

# Opposites on Common Ground

## Two Norwegian Architect Houses

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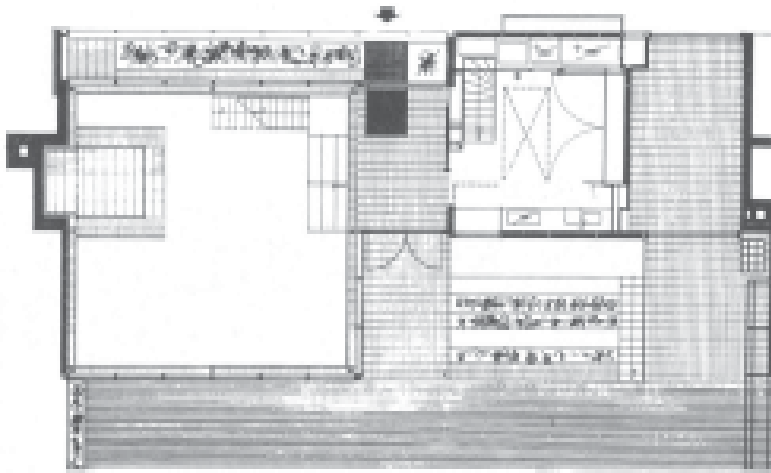
The concept of culture in the wider sense comprises all *giving form* to our existence, custom and etiquette, rituals and institutions of all types. Culture in the narrower sense comprises activities and arrangements which mirror, express and appraise culture in the wider sense.<sup>1</sup>

This paper will discuss the topic of “the house as place of life and culture” by exploring two architect houses, the house of Arne and Grete Korsmo on the one hand, and that of Jens and Wenche Selmer on the other. The houses demonstrate two different attitudes to the same problem, namely that of providing the architectural framework for a home, a place for family life and a studio for design work. The intention is to explore their particular quality as pieces of architecture, while at the same time elucidating the differences and similarities between the two in terms of tectonics, life and culture. The term culture has been widely misused and is therefore by many considered to be depleted of meaning. However, there is no room here to pursue this problem properly, hence, the elegant definition above by the Norwegian sociologist-philosopher Dag Østerberg. Bearing in mind that culture is—in every instance—shared by a group of people, this will serve as a guideline.

The two houses were erected in a period of Norwegian architecture dominated by high modernism, Korsmo’s at the beginning of the period in 1954, and Selmer’s nine years later in 1963. They are situated in the wooded hills on the outskirts of Oslo, only 450 metres apart, and are about the same size: roughly 120 square metres. Both houses are distinguished examples of Norwegian architecture from the period. Korsmo’s is strikingly modern, in steel, glass and white wallboards, while Selmer’s is a carefully modelled house that combines unconventional spatial arrangement with a distinct and subtle reference to traditional wooden architecture. The latter received the Sundt award for outstanding architecture of 1964–65, and the Timber award for 1969.

Peter Davey describes Norwegian post-war architecture as falling into two camps, that of the followers of Arne Korsmo with his allegiance to international modernism, and that of Knut Knutsen with his allegiance to arts and crafts and national romanticism.<sup>2</sup> The controversies between the two camps ran high throughout the 50s and 60s, and the view prevails that the two traditions were incompatible. This *doxa* taken as self-evident<sup>3</sup> has effectively prevented inquiry into the common cultural features of the two houses.





To the left and above:  
The Korsmo House, ground floor and first floor plans.

Page to the left:  
The Korsmo House, above  
The Selmer House, bottom

Therefore it is remarkable to read the studies of this topic by Flora, Giardiello and Postiglione exemplified with Korsmo's and Knutsen's own houses.<sup>4</sup> While admitting the obvious difference in architectural language, the main entries are concerned with arguing the common features of the houses in terms of their relationship to Norwegian building tradition and to nature. Their arguments may at times seem abstract and imaginative, but they definitely have some significance in bringing to attention the underlying value systems of Norwegian culture viewed in a wider context.

Although the Selmer house is different from Knutsen's houses, it relates to the so-called Knutsen school, of which—in terms of rational geometry and unity of materials—it is a modernised example. The Selmers belonged to the “Knutsen camp”, which they defended as late as in 1986 against Christian Norberg-Schulz. In the book on Arne Korsmo, Norberg-Schulz claimed that Knutsen had side-tracked Norwegian architects.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, as the results of two opposing viewpoints, the Korsmo house and the Selmer house provide suitable cases for studying how inherent ideologies or cultural values are embodied in the two houses and how they might prove to have more in common than meets the eye. Taking the cues suggested in the Italian studies, this text will pursue the topic in a more concrete manner, regarding the houses as bearers of contemporary lifestyle and culture.

## THE KORSMO HOUSE

Arne Korsmo (1900–1968) suffered from asthma, and wanted to move to a place with fresh air, close to nature. Together with Christian Norberg-Schulz and the site-owner, Korsmo built three houses on Planet Road (*Planetveien*), and the Korsmos moved in, in 1954, before the house was furnished. Arne Korsmo was especially known for his clean-cut and graceful functionalist houses in the 1930s, and Grete Prytz Korsmo (1917–), designer and goldsmith, was a prominent member of the post-war Scandinavian Design movement. In 1949–50 they stayed in the United States as Fulbright scholars, during which time they became acquainted with leading architects and designers in the States. Back in Norway, when the nation was still isolated and poor after WW II, the Korsmos were exceptional in their international orientation. Norberg-Schulz and Korsmo were deeply fascinated by the new ideas that were developing in the United States, and Norberg-Schulz says that Mies van der Rohe was the godfather of the house.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, in the case of the Korsmo unit, the Eames house seems to be an evident source of inspiration.

The houses are built in a row, all of the units wider than usual for row houses, between 56 and 64 feet. They are situated on the hillside, close to the road that provides access from the Northeast, and facing the wooded slope towards the Southwest. Each unit is subdivided into two parts, the two-storey main volume and the narrow

one-storey volume linking the complex together. The houses are laid out on a four-foot square grid, which defines the architectural identity of the complex in which glass panels and white asbestos wallboards are inserted between Oregon pine posts in the exterior walls. The corresponding steel framework, twelve feet on centre, constitutes the main structural system.

Although Norberg-Schulz' house has been published, and although he did live there for a few years, it is Korsmo's house that has remained an outstanding example of architectural composition and a source of inspiration. This is due to the particular quality of the design, its spatial arrangement and the integrity of finishes and furniture. The manner in which Korsmo's wife, Grete Prytz, has maintained the house and continually revitalised its meaning as a place of life and culture after Arne Korsmo's departure for Trondheim in 1956 is also noteworthy.<sup>7</sup>

### Spatial Openness, Warmth and Shelter

The main impression of the Korsmo house is one of a very particular combination of spatial openness with an atmosphere of warmth and shelter. Protected underneath a small glass roof, one enters the lower volume through a glass door into an intermediate space which leads directly out to the front terrace through another glass door. This intermediate space extends to the kitchen/dining room on the left and connects to the spacious living room (24 by 24 feet) on the right, which is lower than the entrance level by four wide



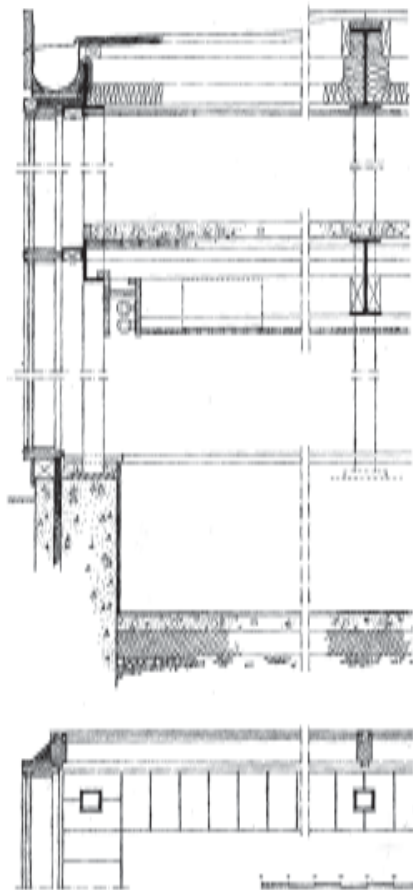
The Korsmo House, entrance



The Korsmo House, living room

steps. In this manner the living room appears like a shallow and wide well surrounded by a magnificent view of the woods outside. A concrete parapet with ceramic tiles on top runs along the edge of the well and is the base for the eight slender (8 by 8 cm) steel columns, which support the top floor and the roof. Opaque glass panels facing the road allow a play of light and shadow. Painted, moveable panels, in combination with the shelving by the neighbour wall, and large glass panels facing the terrace, the woods and the sky, all contribute to the feeling of lightness and changeability. One hundred square cushions, 60 by 60 cm, in various colours, that line the perimeter of the well, can be arranged for different uses offering numerous combinations of shape and colour.

The hearth by the neighbour wall is even one step lower and provides a place for sitting at a generous teak table in front of the fireplace. Since the room is furnished along the walls, the central space is almost empty. The glass walls appear to continue beyond the ceiling, which, owing to the IPE beams hidden inside the construction, seems to float without support as it reflects the variations of light and colour of the trees outside. Panelled with thin Oregon pine boards, it also contributes to the warm impression of the space.



The Korsmo House, section details

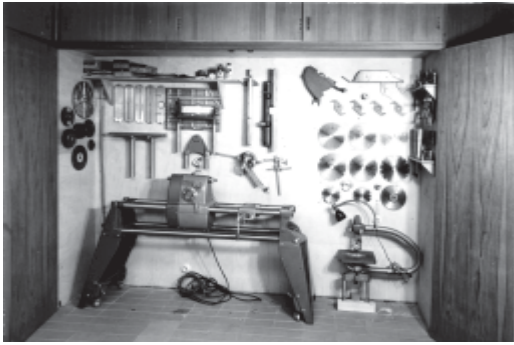
### Furnishing Makes the Space

Inspired by Le Corbusier's system houses from 1916, Korsmo had developed the "home Erector Set method", "an analytic method that places the design of the various constituent parts of the house, including the furnishing, in direct relation,



The Korsmo House, kitchen

using a square grid as the module of reference" as Postiglione states.<sup>8</sup> Korsmo's inventiveness in using furnishing as a vital part of the architectural design, based on the "home Erector Set method", is further displayed in the kitchen in



Korsmo House, Kitchen

the lower volume as well as on the first floor. Nothing is taken for granted. The importance of primary functions such as cooking, washing and sleeping is extended, as they become cores in multifunctional spaces, which share space with various activities under the heading of “work-home”. Additional facilities for work and living are provided in the basement: a silversmith-enamel workshop for Grete with a broad window overlooking a terraced garden, and a sauna with adjoining bathroom.

The kitchen contains satisfactory equipment for kitchen functions, and has a charming place for eating at a table by a low window offering a particular, framed view of the garden. When the floor space is needed for workshop activity, the table can be folded up to the wall, and the room turned into a metal and wood shop. A wallboard can be lowered to cover the stairs to the basement, and thus provide additional work area.

The layout of the first floor above the living room is based on overlapping the two purposes, sleeping/dressing and design work. Thus both kinds of activity enjoy the light and view provided by glass walls in the relatively large space. Furnishings—cupboards, shelves, drawers and tables—are arranged in accordance with the “home Erector Set method”, and serve as spatial partitions as well as accommodating equipment for bedroom needs and the design studio, including a place for meeting clients. The beds can be folded up into cupboards during the day, and sliding doors make various spatial combinations possible. As in the kitchen, the architecture of the first floor is defined by the wooden furnishing, slightly Japanese-looking in its details and plywood fronts. Christian Norberg-Schulz’ words will serve in summary of this introductory outline of the Korsmo house on Planet Road: “It is not a schematic, theoretical ‘international style’, but a vital architecture that adheres to and renders visible the world in which we live”.<sup>9</sup> It is an exquisite example of Korsmo’s “architecture of interiors”.<sup>10</sup>



The Selmer house, plan

## THE SELMER HOUSE

When our house on Trosterud Lane (*Trosterudstien*) was planned, our aim was to build in such a way that the house, in terms of function and form, should satisfy our needs for a simple and unstrained home life. Moreover, a precondition was that it should be as inexpensive as possible. A simple plan, which enabled rational construction, and a strong simplification in the use of materials, have brought us as close to the goal as we reasonably could anticipate.<sup>11</sup>

Sobriety and simplicity are key words which describe the architect couple Selmer's own house, into which they moved with their eight-year-old daughter in 1963. Jens Selmer (1911–1995) was educated in Stockholm under Gunnar Asp-lund, and was trained in functionalist work methods. After returning to Norway in 1938, Selmer's achievements in competitions were remarkable as he won a majority of competitions for prototype houses in the 40s. He was especially skilled in making good plans, to "achieve much out of little", in a period marked by a lack of materials and rationing. The Ekely houses for artists in Oslo are a renowned example of Jens Selmer's small-scale housing projects from the immediate post-war period.

Educated in Oslo, Wenche Selmer (1920–98) belonged to the so-called "Knutsen-school", mentioned above. While

Jens Selmer was a partner in an architectural practice involved in large housing projects, Wenche Selmer dedicated herself to a small but vital practice designing detached houses and houses for recreation. Moreover, she became a highly appreciated teacher at the Oslo School of Architecture where she started working at the age of 56. Although their practices were separate, the two architects supported each other and cooperated on several occasions, such as in the case of their own house. The architecture of Wenche and Jens Selmer in the first post-war decade belongs to the "new realism" typical of the period: functionalist ideals from the 1930s were combined with traditional building methods, such as pitched roofs and wood panelling. However, in the late 1950s the Selmers experimented with more explicitly modernist tectonics in several commissions, a line they refined further in their own house.

### Behind a Spruce Hedge

The Selmer house is scarcely visible behind a compact spruce hedge alongside the road, and access is through a discreet opening between the trees. Further protected behind bushes and small trees, the low and rectangular, tar-brown, wooden volume extends in an east-west direction, so that nearly every room faces the garden to the south. The house

displays an outstanding example of the delicate play of deducting and selecting measures of architectural articulation, using wood as the main building material. The entrance, protected under the roof, leads through the *vindfang*, the room to “catch the wind”, into the reception room, which connects the two bedrooms to the right with the main part of the house to the left. The Selmers detested the conventional *vindfang* filled with Wellingtons and clothes one had to stumble over to get in. They did not waste space on something that was not beautiful, and minimised the *vindfang* to a space about 100 cm wide and 60 cm deep. A wardrobe for coats, shoes, hats and gloves is arranged practically and discreetly further in. Then, a full height window beside the *vindfang* provides just that feeling of surplus that makes the reception room deserve the term *forstue*, which is written on the drawings.

### Open Space and Particular Places

From the reception room, the view is open for the full length of the house through a continuous space that encompasses the dining place and kitchen, the combined living room and design studio, and on through the door to the master bedroom. The relationship between the size of windows and openings and the space inside is balanced effectively so that the actual dimensions of the rooms can be reduced. The dining place, or niche, only 2.4 metres wide, takes advantage of a wide window placed at a height that allows people sitting a panoramic view of the garden. Equipment and furnishing for specific uses are placed to the side of the open zone, in particularly defined spaces. The kitchen, small and efficient, benefits from the broad, low window that provides light to the workbench and view of the trees to the north.

In the living room, large glass sliding doors make the garden—with birds, squirrels, grass, leaves and sky—into part of the interior, and the floor tiles are extended into the garden a metre and a half until they meet the lawn. The lawn is like a meadow filled with daisies, other flowers and berries. The sitting space or couch nook and the design space/work space fully benefit from the open living space and the generous openings towards the garden. A large fireplace separates the two zones, providing a number of overlapping spatial qualities. Just above the couch, a horizontal window is pulled to the outside of the wall so that both the



The Selmer house, entrance



The Selmer house, living room





The Selmer House, living room



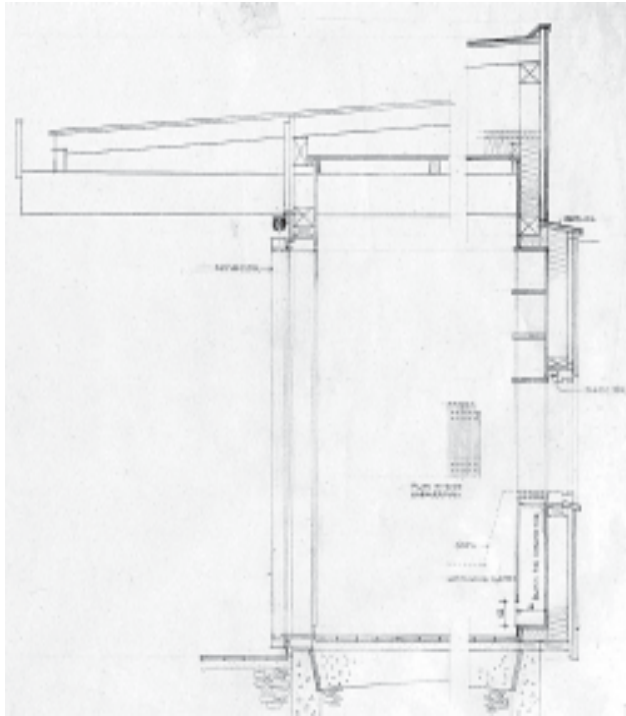
The Selmer House, dining place

window and the bookshelf above form a niche. Here, blinds made of 2 millimetre hand-planed pinewood ribs provide visual protection when necessary. The large windows in the design space too, where the roof is tilted upwards to provide optimal daylight and a greater sense of space, have similar pinewood blinds.

The spatial “suite” is completed with the master bedroom, which is situated two steps above the floor in the rest of the house. This reflects the nature of the site and the large rock outcropping at this spot. Also, the architectural effect is to slow down movement and indicate spatial intimacy. Sliding doors strategically positioned enable a variety of possibilities for closing off sections in the house. The entire house is utilised so effectively that the sum seems much larger than it actually is—richer too, owing to the inventiveness and consideration that has endowed each part their particular quality.

### *Norwegian Wood*

The quality of the simple main layout of the Selmer house depends on the consistency and unity of materials that enhance the synthesis of modernity and tradition in the design: untreated pinewood, red-brown ceramic floor tiles and dark, hard burnt brick in the fireplace. Traditional timber framework is juxtaposed with modern post-and-beam construction in which the visible primary beams span the building in a certain rhythm, while secondary beams reinforce the perspective in the longitudinal direction of the house. These structural components become ornaments in the otherwise bare tectonic composition. In addition to the spatial layout, large glass panes, sliding doors and the “anti-moulding” ideology testify to 20<sup>th</sup> Century construction ideals, while the rough, wooden exterior siding has a long and widespread history in Norwegian building tradition. The various treatments and arrangements of the walls, windows, doors, shelves and blinds create—together with the sparse furnishings—a particularly rich quality in which small nuances express themselves effectively and joyfully within a self-imposed simplicity.



The Selmer house, section details



The Selmer House, northeast wall

## A COMPARISON

The most obvious difference between the two houses lies in their architectural language and tectonics, including materials and colours. The Korsmo house from 1954 is an example of the International Style with its steel structural system, flat roof and modular layout with large glass panes and white wallboards. The design definitely pushed the limits of what could be built in Norway at the time of rationing and restrictions. Variety and newness is typical of the use of materials: wood of different types, solid wood and plywood, Oregon pine, mahogany and teak; painted surfaces; double and triple clear glass and various types of translucent mate-

rials. Textiles are also important in the interior: heavy shantung curtains of a greyish golden colour serve to blind the extensive glass walls, and the floors in the living room and on the top floor are covered with wall-to-wall sisal carpets. And, most importantly, there are the one hundred wool-covered cushions in primary colours, white, grey and black.

The Korsmo house represents a great experimental thrust for its age. The variety and the newness of the materials are assembled in a modern composition, unique in terms of richness and integrity. Viewed as artistic expression, the architecture is in harmony with the abstract paintings by the Norwegian painter Gunnar S. Gundersen, a friend of the Korsmos. His paintings are placed all around the house,

some freestanding, and one in the form of a large wall painting along the staircase.

While prefabricated standard units were an ideal in Korsmo's design thinking, the Selmers were concerned with renewing traditional building crafts and methods. To them, restricting the number of materials was a goal, and their own house is an outstanding example of such an endeavour. Nonetheless, the architecture is strikingly modern compared to the majority of houses built at the time. New materials such as roofing felt, various insulation materials, materials that promoted lightweight construction together with a new variety of glass products and sliding door fittings, enabled them to change the use of traditional materials and construction techniques to achieve a totally new domestic architecture.

While Korsmo displays an extrovert, international mentality, the Selmers pursued their obligation to Norwegian tradition, which they renewed by adopting important features from international modernism. Central to this work was the modern idea of honesty, which implied that the building structure should be visible; it acts as an ornament and the materials themselves as a source of beauty. Implicit in this philosophy of materials is the idea that ageing would make the house even more beautiful, as it had with old Norwegian wooden architecture.<sup>12</sup> Broad experience with life under primitive conditions in the Norwegian woods and mountains, travelling by boat and settling in tiny cabins by the seaside, had taught them to appreciate simplicity. To the Selmers, modesty was an ideal: "What can you live without?" was their standard question to new clients, and thus they interpreted the modernist slogan "Less is more" in a personal architecture.

### Common Architectural Features

From another point of view, the two houses clearly have some fundamental architectural features in common. They share an absolute squareness of form, displaying design principles that favour a certain degree of geometrical and structural rationality allowing free and asymmetric placement of volumes, openings and closed sections. The exterior expression of the two houses is modest and simple, devoid of formal elaboration in keeping with general Norwegian ideals.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, there are distinct similarities in their spatial organisation, such as the great degree of open space combining traditionally separate activities. Minimising the entrance

space is a device that enhances the feeling of openness in both cases. The insistence on avoiding traditional and standard merchandise furnishing is also a common feature, which brings to mind that both Jens Selmer and Arne Korsmo were experienced furniture designers.

While Korsmo idealistically conceived his built-in cupboards as part of a flexible system, the Selmers more pragmatically built them in as part of the space defining structure.

Finally, the ability to deviate from the rigidity of systems in a sensible and artistic manner is present in both houses. The "Erector Set" furnishing in the Korsmo house does not follow the main structural grid directly but constitutes its own system of variables adapted to the individual spaces. Korsmo regarded spatial considerations to be paramount. Therefore, he increased the dimension of the roof structure over the living room so that he could eliminate the column which otherwise would have been placed—given the 12 foot module—in the middle of the space. This is a striking example of Korsmo's ability to make systemic adjustments to attain a particular goal. Within the plain rectangular shape of the Selmer house, the system of load-bearing walls and primary and secondary beams is varied and adapted to the space in question. The tilted roof in the design space is an example of this. In both cases, the architects demonstrate the artistic finesse necessary to maintain an architectural composition that is rich and pregnant, and not disintegrated.

### The Houses as "Work-homes"

The two houses are "work-homes", a term Korsmo used about the house on Planet Road. He and Grete regarded the entire house as a place for work and living integrally. It was the true centre of their professional life, although they both had workplaces elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the large living room was intended for meetings and lectures. The wallboards that cover the shelves have a white front that can be used for projecting slides. The other side, which can be switched to the front by a special hinge, is painted black in order to be used as a blackboard.

Furthermore, Korsmo's sense of scenography and theatrical behaviour is expressed in that the entrance space and the kitchen could be used as a stage with the audience seated in the living room. Both stairs could be removed: the four steps to the living room pushed underneath the adjoining floor, and the light aluminium staircase leading to the first



The Korsmo House, bedroom, design studio



The Selmer House, design studio



The Korsmo House, entrance



The Selmer House, living room

floor could be lifted up in the ceiling by way of an electric motor, thus clearing the entire space. Thus, the idea of professional life totally permeating and sharing spaces with life in general distinguishes the architectural conception of the Korsmo house.

Although allocated only limited space, accommodating professional activities is also a major issue in the Selmer house. The design space is situated centrally, as a well-defined part

of the open living spaces. In addition to this, there is a workspace in the basement for carpentry and repair work, and a darkroom where Jens Selmer developed his films and made black and white enlargements. Thus, Wenche Selmer actually had her architect's office in the main family room. She used to get up early in the morning and was working at the table when Jens and their daughter had breakfast in the dining niche in the other end of the room. From her desk,

Wenche could keep an eye on children, and later grandchildren playing on the warm floor in front of the glass sliding doors when they came to visit once a week after nursery school. The drawings and models were normally left on the tables, elements of the interior visible to family members and guests.

### **Flexibility and Multifunctional Spaces**

In the Selmer house, the different activities have their proper places, and the other areas of the house act as spatial extensions without disturbing the furnishing, which is designed for normal family life. In the Korsmo house, the furnishing is designed specifically as a vehicle to transform the spaces to accommodate an amazing range of different activities. The fact that the Selmers had children and the Korsmos did not can, to some extent, account for the different views of the house as a combined workplace/home in the two cases. However, different mentalities underlie the choices. While the Selmers sought a multifarious usefulness with simple and rather permanent architectural means, changeability was a main issue in the Korsmo house (although over the years several of the devices were hardly used). Ideas were more important to Korsmo than their practical implication. The Korsmos were enthusiastic about new technology and new materials; at the age of 84, Grete is beaming with joy about new mechanical devices such as an electrical corkscrew. Conversely, the Selmers favoured traditional craft methods and materials (they did, however, install radiant floor heating – quite innovative at the time, a dishwasher and other equipment in keeping with their conception of an effortless daily life).

Both houses share the quality of being flexible in the sense that they can accommodate various activities in the same spaces, and that activities can overlap spatially or be separated by simple devices such as sliding doors.

### **Places of Human Emancipation**

It is noteworthy that the women in the two houses were fully engaged in professional work, Grete as a designer and Wenche as an architect. They were exceptional women with respect to the general trend, which after WWII in Norway propagated the ideal of housewives taking care of the home and children, and stressed the importance of cleaning, the so-called “hygiene gospel”.<sup>15</sup> Along with women’s emancipation house servants had disappeared from most middleclass households

by the 1960s. Consequently, practical houses that were easy to maintain and that stimulated the social life of sharing and differentiating activities within the house were of great importance to professional women. Compared to pre-war Scandinavian modernism and Knut Knutsen’s house as well, the influence of women’s aspects on spatial organisation is evident in the Korsmo house and the Selmer house.

Grete says that she insisted on having the kitchen in Planet Road open to the living spaces in order not to be isolated while doing the kitchen work.<sup>16</sup> Wenche Selmer “invented” the particular Selmer-*vindfang*, and from the very start of her career was concerned with improving the conditions for “women’s work” in domestic architecture. As design professionals they were able to transfer more directly their viewpoints into the design of their houses. The open layouts of the two houses display ideals of family life which were highly controversial at the time, but which, after forty years, have become universally accepted.

Both the Korsmos and the Selmers shared the ideal of optimal utilisation of space being realised in an architectural wholeness consisting of spaces that were useful and beautiful without renouncing the demands to artistic quality and craftsmanship. Their architecture was anti-bourgeois and untraditional in terms of the lifestyle it promoted, exemplified for instance by the informality of the open living spaces including the kitchen.

### **The Role of Nature**

Neither of the two houses can be associated with the term “organic” in the sense of irregular forms that represent natural topography. Yet, nature is an inalienable element of the houses and the life in them. Both families spontaneously emphasise the importance of the synergy between the interior and exterior. As outlined above, it is especially the south-facing facades that provide various ways of enjoying nature. Small and large openings make it convenient for the inhabitants to enter nature and take part in it, or to experience views of its endlessly changing colours and lights from inside. In addition, both houses have a niche with a low horizontal window providing a particular view and light to the dining table.

Certainly, in the Norwegian climate, outdoor life is most attractive in places where sun and warmth are possible. Arranging smooth circulation between the house and private



The Selmer house, towards the garden



The Korsmo House, living room

outdoor spaces was a shared concern in the design of both houses. Curiously, the Korsmo house establishes a social, collective situation close to the road, whereas, in the Selmer house, the spruce hedge underlines the garden privacy in front of the house. In the Korsmo house, the entrance is from the Northeast, ensuring privacy in its garden on the opposite side.

The relationship between Norwegian houses and nature is a factor of the harshness of the climate. Dramatic seasonal changes of temperature and light, vegetation, rain and snow are the rule. Traditional Norwegian houses do not include nature as is now possible thanks to modern technology. Today, when people spend much more time indoors, the relationship between a house and its surroundings is a major issue both with respect to the quality of everyday life and the poetic dimension of existence. This dual role of nature is shared and focused in both the Korsmo and the Selmer house; in both cases nature constitutes a fascinating asset of the design.

### **Regional interpretation of a modern world culture**

Whether the differences or the similarities between the two houses are seen as most significant depends upon the perspective in which they are viewed. On the one hand, architectural differences are evident. They represent varying personalities and professional allegiances. On the other hand, the similarities are significant, especially when it comes to interpretation of the houses as places of life and culture. Both as exponents of a professional culture—the culture of architects—and as representatives of broader trends in a wider cultural sense, the two houses advance a set of common values. They represent modernity understood as a hegemonic world culture,<sup>17</sup> which among others comprises the democratisation processes of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Regional interpretations of this world culture are expressed in the manner in which the architects pursue a simple, almost modest architecture with rational structuring principles as the setting for a modern, Nordic lifestyle.



The Korsmo House, living room

FOTO

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## Notes

1. Dag Østerberg 1997. *Fortolkende sosiologi II* (Interpretative sociology II), Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 11.
2. Peter Davey 1986. "Norwegian Reflections", *Byggekunst* 1986, 4–5, 228.
3. Pierre Bourdieu 1977. *Outline of a theory of practice*, Cambridge University Press, 164 ff.
4. Nicola Flora, Paolo Giardiello and Gennaro Postiglione 1999. *Arne Korsmo – Knut Knutsen: due maestri del Nord*, Rome: Officina edizioni. The articles in the book treat the two architects with particular emphasis on their own houses and cabins.
5. Wenche Selmer 1986. "Knutsen-skolen. Norsk arkitektur på sidespor", *Arkitektnytt* 1986, 15, 413–415 referring to Norberg-Schulz 1986, 111–113.
6. Christian Norberg-Schulz 1986. *Arne Korsmo*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 73.
7. Arne Korsmo was appointed Professor at the Department of Architecture at the Norwegian Technical College in Trondheim. He and Grete later divorced, and Korsmo married Hanne Refsdal in 1965. He died in 1968. Grete married Sverre Kittelsen in 1971, who moved into Planet Road and who has been very respectful of the building's architecture and the life and culture that it instigates.
8. Gennaro Postiglione 1999. "Arne Korsmos eget hjem. A Traditional House", in Flora e. a. 1999, 65. "Erector Set" is the English/American equivalent to the "Mekano" construction toy set that was popular among children, especially boys in the 1950s.
9. Norberg-Schulz 1986, 70.
10. Postiglione 1999, 67.
11. Wenche and Jens Selmer 1966. "Eget hus i Trosterudstien 1", unpublished.
12. Wenche and Jens Selmer 1966. Unpublished.
13. See also Postiglione 1999, 67.
15. Grete Prytz Korsmo was employed by Tostrup Goldsmith, her family firm, and Korsmo was teaching architecture and interior design at the College of Arts and Crafts. The collaboration between Arne and Grete Prytz Korsmo was fruitful: at the Triennale di Milano in 1954, Grete won the Grand Prix for her showcase with 12 large enamel works, Arne won the Grand Prix for his exhibition architecture and the Gold Medal for his cutlery design. Grete also won the Gold Medal at the Triennale di Milano in 1957 and 1961.
16. Knut Kjeldstadli 1990. *Den delte byen, fra 1900–1948, Oslo bys historie*, 4, Oslo: Cappelen, 341. See also Elisabeth Tostrup 1999. *Architecture and Rhetoric: Text and Design in Architectural Competitions*, London: Andreas Papadakis Publisher, 42–44, 89 ff.
17. Personal communication, 2001.
18. "Modern culture is a hegemonic world culture, admitting non-modern traits from early on – Chinese interiors, Persian carpets, Turkish janissary music... All of this does not threaten modernity's hegemony; it is rather an aspect of modernity as a dialectical concept: modern culture will acquaint itself with everything." Østerberg 1997, 32–33.