

Utrecht

Arhitectura contemporana

Rietveld (1888/1964) -
locuinta Schroder-Schrader

1924



The house originally stood overlooking open country at the edge of the town, attached to the end of a terrace of conventional brick houses. The exterior is composed of horizontal and vertical lines and planes, using a palette of white, gray, black, and primary colors. It is a tiny object, even in a country notable for its intimate scale, but it has an alluring and even slightly cheeky quality. A short path leads to the front door and a small dark hallway; the main living floor is above. This upper floor is one continuous space, going around the stairway, which forms a cubicle-like box in the center. This openness, with windows on three sides, is one of the intended effects of the house, but the space can also be divided with hinged and folding wooden partitions to make three or four separate rooms. The small space is full of controlled incident, with the same primary colors as the exterior applied to surfaces of furniture—all designed by Rietveld, including his famous red, blue, and yellow chair (1923).

There are few examples of Modern interior design where appearance and function are so well matched. The materials are simple and inexpensive, and the furniture and fittings, which are an integral part of the space, are similarly of the simplest kind of jointed construction and painted finish. The result is an artistic unity that also expresses and serves a concept of an improved lifestyle, uncluttered by status objects or sentimental associations. The focus is directed toward the outside world, through the broad windows, and so to the simple pleasures of life.

This attempt to strip away unnecessary layers and get down to a more basic reality was typical of Modernism as a whole but was most strongly found in the Netherlands, where it revived and also continued older religious and moral beliefs. What is new and delightful in the Schröder-Schröder House is the sense of fun that comes with it, the sliding walls that make and unmake rooms, the bright colors. It is more like a seaside vacation than everyday life. The house was designed for young children, and Rietveld continued to make special furniture and equipment for children.

Rietveld began his career as a furniture designer, then devised shop interiors, but this house was his first building. He was active in the movement named after the magazine *De Stijl* (the style), first published in 1917, which linked the abstract paintings of Mondrian with sculpture and design. The Schröder-Schröder House is the only building that fully illustrates the principles of this influential movement.