



# LA CASA

ESPACIOS DOMÉSTICOS  
MODOS DE HABITAR

**ABADA EDITORES**

# LA CASA

## ESPACIOS DOMÉSTICOS MODOS DE HABITAR

II CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL CULTURA Y CIUDAD  
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# **Topografías domésticas: la casa de Lino Gaspar, Caxias, 1953-1955**

## *Domestic Topographies: The House of Lino Gaspar, Caxias, 1953-1955*

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### **Resumen**

Con una cuidadosa implantación en el Alto do Lagoal, la casa Lino Gaspar es un proyecto de João Andresen para una joven pareja, con sueños para una casa singular. Esta conjunción ha creado tal vez el ejemplo más interesante y relevante de vivienda unifamiliar del siglo XX y uno de los ejemplos más importantes de la arquitectura moderna en Portugal. *Topografías domésticas* presenta los estratos invisibles de esta casa: registros de la vida familiar, evolución del proyecto, incluyendo los primeros dibujos y escritos del arquitecto, así como las ideas y decisiones de los clientes y algunas interpretaciones de artistas. La invisibilidad es, en esta pequeña casa, la vida doméstica privada y cotidiana. Invisible es también el feliz encuentro entre un arquitecto, un cliente y algunos registros interpretativos de artistas, investigadores y documentos oficiales que plantean algunos problemas disciplinarios y no disciplinarios sobre la domesticidad. La casa Lino Gaspar representa la afirmación de una generación más abierta e iluminada, en un país conservador.

**Palabras clave:** domesticidad, arquitectura, interior, João Andresen, Portugal

**Bloque temático:** La casa: mitos, arquetipos, modos de habitar

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### **Abstract**

*Carefully implemented on the top of Lagoal Hill, Lino Gaspar house is a João Andresen project for a young couple, with dreams to a singular home. This conjunction has created maybe the most interesting and relevant example of single-family house of the 20th century and one of the most importante examples of modern architecture in Portugal. Domestic topographies present the invisible layers of this house: records of family life, project evolution, including architect's first drawings and writings, as well as client ideas and decisions and some artists interpretations. Invisibility is, in this small house, the domestic private and daily life. Invisible is also the happy meeting between an architect, a client and some interpretative records of artists, researchers and official data that raise some disciplinary and non disciplinary issues about domesticity. Lino Gaspar house represents the affirmation of a more open and enlightened generation, in a conservative country.*

**Keywords:** domesticity, architecture, interior, João Andresen, Portugal

**Topic:** The house: myths, archetypes, forms of inhabitation

## Introduction

Carefully located at the top of Alto do Lagoal, Casa Lino Gaspar is a young architect João Andresen's (1920-1967) project commissioned by a young couple too. Integrated in a noble zone of Lisbon river bank expansion to the west, the lot will be one of the first to be built in that area. The site was accurately chosen by engineer Carlos Lino Gaspar and university professor Eduarda Lino Gaspar to materialize their project for a quiet life in the auspicious enjoyment of the sun, sky and nature. Casa Lino Gaspar represents the affirmation of a more open and enlightened generation, in a conservative country. João Andresen realizes the opportunity of experimentation for a client, interested in an idyllic and cosmopolitan life, less common at the time. From the established dialogue, which included the sharing of Giedion's *Mechanization Takes Command*, book of 1948, it shows the enormous interest and respect of clients for the creative profession of architect, a respect that has persisted until today through a meticulous preservation of the original project. Casa Lino Gaspar is a paradigmatic example which conjugates a design based on an intimate domestic use and a visual opening to the horizon. The other side of this panoramic visibility, is an invisibility manifested in family's daily life protection of views and its consequent guarantee of domesticity and private life. The privileged view over the "Tagus's mouth" was even the basis for an official agreement proposed by the Portuguese Army for the yield of this house to official surveillance of the coast in case of War.



Figure 1: Horácio Novais, *Fotografia da Casa Lino Gaspar*, 1955  
Source: Biblioteca da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian

Contrary to the dominant Portuguese interpretation of modern architecture, linked to a more modern tropical South American, more objectual and parallelepipedic lines, this house has a Miesian influence, by direct reference to Farnsworth House, as client recalls from his conversations with the architect. Exhibited at MoMA in 1947, this house had just been completed and published in international publications. This influence is recognised in the house elevation from the ground, in the horizontal lines, in the wide glazed openings, forming a set of clear and elemental language. The house stands on the hill on a raised horizontal plane, accessible by stairs, which also owe their design to the North American house. The originality of the house is manifest in the deviation between the horizontal and vertical planes, as well as in the dematerialisation of the covering and floor plans, which extend the interior space into the garden. The reinforced concrete structure shows its modern nature through the use of a pillar/beam system, which includes all interior design as well as exterior covering. Other proposals such as handmade radiant floor heating or natural ventilation in the upper slab would then be relevant technical innovations. However, the influence of Mies is also recognised in the attempt to reduce ceiling height, which had the legal limit, in a way to offer the visual horizon line, approximately half a height, giving the space greater reading in the horizontal plane.

The understanding of such detailed aspects as here are presented is possible through a disciplinary historical research, but also through some extraordinary records of inhabitants continued personal experiences, researchers meticulous observation and the sensitivity of some artists who worked on the house and emphasised specific and less architectural aspects regarding a disciplinary reading of architecture. By carefully observing different registers, left by its different participants (clients, architect, artists, photographers, historians, etc.), some issues stand out. In reality, these different participants leave their own topic or particular interest or sensibility in their registers and, by understanding them, we can enrich the layers of the house topographies.

For example, we know about the final project, but if couldn't get Eduarda Lino Gaspar conversation, we couldn't find the sketch that João Andresen drew for her. The same, if we couldn't get the official documents, from the municipality archive, we couldn't read the descriptive memory from the architect, comprehending his concerns about the possibility of refuse of the project because of its singular language for the time in Portugal. Analysing the photographs from the architecture photographer at the time, we couldn't comprehend the relevance of the view for the object design as well as for de experience and site-writing of the interior space. The contemporary artistic standpoint of Nuno Cera adds an interesting interpretation of the space extension in different perspectives.

The text presents three of many subjects that the house could raise:

- Domestic landscape, or the possibility of a way of life to modify standards.
- House L(w)ife, or the influence of a woman in the housing space.
- Inhabiting the view, or the way the architect design a participated view.

These subjects have the most impact in the architect proposal, and they are the basis for the singularity of its architecture.

## 1. Domestic biographical topographies

Casa Lino Gaspar is an example of a house built for a way of life. Many are, but this one in particular has been built in a time period of a couple's life, when they were also building their lives, careers, family and lifestyle. In this sense they spatialise a promised way of living, for them and their children. The social and political Portuguese system has a major role in this action. This young couple is building their freedom in opposition with the family conception empowered by the regime. They build under the urban rules imposed, and yet, they are also imposing their rules, those of their own beliefs and through their modern aesthetics.



Figure 2: Nuno Cera, *Viagem ao Invisível – Casa Lino Gaspar*, 2016  
Source: Private collection

In the Municipality House Memorandum written by João Andresen says:

I do not think it is possible to justify a plastic language of a work with rational reasons, but only with emotional ones, and since these are usually of a subjective nature, it is impossible for me to explain by a + b if the house is beautiful or ugly. I mean only to say, not that I did so for this or that reason, but because I felt it so. If there is one thing that pleases me in this respect, it is the rare fact of the owner's acceptance as I thought and felt it. That is all I can plead in my defense.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Municipality House Memorandum from licensing official documents, in Câmara Municipal de Oeiras.

This justification, *per se*, explains the difficulty predicted to the approval of this project. Both architect and clients follow the rules of constructive legislation, although they aesthetically take a position radically opposed to the usual conventions around the usual scheme. It is important to underline, that the majority of a more radical modern project in Portugal at the time, happens in the north Oporto surroundings, in the private projects of domestic scale, faraway from the main capital city.<sup>2</sup> Carlos e Eduarda Lino Gaspar could contract a local architect, but why did they ask a 300 km distance one to draw their house? Weren't Lisbon's architects so interesting? The answer is not merely on the visual aesthetic plane, but rather affirms a cultural aesthetic position. João Andresen was the brother of Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, a known Portuguese poetess, intellectual, University Professor and above all, a symbol for a young generation of intellectual freedom. Carlos and Eduarda, both knew her, and through her, in a casual meeting in Chiado, they came to the knowledge of João Andresen, also young architect with a promising career, working in the north of Portugal along with other modern architects, in a more autonomous modern environment.

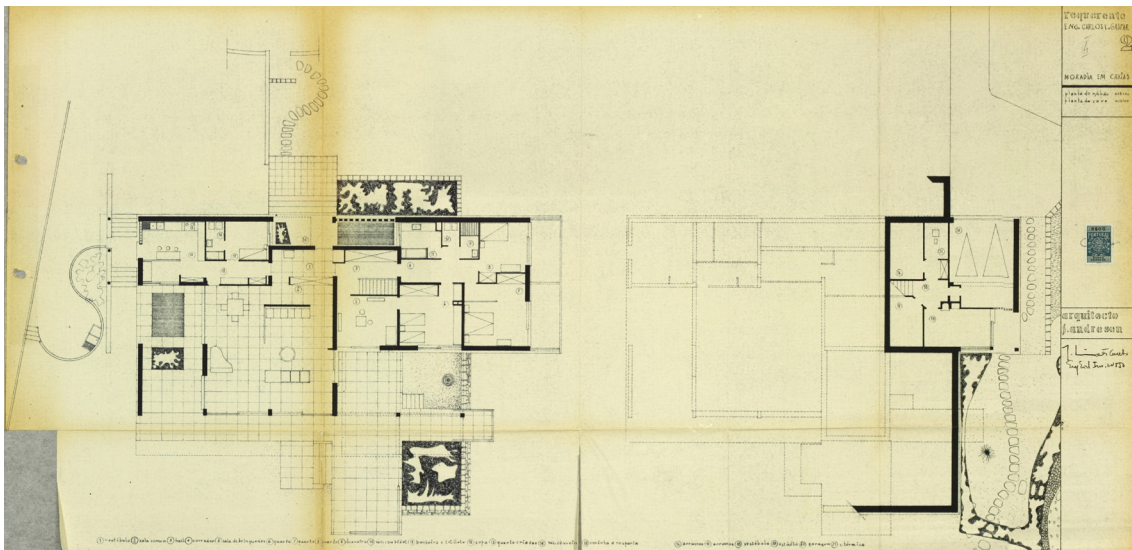


Figure 3: João Andresen, *Ground floor plan and Basement plan* (licensing architectural project), 1955  
Source: Câmara Municipal de Oeiras

The way space is designed for this new positioning has to do with three main levels: disruption with street life, maintaining the privacy of family life; elevation of the leisure and social functions in the same space for all the family in a more open and creative way; and the requirement for a small, private studio for Eduarda. So how would the design of this house introduce several levels of family's behaviour?:

- a) The disruption with street life, acts as a protection, intensifying a free conduct to inhabitants. They don't show a flashy house and they don't show their lives, on the contrary, they reserve themselves to an invisible level and show only a door facing the street. The house is silent and so are they. The life for a different layer in society and in urban settlement. The first time I have visit Carlos and Eduarda, they were very polite, but

<sup>2</sup> Maria Rita Pais, *Dinâmicas da Arquitectura Portuguesa na Segunda Metade do Século XX: um olhar cruzado entre a tipologia de habitação unifamiliar e os meios editoriais* (PhD Thesis, Universidade Técnica de Lisboa, 2012).

just on the second or third visit, they really started to trust me to tell me about their house. And this happened, not because of social convention, but rather because we have discussed about some issues, and this behaviour illustrates also their intellectual character.

b) The elevation of the leisure and social functions in the same space for all the family increase a more fussy and democratic living within family life, as well as with visitors.<sup>3</sup> And this means that there is no distinction between a family, best friend or visit or a formal visitor and their own family. They all will share the same living space. The *salons* in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries were a center for the sharing of ideas and one of the great moments of women's emancipation in history, and there is no coincidence here in relation to Eduarda's role in the family and the way this family sees women in society.

c) The requirement for a small, private space for Eduarda means the possibility of her own independence in the context of the role of women in society. In this case, it is not the man of the house ensuring his own office or library, but rather the wife, who draws with the architect the space for her work completely diverted from the center of domestic life.

Therefore, the biographical side it is not only linked with the domestic day-to-day living, but really recognises a human side in space and its material side.

## 2. "House I(w)ife"

Eduarda, a young working wife, was a Full Professor in Literature in Lisbon University, but despite her professional life, her role in the family has also a great impact. In one hand dedicates totally to them by temporarily interrupting her carrier to motherhood, and in other hand, she dedicates herself to study to pursue an individual carrier in the academy, returning to it some years later to complete her studies. Her necessity for space and privacy is absolute. Despite her role as an inhabitant, mother and wife at home, her needs for personal and professional space is the base for her own and family way of life. She is not a housewife, she is a *houselfife*, and the house represents the possibility for a way of personal, professional and family life.

In *Atlas of Emotion*, Giuliana Bruno add an interesting remarking by adding *Craig's Wife* movie to explain a specific relation between women and the space of the house. In the movie, Harriet Craig, the main character and housewife, explains to her aunt that her marriage was a way to secure a house and, thus, her independence. Her plan included to control a room for herself. The film itself turns to be very architectonic and the house is the focus of the film, the protagonist, as it is the center of the domestic action and movement.<sup>4</sup> It is also a scenery for negotiation of sexuality:

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<sup>3</sup> Following the studies that the salon served to democratize and disseminate ideas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries expressed in: Benedetta Craveri, *The Age of Conversation* (New York: New York Review Books, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas os Emotion. Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (New York: Versus, 2002), 89.



For Harriet the housewife, “house” and “wife” have been incorporated to such an extent that the *wife* became the *house*. This shift is epitomised in a long shot in which Harriet Craig seems like a column as she stands in front of the staircase (...), she has become the pillar of the house.<sup>5</sup>

She makes the house suitable for her has a piece of clothe to her body. By controlling space, Harriet controls her freedom. In the film, this became an obsession and at the end, everybody leaves, leaving her alone in a prison, her own designed freedom.

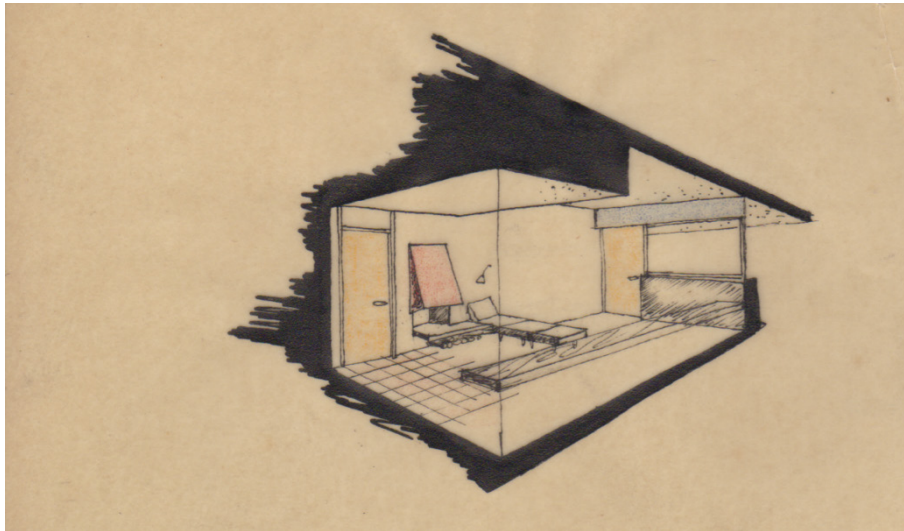


Figure 4: João Andresen, *Refuge perspective* (personal ongoing sketches), 1955  
Source: Privare collection

This film is a metaphor to women searching for freedom in their house from a patriarchal world. That is not completely the case in this house, where Eduarda has already her own freedom, but rests the idea that by building her own space she is building her possibility to progress in professional and personal field. The quietness of this space and its separation from the rest of the world, enables her to pursuit her own projects besides her husband, family and friends. Eduarda does not pursue a space in the center of the house, she wants her private and isolated space aside. In reality and unlike Harriet that stands in the main stairs, Eduarda dislocates herself from the center and from de panoramic view. She wants independence. She needs it to pursuit a traditionally male carrier. Her refuge room is in the basement, but in relation with the garden, not the central part that connects with the living area. Eduarda wanted to have her library, a place to read, a place to write and a door to the garden. But maybe the will, the most relevant to understand this room, is the fireplace. Eduarda proudly calls it “the most comfortable room in the house!”. Eduarda refuges herself close to the roots of her garden, not in the flowered garden, but near by the earth, the darken side as Georges Bataille would said, but also the base of the flower. According Bataille, equilibrium needs this oppositions.

In this decision, there is a conscious distance. Eduarda places children in the two bedrooms next to the living room, as well as the kitchen in the other side. Besides, there is no office or any other masculine chamber to a private conversation, reception or business chat. There is no male room in the public area or facing the view. In this house, there is only space for funcional

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<sup>5</sup> Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas os...*, 90.

activities: private bedrooms, kitchen, service areas and living room. Because there is a interconnection between the children bedrooms, there is a possibility to use them together or separated, but there is no place for any of Eduarda personal activities. So, in a sense, the distance she wants for her represent her freedom from the house functionality. Therefore, the view represents a certain masculinity, a central point for family action and the distant refuge, an interiority, or a more feminine side of the house, an uterus like space.

### 3. Inhabiting the view

The presentation of an object from several points of view introduces a principle that is closely linked to modern life: simultaneity. It will be a coincidence that Einstein began his celebrated scientific work *Elektrodynamik bewegter korper* in 1905, providing a careful scientific definition of simultaneity, which is essential for the understanding of some space phenomena apprehension.

In modern physics, space is conceived in relation to a moving point of view, moving away from the absolute entity of Newton's baroque system. And in modern art, for the first time since the Renaissance, a new conception of space leads to a self-conscious enlargement of our way of understanding space. In Cubism this was fully achieved. Cubists did not seek to reproduce the appearance of an object from a single point of view, they looked from different points of view, circling them and trying to apprehend their constitution. The idea would be to capture and synthesise other levels of natural phenomena. Guillaume Apollinaire was the first to recognise and express this change, in numerous texts, around 1911. *Fenêtre au longeur*, promenade architectural and the simultaneity between interior and exterior are some of its spreads in architecture changes in the beginning of the century.

In l'Orangerie, Claude Monet has produced a serie of eight murals of *Nymphéas*. It is a true artistic installation in the sense in which the artist also designed the circular exhibition space and the natural light for the art works. He wanted that visitors could walk though the two oval chambers in continuity in a way to comprehend the four seasons of its painted garden in the same walk. He is not the first to think about the idea of the continuous garden. In a time that windows could not be completely open has today, On the other hand, Villa Livia demonstrate the will for this exterior in movement. Originally *Ad Gallinas Albas Villa*, Villa Livia was the house for the second wife of Emperor Augustus. Among many relevant facts, there is a special room in this house. Walking across the peristyle and triclinium, there is an underground banquet hall used for dining in the hot summer time. This more enclosed room was design in 38 BC to maintain a closed relation to nature as the rest of the building had. With almost no windows, the room was profusely painted in all its walls with a domestic garden. Roman dining room is usually dressed with three roman bench (*klinai*) on three sides for invited and a low square table in the center, for serving. But if the logic of the use is static, because of the position, reality shows something completely different, the *klinai* position in "U" imply the viewing from at least three different perspectives, and the descriptions from its use report to a continuous movement of employees, actors, musicians and entertainers around the room. So, together with l'Orangerie, these two examples of rooms with continuous gardens around its walls, refer to non-static living. Technology has evolved, and the possibility to really open exterior walls came to be possible. In Farnsworth House, Mies van der Rohe uses the same principle of continuous (real) gardens around its one room summer residence. This american house is also an inspiration for João Andresen. The commissioning of Farnsworth started in 1945 and it was built

in 1950 and substantially, was completed in 1951. Even if the first project and model was published in MoMA catalogue of Mies exhibition in 1947, the built version was published in *Architectural Forum*, October, 1951. Carlos e Eduarda have personally clarify that João Andresen had been openly influenced by Farnsworth house. The stairs have expressly influenced Andresen, but by analysing *Architectural Forum* publication, we can see much more than this visual effect. House Lino Gaspar has a much bigger conceptual proximity with Farnsworth. Of course the two houses have a big dissemblance between them, the american house is a holiday house for a single woman, and the Portuguese is a house for a family to live their day-to-day life. Yet, Andresen transferred the idea of freedom of space experience, from the entire house, to the social activities and produce a single family social room with *plan livre* structure. The publication of Farnsworth from 1951 is particularly interesting, because it shows much more than the usual object point of view, it shows the spacial continuity in the interior and the relation between interior and exterior. Also, in the text, explains clearly its structural minimalist/functionalist conception, both ideas completely expressed in Lino Gaspar.

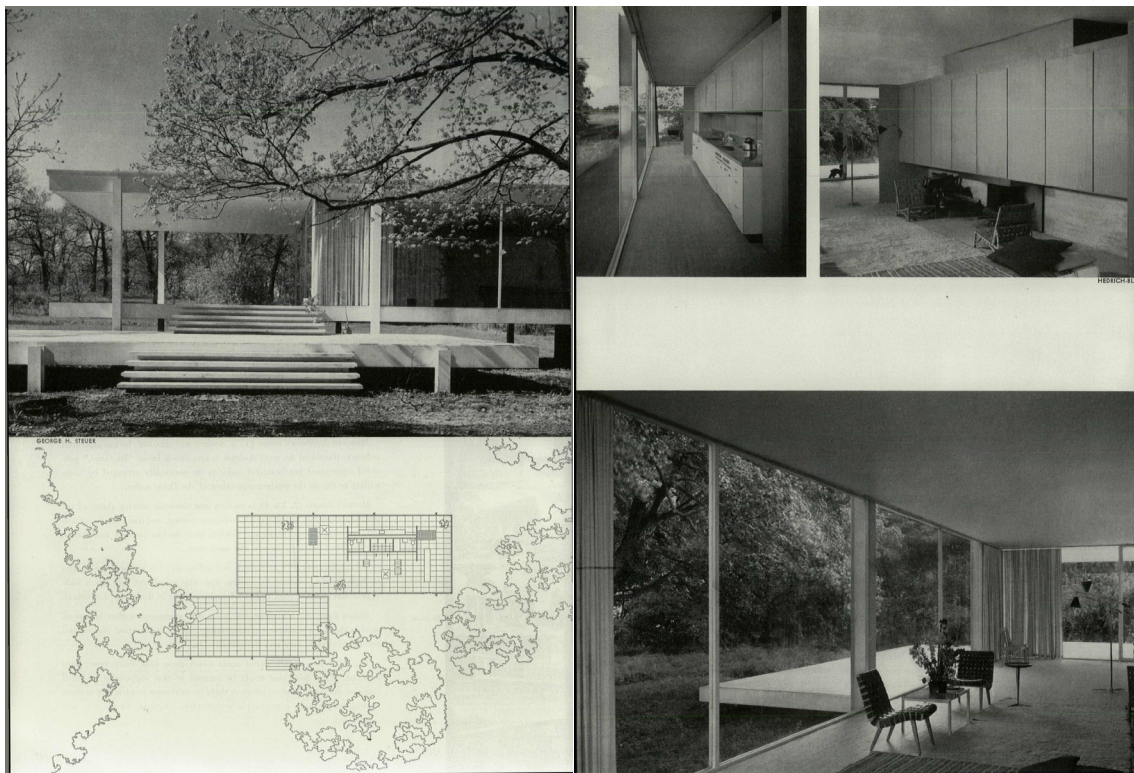


Figure 5: Heorich Blessing, *This is the first house built by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 1951*

Source: Heorich Blessing, "Farnsworth House", *Architectural Forum*, n.º October 1951 (1951): 156 y 158

House Lino Gaspar organizes entry, kitchen and sleeping rooms in a single corridor to liberate social space as a square bubble out of this linear design and surround it by garden and landscape. The linear corridor works also as a wall to the public entry and street protecting living room from all exterior influence. Therefore, the house public space is designed to have three of its four sides open to the exterior. The square reinforces social activities congregation in a single space, while stimulates circular circulation and the motion experience of the view rather than in a static positioning. To reinforce this idea, in a preliminary stage of the project Andresen has proposed two versions for the exterior (A and B): one more orientated to one

single point of view and a second, with a three sides view and a sequence of uneven platforms to swing the movement with exterior and sight. While first proposed a design framed design window (according to the patterns of other architects the time), the second proposed an open object between ground slab (floor) and ceiling slab with multi-directional openings: a *panoramica*. Both architect and clients have agreed to go for this last alternative, confirming the conscience intention on this idea. To reinforce the panoramic idea, Andresen lows the ceiling height to the minimum permitted by legislation in Portugal:2,40m. To low the ceiling height it is a direct relation between body and space in a way to relate experience with the “look” in a moving body. The two parallel plans work like a panoramic frame within the interior of the room and extend experience though different platforms in the exterior and garden.<sup>6</sup>



Figure 6: Horácio Novais, *Fotografia da Casa Lino Gaspar*, 1955  
Source: Biblioteca da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian

Between a decorativism that refers to a culture of social representation and the abstract silence of the modern white wall, there existed a moment of *art-nouveau*, when leisure becomes part of a bourgeois lifestyle. Natural motifs and textures began to take a part in a more serene environment. In the case of Villa Tugendhat, winter garden gives the natural texture and the view gives a natural panorama or perspective. In Lino Gaspar living room, the long bookcase gives the texture and the panoramic view gives the perspective. The 9mX9m square room is almost empty, with just essential furniture and art-works (in the interior and in the exterior). The glass wall divides the room and orders it, and above all, it creates an effect of reflection and shadow, which gives a cinematic texture to the room: movement, the person eating observes the figures of those who talk and vice versa. There are mutant silhouettes and reflections that appear and disappear in a limited frame, a screen. There is last element of order in the room,

<sup>6</sup> José Morales, *La disolución de la estancia. Transformaciones domésticas 1930-1960* (Madrid: Editorial Rueda, 2005), 19.

the fireplace/lake. This changing element captures the look for the family gathering. The idea of the architect was to change between a fireplace, during the winter, to a lake, during the hot summer times, giving different experiences throughout the year.

All relations suggested here seem to involve corporal embodiment implication: in the bookcase, in the glass wall and in the relation between interior and exterior. So, the relation with the sight seeing is active since it implies embodiment.



Figure 7: Unknown author, Casa Lino Gaspar, 1955  
Source: Private collection

#### 4. Conclusion

On 10 of July of 2016, we visit the house integrated in the *Journey into the Invisible* project.<sup>7</sup> The couple generously opened its doors breaking the domesticity boundary to a research group. Carlos e Eduarda's son, Pedro who started the classification of the house and view process a few years ago, guided the tour while the couple shared some of the history of their house. Their invisibility was shared and this was an amazing experience.

The conversations that we continue to have, have showed me the topographies of a lifetime, pronounced in spaces, materials, chairs, windows and trees. The possibility to cross this sharing information with other documents, manuscripts, artworks change my standpoint about archive material in architecture. These records and experiences are insurmountable. This viewpoint may contradict the tradicional disciplinary author's point of view in History of Architecture, but we can only understand a house if we know the set of actors who lived and experienced it.

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<sup>7</sup> The *Journey into the Invisible* project started as a research trip with artists and researchers, than an exhibition and now a book: Maria Rita Pais y Luis Santiago Baptista, *Viagem ao Invisível: espaço experiência, representação* (Purga: Lisboa, forthcoming).

Carlos and Eduarda had three kids. They lived in the house and left to their own. The couple stayed until today. The chess table pattern marked on the floor of their living room seems to mark the game of the lives they have lived here. The house became themselves, by the recognition of themselves in each corner.

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