



# GERRIT RIETVELD

**Rietveld Schröder House**  
UTRECHT NETHERLANDS

ESPERANZA MUINO, COLOR THEORY, SPRING 2016

# BACKGROUND

**Gerrit Thomas Rietveld** (1888 - 1964) A Dutch architect and industrial designer. As a student, Rietveld worked in woodworking and furniture production. In 1917, influenced by **Neoplasticism**, he designed the chair *Red and Blue*. Rietveld was born in Utrecht, the son of a cabinet maker. From very early, at eleven years old, he went to work with his father in carpentry, opening his own establishment in 1917, in order to develop new ways to securities. At that time he created the prototype of the famous chair , *Red and Blue*, originally performed in natural wood and, later, under the influence of the *De Stijl* movement, was painted in the **primary colors inspired by Mondrian**—also a collaborator of this movement.

In 1919, when he graduated, he became part of the movement *De Stijl*, contributing to the magazine *De Stijl*.

Rietveld was the first to apply the principles of this movement to architecture, projecting in 1924 the residence **Schröder**, located in his hometown—a landmark of modern architecture and perfect representation of ideas and concepts defined by the movement "**De Stijl**". During this period, he became an early member of the movement until its dissolution in 1931. He worked for a magazine circulated by mid-1928 and that disseminated the ideals of this movement. That same year, broke with the neoplastic group and founded the CIAM - International Congress of Modern Architecture, which further expanded its fame around the world.

Over the years, the Rietveld became increasingly interested in the social role of architecture, studying low-cost production methods, new materials, prefabrication and standardization.

Author of numerous projects and new concepts, he was also a professor of architecture in Amsterdam between 1944 and 1955, becoming a member of the Dutch Federation of Architects in 1964—the same year that she passed away.

**Project Row Houses**, also in Utrecht (1931-1934);

**Dutch pavilion** at the Venice Biennale (1954)

**Sculpture Pavilion** at Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterloo, province of Gelderland.

**Van Gogh Museum** in Amsterdam.



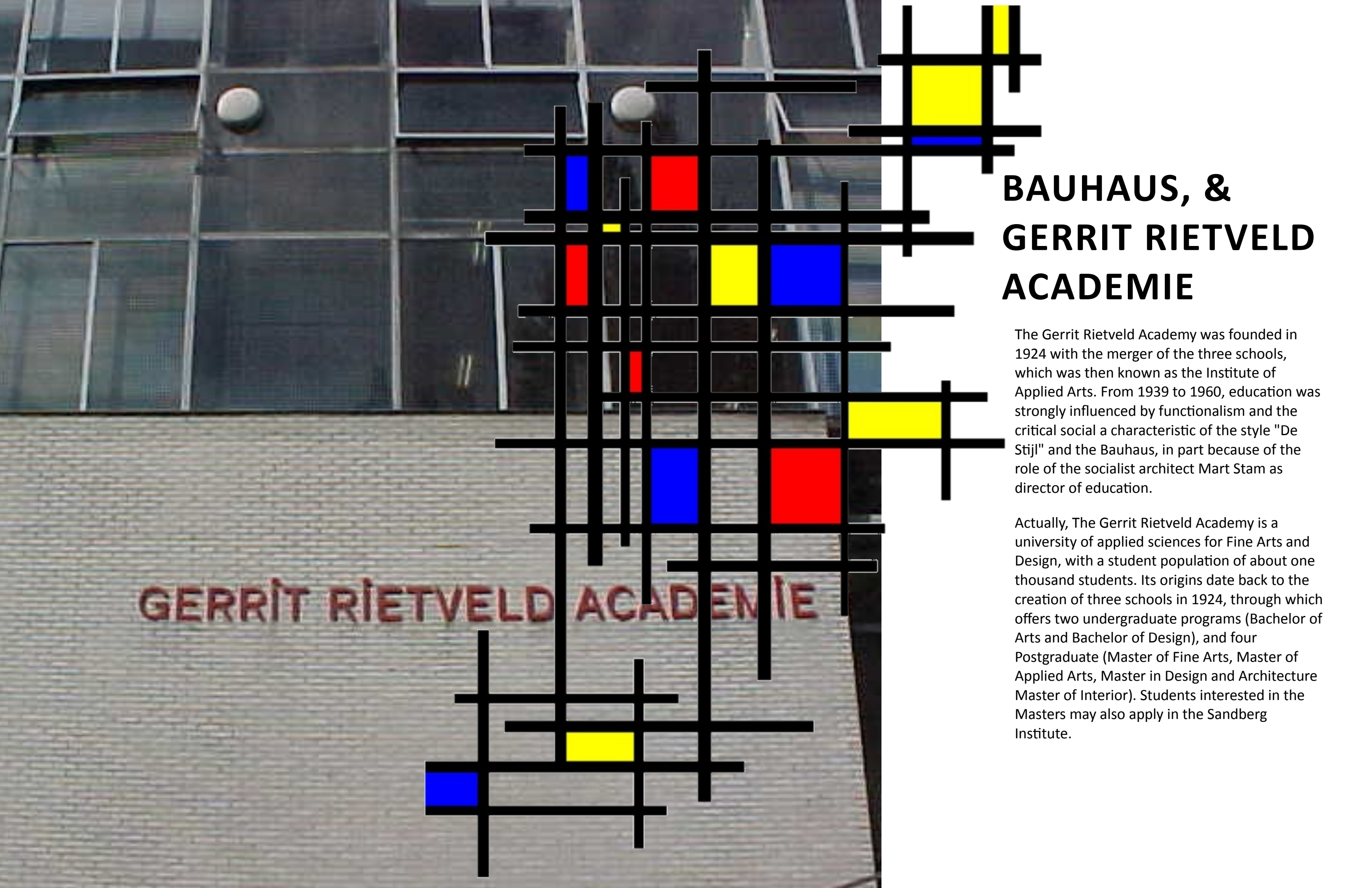


# DE STIJL MOVEMENT

"De Stijl" was founded in Holland in 1917 by Theo van Doesburg. It was a movement of architecture, painting, sculpture, decoration and industrial design, oriented to the execution of works in the arts, and had an active life from 1917 to 1931. *De Stijl* has variants of abstract art and characteristics of modernity. This art was not intended as reproductive, illustrative or anecdotal as most traditional art had been. This art was not only a new style but something of greater scope and significance. "De Stijl" affected different artistic areas (graphic design, architecture, industrial design, painting) and pointed to more pure and simple plastic values. This was a fundamental characteristic, which by 1920 would make his paintings become frames of orthogonal lines that frame full **primary colors** into squares or rectangles.





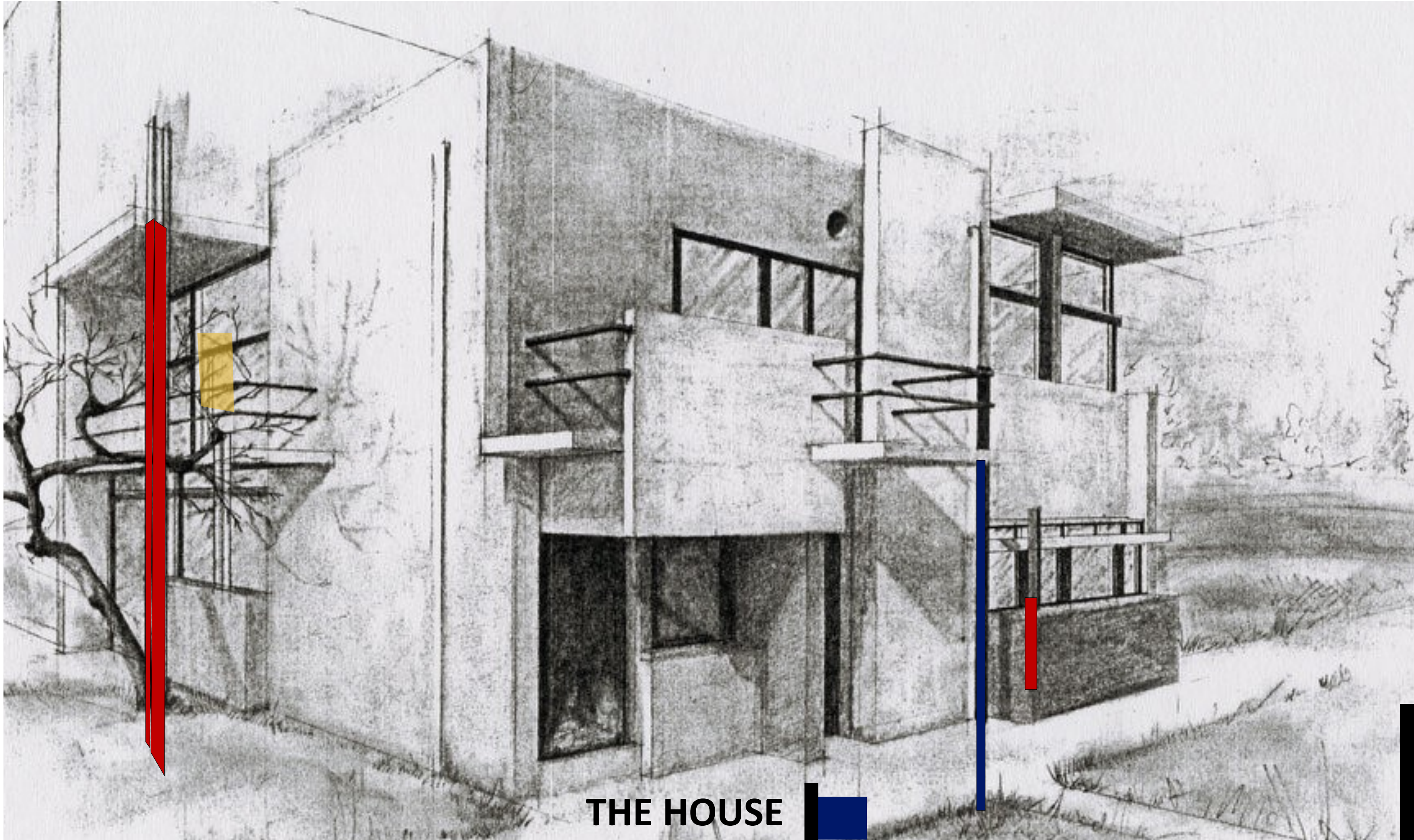


## BAUHAUS, & GERRIT RIETVELD ACADEMIE

The Gerrit Rietveld Academy was founded in 1924 with the merger of the three schools, which was then known as the Institute of Applied Arts. From 1939 to 1960, education was strongly influenced by functionalism and the critical social a characteristic of the style "De Stijl" and the Bauhaus, in part because of the role of the socialist architect Mart Stam as director of education.

Actually, The Gerrit Rietveld Academy is a university of applied sciences for Fine Arts and Design, with a student population of about one thousand students. Its origins date back to the creation of three schools in 1924, through which offers two undergraduate programs (Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Design), and four Postgraduate (Master of Fine Arts, Master of Applied Arts, Master in Design and Architecture Master of Interior). Students interested in the Masters may also apply in the Sandberg Institute.

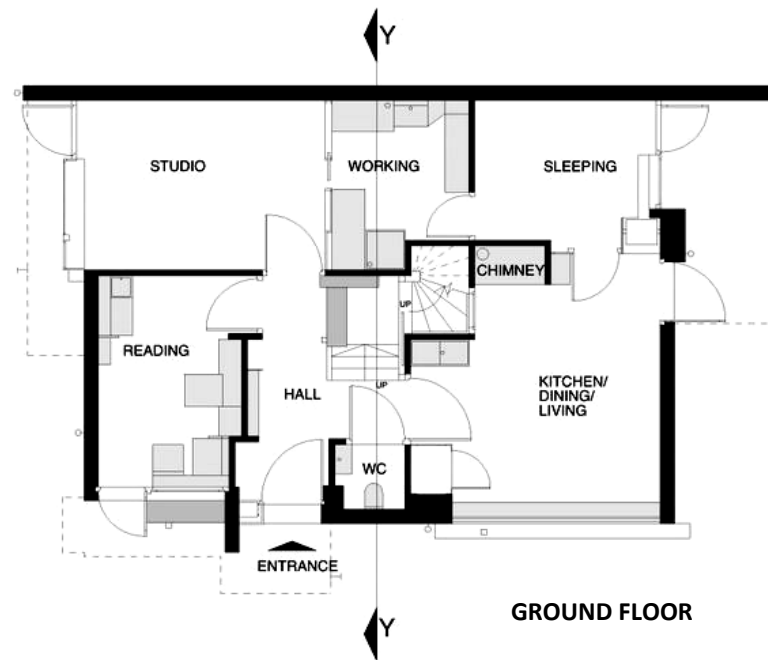
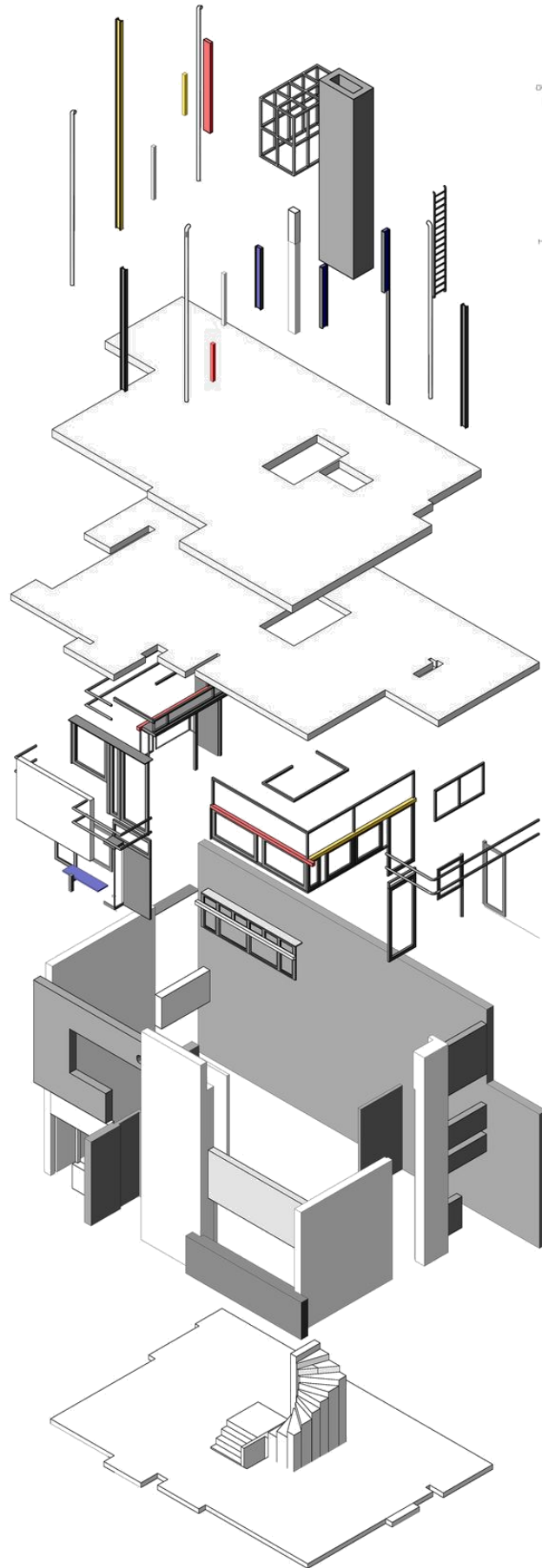




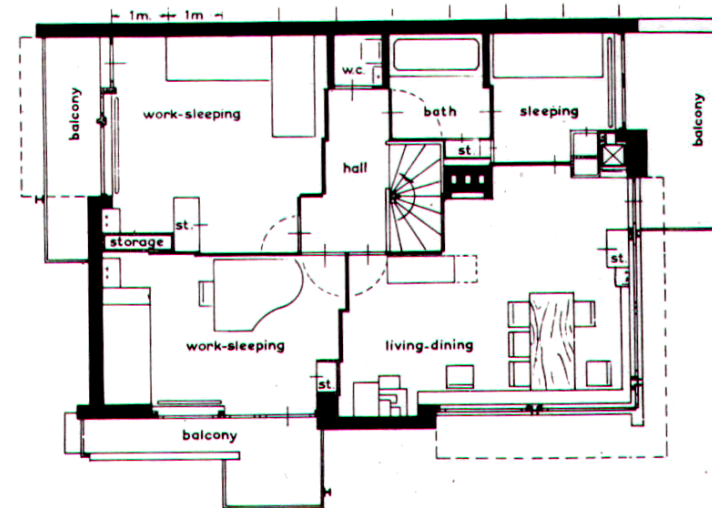
**THE HOUSE**



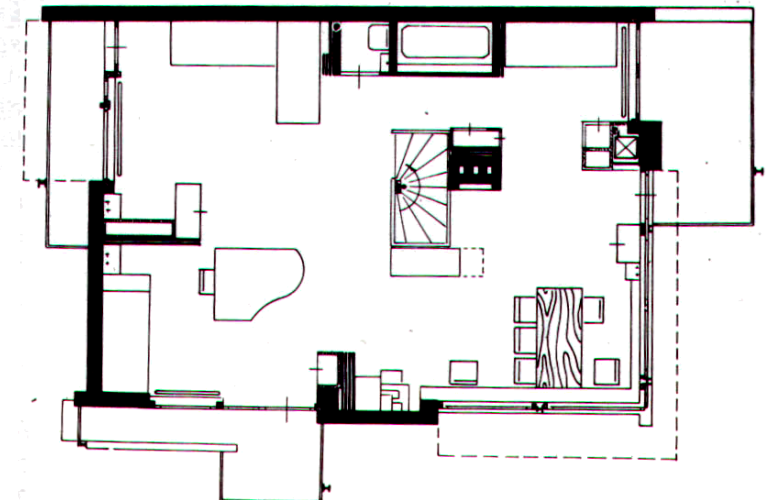
# Schröder House Plans



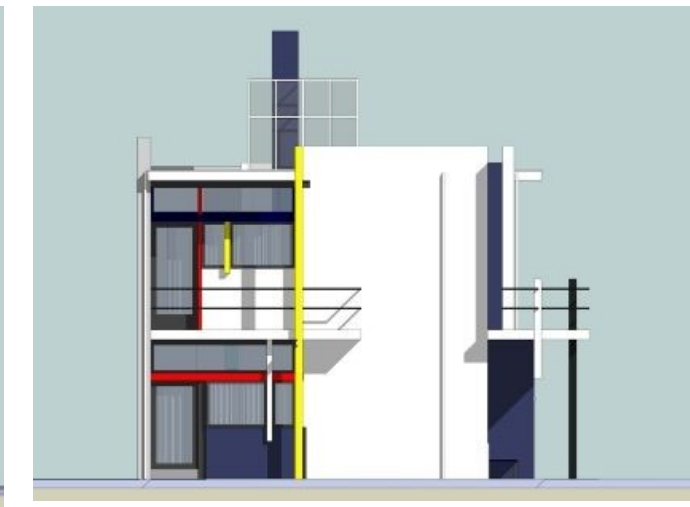
GROUND FLOOR



UPPER FLOOR, CLOSED



UPPER FLOOR, OPEN



**The Schröder house**(1924) was the masterpiece of Dutch architect Gerrit Rielveld. A 1,200 square feet construction, the house is presented as the most important example of Neoplastic Architecture. In 2000 UNESCO included it in the list of World Heritage, as it is considered an icon of the Modern Movement in architecture and an outstanding expression of human creative genius in its purity of ideas and concepts.

## LOCATION

**The Rietveld Schröder House** was built in Prins Hendriklaan 50, Utrecht, Netherlands. Its design is a radical break with all the architecture created so far, both inside and out. It is located at the end of a row of houses and makes no attempt to engage with them.



**Red, yellow and blue the basic colors**, the heart of the color wheel. The artists of the movement "De Stijl" in the 1920s, including Piet Mondrian and **Gerrit Rietveld**, which also influenced the members of the Bauhaus, were so in love of the **primary colors** that restricted his palette to only **red, yellow, blue, black, white and gray**.

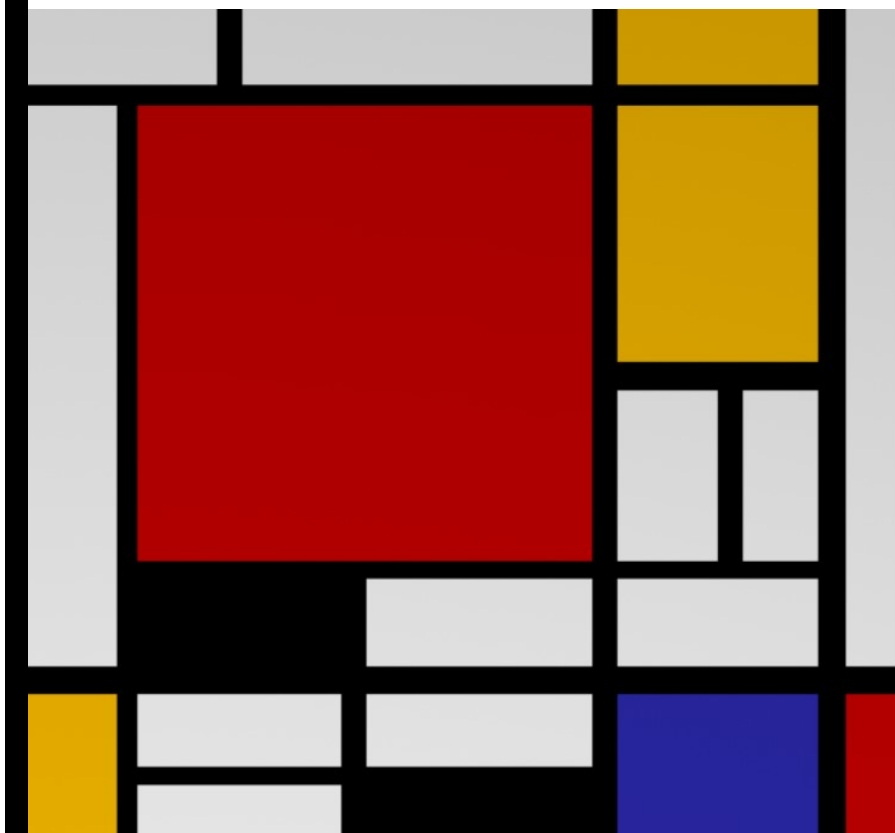
## EXTERIOR



The cubic volume of the building is broken, almost dematerialized and reassembled into **primary elements** such as lines and planes, whose transparency exposes its interior. Balconies, terraces and metal columns intertwine trying to emphasize the immateriality of the volume.



The structure also frees the components of the building, separating them clearly expressing its function.



The planes, lines and **colors** of the facade and interior, painted in **white, black, red and yellow**, evoke a Piet Mondrian composition.

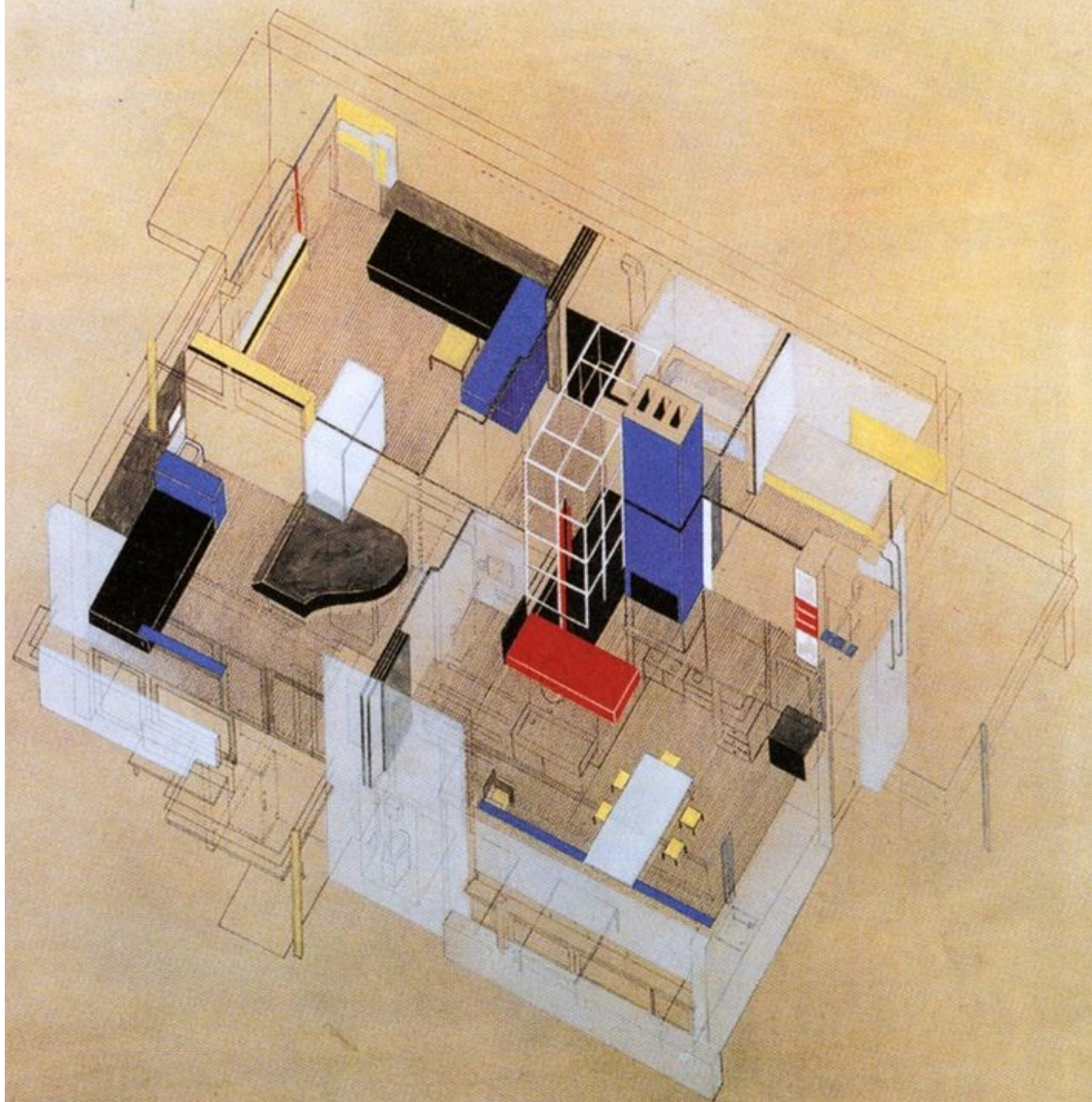


# THE INTERIOR CONCEPT



Built in steel, brick and glass, it is an asymmetrical composition of horizontal and vertical planes, that simultaneously achieve the ideal of balanced and pure relations advocated by the Neoplastic artists. Two of the fundamental objectives of modern architecture: the **free plan** and **formal separation between structure and enclosures**. The flexibility of its interior spaces and the condition of being configured around planes give distinct and unique features at all levels.

**The Schroder house** is the only building designed in full accordance with the **De Stijl style**, marked by the **primary colors** and pure shapes.







Livingroom

The interior of the house was one of the greatest contributions for the definition of Neoplasticism, by its flow, the use of color and visual connection to the outside. The house was a great opportunity to get rid of the "traditions and rules, both social and architectural repressive, and create a thoroughly modern environment. The use of **bright colors** elements represented freedom and choice.

Staircase, upper level



## INTERIOR

Rietveld used **red** to give a resonant and stimulating aspect to these rooms. Also he used **gray** in these interiors spaces giving a formality that is subtle elegance without being too conservative. In conclusion, the use of a beautiful shade of **gray**, in combination with a bright **yellow**, **red** and **blue** and a fresh **white**, create a clean and refreshing appearance.



The colors in the Neoplastic Architecture were characterized by the use of a plane and abstract colors. Its range is reduced to **primary colors (red, yellow and blue)** and **neutral (white, black and gray)**.

The compositional method is based on achieving a balance of artistic means by an explicit renunciation of the classical symmetry and through the use of **contrast and color dissonances**.

Kitchen area



Dining area

To Rietveld, painting and architecture are complements. The architecture is constructive and **colorless** while painting is destructive and **colorful**. The first closes spaces, the second opens. One is based on constructive balance, the other in figurative balances. This tension between **forms and colors** is the most characteristic contribution of this house. This adjustment between **colors** and **sizes** can **achieve balanced compositions** that deviate from the classical organization. Solid architecture reaches their balance by changing its position, **color and proportion ratio**.

Rietveld didn't choose the **colors** of his compositions following **psychosomatic** approaches, nor studied their ability to express the personality of the occupant. In Rietveld there never existed a sentimental or political intention beyond a mere compositional need.





Children's room

The house was an opportunity to break free of repressive traditions and rules—both social and architectural—and create a totally modern environment. The use of bright colored elements represented freedom and choice.

Staircase



The Rietveld-Schröder house is characterized by visual independence of its component parts. The flat components are physically and visually separated by **color**, accentuating and determining the **identity of each part** and the individuality of the horizontal and vertical planes.





# THE CRYSTAL CORNER

What is also very remarkable about this house is ... **a corner**. A very special corner that shows the principle of **transparency** and the form's rupture that Neoplastic architects wanted to accomplish. It is a fully glazed corner in the two planes that are formed. In addition, **the white** and **the black** for the different elements are used and small touches of **chromaticism** are added from the **primary colors**.



Dinning area





# FURNITURE



Although Gerrit Rietveld is not as well known as other renowned architects such as Mies Van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, his contribution to the world of design was very significant, with the *Red and Blue Chair*, also known as Rietveld chair, his most representative work.

The idea of the architect when designing the chair was trying to create something beautiful from simple parts, all derived from the same wooden board. But as he himself admitted later, while he was designing it, he never thought it could become a design icon that came to influence the architecture, as it were.

Extrapolating the principles applied to the chair, he designed the Rietveld Schröder House, which became an icon of the “De Stijl” movement, which artists like Piet Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg belonged to.



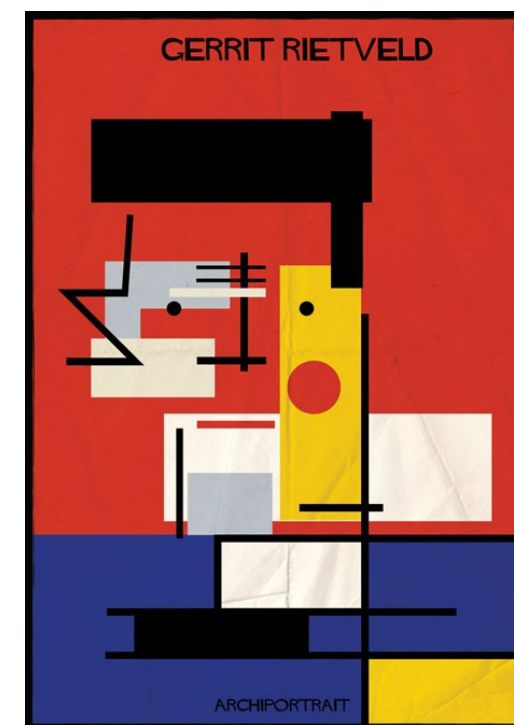




"...We didn't avoid older styles because they were ugly, or because we couldn't reproduce them, but because our own times demanded their own form, I mean, their own manifestation. It was of course extremely difficult to achieve all this in spite of the building regulations and that's why the interior of the downstairs part of the house is somewhat traditional, I mean with fixed walls. But upstairs we simply called it an 'attic' and that's where we actually made the house we wanted."  
—Gerrit Rietveld. from Paul Overy, Lenneke Býller, Frank den Oudsten, Bertus Mulder. *The Rietveld Schröder House*. p73.

In retrospect the Rietveld Schröder House to Truus was a statement of how a modern, independent woman wants to live her life without fear of provoking her contemporaries. For Gerrit, it was a demonstration of its architectural methodological maturity in line with its poetic vision neo-plasticist and catapult as one of the great exponents of Dutch architecture.

The house was donated to the Rietveld Schröder House Foundation of the Central Museum of Utrecht, and was completely remodeled to its original state. It is currently a house-museum in the UNESCO catalog as a legacy for humanity.







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<http://www.theartstory.org/movement-de-stijl.htm>

3. Art & Education. *Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam*  
<http://www.artandeducation.net/announcement/gerrit-rietveld-academie-amsterdam/>

4. Must-Know-Modern-Homes: *The Rietveld Schroeder House*  
<http://www.houzz.com/ideabooks/6223284/list/must-know-modern-homes-the-rietveld-schroeder-house>

5. Rietveld Schröderhuis (Rietveld Schröder House)  
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/965>

6. Selected images from  
<http://architecturalmoleskine.blogspot.com/2013/05/gerrit-rietveld-schroder-house.html>

# REFERENCES