

‘De Werkende Vrouw: in Huis en Maatschappij’: Dutch Feminism, Fashion and Design 1930–1931

This paper focuses on an Amsterdam based feminist magazine published from 1930 to 1931 called *De Werkende Vrouw: in Huis en Maatschappij* (The Working Woman: at Home and in Society). The magazine’s founder and editor-in-chief An Harrenstein-Schröder was connected to members of Dutch women’s right movements as well as avant-garde modernist artists and designers. She created a magazine that had a unique perspective for the Netherlands. On the one hand it promoted equality in the workplace and better chances for women to enter all professions. On the other hand *De Werkende Vrouw* is a rich source of articles on the rational modern home, avant-garde design, and progressive fashion and workwear.

This paper seeks to analyse the relationship between the social and feminist ideals and the interior design and fashion promoted by the magazine. I will argue that the former highly influenced the latter. In doing so, I will try to shed new light on the connections between the Dutch modernist movement and contemporary feminist thinking. My discussion furthermore includes the role that gender connotations played in the way the interior decoration, design and fashion were viewed in the 1930s and the notions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ taste.

Keywords: magazines, the modern home, avant-garde design, gender identity, fashion

Introduction

This research focuses on a Dutch feminist magazine called *De Werkende Vrouw: in Huis en Maatschappij* (The Working Woman: At Home and in Society). The Amsterdam-based magazine was first published in January 1930 and continued to be published regularly until September 1931, with a total of 14 issues (Table 1). In this paper I will try to answer the following question: In what way are the social and feminist ideals that are promoted in *De Werkende Vrouw* reflected in the design, fashion and domestic culture shown in the magazine? I will argue that the social agenda of the magazine highly influenced the fashion and interior design choices that were made by the editorial office and I will clarify the particular role founder and editor-in-chief An Harrenstein-Schröder (1888–1951) has played in this.

To do so, I will first elaborate on the social ideals of *De Werkende Vrouw* to further clarify their feminist goals. Leading women from the Dutch women’s rights movement wrote engaged articles, interviews and opinion pieces on women’s labour, career opportunities, working conditions, women’s clubs, and marriage law. The magazine’s aim was to reach a modern group of women with ambition, who wanted to combine a career with taking care of their homes, household and families. In *De Werkende Vrouw* they found a great number of articles supporting their ideas.

At the same time *De Werkende Vrouw* contained articles with very modern ideas on design, the home and fashion. The fashion section showed the latest trends, as well as work- and sportswear. In the second part of this paper I will further examine the relation between the editorial fashion choices and the identity of the target audience of the magazine. In order to understand the magazine it seems important to understand who this 1930s ‘working woman’ was. I will argue that the feminist ideals of the magazine were reflected in these fashion choices.

Finally, with these issues addressed, the content of the magazine on the modern home will be analysed. Efficiency, the rational kitchen and innovative social housing projects were brought to the attention of the readers in almost every edition. But even more interesting is the fact that avant-garde artist Gerrit Rietveld also contributed to the magazine by submitting articles with his ideas on



Fig. 1. The cover of *De Werkende Vrouw* in March 1930, with the lay-out designed by Gerrit Rietveld (photographer: Verbeek, with permission of Atria, Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History).

architecture and interior design.¹ An Harrenstein-Schröder was not only connected to well-known women's rights activists and writers, but also surrounded herself with artists who visited her home in Amsterdam frequently, and Rietveld was amongst them.² He was responsible for building the famous Rietveld Schröder House in Utrecht in 1924.³ The inhabitant and co-designer of the dwelling, Truus Schröder-Schröder (1889–1985), was the sister of An Harrenstein-Schröder.⁴ Together with Rietveld, she influenced the magazine in a crucial way. Six years thereafter, Rietveld also designed the cover of *De Werkende Vrouw* (Fig. 1).

It is only within this context that *De Werkende Vrouw* has been addressed briefly in a small number of publications until now.⁵ Alice T. Friedman and Marjan Groot both mention the magazine's existence but do not elaborate much on the subject. By researching the altogether rare magazine, new light might be shed on the connections between the Dutch Modernist Movement, contemporary feminist thinking, and (social) ideas behind design of the 1920s and 1930s in the Netherlands. The discussion of the magazine, furthermore includes the role that gender connotations play in the editorial choices which were made in the compilation of the design and fashion content of the

magazine. The gender perspective is crucial in understanding the connection between the social ideals and the promoted interior and fashion.

Women and society: Feminism in *De Werkende Vrouw*

At the end of the nineteenth century the resistance against the subordination of women grew stronger and became more organised in the Netherlands.⁶ Women of the first feminist wave (which lasted from approximately 1880 until 1920) demanded more political influence and economic independence. Middle class women were leading in the foundation and organisation of unions such as the *Nationale Vrouwenraad* (National Women's Council) in 1878 and the *Nederlandse Vereniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht* (Dutch Union for Women's Suffrage) in 1894. Their position had been even more limited than the one of working class women. Middle class women were expected to solely focus on their housekeeping tasks and the upbringing of the children once they were married, and when the income of the husband was enough to make ends meet. They had no alternative lives.

The value of women's labour was, despite this, celebrated at the *Nationale Tentoonstelling van Vrouwenarbeid* (National Exhibition of Women's Labour) in The Hague in 1898: a landmark exhibition organised by over 500 women.⁷ It combined shows on trade, industry, and applied arts with congresses on women's issues. With over 94,000 visitors the exhibition was a great success.⁸ From the profit of the exhibition the *Nationaal Bureau voor Vrouwenarbeid* (National Bureau of Women's Labour) was founded in 1901. The bureau was supposed to realise the goals set by the *Nationale Vereeniging voor Vrouwenarbeid* (National Union for Women's Labour).⁹ Their main goal was to create a better position for women on the labour market and motivate women to get an education. The director of the bureau was Anna Polak (1874–1943), who was also involved with the organisation of the 1898 exhibition.¹⁰ She was a well-known feminist who frequently wrote for *De Werkende Vrouw* as an expert on social and economic issues. The magazine offered her, and her deputy director Marie Heinen (1881–1948)¹¹ amongst many others, a podium for their opinions on women's issues in relation to marriage law, social status, and most of all their position in the field of work and opportunities for education. Whereas the Dutch government granted women the right to actively vote in 1919, their position in relation to labour and marriage remained subordinate.¹² Because of the worldwide economic crisis at the end to the 1920s, women's emancipation seemed to stagnate. Women were the first to lose their jobs during the crisis, and were seen as a threat to the employment

1 Gerrit Rietveld, "Rapport van de studie-commissie inzake praktische woninginrichting," *De Werkende Vrouw* 1, no. 7–8 (1930), 230; Gerrit Rietveld, "De stoel," *De Werkende Vrouw* 1, no. 9 (1930), 244; Gerrit Rietveld, "Architectuur," *De Werkende Vrouw* 1, no. 11–12 (1930), 316–318.
 2 Elina van Tuinen-Taselaar, *Jacob Bendien 1890–1933* (Utrecht: Centraal Museum; Leeuwarden: Fries Museum, 1985), 9.
 3 Ype Koopmans, "Schenking schilderij Charley Toorop door Arnhem Arts Ambassadors," *Museumkrant Museum voor Moderne kunst Arnhem* (Spring 2010), 2.
 4 Marjan Groot, *Vrouwen in de Vormgeving 1880–1940* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 2007), 405.
 5 Alice T. Friedman, *Women and the Making of the Modern House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 87; Groot, *Vrouwen in de Vormgeving*, 405.

6 B.M.A. de Vries et al., *Van agrarische samenleving tot verzorgingsstaat: Demografie, economie, maatschappij en cultuur in West-Europa, 1450–2000* (Groningen: Martinus Nijhoff Uitgevers, 2000), 375–376.
 7 Maria Greve and Berteke Waaldijk, *Feministische openbaarheid: De nationale tentoonstelling van vrouwenarbeid in 1898* (Amsterdam: Stichting beheer IISG, 1998), 274.
 8 Ibid.
 9 Hélène van der Veer, "Polak, Anna Sofia," in *Biografisch Woordenboek van het Socialisme en de Arbeidersbeweging in Nederland* 3 (1988), 169–172, <http://socialhistory.org/bwsa/biografie/polak-a> (accessed September 10, 2015).
 10 Grever and Waaldijk, *Feministische openbaarheid*, 274.
 11 Marie Heinen presumably wrote under the initials 'M.H.'
 12 De Vries, *Verzorgingsstaat*, 375–376.

status of men.¹³ And even in 1924, a law was passed by the government stating that female public servants would receive an honourable discharge on their wedding day.¹⁴ During the brief existence of *De Werkende Vrouw*, the magazine served as an important medium for feminist theorists and intellectuals such as Polak and Heinen who firmly expressed their opinions on the issues that still remained urgent after the highlight of the first feminist wave.¹⁵ This way, the magazine hoped to be a platform for discussion and dialogue among women, but also to be able to support one and other.

Anna Polak described for instance in 'Ambten voor vrouwen gesloten' ('Occupations closed for women'), the injustice of women still being restricted from certain professions.¹⁶ In her articles on women's labour she also urged women to get a good education and fulfil their true potential since they did not know whether they would marry or whether they could depend on their husbands for the rest of their lives.¹⁷ The articles written by Marie Heinen were meant to give advice to young and unmarried women who wanted to work and lead an independent life in the city. She wrote a column called 'Uit het leven van de werkende vrouw' ('From the life of the working woman'), in which she described in a lively manner the way ambitious women were the pioneers of a new emerging lifestyle.¹⁸ In general, *De Werkende Vrouw* hoped to inspire women to aim for a career, even after they got married. The magazine therefore published a number of interviews with women who succeeded in doing so.¹⁹

An exemplary woman, who was not only interviewed for the magazine, but also submitted two articles herself, was Clara M. Meijers (1885–1964).²⁰ She was an executive secretary for the banking association of Rotterdam, and later became the director for a branch office in Amsterdam.²¹ This new bank was founded especially to serve women, and provided credit to those who wanted to start their own business. The women's bank frequently placed advertisements in *De Werkende Vrouw* (Fig. 2). Meijers also became the secretary for National Union of Soroptimist Clubs in the Netherlands. This rather elite club, a female counterpart for the Rotary service clubs, was founded in 1928 by Rosa Manus –a well-known Jewish feminist– and modelled after the American example. The Dutch Soroptimist Club was intended especially for working women and provided an important network for



Fig. 2. Advertisement placed by the Rotterdamse Bankvereniging in *De Werkende Vrouw* (March 1930) (photographer: Verbeek, with permission of Atria, Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History).

the authors of *De Werkende Vrouw*.²² The group mainly consisted of highly educated upper middle-class women who were involved in the feminist movement. Every single member of the club used to have a different profession, so the network would remain as diverse as possible. Marie Heinen and Truus Schröder-Schröder were, amongst other writers of the magazine, members of the club as well.

Besides the goal of bettering chances for women's economic independence, *De Werkende Vrouw* also supported the idea of enhancing the status of the housewife. This view is expressed in an article written by Anna Polak in which she states that the *Centraal Plan Bureau* (Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis) should consider the full-time housewife as employed instead of unemployed. When the housewives would be registered

as 'employed' by the governmental organisation, they would receive more recognition for the work they performed.²³ The editors of *De Werkende Vrouw* claimed in a statement to want to inspire every working woman, including housewives, through the articles in the magazine. Yet the desire to be able to choose to work outside as well as inside the home during marriage remained the most important goal.

Editor-in-chief An Harrenstein-Schröder was able to attract women who were involved with the leading women's issues organisations in the Netherlands to write for *De Werkende Vrouw*. When the magazine is compared to another Dutch women's journal such as *De Vrouw en haar Huis* (The Woman and her House) the emphasis on women's issues becomes even more clear. The editor-in-chief of this magazine, Elis M. Rogge, and the other writers of the magazine, were also involved with the Soroptimist Club and the exhibition of 1898. Even though they covered many of the same subjects, the approach and tone of the articles in the magazine was slightly different. The relative number of articles on women's labour in *De Werkende Vrouw* was simply larger, more extensive, and came across as more activist and urgent. The writers of *De Vrouw and haar Huis* mentioned and supported some of the latest developments on women's labour but this never became the main issue of the magazine. The realm of the home remained the most important female domain in *Vrouw en haar Huis*, which is, in the end, in contrast to the ideals of *De Werkende Vrouw*.²⁴

13 Amoud Jaspers et al., *Bericht uit 1929: Het veelzijdige gezicht van de Nederlandse samenleving ten tijde van de oprichting van het PTT Museum* (Den Haag: Stichting Het Nederlandse PTT Museum, 1989), 33.

14 Anna Polak, "De Nederlandsche gehuwde vrouw in overheidsdienst," *De Werkende Vrouw* 1, no. 9 (1930), 236.

15 Friedman, *Modern House*, 87.

16 Anna Polak, "Ambten voor vrouwen gesloten," *De Werkende Vrouw* 1, no. 5 (1930), 136.

17 Anna Polak, "Vrouwenarbeid II," *De Werkende Vrouw* 1, no. 3 (1930), 71.

18 M.H. [Marie Heinen], "Uit het leven van een werkende vrouw," *De Werkende Vrouw* 1, no. 1–2 (1930), 37–38.

19 S.J.P., "Een vrouw als bedrijfsleidster," *De Werkende Vrouw* 1, no. 1–2 (1930), 4–6.

20 Clara Meijers, "Een internationale voorlichtingsdienst voor werkende vrouwen," *De Werkende Vrouw* 1, no. 7–8 (1930), 187; Clara Meijers, "Een vrouw, die slaagde," *De Werkende Vrouw* 1, no. 9 (1930), 249–250.

21 Francisca de Haan, *Gender and the politics of office work, the Netherlands 1860–1940* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), 91.

22 Groot, *Vrouwen in de Vormgeving*, 209.

23 Anna Polak, "Wordt het huisvrouwschap officieel als beroep beschouwd?," *De Werkende Vrouw* 1, no. 10 (1930), 262.

24 Groot, *Vrouwen in de Vormgeving*, 38.

The Working Women and Fashion

In their article 'Conceptualizing fashion in everyday lives' design- and fashion historians, Cheryl Buckley and Hazel Clark, argue that research of the history of clothing of daily life is just as important as the study of avant-garde fashion. The traditional focus of study lies with exclusive and exceptional couture fashion worn by the wealthy elite and therefore the clothing worn by 'ordinary' women might end up being overlooked. Yet for the 1920s and 1930s, everyday fashion has historical value within the context of modernity and mass-consumption. Because of female mass magazine readership, fashion prints reached middle class women on a weekly or monthly basis and influenced the way women behaved as consumers on a large scale. More importantly, fashion can be seen as an instrument for women to define themselves and consciously or unconsciously create their identities within the context of their social groups.²⁵

It is with this argument in mind that it is interesting to analyse the fashion images and articles of *De Werkende Vrouw* in relation to the identity of the target audience. Who were those working women exactly, and what did they wear and for what reason? As Marie Heinen described in her advice columns, young women with urban jobs formed a new social phenomenon. In the decade prior to the publication of *De Werkende Vrouw* a new look had emerged in the cities of the Netherlands: *la garçonne*. This boyish look with short hair and skirt became the symbol of the young and spirited career woman who had fought her way into the workplace and public sphere.²⁶ In the fashion items of *De Werkende Vrouw* this look can be seen frequently. The magazine featured fashion illustrations and articles almost on a monthly basis, displaying not only the latest trends for the season but different types of workwear as well. The first edition of *De Werkende Vrouw* in 1930 showed three different types of practical professional clothing: an illustration of an apron, a woman gardener wearing dungarees and a woman wearing culottes (Fig. 3). The text explained what kind of work they were suited for and in what kind of fabrics

they were supposed to be made. The culottes for instance were suggested as suitable attire for gymnastics teachers. Besides outfits to work in, the magazine also showed some sportswear to

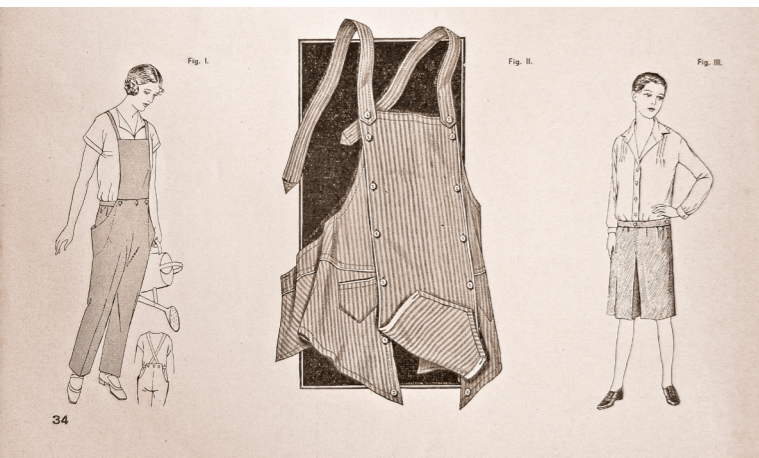


Fig. 3. Illustrations of 'Praktische beroepskleding' ('Practical workwear') in *De Werkende Vrouw* (January-February 1930) (photographer: Verbeek, with permission of Atria, Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History).



Fig. 4. Illustration of sportswear in *De Werkende Vrouw*, 1930 (photographer: Verbeek, with permission of Atria, Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History).

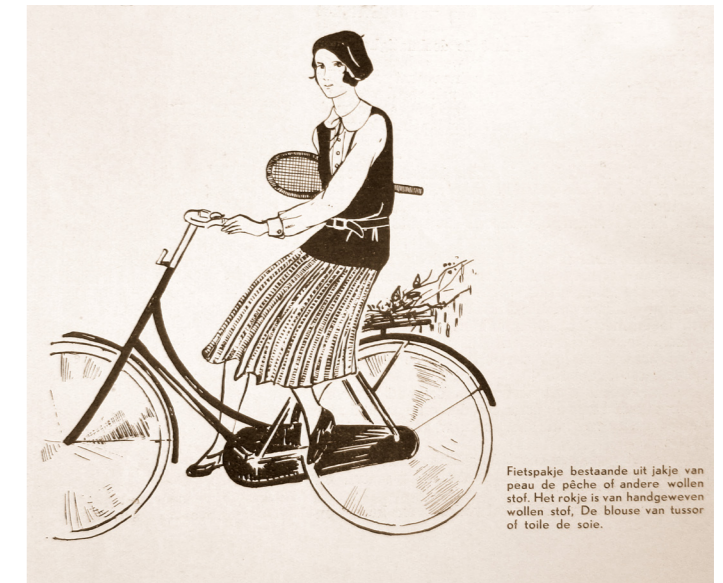


Fig. 5. Fashion illustration in *De Werkende Vrouw*, 1930 (photographer: Verbeek, with permission of Atria, Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History).

play hockey with or ride a bike in (Figs. 4 and 5). In context of the professional clothing and the sportswear the fashion illustrators of *De Werkende Vrouw* showed women wearing trousers. Katina Bill explains in her article on the evolution of trousers in the twentieth century that the general attitude towards women wearing trousers was still quite hostile.²⁷ The idea that trousers were still not completely free of controversy is supported by fashion historian, Elizabeth Wilson, in her book *Adorned in Dreams*.²⁸ Still, wearing trousers became slowly more acceptable after First World War, and it had a symbolic as well as a sportive and functional utility. According to Wilson, wearing trousers became a symbol of the striving for equality, and the increasing freedom of women and modernity. But at the same time, she argues, while women remained unequal, trousers also symbolise the myth of emancipation, for it was only acceptable to wear trousers on certain occasions (such as physical labour and sports).²⁹ Moreover, from a gender perspective, wearing trousers remained problematic because it also exposed the fact that the progress women made was only possible by adopting male values and terms, such as their way of dressing.

The way *De Werkende Vrouw* represented women in their fashion illustration is significant in relation to their ideals. For instance: in the complete 1930 run of *De Vrouw en haar Huis* not one single woman in trousers was shown, neither women working nor playing sports. Fashion had a larger

²⁵ Cheryl Buckley and Hazel Clark, "Conceptualizing Fashion in Everyday Lives," *Design Issues* 28, no. 4 (2012), 18, 22 and 28.

²⁶ De Vries, *Verzorgingsstaat*, 378.

²⁷ Katina Bill, "Attitudes Towards Women's Trousers: Britain in the 1930's," *Journal of Design History* 6, no. 1 (1993), 47 and 54.

²⁸ Elisabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: Virago Press, 1985), 164–166.

²⁹ Wilson, *Dreams*, 165.



Fig. 6. Fashion illustration in *De Werkende Vrouw* (September 1930) (photographer: Verbeek, with permission of Atria, Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History).



Fig. 7. Fashion illustration in *De Werkende Vrouw* (October 1930) (photographer: Verbeek, with permission of Atria, Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History).

share in the content of this magazine, but the illustrations usually showed fashion for at home or in the theatre.³⁰ Women were more often depicted at home with their children, and on fewer occasions were seen outside. Representing women at work, outside or playing sports can be seen as a way for *De Werkende Vrouw* to communicate their ideals through their fashion content. This way, the magazine distinguished itself from *De Vrouw en haar Huis*. Even more so because both magazines were read by the same type of audience: bourgeois women from the upper middle-class, such as An Harrenstein-Schröder and Clara Meijers. This is reflected and confirmed in the rather luxurious fashions that were shown in both magazines. *De Werkende Vrouw* showcased, for instance, clothing for three different moments of the day (Fig. 6) and executed in expensive materials such as a chic fur collar and a leather coat (Fig. 7). This type of wardrobe was only affordable for women with a reasonable income, such as Harrenstein-Schröder who was supported by her husband who worked as a doctor.³¹ Nevertheless, it remained important for the editors of the magazine to include their social ideals and to also represent the working woman in their fashion illustrations.

³⁰ *De Vrouw en haar Huis* (1930), 482–485.

³¹ Ype Koopmans, "Architectuur – Schilderkunst – Beeldhouwkunst: Nieuwe Beelding en Nieuwe Zakelijkheid," *Arnhemse Cahiers* 6 (2004), 13.

The Working Woman and Her Home

What makes *De Werkende Vrouw* interesting in relation to design history of the 1930s is the attention the magazine paid to the home in general and avant-garde interior in particular. In the last part of this paper I will analyse how the social ideals of the magazine were reflected in the presented interior and argue that the influence of An Harrenstein was crucial to this. The articles on the modern home were mainly published in the year 1930, when An Harrenstein-Schröder was in charge of the magazine. In the November-December issue of that year, an announcement was made that in 1931 the magazine would be led by a different group of editors. Although it was not explained in the magazine, the presumable reason for her departure was the fact that she fell ill during 1930.³² Her absence made her influence on the character of the magazine clear: the combination of feminist ideals and avant-garde interior was suddenly relinquished in 1931. The articles on design by Truus Schröder-Schröder and Gerrit Rietveld were therefore only published in 1930. Even though content on labour and women's rights did not change much, the magazine showed a different and far more traditional interior to its readers (Fig. 8). It becomes clear that the way An Harrenstein presented the modern interior to a bourgeois female audience was what distinguished the magazine from others at this time.

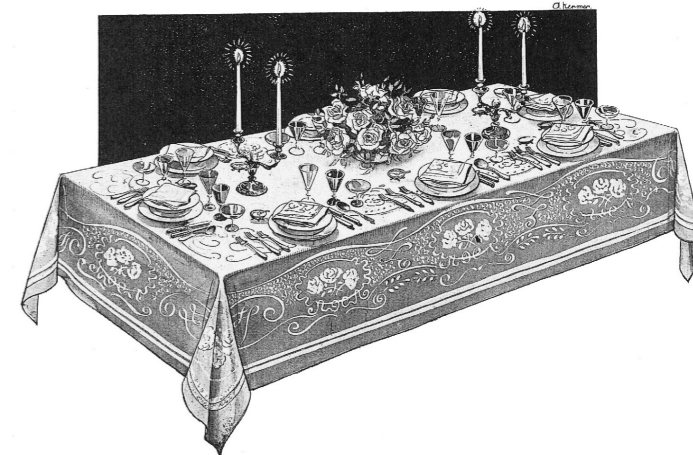


Fig. 8. An example of the interior *De Werkende Vrouw* showed in 1931, after the departure of An Harrenstein (May-June 1931) (photographer: Verbeek, with permission of Atria, Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History).

Harrenstein was an art critic who surrounded herself with avant-garde artists such as Charley Toorop, Jacob Bendien, Kurt Schwitters, César Domela and El Lissitzky. Her home served as a meeting place for these artists.³³ In the article 'Een inleidend woord tot binnen architectuur' ('A preface to interior decoration') written by Truus Schröder, this particular home was discussed and a few photographs were featured (Fig. 9).³⁴ In 1926, the bedroom of the home was redesigned by Schröder and Rietveld, in a similar style as the Rietveld Schröder House they realized in 1924. In *De Werkende Vrouw* they both shared their vision on interior, furniture and architecture in several articles. Schröder explained in the above-mentioned article that she felt that the most important quality of an interior was that the inhabitant should feel activated and uplifted by it. Like art, the space should create an

³² Koopmans, "Schenking," 2.

³³ Tuinen-Taselaar, *Bendien*, 9.

³⁴ Truus Schröder-Schröder, "Een inleidend woord tot binnen architectuur," *De Werkende Vrouw* 1, no. 3 (1930), 93–94.

awareness. When the inhabitant had a busy life, the home should stimulate focus instead of creating passivity. Rietveld shared a similar kind of view in his article "Architectuur" ('Architecture'). He states that the interior should be bright and clear, in order to regain energy and to be able to process the many impressions of modern life.³⁵ In the articles he wrote for *De Werkende Vrouw* he also held a plea for simplicity. For instance in his text 'De Stoel' ('The Chair') he argues that the chair should be freed from the old-fashioned shapes from the past. New materials and machine-production should make furniture simple and useful again.³⁶

Rietveld and the other De Stijl artists, such as Piet Mondriaan and Theo van Doesburg, believed that their avant-garde design and architecture was able to change one's personal life and therefore influence society as well. The idea behind their modern functionalist aesthetic was socially driven.³⁷ New surroundings would stimulate different behaviour. Their utopian vision on living suggested a more democratic, harmonious and therefore gender-neutral society.³⁸ When Rietveld was commissioned by Truus Schröder to design her new home together, he was able to apply his vision. The inhabitants of the home (Truus was a mother of three children) were almost 'forced' to live actively. Within the home there were solid elements such as the bathroom and the staircase, but many walls were adjustable and rooms were multifunctional. Each room could be opened or closed and the interior was recreated as needed at that moment. This way, Rietveld completely disregarded the traditional division of the home and stimulated a conscious and disciplined lifestyle.³⁹ Furthermore, the transparent exterior and interior of the Schröder House together formed a visual whole. The division between inside and outside was therefore dissolved, and this effect was enhanced by the enormous windows on all sides of the house. The traditional separation of the public and private sphere was therefore reduced. This was a significant difference from the comfortable middle class villa Truus had lived in with her late

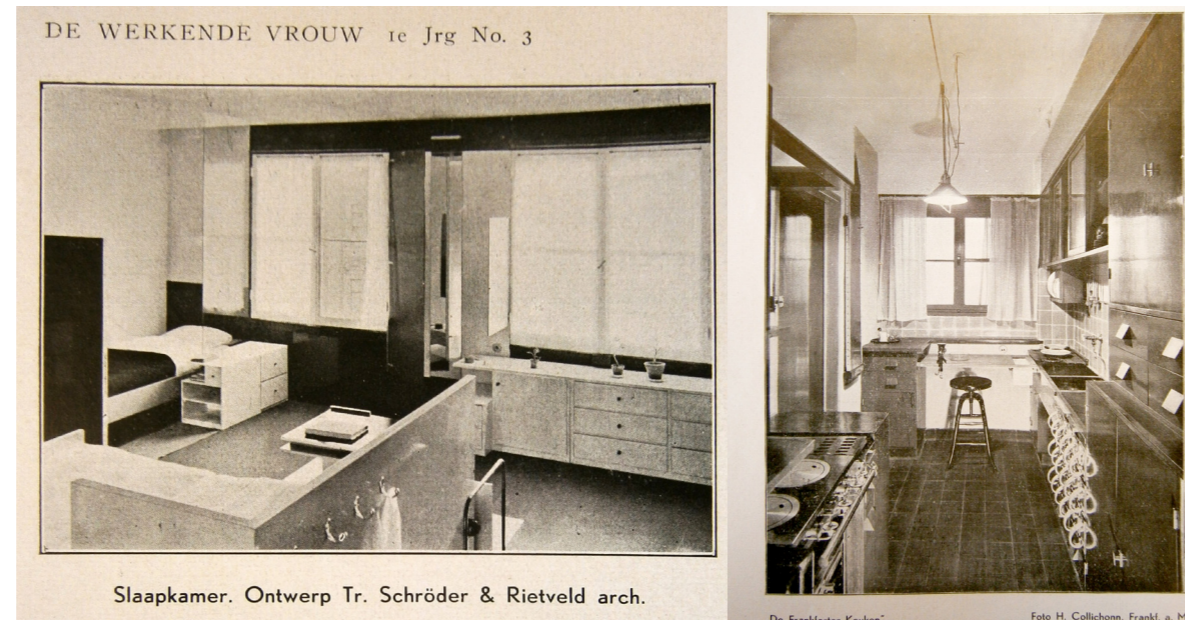


Fig. 9. Photograph of An Harrenstein-Schröders bedroom, designed by Truus Schröder and Gerrit Rietveld in 1926, published in *De Werkende Vrouw* (March 1930) (photographer: Verbeek, with permission of Atria, Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History).

Fig. 10. Photograph of the Frankfurt-Kitchen in *De Werkende Vrouw* (January-February 1930) (photographer: Verbeek, with permission of Atria, Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History).

husband.⁴⁰ Her new home was not a closed-off private space, which was a significant feature of the nineteenth century middle class dwelling. This way, the separation of the male and female sphere (the public and the private) that was dominant in the nineteenth century house was visually lifted in the Schröder House.⁴¹ As the financier and co-designer, Truus Schröder influenced the construction of the house not only in her role as interior designer, but also with her ideas as a woman, mother and housekeeper.

Her thoughts on the rational household were also published in *De Werkende Vrouw*. Truus advocated efficiency and the rational use of the kitchen in several articles, for instance, in her text on the Frankfurt-kitchen, designed by Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky for Ernst May's social housing project in this city (Fig. 10).⁴² The purely functional and laboratory-like kitchen should save the housewife labour and, therefore, time. *De Werkende Vrouw* featured several articles by different authors on the kitchen, electrification, and efficiency in the home in general. The reasoning behind this can be seen as twofold. First and foremost, the time and labour that was saved by this new efficient and rational household could be spent working part-time, outside the home. Secondly, when the kitchen was designed to be a rational working place (based on the logic of the factory or the laboratory), the home was in a way professionalised, which supposedly increased the status of the housewife.⁴³ This was one of the main goals in the articles written by Anna Polak for *De Werkende Vrouw*, and was, thus, reflected in a very practical manner in the articles on the home. The design that was shown in *De Werkende Vrouw*, therefore, broke the boundaries between the male and female sphere in a visual and a practical way.

Penny Sparke analyses taste and design from a gender perspective in her book *As Long as It's Pink: The Sexual Politics of Taste* (1995). She argues that modernity is mainly a male domain where science, technique and rationality are dominant. Architecture and design also belong to this

³⁵ Rietveld, "Architectuur," 317.

³⁶ Rietveld, "De stoel," 244.

³⁷ Penny Sparke, *The Modern Interior* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2008), 172.

³⁸ Nancy Troy, *The De Stijl Environment* (Cambridge Mass.: The MIT Press, 1983), 5.

³⁹ Carel Blotkamp et al., *De vervoljaren van De Stijl 1922–1936* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 1990), 219.

⁴⁰ Sparke, *Modern Interior*, 175.

⁴¹ Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 18.

⁴² Truus Schröder-Schräder, "Wat men door normalisatie in den woningbouw te Frankfort a/d Main heeft bereikt," *De Werkende Vrouw* 1, no. 1–2 (1930), 12–14.

⁴³ Sparke, *Modern Interior*, 134.

sphere.⁴⁴ The opposite of 'design' is 'taste': a gendered concept associated with femininity, consumption and domesticity. This female taste prevailed in the nineteenth century home, where the woman was the beautifier of her 'own' space.⁴⁵ The rational design of the modernist artist and architect completely disregarded this 'bad' bourgeois female taste for it was seen as too irrational, fashionable and frivolous. Architects such as Gerrit Rietveld sought purity and simplicity in their design through rationalisation, standardisation and geometry. In these efficient modernised spaces there was no room for emotion or comfort. 1920s and 1930s modernist design resisted every association with what was seen as feminine (and therefore of a lower status).⁴⁶

Yet these designs, typical for the male domain, were advocated by An Harrenstein and Truus Schröder in *De Werkende Vrouw*. The functionalist aesthetic predominates the articles about the home, but even though the articles were written by women, female designers or architects do not occur as subject matter. The only exception in this case is Schütte-Lihotzky's Frankfurt-kitchen, but Truus Schröder does not emphasize the fact that the kitchen is designed by a woman.

Penny Sparke concludes that male design and rational values eventually replaced the female taste and influence on the interior of the home. In *De Werkende Vrouw* this was celebrated as liberating: the status of the housewife was enhanced, the efficient and electrified home saved time and labour and the separation between inside and outside was removed in the modern home. Yet from a gender perspective this still remains problematic, for women could only achieve equality by adopting male values. By incorporating the 'good' design that replaced the 'bad' bourgeois female taste that was condemned by twentieth century modernists, women still had to conform to a standard that was set by men.

This can be said for both the fashion illustrations and the articles on the home in *De Werkende Vrouw*. On the other hand, these new fashion and interior styles offered a more active, equal and free life to women such as An Harrenstein and Truus Schröder. This way *De Werkende Vrouw* presented an interesting combination of feminist goals and design for the modern, educated, working woman. An Harrenstein was therefore responsible for a unique and brief encounter between the Dutch modernist and the women's rights movement.

Appendices

Year	Edition	Month	Pages
I (1930)	1-2	January – February	1-64
I (1930)	3	March	68-95
I (1930)	4	April	99-127
I (1930)	5	May	129-156
I (1930)	6	June	157-183
I (1930)	7-8	July-August	186-232
I (1930)	9	September	233-256
I (1930)	10	October	259-284
I (1930)	11-12	November – December	287-332
II (1931)	1	January	1-24
II (1931)	2	February	25-48
II (1931)	3-4	March – April	49-80
II (1931)	5-6	May – June	83-120
II (1931)	7-8-9	July – August– September	122-160

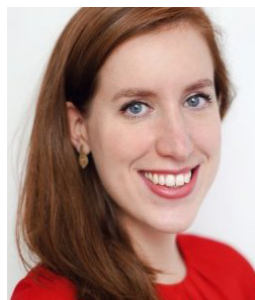
Table 1. Overview of the editions of *De Werkende Vrouw* 1930–31.

44 Penny Sparke, *As Long as It's Pink: The Sexual Politics of Taste* (London: Pandora/Harper Collins, 1995), 74.

45 Sparke, *Sexual Politics*, 109–111.

46 Sherry B. Ortner, 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?' *Feminist Studies* (Autumn 1972), 5–31.

Naomi Verbeek, MA
Leiden University



In 2014 Naomi Verbeek obtained her master's degree in Arts and Culture at Leiden University. Within this master's program she specialised in the history of design and decorative arts. Her main interest lies in the study of nineteenth and twentieth century design, fashion and art from a gender perspective. She also obtained a master's degree (cum laude) in teaching art history. She currently works as a gallery assistant at Kunstconsult in Amstelveen and as an educator and researcher at the Peace Palace in The Hague.

E-mail: nrverbeek@gmail.com

