern woman) and an instruction manual for the modern home, insofar as Taut recommends a list of do’s and don’ts. Among much useful material on the social and hygienic evils of cramped tenement housing, he included precepts and prescriptions on the evils of bad taste in the traditional bourgeois home. For instance, if the new woman was to be creative—a ‘Schöpferin’—she had better implement the following programme: get rid of the knick-knacks on the sideboard: it only collects dust; dispose of bulky pieces of furniture inherited from the aunt or grandparents: they only use up space. Refrain from placing framed photos of your children or living relatives on the sideboard: they make you look sentimental. If you have to have photos, only of dead parents, please. Quite generally, start offloading all that *Gefühlsballast* (literally: ‘emotional baggage’) that you women are socialized into carrying around with you. “If everything not absolutely necessary is eliminated from an apartment based on strict and merciless choice, not only will your work-load be reduced, but a new beauty will materialize itself”<sup>13</sup>—was one of the appeals he made, in a lecture given to a group of representatives from the association of housewives. In other words, Taut addressed himself to women, because he shrewdly assumed that he needed them as

allies: they had to be made to want Das Neue Bauen, the new architecture and the new home. In fact, in another lecture, to his colleagues he was quite candid about his strategy:

The vital influence which the woman's change of mind exerts on the collective condition of the people cannot be overestimated. In order for us to even begin to build better homes, the women must emphatically demand them.<sup>14</sup>

If one casts a glance at the demands of the women's movement that was more or less contemporaneous, one can see both differences and similarities to the modernizing ambitions of the planners: top on the women's list before the war were: universal suffrage, which in Germany was granted with the inauguration of the Constitution of the new Weimar Republic, in November 1918. Battles fought by women's organisations throughout the 1920s included abortion rights (fight § 218), health and hygiene provisions for their children, and benefits for mothers of large families. Yet these same German women's movements were ambivalent about whether women should be encouraged to go to work, and leave the home as their powerbase. As one recent writer explains this apparently conservative stance:

When women did enter the traditionally masculine occupations, they were neither paid nor treated equally. And no political solution to this problem seemed to be forthcoming. Without an appealing alternative, women persisted in their loyalty to the familiar 'Kinder, Küche, Kirche' ethos and saw emancipation more often as a threat than as a blessing.<sup>15</sup>

Additionally, women were also agitated by other 'modernist' anxieties. For instance: there were extensive public debates about the dangers of 'masculinization', conducted in the popular middle-class journals, such as *Die Dame*.<sup>16</sup> Related to sociological concerns about (middle-class) women joining the labour force, was public ambivalence about androgyny (often a code word for same sex relations), which in turn, often blended with an ambivalence about 'Americanitis', the influence of the United States on female role-models, especially via the cinema. It seems that in Germany, it was the greater mobility between home and work of the American woman that was admired and envied, but also feared and rejected.<sup>17</sup> Lively male and female interest centred on such phenomena as the so-called 'Girl-Kultur', whether it was de-humanizing and degrading to women, or whether it actually treated women in a more egalitarian fashion and let them display their sexuality.<sup>18</sup> Discussion also raged around new fashion trends: the Louise Brooks 'bob' hair-cut, tight skirts, the vamp-look and the flapper image. For instance, already in Taut's book, the flat roof was compared with women becoming slimmer and getting rid of corsets.

But the question also arose whether the New Woman was the one who knows how to spend her husband's money? Was she a kept woman: the role model of the femme fatale as portrayed by Louise Brooks in a film like *Pandora's Box* created a good deal of commotion in the popular press, making this 'American girl' an almost instant icon of Weimar modernity.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Kitchen as Laboratory and Catalyst of Modernity**

The degree to which this type of modernisation corresponded to the goals of *Das Neue Bauen* has often been discussed in conjunction with the one domestic area that had traditionally been considered a women's domain, namely the kitchen. It was on kitchens that contemporary planners and conservative women's movements concentrated virtually all their efforts. May and Taut perceived the kitchen as a laboratory of sorts, wherein domestic life in general could be raised to a higher level of efficiency. Women were to be acquainted with the wonders of technology by means of architecture and design; domestic appliances, such as vacuum cleaners, laundry spinners and electric mangles, gas cookers and continuous-flow water heaters henceforth became common commodities in upper middle class households.

Thus a short film of Ernst May, only recently come to light and showing off May's own townhouse at Frankfurt Ginnheim, features a multipurpose motor, designed to power all manner of kitchen appliances. As might be expected, it is operated not by the master himself but by a housekeeper in a white, almost surgical apron.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, May's journal *DMF* employs modern functional furniture—the Marcel-Breuer-chair, extendable tables, built-in units and foldaway beds—to establish the new perception of beauty forecast by Taut. Just as rationalization and modular design was to determine the structure and exterior of the new type of dwelling, so rationalization and efficiency should enter the interior of the home, and in such a way that the housewife should not only appreciate the benefits, but be the active producer of these benefits.

The planning of more efficient kitchen became one of the most frequently discussed topics of the German women's movement after WWI. Such debates carried a considerable ideological charge, the kitchen being the traditional site of gender-roles as well as family values, but also a testing ground for the application of new technologies. Hence it hardly comes as a surprise that the Social Democrats, who were in power at the time, attempted to channel this emancipating debate in a definite direction and to focus on a policy advocating the "professionalisation of housewives". Elisabeth Lüders and Erna Meyer were perhaps the most prominent leaders of this self-appointed progressive form of social democracy. Utilising slogans such as, "Der Architekt denkt, die Hausfrau lenkt" (Let Housewives Define what Architects Create) or, "Erst die Küche, dann die Façade" (First Think of Your Kitchen, then Think of Your Facade!), this policy obviously knew where it was going.<sup>21</sup>

Here, too, the main source of inspiration was American: Christine Frederick's 1919 *Household Engineering: Scientific Management in the Home* was translated into German in 1922, as *Die rationelle Haushaltsführung*. It became the planner's bible, in the way it introduced into the domestic sphere the principles of scientific management, and subjected housework to the principles of Taylorisation and Henry Ford's assembly line automotive production method. Frederick had conducted elaborate time and motion studies, and she paid special attention to ergonomic design in all aspects of the food-producing and food-consuming

environment. However, her book was also full of practical tips and hints, with nifty, easy to do-it-yourself practical aids and instruments.<sup>22</sup>

Frederick herself had been inspired by studying the kitchen design of transatlantic ocean-liners—icons of modernity whose motifs one could find in the shape of countless modernist buildings in the 1920s, for instance the Rotterdam housing schemes of J.P. Oud. These kitchens on pleasure-boats and ocean-liners had above all to be space saving and motion absorbing, not unlike the mini-kitchen-cum-restaurants on Pullman trains, clear formal principles of spatial organisation imposed themselves, as did the idea of built-in units rather than free-standing ones. Riding furthermore on the period's general wave of speed, automation and streamlined forms, mitigated and balanced by the very real spatial and financial constraints of needing to create affordable housing in space-efficient surroundings, there emerged in Frankfurt around Ernst May a sort of mental and ideological blueprint for the kitchen of the *Zeitgeist*, which only waited for its genius loci to implement it and make of it a concrete reality.

### **Grete Schütte-Lihotsky**

This genius loci was to be the Austrian architect Grete Schütte-Lihotsky, since become world famous as the inventor of the Frankfurt Kitchen. Born Margarete Lihotzky in 1897 into a Viennese bourgeois family, Grete Lihotsky was the daughter of a liberal-minded civil servant whose pacifist tendencies made him a republican well before the Habsburg Empire had collapsed in 1918. Encouraged by her father, she became the first female student at the K.-K. Kunstgewerbeschule (today University of Applied Arts Vienna), where artists such as Josef Hoffmann and Oskar Kokoschka held teaching posts. As she later pointed out: “in 1916 no one would have conceived of a woman being commissioned to build a house—not even myself.” Nonetheless, she studied architecture under Oskar Strnad, and won prizes for her designs even before graduating. Strnad was one of the pioneers of social housing in Vienna at the time, designing council housing for the working classes. Inspired by him, Lihotzky began to get interested in combining the new ideals of functionality with more traditional principles of communitarian socialism. Apart from council housing, she was also working on a war veterans' retirement home, a project supervised by Adolf Loos, at that time probably the most famous architect working in Vienna. Between 1919 and 1934, the City of Vienna re-housed almost 200.000 people by building 58,667 new apartments, most of which still exist today and are much sought after. Besides Loos, Lihotsky worked with Peter Behrens, Josef Frank, and Josef Hoffmann, notably on the ‘Winarsky-Hof’, a major housing complex in Vienna.

She also read widely, and when she came across an essay called “How Can Appropriate Housing Construction Reduce the Work of Housewives” in the Breslau architectural journal *Das Schlesische Heim* she started thinking about applying industrial design principles to domestic spaces, notably the kitchen. She wrote an article on the subject, setting out some of her ideas and sent it to *Das Schlesische Heim*. Its editor was none other than Ernst May. Remembering her paper from

1921, May asked Lihotsky to join him and his team in 1926, less than a year after he himself had moved from Breslau to Frankfurt. May put her in charge of designing school kitchen, crèches and other public spaces and communal spaces used by children and young adults in care and education. There she met Dr Wilhelm Schütte, an architect-engineer specialising in school buildings, also working with May, whom she married the following year. During 1927/28 she was asked to devise a kitchen that would fit the satellite town settlement schemes May was developing at top speed. Her efforts resulted in the design of what was to be called the Frankfurt kitchen (in typical May fashion, using the name 'Frankfurt' as a marketing tool), the prototype of the fitted kitchen, as we still know it today.<sup>23</sup>

When May resigned his post in Frankfurt in 1930, Grete Schütte Lihotsky and her husband decided to emigrate, along with May and ten other architects, to Moscow, where they were known as the "May-Brigade". Continuing her work on housing developments, crèches and kindergartens for industrial communities, she found conditions in Moscow and Magnitogorsk no less frustrating than May. However, committed to her socialist ideals and convinced of the achievements of the young Sowjet Union, she stayed on, even after the May Brigade disbanded. She spent much of her time travelling in China, Japan, the Netherlands, Greece, France, and even the United States, lecturing about *Das Neue Frankfort*, kitchen design and occasionally working on commissions for kindergartens. She also made brief visits to Vienna, but after the *Anschluss* in 1938 deemed it too dangerous to remain there. Like many of her former colleagues from Frankfurt, Berlin and Vienna, she found a relatively safe and welcoming exile in Turkey, where in 1938 she accepted a teaching post at the Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul.<sup>24</sup>

On the eve of World War II Istanbul was a safe meeting place for many exiled Europeans, and the Schüttes encountered artists such as the musicians Béla Bartók or Paul Hindemith. In Istanbul Schütte-Lihotzky also met fellow Austrian Herbert Eichholzer, an architect who at the time was busy organizing Communist resistance to the Nazi regime. In 1939 Schütte-Lihotzky joined the Austrian Communist Party (KPÖ) and in December 1940, of her own free will, together with Eichholzer travelled back to Vienna to secretly contact the Austrian Communist resistance movement. However, she was arrested by the Gestapo on January 22, 1941, only a few weeks after her arrival. While Eichholzer and other members of the resistance, who had also been seized, were charged with high treason, sentenced to death by the Volksgerichtshof and executed in 1943, Schütte-Lihotzky was 'only' sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment and brought to a prison in Aichach, Bavaria, where she was eventually liberated by U.S. troops on April 29, 1945. (...) After the war, she went to work in Sofia, Bulgaria, eventually returning to her native Vienna in 1947. However, her strong political views – she remained a Communist – prevented her from receiving any major public commissions in post-war Austria. Apart from designing some private homes, Schütte-Lihotzky worked as a consultant in China, Cuba and the German Democratic Republic. (...) Not until the 1980s were her accomplishments officially recognized by the Austrian Republic. She received the Architecture Award from the City of Vienna in 1980. In 1985 she published her memoirs, *Erinnerungen aus dem Widerstand*, to considerable success. Further awards followed, but in 1988 she refused to be

honoured by then Austrian Federal President Kurt Waldheim on grounds of the latter's dubious Nazi past. In 1995 she was one of a group of Austrian Holocaust survivors who sued Jörg Haider after Haider had referred to Nazi concentration camps as 'prison camps'. She celebrated her 100th birthday in 1997 dancing a short waltz with the Mayor of Vienna and remarking, "I would have enjoyed it, for a change, to design a house for a rich man." Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky died in Vienna on January 18, 2000, five days before her 103rd birthday, of complications after contracting influenza. She was interred in an Ehrengrab at the Zentralfriedhof, Wien-Simmering.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Frankfurt Kitchen: Style and Design**

The "Frankfurt kitchen" is just one of many kitchen concepts that were to be developed as *Das Neue Bauen* gained momentum; J. P. Oud, Erna Meyer, Bruno Taut, Hugo Häring, Ludwig Hilbersheimer and Ferdinand Kramer had likewise come up with new designs, but only a select few made it beyond the drawing board. How come, then, that this particular concept became so phenomenally successful? One possible explanation may be sought in its close ties to the "Frankfurt" emblem. The first fitted kitchen ever to be mass produced, Schütte-Lihotzky's design (1927/28) was immediately linked to May's programme of architectural reform. It made its debut at the Frankfurter Industriemesse (Industrial Fair), held in 1927, (to compete with the Werkbund exhibition, which was taking place simultaneously at Stuttgart-Weißenhof) and it likewise played a prominent role at the CIAM exhibition entitled "Die Wohnung für das Existenzminimum" (Housing for Subsistence Income). Conceived to meet the requirements of a working couple with three children, the standard version measured a mere 6 square metres and took up no more than 3% of the basic construction costs for a three-room apartment at 41 square metres.<sup>26</sup> To quote one of the many descriptions of the Frankfurt kitchen in some more detail:

Using a railroad dining car kitchen as her model, [Schütte-Lihotzky] designed a kitchen that was just 1.90 meters (about 6'3") wide and 3.44 meters (11'4") long [...]. Schütte-Lihotzky included a sliding door so that the mother could talk to and watch over her children in the living/dining area while working in the kitchen. The distance from the stove to the dining table was just three meters (10 feet). Other features included an opening above the stove for ventilation. Next to the stove, she installed a fireless cooking box. You could begin your dinner preparations in the morning by placing partially cooked food in the insulated box, which would cook food slowly in your absence. To keep food cool in pre-refrigerator times, she designed a storage cabinet under the window with an opening to the outside, suitable to European climate conditions. Kitchen furniture was installed on raised concrete platforms to avoid dirt-catching nooks and crannies, and the space between the top of cabinets and the ceiling was enclosed for the same purpose. Next, she designed a sensible sink. With your left hand, you held the item, washed it with your right hand, and then placed it in a drying rack at your left to avoid switching hands. The storage shelves for pots and pans were grids of latches to allow items to dry completely. Working surfaces were made from beechwood, which was resistant to acids and marring, and easy to scour and keep clean. Schütte-Lihotzky added a slot on one end so that refuse like potato peels or onion skins could be swept off the counter, and

into a rubbish bin below. Wood surfaces not being used in food preparation were painted blue to deter flies. Aluminium containers were installed for dry foodstuff like rice, noodles and beans. To prevent mealworms, oak was used for flour bins. An ironing board was attached to one wall that could be folded up when not in use.<sup>27</sup>

[Figures 1 and 2]

Between 1928 and 1930 Lihotsky's kitchen was installed in approximately 10,000 apartments throughout social housing estates at Frankfurt-Römerstadt and Frankfurt-Ginnheim. Although it was received enthusiastically by experts both national and international, it never spread beyond Frankfurt in its original incarnation. A large order had allegedly been received for export to France, but that venture apparently came to nought owing to unfavourable exchange rates.

### **The Frankfurt Kitchen: The Movie**

One thing, however, did come to fruition, namely a short movie that was shot around 1927 and entitled *Die Frankfurter Küche*. Although it does not at first appear to stray from the conventions governing contemporary advertisement spots and industrial movies in general, which typically took the form of a user guide on celluloid, it does differ from the formula prescribed for cultural movies, such as Käthe Tondorf's proposal for a home economics film that was to feature, "a thoroughly practical kitchen, equipped with the latest appliances and operated by a pretty and competent young woman dexterously preparing a fine meal (for instance, the camera could focus on her hands by means of close-up)—surely such a movie would be acceptable to men also!"<sup>28</sup> *Die Frankfurter Küche* on the other hand resembles an industrial film such as might be used to advertise a new product or an innovative manufacturing process. It does, however, conform to the contrastive method, which characterised virtually all reformatory themes at the time, be they educational films or propaganda movies: the before/after principle typically associated with detergent ads was effectively employed to juxtapose the "bad old days" with the new era. For instance, we are shown the time-consuming tedium of lighting a fire in a traditionally equipped kitchen and we are reminded of all the dust and grime that needed to be removed afterwards, not to mention the dangers of chopping wood on site.

Not so in the Frankfurt kitchen, which shows the housewife handling her modern appliances with ease as she squats on an adjustable stool, conveniently close to the refuse drawer which connects up to the communal rubbish chute, whilst a sliding lamp hanging from the ceiling provides optimal lighting under all working conditions. On top of that, the kitchen was equipped with a foldaway ironing board; hence the various technical advances that had been achieved in the Frankfurt design could be shown off consecutively, as might be the case during a demonstration session. The first shot is taken from above to highlight the floor plan and to show the sliding door that leads out to the living area. It culminates in a trick animation showing the amount of space saved in metres. The simulated scenes have us at eyelevel with the housewife, allowing us to follow her every

motion as she goes about cleaning a cabbage head or ironing a tablecloth. The fact that we are dealing with an actual kitchen rather than a replica designed for the studio or the industrial fair may be inferred from the carefully chosen, if somewhat rigid and minimalist, camera settings as well as the primitive lighting (necessitated in all probability by cramped conditions). Thus, we see traces of the Gilbreth time and motion thinking in the calculations of the distances, and their filmic animation. Evident is the DNB-obsession with space and space-saving: the foldaway furniture and bed are shown in action, even integrated into the narrative, thanks to the device of the neighbour's visit. Primed, one also notices the housewife's hair-cut to be the very fashionable Brooks-bob, and the shadow of Taut is present in the concern with dust, the disapproval of knick-knacks (breakable containers), and the discreet demonstration of the ergonomic advantages of the adjustable swivel stool.

### **The Instructional Film as a Tactical Avantgarde?**

However, to understand how the film camera should come into the Frankfurt kitchen—irrespective of the purposes of information, entertainment or surveillance—one has to recall first of all the general circumstances under which private spaces were opened up to the penetration not only of modern technology, but also to the mass media. As argued earlier, it is a process that is in some respects closely intertwined, as the two sides of the modernisation and mediatization of the home and the family, and returns us to the contradictory and often paradoxical alliances entered into by the life reform movements, socialist politics, and modern industry and technology with which I began. Secondly, it highlights Ernst May's particular media strategy, which is itself apparently most contradictory: on the one hand, *Das Neue Frankfurt* under Ernst May made tremendous efforts to publicise and proselytize on behalf of his programmatic innovations and ambitious housing policies. It thereby participated in a process of 'mediatizing' the city, with which we are only too familiar, not least because of such landmark Weimar films as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* and Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin Symphony of a Big City* (both 1927). Yet while these two films, each in a very different way, partake in artistic modernism and the avant-garde, May's commissioned films appear to go in a diametrically opposite direction: they are artless, old-fashioned and utterly conventional in their style. While his quarterly journal *Das Neue Frankfurt*—like the publications of the Dessau Bauhaus—represent the most cutting-edge manifestations of the avant-garde aesthetic, in lay-out, typography, the use of still photographs and overall design, the films seem to belong to a different world altogether. They are close to the industrial and instructional films made in Germany and elsewhere since the 1910s. Ernst May's concept of using the mass media for promoting his ideas and implementing his designs in the medium film thus differs markedly from the techniques more readily identified with different Weimar avant-gardes in the arts, whether inspired by the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Dada or Russian Constructivism. When one furthermore thinks of the filmic avant-garde of the time as formally innovative, influenced by Soviet montage cinema, some of whose representatives even visited Frankfurt, then the discrepancy is even more striking.

Neutral, sober, seemingly without flair or wit, *Die Frankfurter Küche* (as indeed its companion film, *Die Frankfurter Kleinstwohnung*) come across as examples of the most conventional sort of instructional filmmaking.<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, this is what they are, and yet I would claim for them an avant-garde role, not as films *an sich*, (whether ‘pure cinema’, or ‘agit-prop’) but as elements in Ernst May’s highly innovative media-network or *Verbund*-system of utilizing the mass media of his time. I would even go as far to compare May’s city-and-media concept with Bert Brecht’s strategy of artistic production, at least as commented on by Walter Benjamin, in his notion of the artist-as-producer (itself adapted from Sergeij Tretjakov). It could be summarized as follows: an avant-garde artist has to be present in all the most advanced media of his time, in order to intervene socially and politically.

Such a perspective focuses attention on the interventionist strategy behind *Die Frankfurter Küche*, as indeed to some extent behind the Frankfurter Küche itself. Commissioned by Ernst May, both the film and the kitchen had a ‘show-’or ‘exhibition-value’ besides their use-value. Both were featured at the 1929 CIAM Congress already mentioned, both were addressed to a trade fair public, and finally, both were ‘mobile’: they could be shown and exhibited in different places, at the limit, almost anywhere in the world. May’s general policy was to replace the practice of *Mustersiedlungen* (such as the Weissenhofsiedlung) much favoured by the German Werkbund, by housing that on the one hand, had a direct use-value (as his Römerstadt and Praunheim housing complexes), but at the same time he sought modes and forms that made these achievements ‘mobile’and site-independent. Hence his attempts to popularize the concept of *Wander-Ausstellungen*, travelling exhibitions, imported from the Soviet Union and pioneered in Germany by El Lissitsky, in Dresden, Cologne and elsewhere. It was in line with the general trend, which favoured small-scale specialized trade-fairs, to replace the unwieldy and pompous world-fairs, and of glossy, well-designed and well-illustrated occasional publications and catalogues, to replace handbooks and encyclopedia.

If May’s public relations strategy relied on techniques that were multi-medial in essence (word-of-mouth propaganda, print and even realia—all played roles of equal importance in the media policy pursued by *Das Neue Frankfurt*), it was also multifunctional (in that it reached various target groups).<sup>30</sup> However, paradoxically enough, film was not accorded the same pivotal role in the process as we would now automatically tend to assume. There are several reasons for this, notably a distinct lack of enthusiasm for the motion picture which was common even among architects otherwise devoted to modernism, and though this reluctance may not constitute the single most important hindrance factor, it would certainly have figured at some level. A much bigger issue would be the fact that by 1927 it would hardly have been possible for an independently produced cultural or educational movie to make it onto the big screen, because the UFA and its subsidiaries virtually monopolised this end of the market. As a result, the motion picture was considered too expensive a medium for wooing customers, unless it could be used for private showings or special events. Hence *Die Frankfurter Küche* was clearly pitched at

construction experts and professionals attending trade fairs or conferences connected with the building sector, rather than addressing a general public or film aficionados who would have been acquainted with avant-garde art. This mixed audience, consisting in the main of amateurs and tradesmen, was much more likely to appreciate a film that took the form of an ad or an industrial movie, rather than having to watch films by the likes of Walter Ruttmann, Joris Ivens or Hans Richter, which were deliberately bold and stylistically provocative. It is precisely this quasi-anonymous focus on technical aspects ('Sachlichkeit') which renders *Die Frankfurter Küche* so convincing in that it refers back to May's otherwise highly differentiated handling of the media, incorporating avantgarde and technical elements in media campaigns which were designed to complement one another.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, despite these self-imposed limits of the instructional film and May's use of its form on both subject and scope of the film, there are a number of significant details that testify to the wider issues being present in *Die Frankfurter Küche*. For instance, several of the points emerging from the previously mentioned intense debates within the German women's movement about the proper way to run a modern household and family can be seen also embedded in the film, just as it implicitly addresses a number of the contradictions inherent in the idea of bringing industrial design and industrial production methods into the home. Even more general questions, such as whether the principle of the division of labour and the ethos of factory work ought to have a place at all in the home, do occur to the viewer, recalling just how ambivalent the period was about women's place in the home or at work, and what it meant to claim for housewives the professional status of 'worker' or 'employee'.<sup>32</sup>

Viewed in this light, *Die Frankfurter Küche* makes it clear that the woman shown is not, properly speaking employed, but rather has made her kitchen her place of work. Indeed, she has made her kitchen an *industrial* place of work. The double gaze of the camera—at eye-level and from above, on the isometric ground plan—turns out to be part of a surveillance regime: here a test person is being observed on her literally 'home-made' assembly line. Her gestures and action are subject to the laws of the time-and-motion studies of a Frederick W. Taylor or Frank Gilbreth. Even if the stop-watch stays outside the frame, it is clear that her efficient handling of the ironing board or of the carrots and cabbage at the sink are guided by the same invisible pressures and rhythms that impose themselves on the (female) workers on assembly lines, or doing piece work in factories. In this respect the film is not without a touch of (unintended?) irony: in industrial and factory work, women were employed because machines made light and repetitive work possible, but also a division of labour. In the modern model kitchen, the housewife has to fulfil all the roles in the production process herself. This (middle-class) housewife, in other words, is in some sense worse off than the woman working in the factory, where besides a wage and an element of economic independence, she also enjoys the collectivity and communality of others. In the home, by contrast, she is mostly alone, and entirely dependent on her husband as breadwinner. No wonder that many of the young women in the 1920s began to prefer working in the factory to

being servants in bourgeois households, thus partly provoking the crisis to which the Frankfurt kitchen was meant to be the solution.

### **The Frankfurt Kitchen: Icon of Modernity as Image and Installation**

At first glance, then, as artefact *Die Frankfurter Küche* appears to be somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand this film contains many images that prove to be very revealing when it comes to the ideational principles of *Das Neue Bauen*, which were radically avant-garde. Similarly, it shows up many of the paradoxes and misconceptions, which dogged the agenda, set forth by this new school of architecture; they appear both directly and indirectly in the images themselves as well as in their argumentative structures. On the other hand it does not appear to have been greatly influenced by the debate on absolute film as proposed by Hans Richter; it does not take its cues from the sort of independent film advocated by the CICIM, nor does it bear the hallmarks of a documentary in the vein of John Grierson. In other words, the great cinematic debate that was going on at the time, even among the Frankfurt set, seems to have had no effect whatever on *The Frankfurt Kitchen*, either in terms of form or in terms of aesthetics.<sup>33</sup> It does not contain so much as a trace of the poetic “Stimmungsfilm” (atmospheric movie) then propagated by Walter Ruttmann and Joris Ivens, never mind emulate the conventions of revolutionary agitation movies associated with the Russian avant-garde. Quite the contrary: both its forms and its aesthetics are based on an entirely different genre. The Frankfurt movies were intended neither to advocate a new type of cinema, nor to further the cause of avant-garde art; they propagated new technologies, such as urban planning and the modern ‘living machine’, as well as industry in general (construction, urban infrastructure and large-scale domestic energy supply schemes, particularly with electrified kitchens in mind). Conceived to supply visual material to stimulate debate in various forums and panels, each individual film constituted part of a whole and functioned not as an autonomous piece, but rather in the manner of a ‘semi-finished’ product or as a modular building block in a complete series. Hence it did not centre on the author as artist but remained deliberately anonymous. If some of these films do display clear-cut allegiances, they are not out to propagate any particular aesthetic direction but rather to advertise *Das Neue Frankfurt* as an emblem, which in turn did not represent any standardised or normative quality product as much as a think tank epitomised in slogans such as “Licht, Luft und Sonne” (Sunny, Bright and Airy!) or “Die Wohnung für das Existenzminimum” (Housing for Subsistence Income). We may assume, therefore, that films such as *Die Frankfurter Küche* aspired towards a certain formal transparency, which means in practice that they reflected—and indeed subscribed to—whichever type of genre might be prove most effective in subtly convincing a sceptical public. The form in question was to be practical in essence, i.e. it was to take the shape of an educational movie, an industrial film, or even an advertisement feature.

Seen in this light, the Frankfurt films, despite their conventional form, do qualify as being consistent with May’s overall media concept, which, taken as a

whole, certainly deserves to be called avant-garde. For although the town planner may not have assigned a central role to the cinema, judging other visual and print media more suitable in terms of accessibility and ease of circulation, his overall deployment of the technical media remains as innovative as it was radical. The film series itself was to be part of a master plan which sought to tap into the emerging public sphere of mass media awareness, intent on creating as a sort of open forum located somewhere between discussion, documentation, promotion and intervention in a completely novel manner, utilising the entire spectrum of available media forms and media outlets.

Hence it is precisely this element of impersonal neutrality and its unintended implications that poses reception problems for today's viewers when it comes to placing *Die Frankfurter Küche* in context, which the above approach can hardly claim to cover, based as it is on an interpretation mainly focusing on ideological textures grounded in political history. Nonetheless we may safely assume that the *Frankfurter Küche* did not enjoy much exposure beyond its initial target audiences at the Frankfurter Industriemesse and at the CIAM Congress. No censorship documents have so far been found, which virtually eliminates the likelihood of a public showing ever having taken place. Hence we must again ask ourselves how exactly the Frankfurt kitchen attained its worldwide reputation. As mentioned before, its fame may be attributed in part to Grete Schütte-Lihotsky's remarkable presence and to an even greater degree to its being at the epicentre of an ambivalent discourse, wedged as it were between high-flown theories and provisional, ad-hoc pragmatics. However, it owes most of its fame, I would argue, to the unusual manner in which it was brought to the attention of the public; for it is true that neither its uniqueness, its chronological priority, nor its specific advantages over other fitted kitchens quite manage to explain its resounding success. As a matter of fact, its success in the media was in diametrical opposition to the manner in which it was received by its actual users.

Schütte-Lihotsky's Frankfurt kitchen was installed in some 10,000 units in Frankfurt and as such was a commercial success. The cost of a single kitchen, fully equipped, was moderate (a few hundred Reichsmark); the costs were passed on to the rent (which reportedly increased the rents by 1 RM per month). However, the users of these kitchens often had their difficulties with the Frankfurt kitchen. Unaccustomed to Schütte-Lihotsky's custom-designed workflows for which the kitchen was optimized, they often were at loss as to how to use the kitchen. It was frequently described as not flexible enough—the dedicated storage bins were often used for other things than their labels said. Another problem with these bins was that they were easily reachable by small children. Schütte-Lihotsky had designed the kitchen for one adult person only, children or even a second adult had not entered the picture, and in fact, the kitchen was too small for two people to work in. Even one person often was hampered by open cabinet doors.<sup>34</sup>

Thus ran the various complaints that appeared in numerous relevant reports furnished by Frankfurt's building inspectors, who even considered some of the more ingenious devices characterising the design to be 'flawed'.<sup>35</sup> In its extreme

functionality, Lihotsky's kitchen somehow ignored the basic living requirements of the tenant, which goes to show that the Frankfurt kitchen was very much an integral element of May's design strategy that manifested itself in various ways throughout the Praunheim estate;<sup>36</sup> *Das Neue Frankfurt* had apparently overtaken the New Man, and indeed the New Woman, thus rendering it 'avant-garde' in an entirely different sense.

The mini-apartment incorporating the Frankfurt kitchen could only be turned into a reality in the context of a housing estate designed from the ground up and it had originally been conceived to alleviate a housing crisis. The rift that existed between the construction concept and its actual habitability, i.e. the difference between the architect as an intellectual developer of living space who is burning with reformatory zeal and the housewife as a consumer, driven by ideals of traditional domesticity, as well as a desire for greater convenience, could not be reconciled, either in May's estates or in Lihotsky's kitchens. This issue is convincingly, if involuntarily, documented in *Die Frankfurter Küche*. Thus the film (or should we say its inherent ontology?) has transcended both its own historic moment and its initial purpose, giving even this pragmatic product of circumstance the dignity of redemptive power, 'rescuing' reality, as famously claimed by Siegfried Kracauer, by documenting its contradictions. At a time when there was as yet no accepted medium for rendering the discourse of modernity-as-modernisation, reality in all its recalcitrance rears up against the very intention of *Die Frankfurter Küche*, by preserving the contradiction of the concept almost in spite of itself. It shows the master-slave dialectic implicit in this moment of feminist emancipation, while leaving the viewer to ponder how to resolve the schism of (wo)man as producer and (wo)man as consumer, which has marked so profoundly the developed societies in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, leaving unresolved the function of 'work' in the spectrum: drudgery, wage-labour, self-fulfilling creativity.

Why—beyond such philosophical considerations—has the Frankfurt kitchen retained its appeal as an idea and as an imaginary (rather than a practical) concept? First of all, because it represents in Europe at least the prototype of the (built-in) kitchen we still inhabit, use and take for granted. Universalized, it has become invisible, so that a genealogy of its origins retains a special kind of fascination. But surely, it is also because Schütte-Lihotsky's concept is above all a marvel of design: it represents a compact and intricate interplay between a host of individually functioning components integrated into a working macrocosm. Such a view takes up Walter Benjamin's reflection on the aura, to the extent that the aura puts the recto of use-value and cult-value in direct contact with the verso of exhibition value and 'art object' status. If we grant that the 'use value' of the Frankfurt kitchen in its time stands in indirect proportion to its 'exhibition value' for posterity, then one could argue that the Frankfurt kitchen delicately balances beauty and function, but that its afterlife aligns its beauty with the aesthetics of surrealism, somewhere between the fantastic (but useless) objects designed by Man Ray, and Marcel Duchamp's found-objects and (formerly useful) ready-mades. If indeed, the Frankfurter Küche has a touch of surrealism, even as it belongs to the *Neue*

*Sachlichkeit*, then one can understand why the Frankfurt kitchen initially conquered the world via the medium of photography. It was as a photograph that it first made its appearance in magazines, in books, and, finally, in encyclopaedias. The rhythm of curved knobs and handles is subtly contrasted with the rectangular tiling, while the tripod supporting the adjustable stool serves to mediate between them by reiterating the curvature of the former. Strict geometry suddenly takes on a playful quality in that the symmetry of the square tiles creates a dynamic all of its own as it simultaneously absorbs and accelerates one's gaze in order to project it towards the window, resulting in a unique sense of space in the manner of any 'trompe l'oeil' or picture puzzle.

As anonymous as May's commissioned film, but unlike the film, constantly reissued, the photograph has made the Frankfurt kitchen into an emblem, an icon of modernity that has gained a firm place in the annals of architecture. Paradoxically enough, this kitchen was to prove that the aforementioned architects who had initially resisted the motion picture as a medium actually had a point when they refused to have their edifices feature in movies, as the preferable 'camera in the kitchen' appears to be one that captivates one's gaze to guide and transport it at will, rather than bringing the room to life and manipulating it in three dimensions. This impression is reinforced by the fact that the angle of the still camera is an 'impossible' one; for it does not show us the kitchen as we might see it as we enter the door but from the perspective of an invisible fourth wall, as though the kitchen were a theatre stage of sorts. This position almost takes us back to the cinema; at the very least it evokes a film set, such that the famous photography now resembles a still intended to document an imaginary screenplay featuring scenery commissioned by the likes of Hitchcock or Kubrick. Moreover, it would seem to verify that *Die Frankfurter Küche* had to remain something of a 'hollow space' in kitchen history, as it 're-attributes' not one but two dominant media that implicate cinema on the one hand while at the same time competing with it; for, although the Frankfurt kitchen initially came to public attention as a photograph, it has now gained immortality via a rather different medium: the installation. For two decades running it has seemed as though no museum throughout Germany (and Austria) could do without a 'Frankfurt kitchen'. Opened in the late 1980s, the Mannheimer Technikmuseum promptly boasted a Frankfurt kitchen, a trend which was then reciprocated in Frankfurt itself and at the MAK in Vienna. The latest institution to follow suit was the Germanische Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg: an internet announcement dating from December 18<sup>th</sup> 2003 proudly states that the museum, "(had) now incorporated into its collection the prototype for all modern fitted kitchens, namely the Frankfurt kitchen." A built(-in) space becomes a photograph, and over time, the photograph takes on a reality of its own—until another point in time, when the photograph, in order to index reality authentically, once more has to become (ex) posed space.

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## Illustrations

Images 1 and 2: Grete Schütte Lihotsky's 'Frankfurter Küche' (photograph and ground plan). In: Christoph Mohr und Michael Müller: *Funktionalität und Moderne. Das Neue Frankfurt und seine Bauten 1925-1933*, R. Müller Verlag, Köln, 1984, pp. 122-123, and <http://www.tu-cottbus.de/BTU/Fak2/TheoArch/wolke/deu/Themen/961/fuehr1/ding1.html>.

### Notes

1. Beatriz Colomina, "Introduction", in Beatriz Colomina (ed.), *Sexuality and Space*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 1992.
2. On *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* (Harun Farocki, 1996), see Wolfgang Ernst and Harun Farocki, "Towards an Archive for Visual Concepts", in T. Elsaesser (ed.), *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004, pp. 261-287.
3. The shock caused by *Psycho* in 1960 was not only the by now all too familiar shower scene—even without a gruesome murder to make it unforgettable a site rarely featured. Possibly even more unsettling—and an indication of things to come—was the visual and aural close-up of the gurgling toilet earlier in the film, as Janet Leigh disposes of the some of the evidence of her crime.
4. For a history of *Das Neue Bauen*, see for instance Norbert Huse, *Neues Bauen 1918 bis 1933. Moderne Architektur in der Weimarer Republik*, München, C.H.Beck, 1975.
5. See Günter Uhlig, "Stadtplanung in der Weimarer Republik: Sozialistische Reformaspekte", NGBK (Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, ed.), *Wem gehört die Welt?*, Berlin, NGBK, 1977, pp. 50-71.
6. Not all reformers belonged to the leftist camp. The initiation of new housing schemes was an equally popular topic amongst conservative circles in and around 1926, and it was often proffered as an all-in-one remedy for the myriad problems Germany was then faced with: "Wir haben seit 1918 [...] im ganzen rund 32 Milliarden RM vertrunken, rund 12 Milliarden RM verraucht; rund ebensoviel in Zuchthäuser und Krankenanstalten gesteckt, um alle die unglücklichen Opfer dieser beiden Laster unterzubringen, im ganzen also 56 Milliarden verjuxt in acht Jahren!—Für dieses Geld hätten wir längst das ganze Wohnungselend—und gleich das ganze Arbeitsloseneleid aus der Welt schaffen und unser Volk zu innerer und äusserer Gesundheit zurückführen können" ("Since 1918 we have drunk around 32 billion RM worth of alcohol, and 12 billion RM have been burned in the form of tobacco. Roughly the same amount has been invested in prisons and hospitals to help accommodate the victims of both these vices. In other words we have put to waste no less than 58 billion RM these last eight years! With that sort of money we could just as easily have solved the housing crisis; indeed we could probably have done away with the spectre of unemployment and we could have led our people on a path of physical and spiritual recovery"). In: Gert Kähler, "Wohnung und Moderne", [http://www.tu-cottbus.de/BTU/Fak2/TheoArch/wolke/deu/Themen/971/Kaehler/kaehler\\_t.html](http://www.tu-cottbus.de/BTU/Fak2/TheoArch/wolke/deu/Themen/971/Kaehler/kaehler_t.html).
7. Rosemarie Höpfner, Volker Fischer (eds.), *Ernst May und Das Neue Frankfurt 1925-1930*, Berlin, Ernst & Sohn, 1986.
8. Upon his retirement *Das Neue Frankfurt* honoured May with a special edition: "*Deutsche bauen in der UdSSR*", *Das Neue Frankfurt* 9 (September 1930).
9. See Christian Borngräber, "Ausländische Architekten in der UdSSR: Bruno Taut, Die Brigaden Ernst May, Hannes Mayer und Hans Schmidt", *Wem gehört die Welt*, pp. 109-137.
10. Eckhard Herrel, *Ernst May - Architekt und Stadtplaner in Afrika 1934-1953*, Tübingen, Wasmuth Verlag, 2001.
11. This film club was run by Ella Bergmann Michel, who was both a photographer and a moviemaker. See 'Zwei Jahre Filmgruppe Bund *Das Neue Frankfurt, 1931-33*'. In: *Das Neue Frankfurt* 10 (1932/33), pp. 32-33.
12. There is not a single major publication on modern city planning and architecture that fails to mention May's Frankfurt. English accounts may be found in: Charles Jencks' *Modern*

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- Movements in Architecture* (London, Penguin Books, 1973); Kenneth Frampton's *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London, Thames & Hudson, 1992, pp.137-138); Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1996), pp. 115-22.
13. "Wenn aus einer Wohnung nach strengster und rücksichtslosester Auswahl alles, aber auch alles, was nicht direkt zum Leben notwendig ist, herausfliegt, so wird nicht bloß Ihre Arbeit erleichtert, sondern es stellt sich von selbst eine neue Schönheit ein." Bruno Taut, *Die Neue Wohnung. Die Frau als Schöpferin*, Leipzig : Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1924, p. 55.
  14. Bruno Taut, *Die Neue Wohnung. Die Frau als Schöpferin*, p. 58.
  15. Mark Peach, "Der Architekt denkt, die Hausfrau lenkt", *German Studies Review* 18 (1995), p. 445.
  16. Among the many books now discussing these aspects of Weimar culture, one of the first was Patrice Petro, *Joyless Streets*, Princeton, Princeton UP, 1989.
  17. See Renate Bridenthal und Claudia Koonz, "Beyond Kinder, Küche, Kirche. Weimar Women in Politics and Work", in R. Bridenthal (ed. et al.), *When Biology became Destiny*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1984, pp. 33-65.
  18. See for example Sabine Hake, "Girls and Crisis—the Other Side of Diversion", *New German Critique* 40 (Winter 1987), pp. 147-166.
  19. On *Pandora's Box* see Louise Brooks, *Lulu in Hollywood*, New York, Praeger, 1982, and Thomas Elsaesser, 'Lulu and the Meter Man', in T.E. *Weimar Cinema and After*, New York, Routledge 2000, pp. 259-92.
  20. This probably refers back to the fact that May's Römerstadt estate was the first housing complex in Germany to be 'fully electrified'. However, even in this instance, it turned out to be an experiment that required huge amounts of PR-work to convince the general public. At one point the firm even hired "publicity ladies" who were to familiarise ordinary housewives with the benefits of devices such as continuous-flow water heaters and electric cookers. See Gerhard Kuhn, "Amerika vor den Toren, oder die vollektrifizierte Siedlung Römerstadt und Praunheim III", in *Wohnkultur und kommunale Wohnpolitik in Frankfurt am Main 1880-1930*, Bonn, Dietz, 1998, p. 168-84.
  21. Marie-Elisabeth Lüders, "Erst die Küche—dann die Fassade", in *Die Küche der Klein- und Mittelwohnung*, ed. by Reichsforschungsgesellschaft für Wirtschaftlichkeit im Bau- und Wohnungswesen e.V., 1928, p. 1. (= Sonderhefte: Reichsforschungsgesellschaft für Wirtschaftlichkeit im Bau- und Wohnungswesen, vol. 2); Erna Meyer, *Der Neue Haushalt*, Stuttgart, Frankh, 1928. The socio-political backdrop behind these debates is discussed in great detail in Susan A. Henderson, "A Revolution in the Women's Sphere. Grete Lihotsky and the Frankfurt Kitchen", in D. Coleman (ed.), *Architecture and Feminism*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 1996, pp. 221-53.
  22. Frank B. Gilbreth and his wife Lillian, for instance, engaged in such practices during the 20s (see Gilbreth's *Primer of Scientific Management*) and were immortalised during the 40s in the books published by their children (e.g. *Cheaper by the Dozen*, New York, Double Day, 1949).
  23. Schütte-Lihotsky published her own account in May's house-journal: Margarete Schütte-Lihotsky, "Die Frankfurter Küche", *Das neue Frankfurt* 5 (1926-1927), pp. 18-26.
  24. About German architects in Turkey, see the catalogue of the exhibition *Haymatloz: Exil in der Türkei 1933 – 1945* by Sabine Hillebrecht (ed.), Berlin, Verein Aktives Museum, 2000.
  25. Text taken in part from [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margarete\\_Schütte-Lihotsky](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margarete_Schütte-Lihotsky). For a fuller account of Grete Schütte-Lihotsky's life, see Peter Noever, ed. *Die Frankfurter Küche von Margarete Schütte-Lihotsky*, Berlin, Ernst & Sohn, 1992.
  26. Gerd Kuhn, Die "Frankfurter Küche", in Gerd Kuhn, *Wohnkultur und kommunale Wohnungspolitik in Frankfurt am Main 1880-1930*, Bonn, J. H. W. Dietz, 1998, p. 151.
  27. See Billie Ann Lopez, 'Grete Schütte Lihotsky' in Virtual Vienna: <http://www.virtualvienna.net/columns/billie/zentralfriedhof.html>.

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28. Käthe Tonndorf, "Hauswirtschaftliche Filme", in E. Beyfuß und A. Kossowsky (eds.), *Das Kulturfilmbuch*, Berlin, Carl P. Chryselius, 1924, p. 175.
29. Regarding the films produced in Frankfurt see Anders Janser: "Only Film Can Make the New Architecture Intelligible!", in François Penz und Maureen Thomas (eds.), *Cinema and Architecture—Melies, Mallet-Stevens, Multi-Media*, London, bfi, 1997, p. 38; Kristin Vincke, "Kleine Stadt ganz groß. Frankfurt im Dokumentarfilm zwischen 1920 und 1960," in Rudolf Worschech, Michael Schurig, Thomas Worschech (eds.), *Lebende Bilder einer Stadt: Kino und Film in Frankfurt am Main*, Frankfurt/M., Deutsches Filmmuseum, 1995, pp. 133f.; Leonardo Ciacci, *Progetti di città sullo schermo. Il cinema degli urbanisti*, Venedig, Marsilio, 2001. Regarding Ruttmann's ambivalent position see Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, "Walter Ruttmann: 1929", in Stefan Andriopoulos and Bernhard J. Dotzler (eds.), *1929. Beiträge zur Archäologie der Medien*, Frankfurt/M., Suhrkamp, 2002, pp. 316-49.
30. "Die Entwicklung der Stadt, ihres täglichen Lebens, einschliesslich ihrer Kultur, drängen nach Ausdehnung und menschenwürdiger Organisation. Daraus zog Frankfurt bewusst Konsequenzen, die heute als führend für die 20er Jahre erkannt sind. Koordination der Vielzahl städtischer Ämter. Direkte Zusammenarbeit: Stadtplanung, Hochbauamt, Kunstgewerbeschule und freischaffende Architekten. Förderungen schöpferischer Kräfte setzen ein und ergeben eine ausgezeichnete Teamarbeit zugunsten des Gemeinwesens, des Stadtbildes und für alle kulturellen Aufgaben." (Metropolitan development and advances in urban living, including its cultural facets, called for expansion and more humane forms of organisation. The city managers of Frankfurt consciously reacted to this need and came up with solutions that are now acknowledged to be at the cutting edge of 1920s planning, including such issues as co-ordinating the various municipal offices and departments and initiating direct co-operation between the planning office, the building office, applied art schools and freelance architects. Furthering creative energies in this manner led to some exemplary team efforts that benefited not only urban culture and ambiance as such but affected the entire community in a most positive way). Ella Bergmann-Michel, "Die 20er Jahre in Frankfurt", in Adam Seide (ed.), *Egoist* 10 (1966).
31. To give just one example among many, May had gone so far as to garner publicity in radio broadcasts. For more information, see Gerd Kuhn, "Die Frankfurter Küche", p.170.
32. Even elevating housewife duties to professional status "konnte nicht darüber hinwegtäuschen, dass dem 'Beruf Hausfrau' das wichtigste Element eines Berufes fehlt, nämlich das Einkommen, der Lohn" (could not mask the fact that a 'domestic professional' had to make do without the most important component of any job: her wages, or some form remuneration). G. Bock and B. Duden, "Arbeit aus Liebe, Liebe als Arbeit. Zur Entstehung der Hausarbeit im Kapitalismus", in Frauenkollektiv (ed.), *Frauen und Wissenschaft*, Berlin, Courage, 1977, p. 152.
33. See *Das Neue Frankfurt*, vol. 5, no. 8 (1930), which was entirely devoted to the film in question, including an essay on Eisenstein, Vertov and Joris Ivens by chief editor Joseph Gentner. *DNF* 4 (1929) already featured an essay by Sophie Küppers (Lissitsky) entitled "*Der soziale Film in der UdSSR*".
34. This is based on an internet article on the Frankfurt kitchen found at [www.encyclopedia.org](http://www.encyclopedia.org). It continues as follows: "Erna Meyer responded to the criticisms of the Frankfurt kitchen with her Stuttgart kitchen, presented in 1927. It was slightly larger and had a more quadratic ground plan, and used unit furniture in an attempt to make it adaptable to both the future users' needs and different room shapes."
35. See Gerd Kuhn, "Die Frankfurter Küche", pp. 163-167.
36. The municipal archives at Frankfurt hold an impressive collection of letters on the demerits of the Praunheim apartments, penned in anger by numerous distraught citizens. Some of these have been published in NBGK (ed.), *Wem gehört die Welt?*, p. 150ff.