



# HOM(m)E

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1st Beijing Architecture Biennale - 2004

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# Living chimera

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Everyone interested by architecture should visit the city of Weissenhof in Stuttgart, Germany.

There, in 1925, was launched the first modern city. The *Deutscher Werkbund*, powerful Work Federation, Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe, architect of the town of Berlin, and Dr Theodor Heuss, who was nominated afterwards president of Germany, convinced the city of Stuttgart to appoint 16 architects to build 16 visionary houses obeying to one and only rule: a flat roof.

*«The problem of rationalization and standardization is a partial problem. Rationalization and standardization are only the means and must never be the aim. The future habitat, in fact, is a spiritual problem, and fighting for this future habitat is part of the bigger fight for new forms of living».* Mies Van der Rohe, who claimed that, chose the 15 other architects, among which Walter Gropius, Peter Behrens, Le Corbusier... from five European countries.

The exhibition opened in July 1927. Eight of these houses still remain and are under the German monuments protection. Weissenhof is considered as the first experimental habitat.

In the 60's, another time of big technological changes and strong thinking, a German chemical firm, Bayer, organized other exhibitions of experimental and colorful habitat with Danish designer Verner Panton, Italian designer Joe Colombo, etc... The exhibition *Visiona* took place twice in Cologne, Germany. In the 80's, right next to Basel, in Switzerland, a Veil am Rhein, German firm, Vitra, started collecting architects buildings (Tadao Ando, Alvaro Siza, Zaha Hadid...) in the same land, but these are offices, storage houses, firemen's quarters, not living spaces.

Some projects of dream homes were built in Mexico (JVC Centre in honor of Luis Barragan), others in United States and Scandinavia. The French architect Ionel Schein, in the 70's, built a splendid prototype of an ideal industrialized house... In the «Salone del Mobile di Milano» in Italy, the most important furniture show in the world, last April 2004, design students teams from many countries built up conceptual restaurants with brand new ideas about how people will eat in future years.

Recently, in China, in Shuiguan at the Great Wall, twelve Asian architects designed futuristic houses in *La Commune*. Followed, in NanJing, by another exciting experience of twenty buildings, each one conceived by a different architect.

Anticipating visions of our living takes a great part in progress, it contributes to a softer and more acute civilisation. This is what led to the *Infinite Interior* project. In fact, since 1925, these shows of prospective habitats have been extremely rare. They are indispensable though. In architecture, like in all cultural topics, research appears essential. It is a matter of public health. As states the famous Italian architect Alessandro Mendini *«The world is violent and the home has to be protective»*. An intelligent shield.

**Alice Morgaine**

**International Interior Design Consultant**

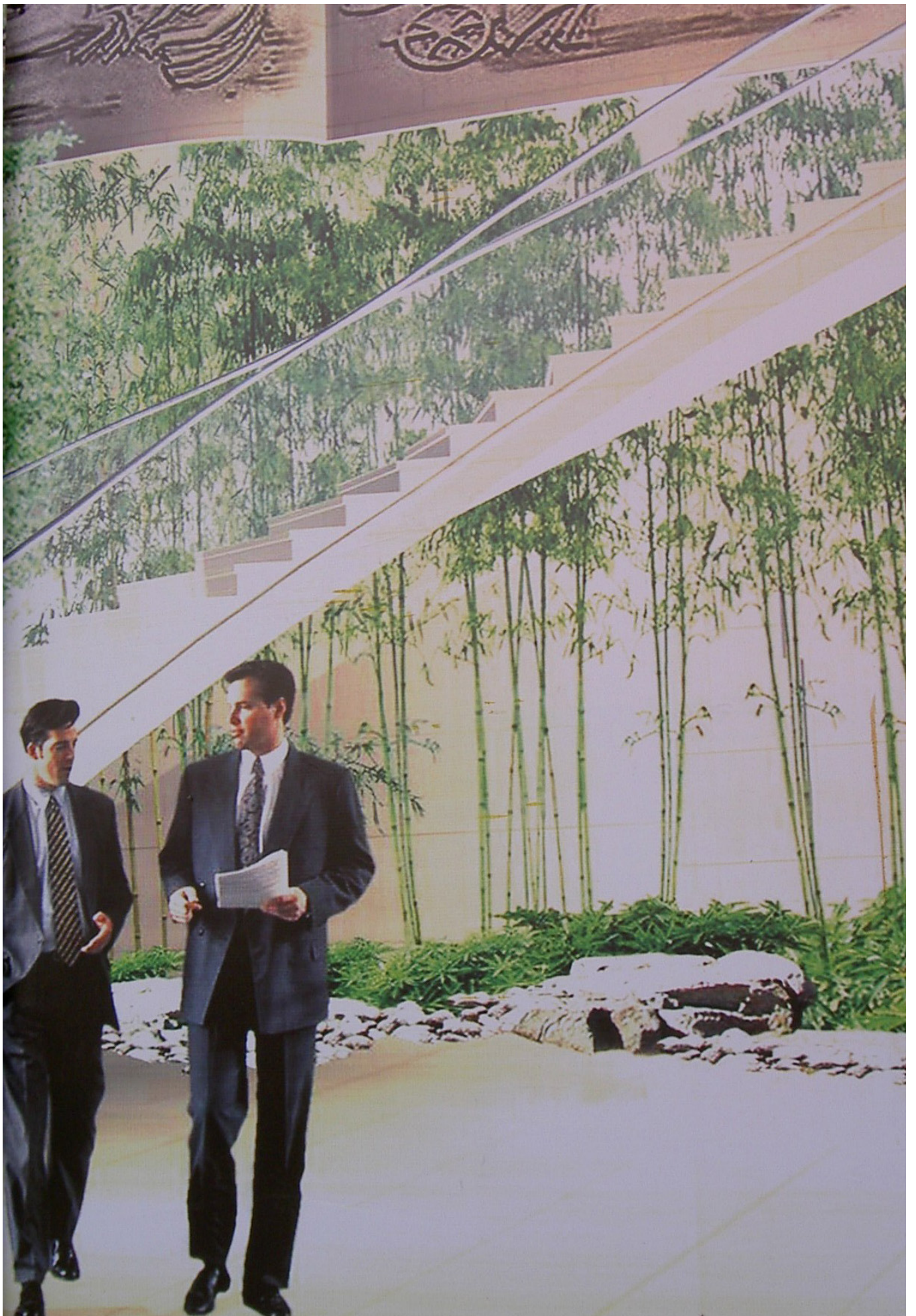
*Holds a master's degree in philosophy from the University of Montreal. Journalist for «France soir» and «L'Express», then editor-in-chief of «Jardin des modes» (1980-1997). Artistic director of La Verrière, Brussels (2002)*





Collective spaces and socialisation to help each other



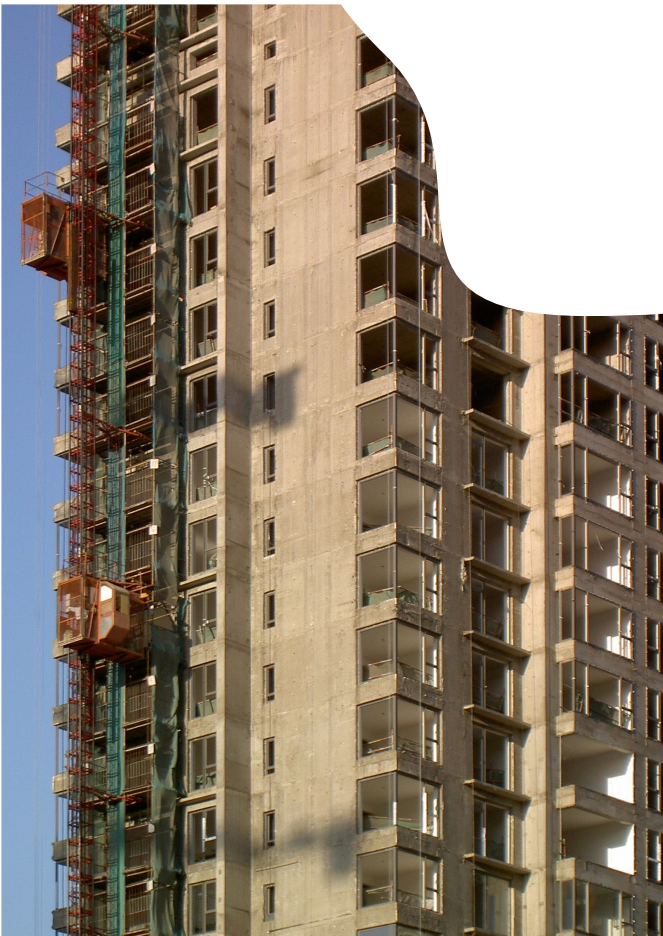


Individual spaces, based on success with white men as the model





European standards and conventional interior architecture principles have been deliberately abandoned in favour of the container at the expense of the content, leading to a delimitation of spaces and a predefinition of uses.







Nail-built houses are where people don't want to leave their homes to live in a modern building.

# HOM(m)E

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In this project, **HOM(m)E**, Nathalie Bruyère and Pierre Duffau, designer and architect, have deliberately abandoned European standards and conventional principles of interior architecture that favour the container at the expense of the content. which lead to a delimitation of spaces and a predefinition of uses.

As its name suggests, **HOM(m)E** places the individual at the centre of the overall design of the home. The idea here is to propose a different culture of domesticity, as described by Reyner Banham in *The Architecture of the Well-Tempered Environment*, based on a re-qualification of services, particularly the water, gas and electricity supply network. These conduits, usually hidden from view, act like a backbone. They give structure to the flat by providing

a minimum logic for the circulation and function allocated to each room.

The residents of **HOM(m)E** can change the configuration of their private space at will, not only according to their needs, but also according to their desires and moods. In this way, they become the true inventors of their domesticity and, by extension, of their lives.

In practical terms, the design of the space is based on the flexibility and manoeuvrability of the elements, which literally plug into the spinal column.



This process could be compared to that of construction games such as Meccano.

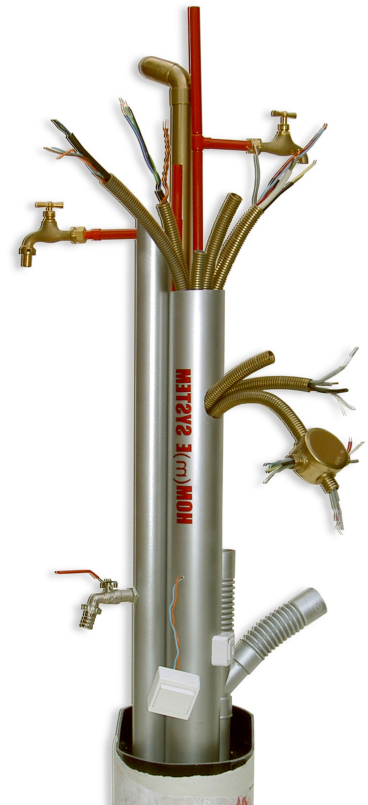
All the elements, present and future, are part of the same plug-in system, whether they be furniture (*Italic* hooks, hanging *Lampions*, etc.), equipment (household appliances, etc.) or decorative elements. Because they are the result of industrialised production, while favouring flexibility and modularity, they can be assembled à la carte according to the moment, and also offer a choice from a vast range, or even a made-to-measure decor for the environment.

In so doing, **HOM(m)E** goes beyond the hypotheses of modular housing put forward at the end of the 60s to establish a new elementary principle.

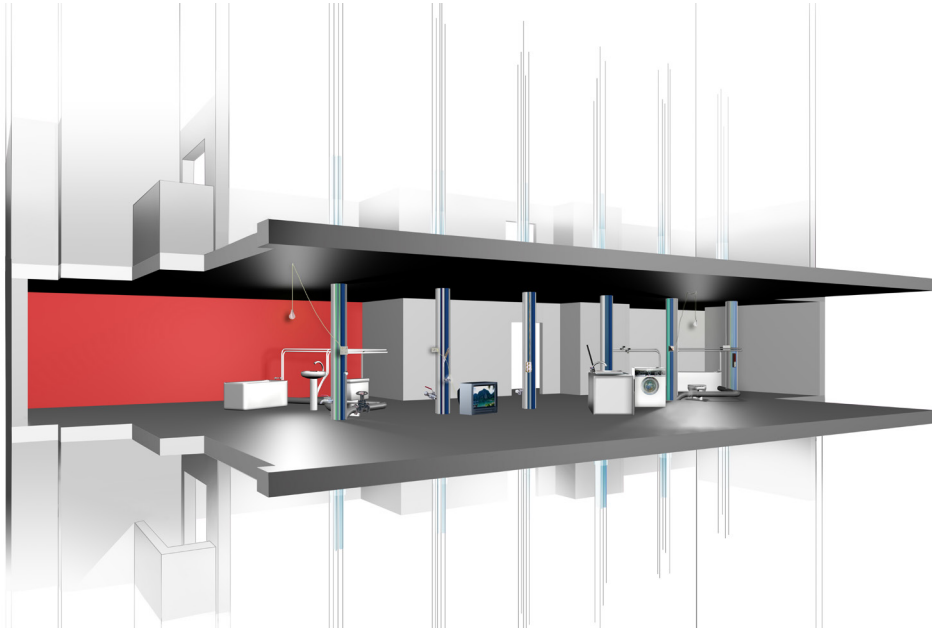
This principle does not set out restrictive instructions for use or the definitive spatialisation of functions, but subjects the home to future developments, and takes into account variables such as the major changes in life. **HOM(m)E** offers a different scenario in which space is transformed into a place that is indeterminate, shifting, inconstant and above all human.

## Alexandra Midal

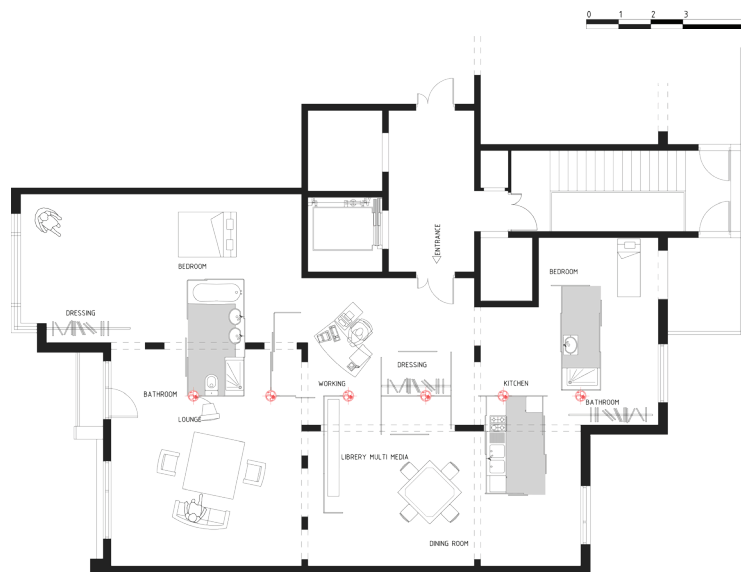
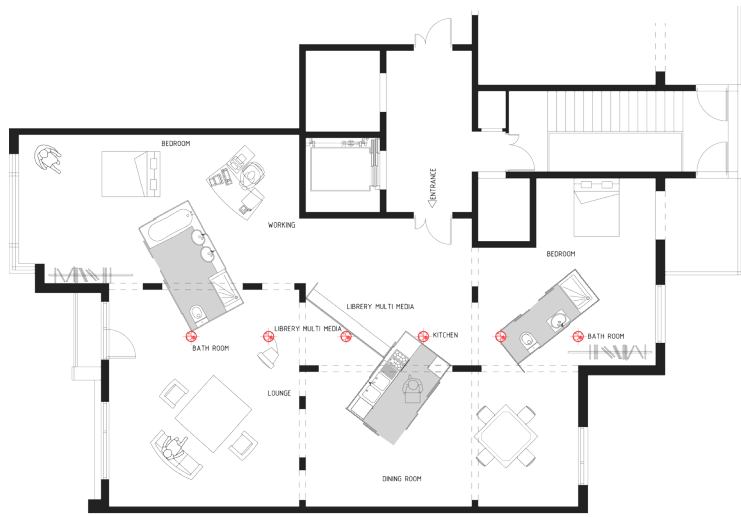
*Alexandra Midal is a historian and theorist of design and architecture. A graduate of the Sorbonne (Paris-IV) and Princeton University's School of Architecture, she was director of the FRAC de Haute-Normandie. She is currently a professor at the Genève University of Art and Design.*







Housing developments based on drainage and supply networks that can be easily modified at the request of users



Housing developments based on drainage and supply networks that can be easily modified at the request of users









# Participating in the exhibition

International Interior Design Consultant :  
Alice Morgaine

- Matali Crasset (France)
- Odile Decq (France)
- POOL products - Duffau & Associé-e-s (France)
- Delugan Meissl (Austria)
- Didier Faustino (France)
- Marc Ferreri (Italy)
- Marcelo Joulia (Argentina)
- Michele Saeë (USA)
- Denis Santachiara (Italy)
- Bernard Tschumi (USA)
- Wang Hui (PR China)