

Working and living: transferring the kitchen space.

The notion of the fixed unit kitchen as was developed by Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky in 1926 with her so-called »Frankfurt kitchen« had the benefit of making housekeeping far more economically efficient. The need for an optimized kitchen system today no longer hinges on superficial issues of home economics, but on the contextual function of the kitchen space in an often fast changing living environment. What do we expect of kitchens as a place and in term of furnishings; indeed, what do kitchens say about us and our lives? Today, »kitchens« have the connotations of individuality, are informed by a specific definition of needs and uses. That said, the kitchen is often construed as a social space in terms of the relationship of space, kitchen system and user. It serves not only as a place for sustenance, but opens up the kitchen as terrain for a choreography of life that identifies its own special niches and is forever fleshing these out.

The idea of an essentially open-plan kitchen was what drove designer Kilian Schindler when he started elaborating his notion of the Concept Kitchen: a project initiated by Naber GmbH, corporation based in Nordhorn, and now being supported by Tolix, a long-standing French company and renowned manufacturer of metal furniture. Schindler focused on a kitchen structured by modules, but co-defined by the users, who decide through how they live in the kitchen how best to engage its space. The kitchen's shape derives from the opportunities for its use, and the methods involved, meaning the kitchen space evolves depending on the users' mindset, preferences and needs.

Naber took as the leitmotif »Inspiration«— as a specialist for kitchen accessories the Concept Kitchen was the first time it had marketed kitchen furniture, and the design chosen was new and direct by dint of being inspired by active life in the kitchen and the objects integrated into it such as are forever being used or consumed.

In recent years, much theoretical and practical work has gone into molding the kitchen into a room influenced by both functionality and emotions. It was designer Otl Aicher who in the early 1980s first grasped the kitchen as a sensual space, as a communal place for communicative action and it was he who emphasized once again the idea of the »open plan kitchen« structured as if it were a work bench.

And in 2006 Mike Meiré revised the notion of the kitchen as organism. The model »The Farm Project« highlighted the kitchen as a (mobile) living space where things centered on appliances, utensils, food, animals and people and their interaction when cooking and eating. Kilian Schindler takes this as his starting point, but expands considerations on the relationship in the kitchen to our behavior toward it as a space: Concept Kitchen is construed not just as a place, but in terms of it constituting a module responding to changing spatial needs and conditions. The space we today define as a kitchen occurs where we need it, be it in the office, the studio, the living room, in an open space or in a corner of the room that we assign the function of »kitchen«. The kitchen occurs, sallies forth and take shape where and how it is needed.

The structure of the Concept Kitchen takes up these requirements. Kilian Schindler modified the kitchen both as a forum and a display: The design of the modules, which are made up of open shelves and closed storage areas, squares up to the idea of a kitchen that can change in the course of its daily use and therefore revolves around

the model of the »open-plan kitchen« and the processual aspects of function and aesthetics. This is a kitchen system that can be expanded by adding modules, or one's own kitchen appliances, household items and food, and it is a form of furniture that can be categorized as storage shelf, living room furniture and sculpture, depending on one's particular whim at the time. This modular and highly flexible approach to furniture highlights above all the idea of transferring the kitchen as a space. Schindler's design accords priority to freedom of use: It takes on form wherever the user's life take place.

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