

Frankfurt Kitchen, Margarete Schutte-Lihotzky, 1926-30, 2004.195

Submitted by Lynn Brofman

The Frankfurt Kitchen (1926-30) was not the first fitted kitchen, or even the earliest modernist kitchen, but it was the most successful and influential kitchen of the Weimar interlude, and it still stands as the epitome of "scientific" organization for the domestic workspace. Following the First World War, an ambitious citywide housing project was initiated in Frankfurt, Germany, by Ernst May, city architect for the Municipal Building Department. He brought into his office a young but experienced Viennese architect, Grete Schütte-Lihotzky (1897-2000). It was a coordinated effort to provide low-income housing for some two million soldiers returning to Germany following the 1918 Armistice, as well as thousands of war widows. With an overriding motivation to save time and money, the principles of rational organization, standardized building units, and mechanized construction were applied not only to the design of settlements themselves, but also to the design of the Frankfurt Kitchen, versions of which were installed in 10,000 integrated housing units within a four-year period. By analyzing key principles for household design and labor, the advantageous positioning of each kitchen element was carefully articulated, thereby minimizing unnecessary steps as well as providing labor-saving devices and increasing physical comfort. The kitchen's many innovative features included integrated units, continuous work surfaces, and a worktable for preparing food under a large window adjacent to the sink (both set at a convenient height for use while seated). Other features were storage bins with handles and spouts for pouring dry comestibles, an adjustable ceiling light, a movable stool, a concealed pass-through, drop-down ironing board, and cabinetry painted a deep blue to naturally repel flies. Schütte-Lihotzky was one of the first female architects in Austria and was active in the anti-Nazi resistance. Born in Vienna, the daughter of a liberal civil servant, she was probably the first female student of the school now known as the University of Applied Arts, Vienna, studying under architect/designer Josef Hoffmann and Oskar Kokoschka. Gustav Klimt wrote her letter of recommendation to the school. She celebrated her one-hundredth birthday in 1997. One of sixteen period rooms on view at the Institute, the Frankfurt Kitchen offers an insight into a fully functional German workspace

Questions

1. How is this kitchen different from today's
2. How is it different from preceding kitchen design (see video display on adjacent wall)
3. Why the emphasis on hygiene
4. Why the emphasis on time and motion--efficiency

Key Points

- Housing for returning WW 1 Vets and widows
 - Germany 850k dead (65 Million = 13%)
 - France 700K
 - Britain 400 K
- Influenza 1918, 50-100 million deaths worldwide --- Sir McFarland Burnett 1962
 - 1918 World population 1.8 billion, 3-6% died, 30% infected

Bibliography

http://artsmia.org/education/teacher-resources/fivefacts_d.cfm?p=4&v=138

Stokstad p.1088

Wikipedia [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Germany -](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Germany_-_Vital_statistics_since_1900_.5B17.5D)

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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank Macfarlane Burnet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_Macfarlane_Burnet)

See attached pdf scanned document contained in the booklet which is on the wall of the gallery next to the kitchen