

HOME ECONOMICS

Five new models for domestic life

Months		Years
Days	Hours	Decades

British Pavilion,
Venice Architecture
Biennale 2016



HOME ECONOMICS
proposes new models for the frontline
of British architecture: the home.

HOME ECONOMICS
is the science of household
management. It intervenes directly
in the architecture of the home,
responding to changes in life and
social norms through the design
of the everyday.

HOME ECONOMICS
asks urgent questions about the role
of housing and domestic space in the
material reality of familiar life.

HOME ECONOMICS
is a truly collaborative proposal
challenging financial models,
categories of ownership, forms of life,
social and gender power relations.

HOME ECONOMICS
understands that in housing there
can be no metaphors.

Each model in Home Economics is a proposition driven by the conditions imposed on domestic life by varying periods of occupancy. They each address different facets of how we live today – from whether we can prevent property speculation, to whether sharing can be a form of luxury rather than a compromise.

Home Economics presents five new models for domestic life curated through five periods of time. These timescales – Hours, Days, Months, Years and Decades – correspond to how long each model is to be called “home”. The projects appear as full-scale 1:1 interiors in the British Pavilion, displaying architectural proposals as a direct spatial experience.

These models have been developed in an intensely pragmatic way, working with architects, artists, developers, filmmakers, financial institutions and fashion designers. It is the first exhibition on architecture to be curated through time spent in the home, and is dedicated to exploring alternatives to conventional domestic architecture.

The frontline for architecture in Britain today is not only a crisis of housing, but a crisis of how we live. Over the past decades our patterns of life have changed profoundly. These include new social power relations, family structures and gender roles, as well as the consequences of rising wealth inequality, mass migration and an ageing population. New technologies have displaced how, where and when we work and play, while prompting questions about surveillance and privacy. All these factors, and others, have put immense pressure on the British home.

Life is changing;
we must design for it.

1 HOURS
Own nothing, share everything.

Jack Self with
Finn Williams and Shumi Bose

2 DAYS
Home is where the Wi-Fi is.

Åyr

3 MONTHS
A house without housework.

Dogma and Black Square

4 YEARS
Space for living, not speculation.

Julia King

5 DECADES
A room without functions.

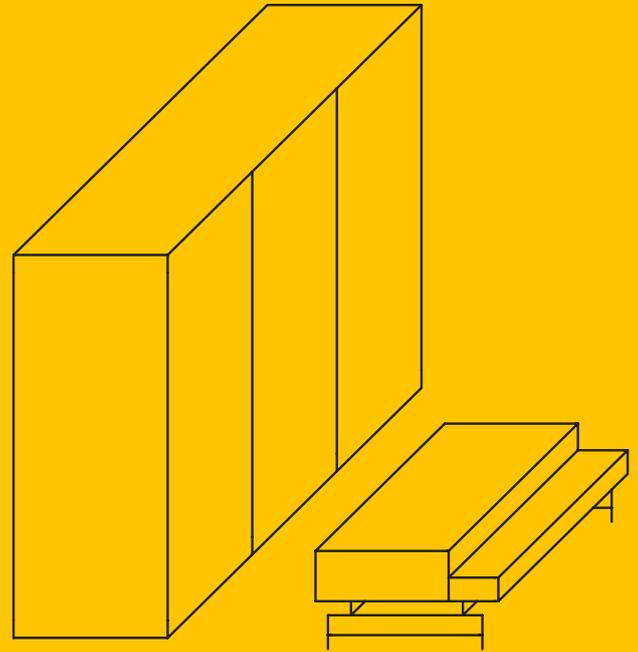
Hesselbrand

HOURS

Own nothing, share everything.

Welcome home. This is your communal living room, which you share with a number of other apartments on your floor. You normally spend a couple of hours here each day entertaining friends, socialising with neighbours, working or relaxing. The modular daybeds allow you to tailor the space for different forms of labour, rest and play. You describe it as your own private living space; it feels like a shared home, but not a public room.

You share a number of common objects with your neighbours – from practical things that are infrequently used (like power tools) to objects you can better afford together (like clothes). You keep these objects in a large transparent “garderobe,” or communal wardrobe. Even though you live in the centre of the city, your rent is not expensive. You use your savings to invest in shares of the company that owns and manages your building.



Sharing can be a luxury, not a compromise.

The bed and sofa are converging: in 2014 the bed overtook the sofa for the first time as the most used piece of furniture in British homes.

Our current economic model makes mass ownership impossible in the long run.

Communal storage suggests new ways of sharing personal objects; a transparent structure questions our relationship with everyday domesticity.

In a fair and just society, we will collectively own the sharing economy.

British fashion designer J.W. Anderson has curated the clothes of a common wardrobe shared between households.

The bed today is a place for production and reproduction, working and relaxing, socialising and sleeping.

Each apartment possessing their own vacuum cleaner is neither necessary, nor environmentally responsible.

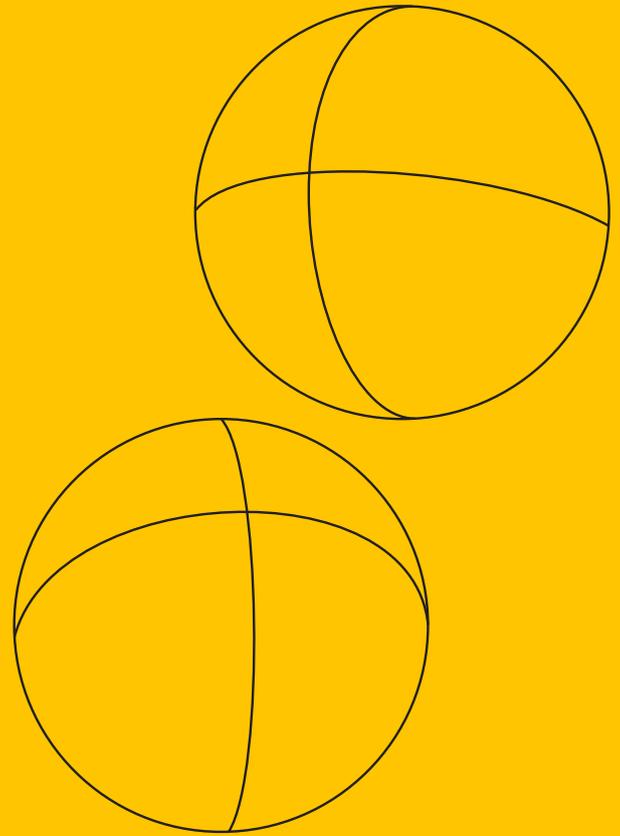
When we combine our resources, the result is more than the sum of the parts.

DAYS

Home is where the Wi-Fi is.

You're constantly on the move, from city to city around the world. It doesn't matter where you are, you can always climb inside your inflatable retreat whenever you need – this is your portable and personalised space, where you can make yourself at home. To feel at home here you only need a Wi-Fi connection, which you use to flit between your social media feeds, entertainment, virtual and commercial consumption.

You used to think of inflatables as either practical infrastructure, like the air mattress, or pure entertainment, like the children's bouncy castle. Now your personalised spheres offer a new type of space, one that responds to the transience of your global mobility and is just as unique as you. No two are the same. So come on and climb inside, wherever you are you can get away from it all and reconnect with your friends. Relax – what's new on your screens?



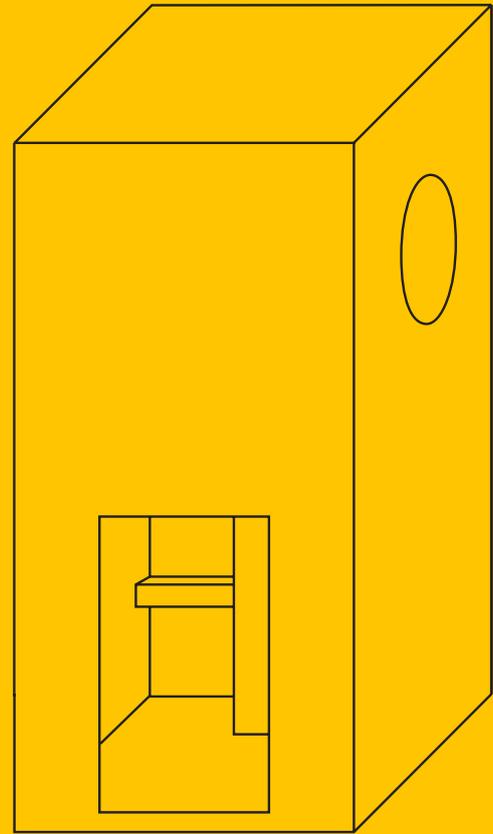
How can a home be more than clothing, but less than architecture?
80% of smartphone owners check their email or social media accounts within 10 minutes of going to sleep or waking up.
You travel ever-increasing distances, yet live in an ever-decreasing circle of references.
More than 53,000 properties in the UK are being rented on a daily rate.
The future is always forced to occupy the spaces of the past, even if it refuses to acknowledge or engage with them.
The short-term accommodation company Airbnb takes its name from "AirBed and Breakfast." The company's founders developed the concept after using inflatable mattresses to convert an apartment into a shared home for a couple of days.
Your personalised space feels familiar anywhere, but generic space everywhere feels uncanny.

MONTHS

A house without housework.

When you first heard your new home was modelled on a boarding house you had doubts... but after living here for a few months you can't imagine a better form of life. It's not a hotel, and it's not a rental flat, it's a well-organised communal household, which allows the ideal balance of private enclosure and social contact. Everything you need is provided – your personal totem is a two-storey utility core containing private spaces for sleeping, washing and preparing food. The open-plan areas between you and your neighbours are shared, and you spend the days here working and socialising.

You feel liberated in your totem: you don't need to buy furniture, sign up for utilities or get internet installed. It's all as easy as booking a room. Most of all, there is no housework – cleaning, laundry and all the other domestic chores are included in your rent. This home makes perpetual labour history.



Private renting in the UK has doubled over the course of the last 10 years.

The politics of domestic labour forces us to adopt certain power roles. We are only liberated from the family when there is no longer any obligation to do housework.

The boarding house is to the home what co-working space is to the office.

The totem structure is impossible to categorise, and it exists at the junction of architecture, infrastructure and furniture.

The number of temporary workers in the UK has increased by 20% over the last six years.

In a boarding house, domestic labour is separated from the individual cell, which becomes a pure temple for living.

Private renters in the UK spend almost 40% of their income on rent in comparison to the European average of 28%.

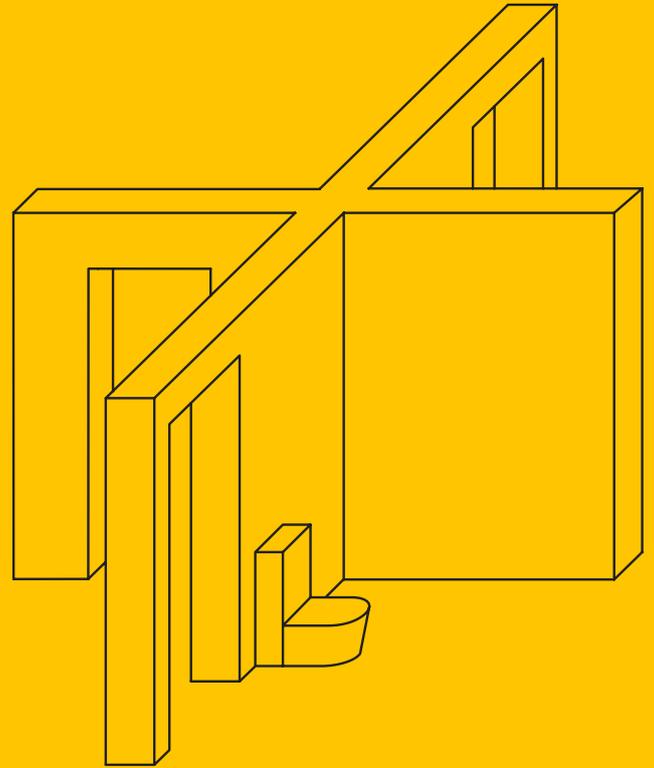
YEARS

Space for living, not speculation.

When looking to buy a new home, you suspected you were being taken for a ride. The tacky countertops, ugly lights and built-in ovens – the finishes and fittings were so expensive, and not at all your style. That’s where developers make most of their money, and you simply refused to pay.

Your home is designed from the bank’s perspective, stripping out every cost that is not required by your mortgage. It’s called “shell” construction – just a roof over your head, running water, electricity, a toilet and basin. Nothing else. Not even a kitchen sink! Some people thought it looked bare, but you saw a blank canvas. You saved a lot of money and, over time, created a space that reflects the way you choose to live.

The price of your home is tied to shell value, locking in the original discount. Your fixtures and fittings are your own, and you can either take them with you, recycle or resell.



Domesticity requires a lot less than we might think. What are the core qualities that make up a home? And how basic could its material conditions be for it to still feel homely?

The price of the typical UK home is forecast to rise by 50% in the next 10 years.

Without price controls, discounted house sales (through subsidies or reduced construction costs) will only benefit their first owners, and lead to accelerated market speculation.

More than 170 tenants were evicted every day in 2015, the highest figure since records began.

Home ownership in the UK is now so unaffordable that the average age of a first-time mortgage applicant is 39.

Family relationships are fundamentally reconfigured when the home becomes primarily valued as an asset.

If you moved into rented accommodation in London today, you will spend about £91,500 on rent before buying your first home.

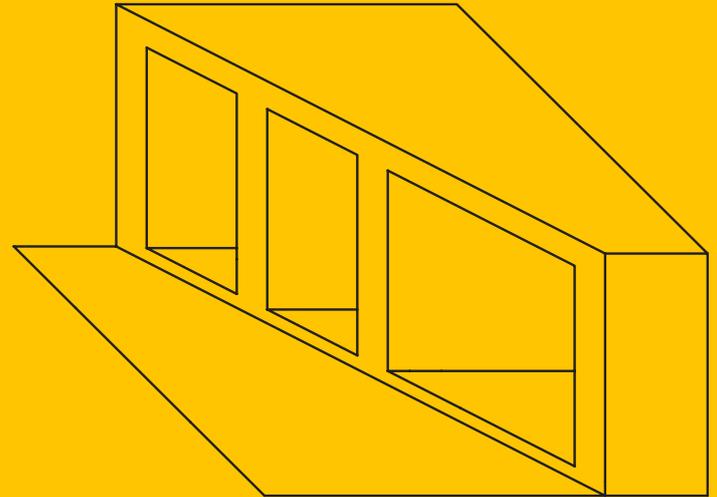
DECADES

A room without functions.

Your home is functionless, but that's not a bad thing. Instead of cramming specific programmes into the smallest area possible, it is designed to provide you with generous, adaptable, useful spaces. You occupy two spaces, one inside the structural core and one outside it.

There are no predetermined rooms with predetermined activities – no “kitchens,” “bedrooms” or “bathrooms”. Your home has a diverse range of spatial conditions that suggest different activities. There are qualities of light and dark, open and closed, private and public, wet and dry, soft and hard. Your square bed captures the essence of your home: it doesn't dictate which way you should sleep, or even how many people can rest here together.

Over the decades your life has changed from youth to old age and from singleton to parent. But your home has always accommodated your needs. Your neighbours reflect this demographic spread, and the residents' community promotes intergenerational exchange. Twice a week you volunteer as a childminder for the building.



Future-proofing our homes means abandoning architecture's reliance on technology or specific pieces of furniture.

Functionalist space is designed around ergonomically optimised actions that determine precise social relations. When cultural norms change, these spaces can quickly become impractical or redundant.

Most building materials used in new housing in the UK have a lifespan of around 30 years. Yet over half of the existing homes are over 70 years old.

1 in 3 children born in Britain now will live to 100.

Rationalism is the design of space through abstract or universal ratios. In 18th century Georgian Britain, terraced houses used classical proportions and harmonic dimensions to create adaptable, useful and timeless spaces.

HOME ECONOMICS
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by the British Council

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Jack Self
Finn Williams

Room Designers
Hours
Jack Self with
Finn Williams
and Shumi Bose

Days
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Months
Dogma and
Black Square
Years
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WELCOME HOME

In 1580, Queen Elizabeth I
tried to quell the plague
by forcing every family to
have its own front door. As a
result, Britain developed the
terraced house while Europe
created the apartment block.
Since then, the front door has
become the ultimate domestic
symbol in the British psyche.

As the primary interface
between state, society,
corporations and the family,
the front door is crucial for
identifying and monitoring
populations. Perhaps the
most important urban
invention of modern times
was house numbering,
developed in London in the
late 17th century. Numerals
permitted geographic studies
for population management,
as well as incorporating the
household into early
capitalist infrastructure.

British Pavilion
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