

The kitchen turn in Socialist Yugoslavia: Women, materiality, and (un)paid labor, 1950s-1970s

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Abstract

The article shows the trajectory of Yugoslav kitchen design between early 1950s and early 1970s, from its pathbreaking emergence within home economics institutions and women's organizations to mass production, commercialization, and popularization by the furniture industry. Centered on two case studies –the Swedish kitchen designed by Branka Tancig in 1954 and Cocktail 68, designed by Biala Leban in 1968– the article explores temporal and qualitative changes in Yugoslav kitchenscapes with several critical junctions –women's activism, home economics, kitchen design, and women's (un)paid labor. We argue that the initial expert focus on producing simplified, efficient kitchens for modern households has been transformed in the light of economic, social, and artistic changes from the mid-1960s into an industry-driven promotion of elaborate and colorful kitchen designs. This transformation, however, should not be seen in a dichotomic manner; although the differences in design were strongly linked to changing materialities, and their symbolic values while promoting an entirely dissimilar type of user, all were a result of efforts in standardization and modernization driven by Yugoslav women's professional activities in architecture, design, and home economics. By weaving together these different themes, we bring new insights into the history of Yugoslav design, materiality, science, women's expertise, organizing labor, and transnationalism in the 1950s and 1960s.

Keywords: kitchen, home economics, design, materiality, gender, Socialist Yugoslavia.

Résumé

Cet article illustre l'évolution du design des cuisines en Yougoslavie entre le début des années 1950 et le début des années 1970, à partir de son apparition inédite au sein d'institutions d'arts ménagers et d'organisations de femmes, jusqu'à sa production en série, sa commercialisation et sa popularisation par l'industrie du meuble. En nous focalisant sur deux études de cas : la cuisine « Suède » conçue par Branka Tancig en 1954 ainsi que « Cocktail 68 » conçue par Biala Leban en 1968, nous étudions les changements temporels et qualitatifs dans les *kitchenscapes* de Yougoslavie à la croisée des sujets suivants : activisme des femmes, arts ménagers, design de cuisines, travail (non) rémunéré des femmes. Nous soutenons que l'objectif initial des experts de produire des cuisines simplifiées et efficaces pour les ménages modernes s'est transformé, à la lumière des changements économiques, sociaux et artistiques survenus à partir du milieu des années 1960, en une promotion industrielle de modèles de cuisine élaborés et colorés. Cette transformation ne peut toutefois être réduite à une dichotomie. En effet, bien que les différences de conception soient étroitement liées à l'évolution des matérialités et de leurs valeurs symboliques, tout en promouvant un genre d'utilisateur entièrement différent, ces disparités résultent des efforts de normalisation et de modernisation accomplis par les activités professionnelles des femmes yougoslaves dans les domaines de l'architecture, de la conception et des arts ménagers. En montrant les liens entre ces différents thèmes, nous proposons de nouvelles perspectives sur l'histoire du design yougoslave, de la matérialité, de la science, de l'expertise des femmes, de l'organisation du travail et du transnationalisme dans les années 1950 et 1960.

Mots-clés : cuisines, arts ménagers, design, matérialités, genre, Yougoslavie socialiste.

Introduction

Our household in the broadest sense –apartment maintenance, all-round care for family members– is undoubtedly backward. This especially applies to household work in the narrow sense, work in the kitchen, which comes first and is most indispensable in everyday life (Ravnikar 1954, 3).

Modernization of household work should begin with improving the central space where this work takes place within the individual confines of the home –the kitchen. This was the claim made in the early 1950s by the Yugoslav Centers for Household Improvement (CNG), which were established by the League of Women’s Associations of Yugoslavia to professionally engage in modernization of households.¹ For Yugoslav women’s organizations in the 1950s and 1960s, outdated households –with their overly large kitchens full of clunky furniture– were the main cause of women’s insufficient participation in the social and political life of the country. In contrast, modern households meant less work for women within the home and in turn more freedom for work outside the home, both wage labor and socio-political work in the Yugoslav self-management system (“Vaspitanje i rasterećenje radne žene” 1953, 14). This crucial change was advocated as an emancipatory step towards the equal status of women in Yugoslav society, which despite legal measures was in this period still not taking ground in different aspects of everyday life.²

Some of the first kitchen models were designed, exhibited, and serially produced in the early 1950s by Yugoslav CNGs. By the early 1970s, they became staple consumer goods produced by Yugoslav furniture and domestic appliance enterprises. The article shows the trajectory of Yugoslav kitchen design between early 1950s and early 1970s, from its pathbreaking emergence within the home economics framework of CNGs towards mass production, commercialization, and popularization by the furniture industry. Emphasis is placed on the knowledge and material production of kitchens, and particularly focuses on the role of designers –understood as “vanguard figure[s]” (Freeman 2004, 16) in the creation of visual languages that express and shape aspirations and values– and the objects, approached through a close reading of their material transformations.

¹ In the decentralized Yugoslav administration, *Centers for Household Improvement* [Centri za napredek gospodinjstva, CNG] existed on the republic, county, and municipal levels. In the article, we focus mainly on the Slovenian and Croatian centers. The League of Women’s Associations of Yugoslavia was established in 1953, and in 1961 it was succeeded by the Conference for the Social Activity of Yugoslav Women.

² The load of wage labor, household work, and socio-political work was later interpreted by scholars as the “triple burden” (Bonfilgioli 2020).

By paying close attention to the shifting relationship between theoretical and material production of Yugoslav kitchens across different interest groups, the article reveals the economic, social, and cultural concerns related to (un)paid labor, gender, housing, industrialization, and everyday life under Yugoslav self-managed socialism in the 1950s and 1960s.³ We argue that the initial expert focus on producing simplified, efficient kitchens for modern households transformed in the light of economic, social and artistic changes from the mid-1960s into an industry-driven promotion of elaborate and colorful kitchen designs. This transformation, however, should not be seen in a dichotomic manner; although the differences in design were strongly linked to changing materialities and their symbolic values while promoting an entirely dissimilar type of user, all were a result of efforts in standardization and modernization driven by Yugoslav women’s professional activities in architecture, design, and home economics.

Until now the research on Yugoslav socialist domesticities mostly focused on architects and urban planners, flagship mass housing projects, and housing policies (Le Normand 2014; Blagojević 2007; Topham 1990; Križić-Roban 2012). A more specific look into the history of Yugoslav kitchen design is provided by Slovenian art historians and ethnologists Martina Malešić, Mirjana Koren and Špela Ledinek Lozej, whose informative works deal with the Slovenian context as the Yugoslav republic with arguably the most developed furniture industry. By building on these insights from architectural and design history, we utilize a broader analytical scope centered on domestic materialities. Privileging materiality encourages a constant recourse to the economical side of the story –the price, commodification, and affordability of kitchen products, but also the question of household chores and reproductive work. Materialist feminism, an updated Marxist position focused on power relations in discursive and material practices, offers a robust theoretical framework expanded with recent emphasis on the production of meaning through contact and entanglement (Hennessy 1993, xi; Coleman et al. 2019). Centering materialities also adds a decisively sensory dimension to the history of domesticities and welcomes insights from the history of the body inhabiting kitchenscapes. Materialist feminism exemplifies that materiality and discourse are closely intertwined (Hennessy 1993). Materiality is always mediated, be it through media accounts and circulating images or through the interaction between the kitchen space and the body. To make sense of Yugoslav domestic materialities, we also examine the narratives and images that co-constitute the domestic matter.

³ For more information on the self-management system, see Musić 2011.

Our research explores a range of sources that reveal the material changes in Yugoslav kitchens from the early 1950s to the early 1970s, a period characterized by all-encompassing modernization (Kolešnik 2012), economic liberalization (Duda 2005; 37-71) and the consumerist “expansion of Yugoslav dream” (Patterson 2011, 264). By narrowing domestic materialities down to the kitchen, we discuss two models reflective of the period’s scope of commercial success, design, and industrial framework –the Swedish kitchen designed by Branka Tancig in 1954 and Cocktail 68, designed by Biala Leban in 1968.⁴ Tancig’s kitchen was produced by the Maribor Furniture Factory, which in 1960 integrated with several other enterprises into Marles, one of the most well-known Yugoslav furniture companies specializing in kitchens (Koren 2020, 88). While Tancig worked for the Slovenian CNG, Leban was a longstanding employee of Marles. Consequently, Tancig’s kitchen primarily appeared in professional publications, household manuals and popular science literature, while Leban’s kitchen was featured in advertorial materials, such as the 9-minute promotional film *Love goes through the kitchen* [Ljubezen gre skozi kuhinjo, 1972] and in *Our home* [Naš dom] the leading Yugoslav magazine for housing culture.

Our choice of sources provides crucial clues about the transformations of Yugoslav kitchenscapes in their transition from the scientific to the commercial sphere. In following these transitions, the article explores temporal and qualitative changes in several critical junctions –women’s activism, home economics, kitchen design, and women’s (un)paid labor. The first section explores the emergence of initial kitchen designs in the context of Yugoslav women’s organizations’ emancipatory agenda to modernize household work, and in this way contributes to the still under-researched topic of state-socialist women’s activism from the 1950s.⁵ The following sections then zoom more closely into the theoretical and physical development of Tancig’s Swedish kitchen, and reveal its transformation into the elaborate, colorful and luxurious kitchens from the mid-1960s, particularly exemplified by Leban’s work for Marles. The final section highlights the way that the changes in kitchenscapes and their materialities were linked to different visions of (mostly female) users and consumers, and the gendered circumstances of unpaid as well as paid labor connected to kitchens.

⁴ Branka Tancig (Ljubljana, 1927-2013) was an architect and designer from Slovenia. She graduated in 1954 from the Technical University in Ljubljana with a thesis on contemporary kitchens and was soon after employed at the Slovenian CNG and as a teacher at the Higher School for Home Economics in Groblje (Malešič 2020a, 212). Designer Biala Leban (1929) was also a graduate of the Technical University in Ljubljana. Since the 1950s she worked in different Slovenian furniture enterprises, and from 1965 at Marles, where she designed several awarded kitchens (Koren 2020, 92).

⁵ In the 1950s and early 1960s, women’s organizations in Yugoslavia exercised “multifaceted efforts in modernizing household through professionalization and institutionalization of expertise, general and specialized education, and popularization in the public sphere” (Žimbrek 2023). Recent research on Yugoslav women’s organizations in the 1970s and 1980s (Bonfiglioli 2022) demonstrates “discursive and biographical continuities between the AFŽ and subsequent women’s organizations” (Bonfiglioli and Žerić 2022, 83).

By weaving together these different themes, we bring new insights into the history of Yugoslav design, materiality, science, women’s expertise, organizing, labor, and transnationalism in the 1950s and 1960s.

1. Relieving the double burden: Home economics in socialist Yugoslavia

The first professional proposals for modern kitchens in Socialist Yugoslavia emerged from the women’s organizations’ emancipatory agenda to modernize household work. From the early 1950s a crucial component in the professionalization and institutionalization of these efforts represented the establishment of first CNGs, which by 1960 numbered around 124 institutions throughout the country (“Družina in gospodinjstvo 1960” 1960, 132).⁶ These centers became hubs for the scientific, interdisciplinary development of households based on home economics, a discipline which applied principles of efficiency and rationality from scientific management and Taylorism to improve household work, domestic appliances, homes, and neighborhoods (Hayden 1987, 10). After emerging in the late 19th century (Williams Rutheford 2003, 37-38), home economics flourished in interwar Europe, where it brought together women experts and architectural and housing movements, with the aim to either improve the role of women as homemakers or liberate them from the double burden of household work (Nolan 1994, 206-26; Freeman 2004, 26). Homemakers who aspired towards “a managerial (literally, steering) function” and exercised “the extension of the female gaze to oversee a male profession” (Meister 2022, 17-18) started to appear.

Kitchens were early on a prominent preoccupation of home economists, starting from the foundational texts of Catherine Beecher, Christine Frederick, and Lilian M. Gilbreth (Ledinek Lozej 2016, 128-129; Surmann 2017, 50-51). The materialization of decades of theoretical and scientific work peaked in the now emblematic Frankfurt kitchen, designed in 1926 by Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky. Although not the only project in this period, the Frankfurt kitchen represents a milestone in the history of kitchen design, based on its innovativeness, mass-production, and world-wide influence, which extended into the period after the Second World War (Ledinek Lozej 2016, 130-133; Surmann 2017, 52; Freeman 2004, 38-39; Akcan 2009, 185-207). Probably the most notable evolution of the Frankfurt kitchen is the so-called Swedish kitchen, which was developed by the Swedish housing cooperative HSB in the 1950s and quickly became the most popular type of mass produced fitted kitchen (Surmann 2017, 53).

⁶ *Arhiv Jugoslavije* (AJ) [Archive of Yugoslavia], 354. *Savez ženskih društava Jugoslavije* [Alliance of Women’s Associations of Yugoslavia], 7. *Aktivnosti u društvu i porodici* [Activities in the Association and Family].

Home economics also flourished in interwar Yugoslavia and was continued by the Yugoslav women’s organizations in the postwar period (Ledinek-Lozej 2016, 138; Horvat 2021, 32-33). Their vision of modern households was based on the socialization of household work through welfare and commercial services in housing communities, and technological advancement within the home provided by the Yugoslav industry. Although imagined as complementary, the efforts between advancing household work within and outside the home, between liberalizing and confining powers of mechanization, and between individual or social consumption remained in tension until the economic reforms in 1965. The introduction of market mechanisms into the decentralized and self-managed economic system that was already prioritizing light industry and increases in consumption and the living standard was then “finally rolled out as an official partyline popularly known as ‘market socialism’” (Musić 2011, 182). With the increasing dominance of profit-making and the transfer of social services to enterprise levels (Musić 2011, 183), many of the organization’s initiatives in socialization of household work lost their economic and social appeal in competition with individual consumption. By the end of the 1960s CNGs were restructured or closed, while women’s organizations continued their emancipatory work by shifting the focus to health, welfare, family planning, and child-rearing.⁷

Part and parcel of these transformations was the industrial production of consumer goods, which in the case of furniture and domestic appliances implied a move from artisanal manufacture and import towards mass production by local enterprises. Although first kitchen models in the early 1950s were designed by CNGs in cooperation with local furniture factories, in the span of two decades the design, production and commercialization of furniture and appliances became a realm of Yugoslav furniture enterprises, such as Svea, Marles, Meblo, Brest, and Lesnina. It is no mere coincidence that all mentioned producers were based in Slovenia. According to Radmila Milosavljević, an iconic household advisor and member of *Dizajn centar* founded in 1972 in Belgrade, “Slovenian products were definitely the best” (Borovnjak 2015). The furniture market in this way also reflected intra-Yugoslav economic inequalities. The industrial takeover was fast –after opening a new factory in 1965, Marles stopped producing traditional kitchen models and focused solely on mass produced kitchens (Koren 2020, 86). The transformations in the planning, design and manufacture of kitchens were embedded in the transition from the expert, socially oriented sphere of women’s organizations and home economics to commercial industrial production.

⁷ *Hrvatski državni arhiv* (HDA) [Croatian State Archives]. 1234 *Konferencija za društvenu aktivnost žena, 13. Unaprjeđenje domaćinstva* (1963-71) [Conference for social activity of women, 13. Improvement of the household (1963-71)]. See also Bonfiglioli, Žerić 2023.

2. Kitchen role model: The Swedish kitchen

In the mid-1950s a prominent milestone both in Yugoslav kitchen design and the home economists’ activities in modernizing household work was achieved by Branka Tancig and her version of the Swedish kitchen. Tancig’s model appeared in a period characterized by a lack of clear consensus among the home economists and architects on how to properly conceptualize the kitchen. Under the Soviet influence –which started promoting individual mechanized kitchens only from the late 1950s (Ruscitti Harshman 2016, 219-226; Reid 2002, 223-228)– some of the first postwar Yugoslav housing blocs in the late 1940s included a communal kitchen. Common were also apartments with kitchenettes, which were mostly added as niches to living rooms (Križić-Roban 2012, 59). These kitchen types, however, never became popular with most architects and users (Ledinek-Lozej 2016, 138). The efforts to improve community catering (Duda 2019, 53-72) –in public cafeterias, workplaces, and schools– also ran parallel to the design of individual kitchens instead of trying to replace them. Yugoslav home economists never advocated for the communalization or eradication of kitchen space, but rather for its modernization (“Radne žene i majke: savjetovanje s arhitektima” 1950). An important question for them was whether to adopt the spirit of the Frankfurt kitchen and conceptualize the kitchen as “a working room where one does not stay after cooking”, or rather as a residential space for other aspects of family life (*Ibid.*).

The first steps in favor of the former proposal were taken by Branka Tancig and her rationalized, white-painted kitchen, designed to reduce unnecessary movements and steps, and include adaptable, standardized furniture and domestic appliances (Ravnikar 1954, 4). An early serially produced model by the Slovenian CNG, Tancig’s Swedish kitchen (**Figures 1, 2**) for three-four family members included four kitchen units (the complete version had thirteen), an integrated refrigerator and combined cooker, and an ergonomically adapted working area that took up only 2,80 m width of kitchen space (Malešič 2020a, 212; “Stanovanje za naše razmere” 1956, 162; “Kuhinja Centralnega zavoda za napredek gospodinjstva” 1956, 113). After receiving popular exposure at several Yugoslav housing exhibitions, Tancig’s kitchen was built into 270 new apartments in Ljubljana, Maribor and Kočevje with modest success, partly due to dwellers’ inexperience with furniture assembly (Koren 2020, 87).⁸ Tancig’s designs were, however, able to spread throughout Yugoslavia not necessarily as objects, but

⁸ Tancig’s kitchen was displayed at the exhibition “Housing for our conditions” [*Stan za naše prilike*] in 1956 in Ljubljana and the second “Family and Household” [*Porodica i domačinstvo*] exhibition in 1958 in Zagreb. Both were co-organized by the Yugoslav women’s organizations to highlight the best way to modernize households through new housing designs and organization of life in housing communities (“Stanovanje za naše razmere” 1956, 161-162; Tepina 1957, 9; Ledinek-Lozej 2016, 139).

rather through her several published manuals on kitchen and interior design and the implementation of the Swedish kitchen standards into the federal and republic norms for housing construction officialized during the 1960s (Ledinek-Lozej 2016, 138-139; Malešič 2020a, 21; Koren 2020; Beltram 1958, 104).

Tancig’s design conceptualized a kitchen intended solely for household work, which was in opposition to some voices in the women’s organizations who still advocated for spacious kitchens where the rest of family life, particularly childcare, could take place (Ravnikar 1954, 4; “Radne žene i majke: savjetovanje s arhitektima” 1950). Architect Jelena Minić pointed out that, although “it is also theoretically correct to build small kitchens,” given the conditions of household work in Yugoslavia, where ready-made, canned food, washing machines or institutions for childcare are not widely available, “the kitchen space must be bigger” (Minić 1953, 37). This remark reveals the negotiation between theory and practice, the socialist home economics’ long-term goal to modernize household work, and users’ preferences in circumstances when the technology, infrastructure and institutions needed for modernization and socialization were still underdeveloped.

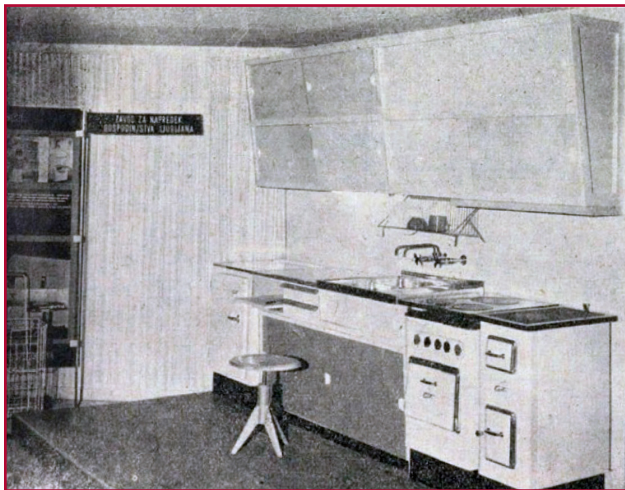


Figure 1. Branka Tancig, kitchen displayed at the exhibition “Housing for our conditions”, Ljubljana, 1956. © Photo by Janez Kališnik. Source: *Čovjek i prostor* 52: cover.

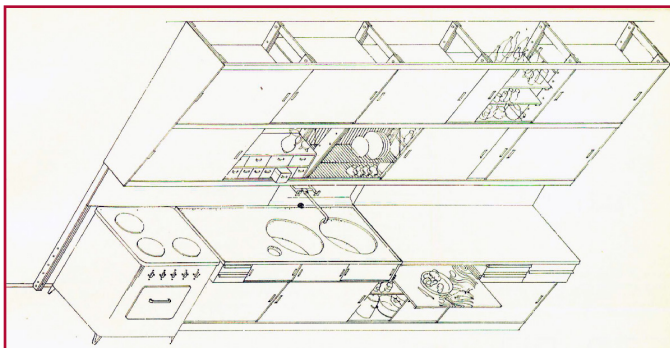


Figure 2. Branka Tancig, kitchen-drawing, 1953. Source: *Arhitekt* 9: 15..

From the mid-1950s, however, the CNGs more unanimously advocated the Swedish kitchen. In May 1954, the Croatian CNG organized a design competition for kitchen furniture for a mid-size blue and white-collar family. The first prize was given to Ivo Bartolić, whose kitchen (**Figure 3**) –reliant on the model from West Germany’s AEG– was the only one to fulfill the criteria of “seriality, functionality, cost-efficiency, adaptability, constructiveness, solidity, use of materials, aesthetic appearance, and new ideas” (“Kuhinjski namještaj” 1954, 6). The kitchen –eventually produced by the Ivo Marinković furniture factory from Osijek– was available in four different sizes and units always placed in a single row (“Suvremena kuhinja” 1955, 8; “Pokućstvo na našem tržištu” 1956, 4-5). The preference for the Swedish kitchen expressed both the agenda of modernizing household work as well as economic, social, and urban concerns in the 1950s. As the slogan of the exhibition Modern Kitchens for Our Households – organized by the Croatian CNG in Zagreb in 1955 –stated, “[t]o make the homemakers’ work easier: save time and movement; to relieve the housing fund: reduce the kitchen space” (“Suvremena kuhinja” 1955, 6; “Kuhinja” 1955, 6). The Swedish kitchen therefore corresponded to the period’s housing crisis, and the need to use the state’s limited financial means to quickly provide housing for a growing urban population. In these circumstances, the smaller, streamlined, and standardized kitchen was promoted as more affordable and easier to fit into apartments in new neighborhoods (Koren 2020, 87).

Towards the end of 1950s, CNGs continued to work on developing and popularizing kitchens, both individual and public, with a particular emphasis on the Swedish kitchen. The educational and popularization efforts made in the sphere of kitchen design, however, targeted not only Yugoslav consumers but also the industry, which was supposed to produce the recommended furniture and influence citizens to buy it (Ravnikar 1954, 4-5). In the first half of the decade, the furniture industry was particularly criticized for clinging to outdated consumer taste and producing cumbersome and kitschy furniture to achieve successful sales. Instead, the CNGs believed that the furniture industry should steer consumer preferences toward what was considered scientifically and economically superior standardized, minimalist furniture, more appropriate for the consumers and for industrial mass production. This kind of kitchen furniture was therefore necessary to “urgently improve the urban working woman’s position in a cramped apartment” as well as contribute to the state’s new economic agenda of increasing the living standard through mass production of consumer goods and apartments (Duda 2005, 44-47; “Dom i industrija” 1956, 6).

The pace of cooperation between the CNGs and furniture enterprises accelerated towards the late 1950s, when companies also started to independently produce Swedish

kitchens. The earliest mass-produced kitchen in Yugoslavia was Svea (Figure 4), a Swedish kitchen model designed in 1960 by Marta and France Ivanšek (Malešič 2015). With enveloping smooth, light blue surfaces, Svea consisted of units that could be multiplied or rearranged, as long as they were placed in a single-row and followed the sequence of preparation, cooking and cleaning that Frederick and Gilbreth defined as the three main components of kitchen-work (Surmann 2017, 50; “Natečaj za sodobno jugoslovansko pohištvo” 1960, 95). Produced by the enterprise Zagorje ob Savi, which was later renamed after its popular product, Svea marked the popularization of the Swedish kitchen. In 1962, Marles responded by buying the license from the Slovenian CNG to produce Swedish kitchens and named its technically improved version “the modern kitchen” (Koren 2020, 87, 90-91).

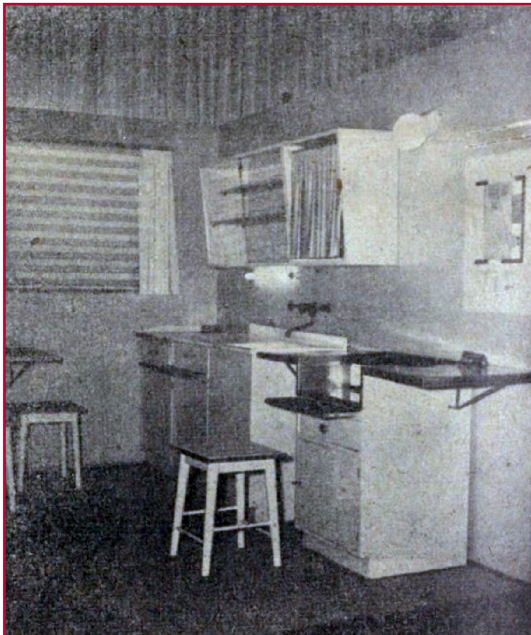


Figure 3. Ivo Bartolić, kitchen for 2-4 family members, displayed at the exhibition “Modern kitchen for our households”, Zagreb 1955.

Source: Čovjek i prostor 44: 6.



Figure 4. Marta and France Ivanšek, Svea, 1960.

Source: Malešič 2020b, 88.

In the Swedish kitchen, the previously dominant kitchen dresser –often a point of dislike of Yugoslav commentators– was replaced with a lower and upper row of units made out of wood or synthetic materials, with cleaning surfaces from stainless steel and worktops from linoleum (later formica laminate), monochromatic (in white, black and gray tones or wood color) and angularly shaped (Ledinek Lozej 2016, 132; Surmann 2017, 53; Ivanšek 1955). In a similar fashion, the colors and materials that Yugoslav household manuals from the mid-1950s advised for kitchen walls and floors focused on maintaining literal and symbolic cleanliness, with using only “calming, fresh colors”, like white and pastels, ceramic tiles, linoleum, and plastic materials (“Kuhinja u vašem stanu” 1955, 6). With its closed, reduced forms and color-schemes, Yugoslav working kitchens belonged to the Taylorist visual language of interwar and early postwar modernism materialized in the Frankfurt and Swedish kitchens, which prioritized efficiency and hygiene in household work and conceptualized the kitchen as the women’s workplace in the home (Surmann 2017, 36, 54).

More than just names, Tancig’s Swedish kitchen and Ivanšek’s Svea were results of rigorous scientific research of kitchen design with a strong transnational dimension. An expert in interwar and postwar Swedish research on kitchen design, Tancig was one of many Slovenian architects who studied and worked in Scandinavian countries, impressed by their housing policies and efforts in increasing the living standard (Tancig 1953, Malešič 2015). The list also included the architectural couple Ivanšek, who, influenced by their employment in architectural offices in Stockholm –including HSB (Malešič 2021, 170)– based Svea’s design on “Swedish standardized kitchen units adapted to our needs and manufacturing possibilities” and even named it after the central Swedish region Svealand (Malešič 2020b, 86; “Natečaj za sodobno jugoslovansko pohištvo” 1960, 95). Scandinavia was also interesting for Yugoslav women’s organizations because of their focus on the development of home economics, which the organizations’ members could study during their visits in the second half of the 1950s.⁹ Thanks to travels and reports published in professional journals, Yugoslav architects and home economists were acquainted with the state-of-the-art kitchen research and design from countries like Sweden and West Germany. Beyond the often-simplifying label of Westernization, the examples of first Yugoslav kitchen designs show the very concrete influence that Scandinavian countries had on several groups of Yugoslav, primarily women experts involved in the domestic realm in the 1950s.

⁹ These study visits were partially enabled by stipends given to Yugoslav women’s organizations by FAO to support development of home economics. HDA. 1234 *Konferencija za društvenu aktivnost žena*, 13. *Unaprjeđenje domaćinstva* (1958-1960) [Conference for social activity of women, 13. Improvement of the household (1958-1960)].

3. New kitchen materialities

The sleek, clean, and minimalist design embodied by the Swedish kitchen was the predominant ideal model for Yugoslav households from the mid-1950s until the late 1960s. In these first postwar decades the purchasing power, consumer choice and infrastructure like retail and advertising, particularly in economically well-off republics like Slovenia and Croatia, rapidly improved (Duda 2005, 60; Rendla 2018, 322-339). The production as well as consumption of durable consumer goods such as household appliances and furniture also grew, particularly in the first half of the 1960s (Duda 2005, 64; Rendla 2018, 324, 331). In this period Croatian households purchased almost half of their appliances, like refrigerators and ovens, which cost them four average salaries; by 1969 they could be purchased already with less than three average salaries (Duda 2005, 65). At the same time in Slovenia every second urban household owned all the main household appliances, while 68% of urban and 66.5% of rural households were equipped with a complete kitchen (Rendla 2018, 333, 336).

By the late 1960s, the reign of the white kitchen, a purist hygienic fantasy of a distinctively modernist flavor, was over. Kitchens made in Yugoslavia after 1965, such as Super-67, Cocktail 68, Elegant or Venera designed by Biala Leban for Marles, were presented to potential customers as dazzling pieces arranged in a lengthy sprawl. Coming in intensive hues, such as petroleum blue, saturated orange, with shiny varnished and polished surfaces, they overcame the aesthetics of ascetic functionalism and modernist formal reductivism. Even toned-down options such as Cocktail 68 (Figure 5) with a tri-color finish (black bottom, white upper cupboard row, Japanese maple in the lower cupboard row) included a spectrum of colors and evoked luxury with the optics of exotic trees. Cocktail 68 Variant combined rosewood with orange, while Variant *de luxe* included rosewood and white (Koren 2020, 95-96). The timber was not the material, but its optical appearance, a literally superficial effect.

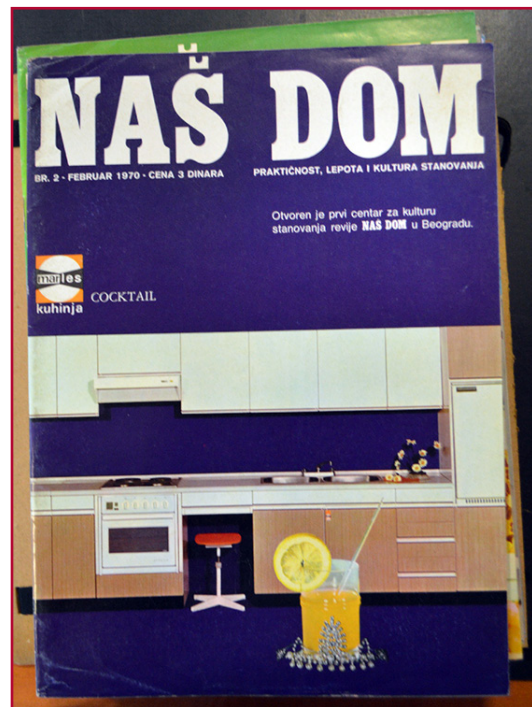


Figure 5. Advertisement for Cocktail 68 on the cover of *Naš dom*, February 1970. Source: *Naš dom* 2: 1.

Yugoslav post-1965 kitchen design championed visual pleasures, vibrant colors, lush surfaces, and manifold evocations of plentitude. This new intense aesthetics was consistent with the global trends in art and design on the threshold between Pop Art and postmodernism, marked by new tendencies to make kitchen space more livable and communicative. “The sterile fitted kitchen, once a workspace for one person”, writes Antonia Surmann, “was gradually replaced by a ‘cozily designed’ kitchen-diner”, characterized by more decorations, curves, units, and warmer colors, and an incorporated eating area that “once again made communication and shared work in the kitchen possible” (Surmann 2017, 54). In other words, the ideal kitchen shifted from the working to the living kitchen.

At the same time, kitchen design became increasingly conventionally feminized; as one of the producers advised, “homemaker’s favorite color is the critical factor” in a color scheme of the kitchen space (“Dobra vila Corona” 1971, 24). Color worked as a gendered marker of space, an operation of domaining in which both furniture producers and popular press routinely connected women with domesticity and housework, especially with the kitchen. In the design of Yugoslav working and living kitchens, the gendered division of labor remained unchallenged as the women homemaker remained designated as its main user.

Yugoslav home economists and household advisors in the late 1950s and early 1960s were preoccupied with solutions tailored to small apartments in the rapidly growing mass housing; the matter was to be pressed into the most efficient, logical solution for such typology. By the late 1960s, the matter spilled over into differences in material status increasingly framed as individual choice (Le Normand 2014, 187) and prospective consumers were presented with a growing range of options waiting for them in furniture salons. In the realm of interior design and home décor, not all “choices” got the spotlight of the same size and brightness. Maximalist solutions got more media coverage, glossy pages, and color photography, while modest options were confined to black-and-white photos, utilitarian sketches, and household advice for making do with the less attractive “choices”. Lavishly illustrated ads and portrayals of celebrity homes figured as “an object of consumption *per se* – a visual treat” (Horvat 2021, 372-373).

The choice of material also changed. Tancig’s kitchen was built from wood and plywood, materials that were locally available, inexpensive, and easy to clean. Synthetic materials such as polyvinyl were used for the kitchen table, and polished aluminum (instead of the superior, but more expensive stainless steel) for the sink and cleaning area, which were novelties in Yugoslavia at the time (Tancig 1953; “Kuhinja Zavoda za unaprjeđenje domaćinstva Slovenije” 1956, 5).

The furniture was standardized and serially produced, and the kitchen was flexibly designed to fit into both old and new living spaces owned by a broad spectrum of users, who could purchase the number of units that their family context, housing conditions and financial means allowed.

Particularly important was aluminum, which as a lightweight, stain-resistant, inexpensive but relatively soft material, was since the mid-19th century an increasingly popular material for domestic goods, such as pots, lamps, and containers (Snodgrass 2004, 14-17). Aluminum drawers with inscriptions for a range of staples such as oats, lentils, and sugar were a hallmark of the Frankfurt kitchen. In the same vein of interwar modernism, the poster for the exhibition *Neue Hauswirtschaft* [New household management] held 1930 in the Museum of Applied Arts in Zurich showcased the metallic shine of pots along with the shiny white cups and saucers. Both earth- and metal-ware on display conveyed the message of spotless hygiene powered by industrial production. In the aftermath of the Second World War, aluminum fit demands of a range of fields, from the emerging canning and convenience food industry to construction. In Socialist Yugoslavia, JU-61 –mass prefabricated buildings from the Zagreb company Jugomont nicknamed “cans” [*limenke*]– featured aluminum sheets on the façade that were meant to be replaced after thirty years by state-of-the-art materials. The echo of aluminum foil and cans anchored JU-61 in the domestic sphere, whose shine got the project international critical acclaim (Budimirov 2007, 30). Kitchen development was embedded in the larger story of domestic materiality at this stage: relatively accessible materials were employed as a quick solution to day-to-day problems, without the expectation of being a lifelong solution.

By the 1960s, the cool metallic shimmer of stainless steel –from cookware to sink– started to pervade the ideal of a modern Yugoslav kitchen. Whereas stainless steel began its career in construction, warfare, and engineering, after the Second World War the steel industry in the US and elsewhere was reoriented towards domestic goods. Consequently, stainless steel was rebranded as the embodiment of “consumer modernity, including stylishness, novelty, cleanliness, and even a kind of domestic ‘magic’” (Maffei 2021, 97). In the kitchen furniture set Vega 60 (Figure 6), Brest from Cerknica, Slovenia proudly displayed “sinks made of stainless steel”, stove, refrigerator and control surfaces executed in metal, as well as strips of handles delineating drawers and cupboards (“Kuhinja Vega 60 najbolja je prijateljica svake savremene domačice” 1971, 24-25). Its competitor, colorful enamel, did not stand still. “[H]omemakers! Decorate your kitchen with enamel dishes” invited the factory Gorica from Zagreb, stressing the “high shine and quality” of the “steadfast enamel” –both features that were used to describe stainless steel (“Domačice!” 1960, 4). By the 1970s, Gorica and

other producers turned away from large pots to product lines of higher quality for individual households (*Ibid.*). As a result, vivid colors and patterns backed up the decorative side of the kitchen: its materiality an embellishment rather than a tool. Bustling product placement –kitchen ads within household manuals, cookware within the kitchen ensemble– defined an emerging understanding of domestic materiality as a purchasable entity existing in a landscape of competing options.

One of Cocktail 68’s successors, Venera (**Figure 7**) made by Marles in 1971, exemplifies the interplay of sensuality and historical pastiche at the core of Yugoslav post-1965 kitchens. The corporeal pleasures are embedded in the name of the kitchen –Venus– and underlined with the logo, a detail of Botticelli’s *The Birth of Venus*. Beyond the playful references to art history, the kitchen incorporated past styles. Brown and beige tones, straw chair seats resembling pre-modernist wood optics and vernacular design, the curvy Thonet bentwood stool from the late 19th century. Vintage iron, grinder, and lamp completed the picture. A dozen books and the telephone added a touch of the living room and transformed the kitchen into a cozy space for leisure and communication. Nevertheless, the kitchen design was quietly, but undoubtedly rooted in its functionalist predecessors with standardized dimensions, modular system, and promotional rhetoric saturated with efficiency studies.

A sudden surge of interest in historical styles written off by modernist household advisors as old-fashioned, shabby, and even ridiculous, as well as the renewed interest in restoration of older furniture and its incorporation in modern apartments speak for the transformation of domestic materiality. Middle class domesticities and traditions, embodied in the Thonet chair that the Soviets regarded as the ultimate “illustration of a bourgeois interior” (Schlögel 2022, 217), gained momentum and recognition. The sensual and affective qualities came to the fore –the historical and memory work added a “very personal” touch to interior design (“Ovako pomlađujemo stari nameštaj” 1970, 12). Whereas modernist laws favored rationality, functionalism, quantification, and single-choice answers to questions of interior design, postmodern kitchen visions were based on revivals of past styles and whims such as “Old America”, nurturing of consumerist desires, and reevaluation of personal and family pasts. Homes and domestic practices came with material baggage, and post-1965 kitchens seem to have found a place for it. Artifacts such as comprehensive family trees, hand-picked antique pieces, or redressed farmhouse wardrobes suddenly entered (at least privileged) socialist domesticities, not just in private arrangements, but also in the popular discourse on housing (Horvat 2021, 359; “Kuhinje” 1967, 14). The transformation conflated global postmodern tendencies with the Yugoslav market liberalization.



◀ **Figure 6.** Advertisement for Vega 60 in *Naš dom*, 1971.
Source: *Naš dom* 9: 24-25.

Figure 7. Advertisement for Venera on the cover of *Naš dom*, 1971. Source: *Naš dom* 11: 1.



Figure 8. Advertisement for Cocktail 68 in *Naš dom*, 1968.
Source: *Naš dom* 11: 37.

Additional materialities that did not come with the product played an increasingly important role; the overall effect and allure of the new kitchen was produced in the interaction between the product and the growing amount of décor. In the foreground of the ad for Cocktail 68 (Figure 8), a set table bursting with vibrant colors waited: yellow tablecloth, three orange chairs, blue glasses, and floral arrangement of daisies. The finishing golden touch came from an unopened bottle of champagne, as intimately suggested, was depicted from the perspective of an observer just entering the dining area. The coloristic composition is a dynamic back-and-forth; champagne corresponds to the shimmering lampshade, glasses are echoed in the dark blue enamel pan and pot, chairs have a pendant in orange work surfaces, walls, and the namesake fruit, yellow is repeated in the handles of kitchen utensils hanging in an orderly line or casually lying on the work surface. The advert’s add-ins visually amplified and dynamized the kitchen, itself in rather tame, subtle nuances of beige, white, and fine black bordures.

Beyond that, additional materiality added an atmospheric touch of abundance to the overall picture. Although the tropical fruit did not have the meaning as reiterated in popular accounts on socialist histories –by the mid-1970s, so-called exotic fruit was steadily available or locally grown in Socialist Yugoslavia (Erdei 2019, 253)– overflowing baskets and refrigerators still echoed cornucopia, an ancient symbol of abundance. For many Yugoslavs, yesterday’s luxury became the self-evident fabric of everyday life, a process that David Crowley and Susan E. Reid describe as one of the key elements of modernization (Crowley, Reid 2010, 18). Wine, beer, cocktails, or liquor, occasionally accompanied by a cigarette, transformed the kitchen into a lounge for relaxed after-work time. The kitchen was complemented with a handful of domestic products, pots and pans made of stainless steel or enamel. A crucial role in evoking pleasurable abundance went to kitchen appliances, many of them still a pricey rarity in Yugoslav households. Coffee machines, blenders, and small grinders were exhibited as a marker of material affluence and everyday life unburdened by little helpers. From a space intended exclusively for work, the kitchen was now promoted as a location of luxury and leisure, two fields where socialist pleasure was both materialized and subject to public scrutiny (Crowley, Reid 2010, 6).

In these new kitchenscapes, visions of plenty resurfaced in plenty of ways. Already the name of the product set the scene for an easygoing light afternoon or early evening entertainment [*Cocktail*], chic feminine sensuality [*Venera*] or a floral embellishment [*Corona*]. Like Tancig’s Swedish kitchen, Cocktail 68 was sold in individual pieces, offering the prospective kitchen owner the option to start small and add new pieces when their financial situation allowed it. The commercial displays in ads or furniture centers instead usually showcased maximalist versions –a hefty sprawl of nine or

more kitchen units, arranged in a single long row or in the most space-consuming U-shape. Such images encouraged the ever-expanding consumerist desire following the growth chart, while pointing out the accommodation of luxury and leisure in Yugoslav society. As Anita Buhin writes, “to enable people to hedonistically enjoy the good life, without abandoning ideological commitments” confirmed the particularity of Yugoslav socialism (Buhin 2022, 5).

Ironically enough the design of lush kitchens compatible with gradual purchases would be unthinkable without the standardization of dimensions on a European level, such as the width of kitchen units to 60 centimeters. Brest’s kitchen Vega 60 proudly paid homage to this standard in its name (“Kuhinja Vega 60 najbolja je prijateljica svake savremene domaćice” 1971, 24-25). The legacy of early 20th century home economics, studies of movement and quantifications, by the late 1960s passé in Yugoslavia, seamlessly slipped into the kitchens dressed in rhetoric explicitly opposing the working kitchen principle. Standardization in this case, however, ceased to mean equal redistribution to all Yugoslav citizens. “Mini-kitchen” by Marles precisely portrays the widening gap in domestic materialities and growing social inequalities in Yugoslavia since the mid-1960s (Archer, Duda, Stubbs 2016). Among its target buyers were both “a smaller family that can’t afford a separate kitchen, [...] forced to do the cooking and everything that comes with that in the same room where they spend the day and sleep”, and the owners of weekend homes [*vikendica*] (“Kuhinja mora biti više nego radni prostor” 1971, 7). The consensus on the standard equipment of a home available to all, or an attempt to reach one, was no longer on the agenda of Yugoslav housing experts and furniture producers.

4. Shiny un/paid labor

The changing material configurations of kitchens and their media representations projected a fundamental shift in the conceptualization of unpaid and paid labor without fully altering the position of women as its main performers. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the activities of CNGs peaked, women were actively shaping the kitchen matter. Architects and designers like Branka Tancig authored both kitchen and popular household advice by harboring the Taylorist belief that the ideal kitchen can be designed and produced based on the systematic study of kitchen work (Tancig 1953, 15). The expert in kitchen design, moreover, was a counterpart to the expert in kitchen work –the woman homemaker– and the kitchen her “laboratory” (*Ibid.*). Emerging in kitchen research from the interwar period, the metaphor of the kitchen-laboratory signified a process of scientization of household work that was also discernible in the visual presentations of Yugoslav working kitchens from the

1950s. Most were drawings and photographs published in architectural journals and women’s organizations’ magazines, an element in expert knowledge production rather than commercial or personalized artifacts. Black and white photographs from various housing exhibitions (Figures 9, 10) capture empty, sanitized kitchens with no traces of food or usage, surrounded by charts and explanations for the audience, while demonstrators from CNGs are shown wearing white aprons and overcoats in the manner of experts and educators rather than homemakers (“Velika mednarodna revialna rastava ‘Družina i gospodinjstvo 1958’ 1958, 240; “Kuhinja Zavoda za unaprjeđenje domaćinstva Slovenije” 1956, 5). The conflation of new domestic technologies with a feminine touch was a common trope in domestic modernity beyond Yugoslav socialist borders, comparable with the Miss Stainless Steel in post-1945 US and female demonstrators working for electrical industry in interwar Britain (Maffei 2021, 97-98; Lloyd Thomas 2019, 126; “Dobra vila Corona” 1971, 10-17).

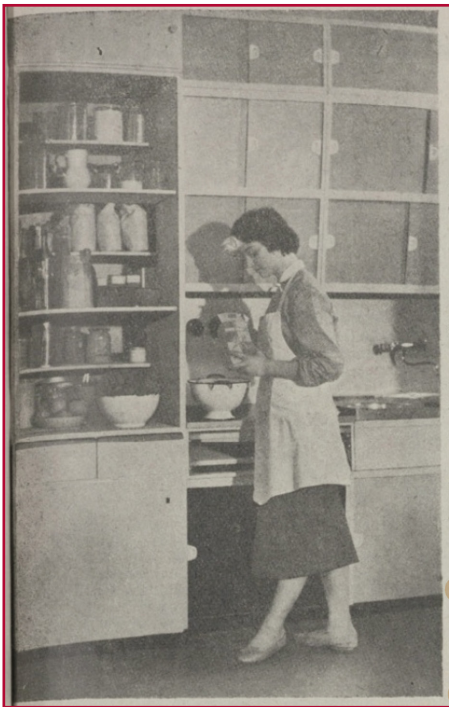
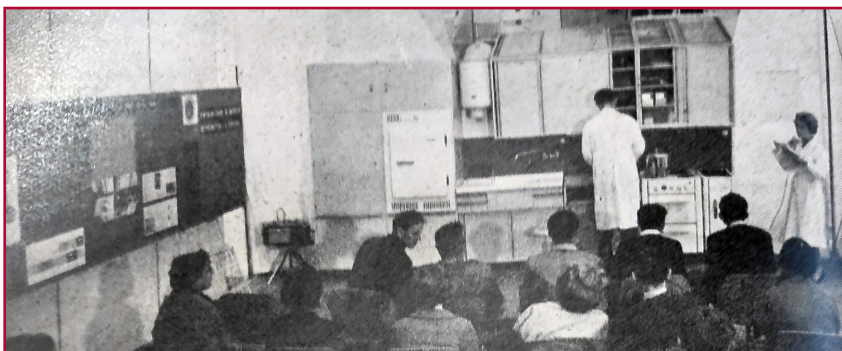


Figure 9. Demonstrators, Tancig’s kitchen at the exhibition “Housing for our conditions”, Ljubljana, 1956. © Photo by Janez Kališnik. Source: *Čovjek i prostor* 52: 5.

Figure 10. Demonstrators, Tancig’s kitchen at the second Family and Household exhibition, Zagreb, 1958. Source: *Sodobno gospodinjstvo* 56-57: 240.



In addition to the laboratory, the kitchen was in the Taylorist sense also often referred to as a “factory” with a “conveyor belt” (Surmann 2017, 52; “Što je izloženo na Velesajmu za nas domačice?” 1953, 13). The scientific conceptualization of kitchen-work influenced its material and spatial design –or in Tancig’s words, “work dictate[d] the equipment”. The organization of units and appliances in a linear form inspired the metaphor of the “conveyor belt” used for preparation, cooking, and cleaning (Tancig 1953, 17). According to Tancig, since these tasks were hardly different between households, they allowed the furniture to be standardized and included in any type of housing. This was significant in the period of intense housing construction, when Yugoslav architects were discussing the need to industrialize the Yugoslav furniture sector (Tancig 1953, 16). Serially produced working kitchens gave firm material and theoretical contours to the previously undefined kitchen space and its role within the household. Simultaneously, the standardization of kitchen materiality also meant its reduction to the most necessary elements for efficient labor, with units and appliances in shapes and materials appropriate for easy navigation and maintenance. Reduction in space was supposed to mean a reduction in working time, and the exclusion of leisure and family life from the kitchen (Tancig 1953, 17).

The reduction in kitchen materiality and scientization of the homemaker put the representations of household work into the spotlight. Be it popular exhibitions, events at the workplace and in the local community, or illustrations of household manuals and popular press, women in white aprons demonstrated the proper use of space, kitchen appliances and procedures by emphasizing systematic, exhaustive directions for kitchen-work. Tancig’s advice on doing the dishes stretched over nine pages, encompassing eighteen photographs and four drawings (**Figure 11**) (Tancig 1958, 44-52). Household work went through disenchantment appearing as something that can and needs to be learned in a systematic way. The scientization of household work, however, did not challenge the fact that women were generally understood to be the main performers of this type of labor.

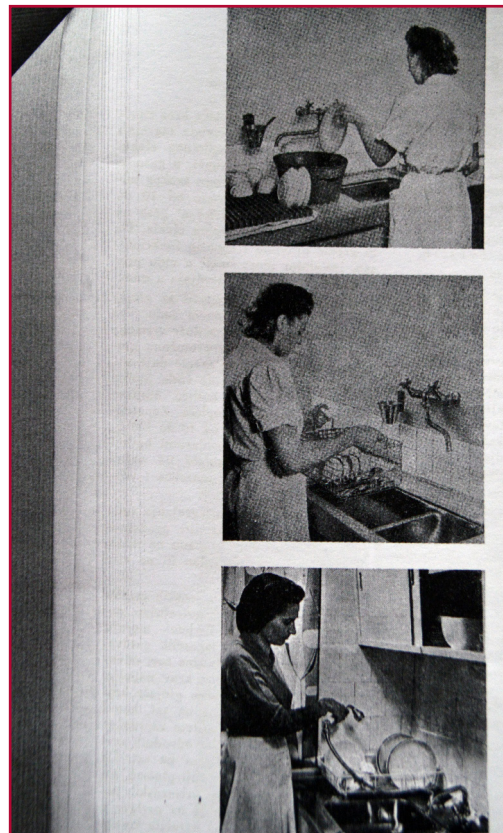


Figure 11. Doing the dishes: step-by-step instructions (excerpt) by Branka Tancig. Source: Tancig 1958, 50.

By the late 1960s the face of household expertise underwent a major change from the trained agent of modernization and rationalization to a sexualized seller (Horvat 2021, 115). This turn from materialist rationality to materialist sensuality bounded Yugoslav women to domesticity in a new way. Instead of being a purely practical fixture that transcends its materiality and emphasizes use value, pleasurable materiality invites the eye and the dweller to linger. The dream kitchen became literally captivating. The kitchen producers such as Marles steadily argued for the return of the “kitchen-living room” (“Marles upotpunjava program kuhinja” 1970).

The advertorial fantasy of kitchen leisure painted by the Yugoslav furniture producers in the late 1960s was one devoid of cooking smells and household work. All traces of mundane, repetitive, and exhausting household chores were replaced with spotless surfaces, brand-new home gadgets, empty pots, coffee cups, and raw or no-cook treats (sliced watermelons, cold drinks) rather than full meals. Instead of a dweller deep in the mud of dirty dishes, food leftovers, and kitchen fumes, the dread of maintenance was wiped out almost by magic with the help of a happy and discreet “best girlfriend” (“Kuhinja Vega 60 najbolja je prijateljica svake savremene domaćice” 1971, 24-25) or a “good fairy” (“Dobra vila Corona” 1971, 10-17). Such figures tamed modernity and gave it a friendly service-oriented appeal. The final glowing touch was ingrained in the medium: the glossy pages in magazines, which were still an exception, further intensified the sensual allure of Yugoslav post-1965 kitchens.

Another kind of sensuality that emerged together with new shiny kitchens counted on women’s bodies. A carefully groomed woman came with the image of a perfect kitchen. The type of a “free-floating girl”, “absent, immersed in leisure, boredom or media consumption” (Horvat 2019, 184) was trending in the Yugoslav advertorial imagery of the late 1960s. Rather than vivid scenes of warm family life, the advertorial scenarios foregrounded sexual tension and used women’s bodies as an additional source of embellishment harmonized with the kitchen, just like another element of decorative still life. Stiff poses and bodies conforming to the then prevailing beauty ideals made the women look like mannequins, their objectified flesh turned into an inanimate being frozen in the moment (Figure 12). Women’s bodies were used to add sexual tension and sensuality. Nowhere was this more pronounced than in the promotional movie *Love goes through the kitchen* (1972) (Figure 13): in nine minutes, kitchens in the furniture salon turned into a playground charged with erotic allusions where a couple of sellers and a couple of buyers separate and then temporarily come together in new constellations.

Beyond design and household work, women also made up a significant part of workforce in kitchenware and furniture factories. In Gorica, by the early 1980s two thirds of employees were women, many of them working in the metal and enamel departments at positions with a high occupational risk (Vlasta 1981, 4). In Meblo, the application of varnish, a relatively dangerous and toxic step in furniture production, was traditionally a woman’s job (Vodopivec 1998, 29). Although this work was not unpaid, as housework at home was, the industrial branches with a high percentage of women in the workforce still persistently lagged behind men-dominated branches in terms of salary and benefits such as housing provision (Bonfiglioli 2019, 59). Even when working on domesticity was financially remunerated, the social status, value, and burdens that accompanied (un)paid labor remained unrecognized in the change from the scientific to the sensual kitchen.

Figure 12. Couple in the kitchen on the cover of *Naš dom*, 1969. Source: *Naš dom* 4: 1.

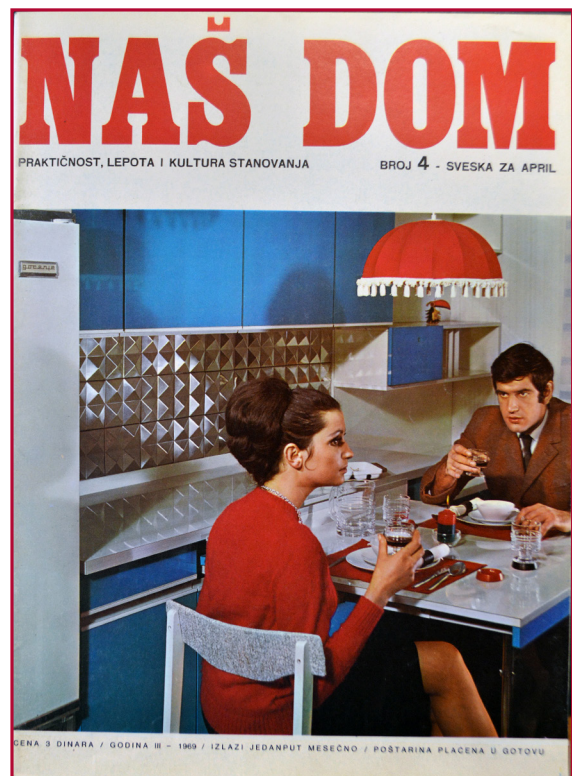


Figure 13. Film still from the Marles promotional video *Love goes through the kitchen*, 1972. Source: *Ljubezen gre skozi kuhinjo*: 7:24.

Conclusion

Kitchen matter persists in materials, outlines, colors, and built-in empty spaces. It matters who has the idea for its spatial disposition, it matters who built it with their hands, it matters who uses it daily, and wears out its surfaces. By intertwining threads of architects and designers with those of factory workers, homemakers, and media-makers, we have explored how they have shaped domestic materiality and configured in the liberal, consumption-forward reform of Yugoslav socialism from the mid-1960s.

In the 1950s, the fervor of household reform came from CNGs, its main carriers being women trained in the fields of architecture, design, and work organization, experts in exchange with their colleagues abroad and aware of the latest international developments in the field of domestic design and home economics. They were readily communicating their findings in a range of popular scientific formats and put their knowledge into practice by coming up with kitchen prototypes. This development is condensed in Branka Tancig’s Swedish kitchen, the earliest professionally and serially produced Yugoslav kitchen, which through its simplified, scientifically based design and usage of affordable and readily available materials projected a vision of maximum reduction of household work. In Tancig’s monochromatic and rational kitchen, household work was programed in the spirit of Taylorist efficiency, with the woman-homemaker envisioned as both a scientist and conveyor-belt worker. In the period of housing shortages, orientation towards mass production and efforts in promotion of women’s (un)paid labor, Tancig’s Swedish kitchen –result of vigorous scientific activity at home and abroad– represented an ideal model that spread throughout Yugoslavia in material and theoretical forms.

With the liberalization of the Yugoslav market, mass production and import of consumer goods, and the strengthening of the consumer-role of Yugoslav citizens, kitchens acquired a mundane presence in Yugoslav homes. By the mid-1960s, Yugoslav furniture industry reemerged as an increasingly industrialized branch with its own kitchen models and research departments, and the kitchen transformed from a standardized and accessible social artefact into an object of choice, desire, and financial means. On the way from the Swedish kitchen to Cocktail 68 more matter came into play –glimpses of abundance, variety of products, new meanings of kitchen as a place to dwell. The kitchen materiality promoted by the furniture industry and home-décor magazines grew parallel to the amount of time that users were envisioned to spend in the kitchen. Several components came together to produce a dazzling image impressed on the potential consumer –a trifold gloss of the material, magical

cleanliness, and advertorial imagery on glossy pages. All three came with a gendered undertone— from women’s strong presence in the industrial production, over the still prevailing patriarchal understanding of household work as a woman’s task to the appearance of women in commercials for household industry.

Despite these key transformations, the article highlights that the transition from the working into the living kitchen should not be understood as a dichotomy, but rather, as the Marles purchase of the license for the Swedish kitchen shows, a continuation of the home economics’ legacy in a new form. Women continued to shape the kitchen matter, as designers in furniture enterprises, such as the award-winning architect Biala Leban in Marles, as thousands of women working in industrial production of kitchenware and furniture, or as everyday users. The kitchen turn of the mid-1960s was based on the foundations laid by the CNGs, and decades of women’s work on home economics were quietly weaved into the kitchen matter. By uncovering these consistencies and changes in the visible materialities of Yugoslav kitchens, we have brought into light the invisible dimensions of gender, labor, and visions of Yugoslav socialist society from the 1950s to the 1970s.

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