

TOTAL DESIGN

Architecture and Interiors of Iconic Modern Houses

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RIZZOLI
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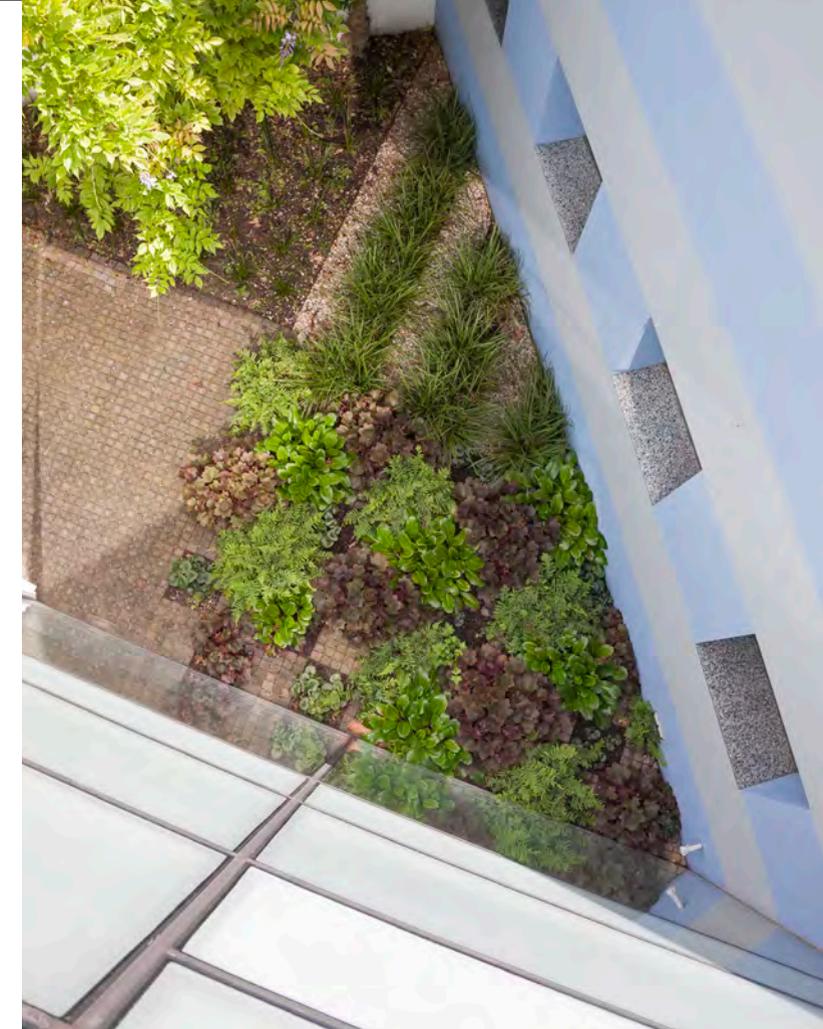
VAN SCHIJNDEL HOUSE

Utrecht, The Netherlands
Designed by Mart van Schijndel
1992-93



Previous spread. The glass, patio façade of the Mart van Schijndel's house shows how the roof steps up from one story at left to two stories at right to accommodate the bedrooms. Two red chairs by Gerrit Rietveld are seen in the distance in the open triangular space.

This spread. The house is surrounded by the urban landscape and closed off from the street.



SPATIAL MANIPULATION IS AT THE HEART

of the efficient, compact house that the architect-designer Mart van Schijndel built for himself off an historic square in Utrecht, a stone's throw from its medieval cathedral. With forced perspectives, colors calculated to exaggerate the perception of depth, and corner-less doorways, he created an integrated interior that seems more spacious than it actually is. The house has no street façade, but occupies the void behind a small apartment building that Van Schijndel designed on the square itself. Here, closed off from the street, he chose to be sheltered from the annoying indignities of urban existence, an accommodation to city living that he called "bunkering."





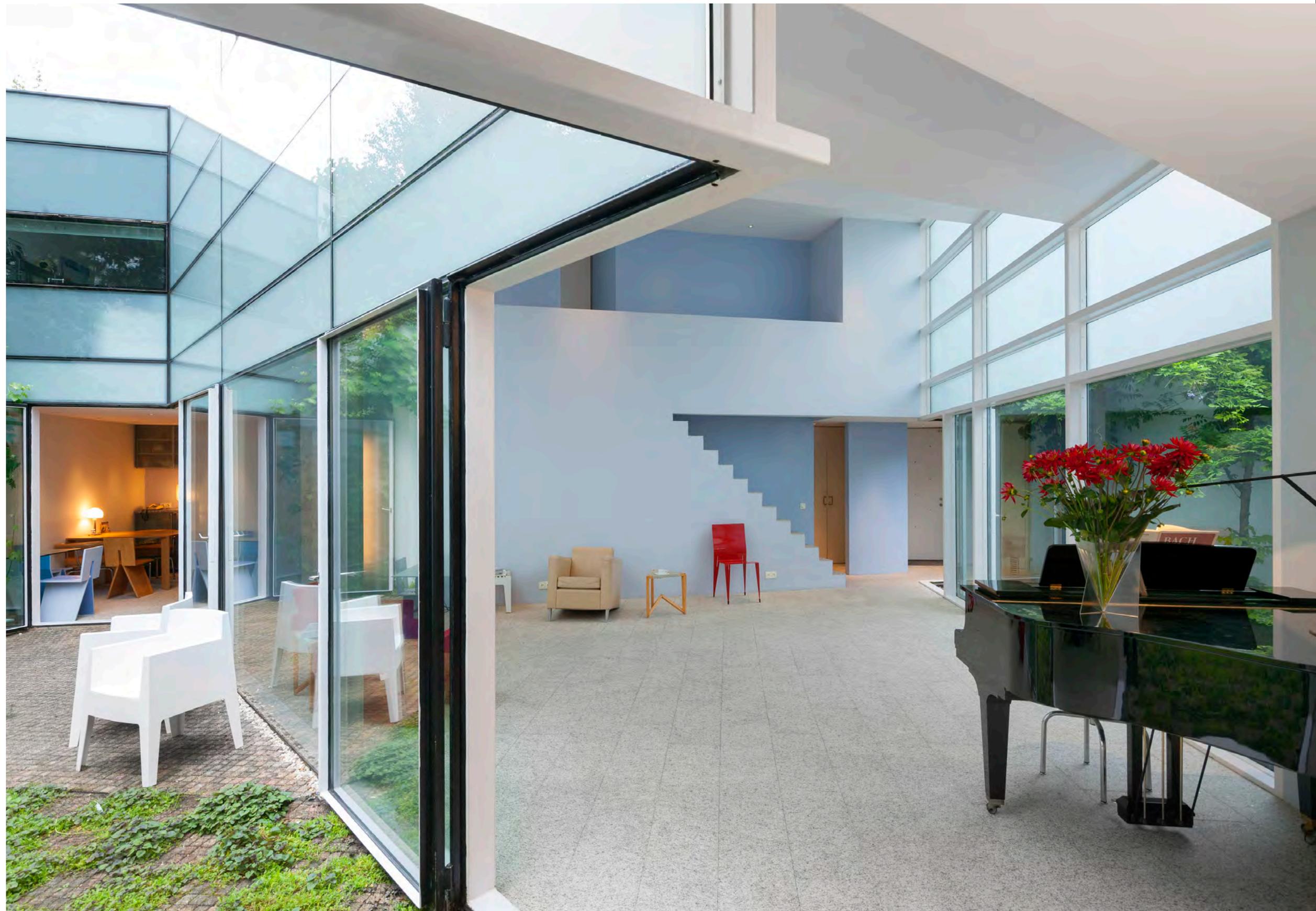
The path to the house follows the alley behind the glass doors. The walls are painted in gray and blue stripes, a variation of the lavender stripes of Van Schijndel's apartment building in front.

To reach the house, you go through the glass door on the left side of the striped postmodern façade of Van Schijndel's apartment house and walk along an alleyway, also striped, to the front door. Almost immediately you enter into a large, open, triangular space furnished with a piano and several chairs at its perimeter. This is the core of the house but it is ambiguous; it has no immediately apparent function, and while it serves both as a reception area and

a passageway, Van Schijndel described it as a space whose function is to be empty. On the near side of the triangle is a rectangular strip housing the entrance, kitchen, bath, and a staircase that takes you to the bedrooms above, and at the tip opposite, a library and workroom.

Two glass-walled patios border the central space, bringing light from both sides into the ground floor, which has no other views than these. The ceiling rises

The corner doors open widely without any intervening frame, adding to the sense of the interior as one continuous space.





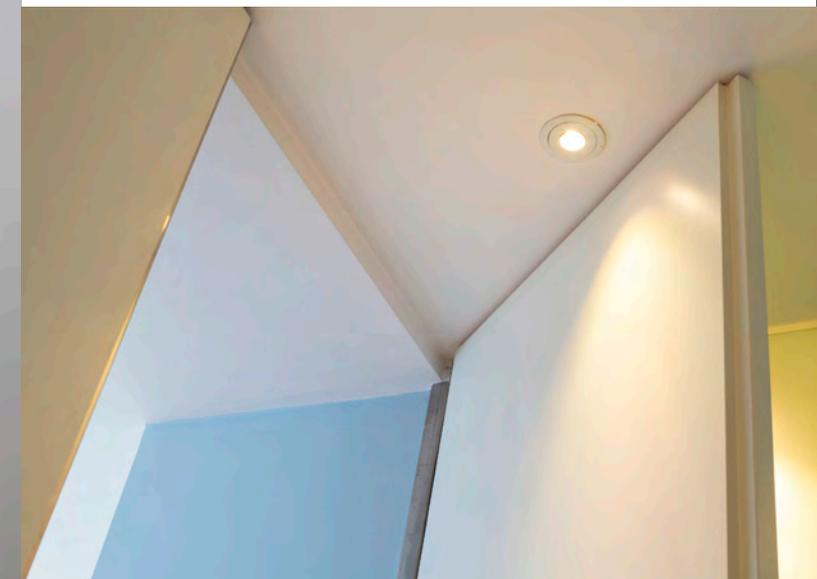
The ceiling narrowing into a triangular form forces the sense of depth in perspective.

in steps from the low, far side of the room, allowing for the second story on the entrance side. If you look down onto the patios from the roof garden, you see two internal façades with glass panels that express the stepped profile of the roof. The house reads as a space that continues inside and out, emphasized by the fact that the patios are faced with glass and the doors at all three corners, and in particular the one at the edge of the library, open widely at the corner with no frame between them, a nod to the noted frame-less corner window in Gerrit Rietveld's Schröder house on the other side of town.



Van Schijndel's tables appear with a glass top on the patio and wooden tops within the kitchen. The chairs are of plank construction to avoid creating a gang of individual legs.

The house has almost no right angles, and the fittings are designed to accommodate this.



cool tones, and those at the end of the day, gray or whitish tones.

The sparsely furnished house is a showcase for Van Schijndel's own designs, equally spare and equally clever. On the piano, seen here filled with red flowers, is an example of Van Schijndel's most successful work, his Delta vase, designed in 1981. Made from three glass plates, they are joined into a triangular form with silicon glue, a technique for which

he received special recognition when he later used it to hinge the doors and windows of the house to their steel frames. Van Schijndel introduced two red upholstered chairs by Rietveld, whom he greatly admired, into his design of the triangular space, while a red version of his own Fulfil stacking chair completes a triangular counterpoint of color that subtly reinforces the form of the central space and underscores the minimalist design of the house.



Van Schijndel's crisp aluminum Fulfil stacking chair mirrors the minimalist design of the house.

The central space confounds perception, with the point of the triangle that extends behind the piano seeming far deeper than it is, and the staircase wall closer, but this is enhanced to suggest greater depth with an artful use of two shades of blue, the lighter marking the plane at the front of the stairs and the darker, the plane on its far side. The walls of the rooms seem to change their tone with the changing light, and are painted in subtle pastel tones, which accentuate these changes. The patios catch the sunlight throughout the day, and those walls lit by the morning sun have energized yellow tones, those in the afternoon,