

Haus Strasser



Jennifer Stutzenberger

Haus Strasser

How Raumplan Principles Shaped
The Conversion Of An Existing Structure

Colophon

TU Delft, Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment

This thesis was part a series of 15 theses on the Raumplan within the course 'AR2A011 Architectural History Thesis' (2024/25 Q3), guided by Jurjen Zeinstra

Abstract

This thesis explores the transformation of Haus Strasser (1918/19) by Adolf Loos as a case study to understand the application and development of Raumplan principles in conversions. Based on an analysis of archival and contemporary architectural drawings, photographs, and literature, it aims to reveal how Loos restructured circulation, introduced layers, and used materials to define spatial hierarchies and enhance interior experience. The study highlights how movement and perception were carefully arranged through reconfigured staircases, axial views, and strategic use of mirrors, openings and materials. It argues that the transformation of Haus Strasser demonstrates how existing structures can be reinterpreted through Raumplan principles – not by imposing new forms, but by revealing the spatial potential within the original design to create a cohesive architectural whole.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction | 4 |
| Spatial Organisation In The 1896 Plans | 7 |
| Two-Stage Transformation Through Loos | 10 |
| Experiencing Haus Strasser After Its 1919 Transformation | 15 |
| Raumplan Influence On Haus Strasser's Transformation | 25 |
| Understanding Raumplan Through Haus Strasser | 31 |
| References | 33 |

Introduction



- 1 **Street façade of Haus Strasser in 1981 – today, it's adorned with presumably Japanese ivy, based on Bock's (2007, p. 71).**
Source: Photograph by Johanna Fiegl (1981), reproduced in Rukschcio & Schachel (1982, p. 522)

Kupelwiesergasse 28, while unassuming at first, is the address of Haus Strasser – a building that unfolds its significance beyond its exterior impression (Figure 1).¹ Located in Vienna’s 13th district, Hietzing, the detached house is approached at street level and accessed through a vestibule leading to the set-back entrance door. As one enters Haus Strasser, spaces begin to spread out with a smooth rhythm – subtle shifts in floor and ceiling height, guidance with light, and carefully framed views shape how each room is perceived and experienced. The flow seems so seamless that it is almost surprising to learn that its current configuration was not part of the original design.

Commissioned by Karl and Hilda Strasser, the house is in fact a transformation of an existing building built in 1896 – one where the architect Adolf Loos (1870-1933) integrated his evolving spatial principles, known as Raumplan, for the first time in a pre-existing structure in the year 1919.² The transformation of Haus Strasser took place at a transitional period in Loos’s career, when he was further refining his ideas, influenced by his travels and followed by his early Viennese works.³

Although his subsequent group-up designs are frequently used to analyse Loos’s work, the conversion of Haus Strasser required Loos to negotiate with an existing structure while integrating new interventions. The exterior was altered in such a way that it conveyed a sense of restraint, relying more on volumetric expression than on a varied use of materials. The interior, however, saw far more extensive structural modifications. Particularly on the now partially raised ground floor, where Loos integrated his spatial planning principles to create a dynamic interplay of spatial connections. This restructuring and rethinking lies at the heart of Adolf Loos’ Raumplan concept – a term later coined by his student Heinrich Kulka (1931/1979) – which structures buildings through a hierarchy of levels rather than a uniform stacking of floors.

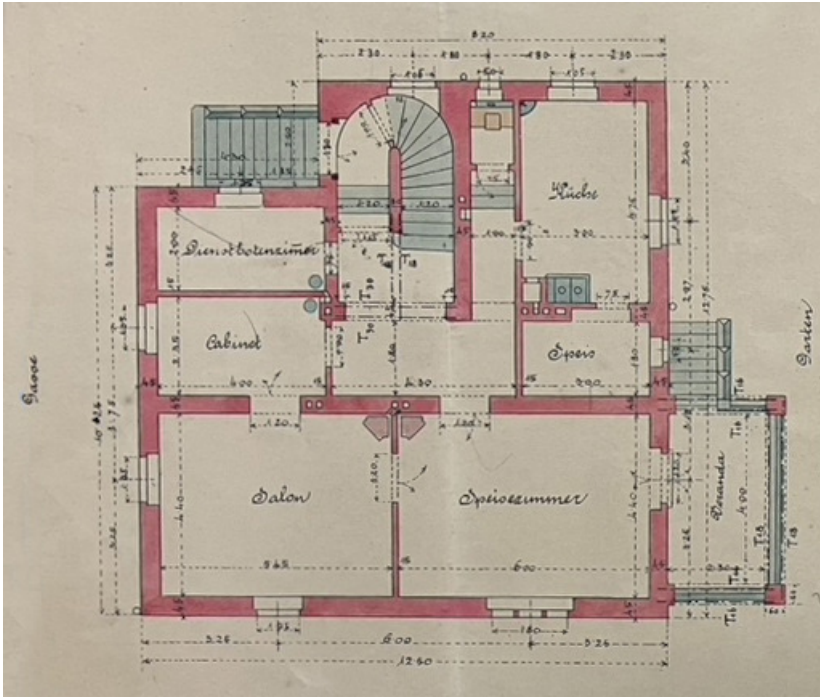
Through the analysis of plans, photographs, archival material and literature on the Raumplan, this paper examines how Loos’ key interventions in the redesign of Haus Strasser’s main living spaces shaped its spatial hierarchies. It explores how the principles of the Raumplan and the constraints of the original structure come together to create a refined and cohesive architectural whole. In doing so, it suggests that the redesign of buildings like Haus Strasser highlights the continuing importance of reimagining existing structures in today’s architectural practice.

¹ In the following, the building is referred to as *Haus Strasser*, using the German expression for *house* to maintain consistency with its original context.

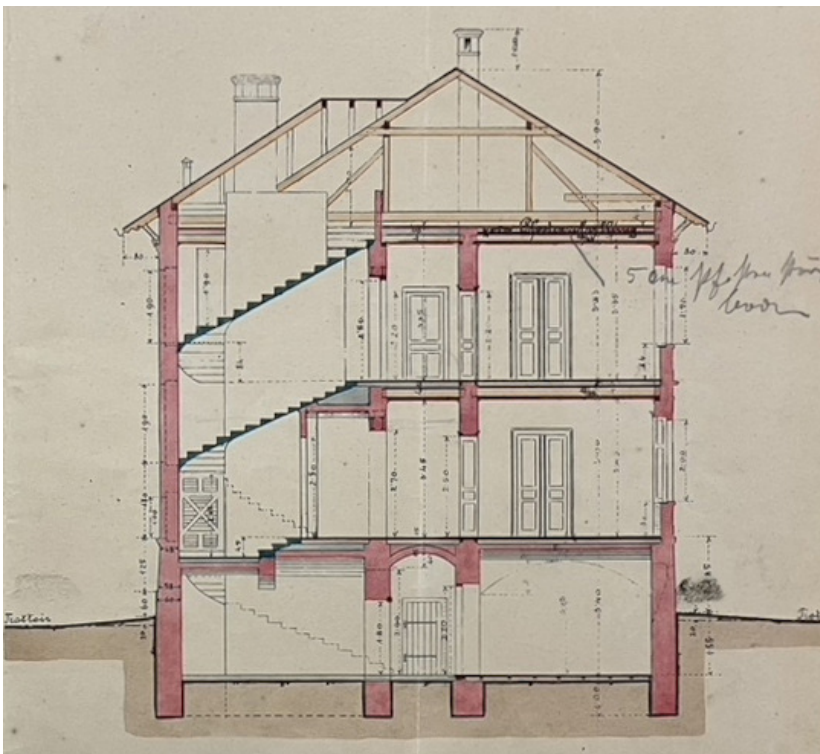
² For more information on Karl and Hilda Strasser, see Bock (2007, p. 204).

³ For a better understanding of the historical context in which the redesign took place, see Zednicek (1984, p. 11).

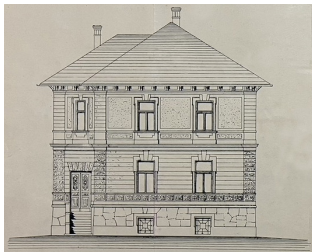
Spatial Organisation In The 1896 Plans: Formal Order And Interior Constraint



2
 First-floor plan from 1896 illustrating the division between resident and servant spaces, with circulation areas occupying a significant portion of the layout.
 Source: Stadt Wien, Planarchiv der Baubehörde (1896).



3
 Section through the entrance hallway, highlighting the vertical transitions and spatial hierarchy between the entry, hallway, and dining room.
 Source: Stadt Wien, Planarchiv der Baubehörde (1896).



4
The elevated entrance in the 1896 street façade drawing marks the transition from public to private.

Source: Stadt Wien, Planarchiv der Baubehörde (1896)

Based on the original 1896 plans for the Villa Ritter v. Loebenstein, the house presented a façade with a clear order (Figure 4). A textured stone base and horizontal bands, and framed windows structured the elevation, while a frieze beneath the eaves and contrasting surface textures added visual depth. Visitors approached the entrance via a flight of stairs, entering the house on the first floor (*Parterre*).⁴ This marked the transition from the public street to the private interior, reflecting the formal spatial organisation of contemporary bourgeois homes at the time.

A 1.20m wide entrance doorway led into a hallway of similar width, with walls momentarily narrowing the space (Figure 2). A subordinated door on the left, leading to the cellar, obstructed light from the window behind, leaving the corridor naturally dimly lit. The following route was not immediate; after three steps along closed walls, one arrived at the main level, hence entering on an intermediary level. A 2.50m high opening led to a slightly taller one (2.70m), transitioning into a more spacious (1.80m wide) hallway (Figure 3). Along the way, a narrow door on the right would lead to the servant's room (*Dienstbotenzimmer*), its reduced width hinting at its subordinate position.

The hallway marked the junction of corridor and stairwell leading to the upstairs bedrooms, drawing natural illumination only from a taller window higher up in the stairwell. Facing a wall on the main living floor still, one would turn left, towards the 1.20m wide door leading to the dining room (*Speisezimmer*). Positioned off-centre along the room's long wall, the door swung inward, directing the view toward the dining room. From there, one accessed a veranda facing the garden, with stairs descending along the garden-facing facade.

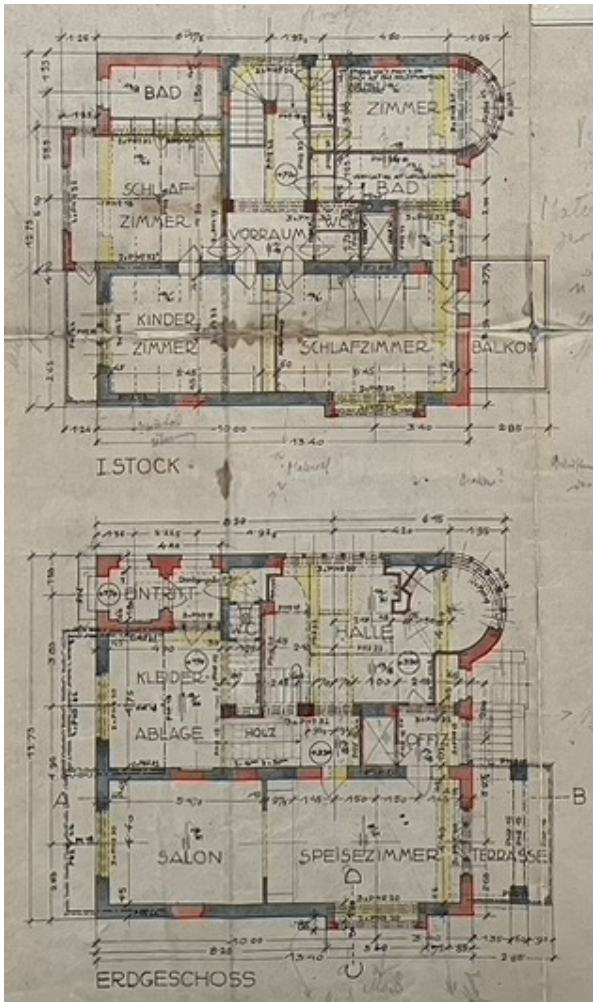
A turn to the right from where one entered the dining room, an inward swinging door reveals the salon. The proximity of the openings meant one could pass into the salon without fully engaging with the dining space. The salon's longer interior wall exhibited a central door to the cabinet, possibly used as a library. This implies a relation to the representative spaces, yet the solid wall restricted a complete spatial link. A secondary, narrower door also connected the cabinet to the hallway, contributing to a network of interconnected but not directly aligned spaces.

Servant spaces appear intentionally discreet, intersecting the circulation space only occasionally. Visitors were likely drawn directly to the dining room, leaving the dimly lit kitchen hallway mostly unobserved. The servant's room, with a window facing the entrance stairwell, seems positioned to monitor movement into and inside the house, suggesting a hierarchy through spatial placement and access. The street-facing openings, are reserved for the cabinet and salon, reinforcing their more public, representative character.

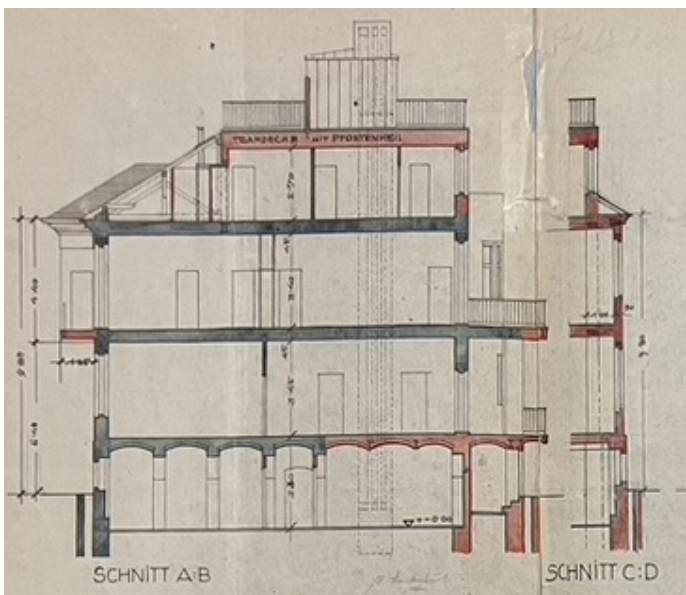
The interpretation of the plans suggests that the visitor's route through the house was characterized by seemingly forced turns, making movement feel somewhat unintuitive. While the façade presented a rich and inviting exterior, stepping inside revealed a space that was, in parts, narrow and constrained, with walls that structured the spaces too rigidly.

⁴ All translations from non-English sources are by the author, unless otherwise indicated.

Two-Stage Transformation Through Loos



5 Ground floor (bottom) and first floor (top) from 1918 show how the redesigned entry sequence and the insertion of an intermediary floor create a more refined transition from street level to the raised main floor. Source: Stadt Wien, Planarchiv der Baubehörde (1918).



6 Section A-B and C-D from 1918 illustrate the addition of a mansard roof, which provided space for servant's and adjoining rooms. Source: Stadt Wien, Planarchiv der Baubehörde (1918).



7

Alterations to the street-facing façade 1918 resulted in a more unified appearance.

Source: Stadt Wien, Planarchiv der Baubehörde (1918).

1918: Reconfiguring Circulation and Interior Organisation

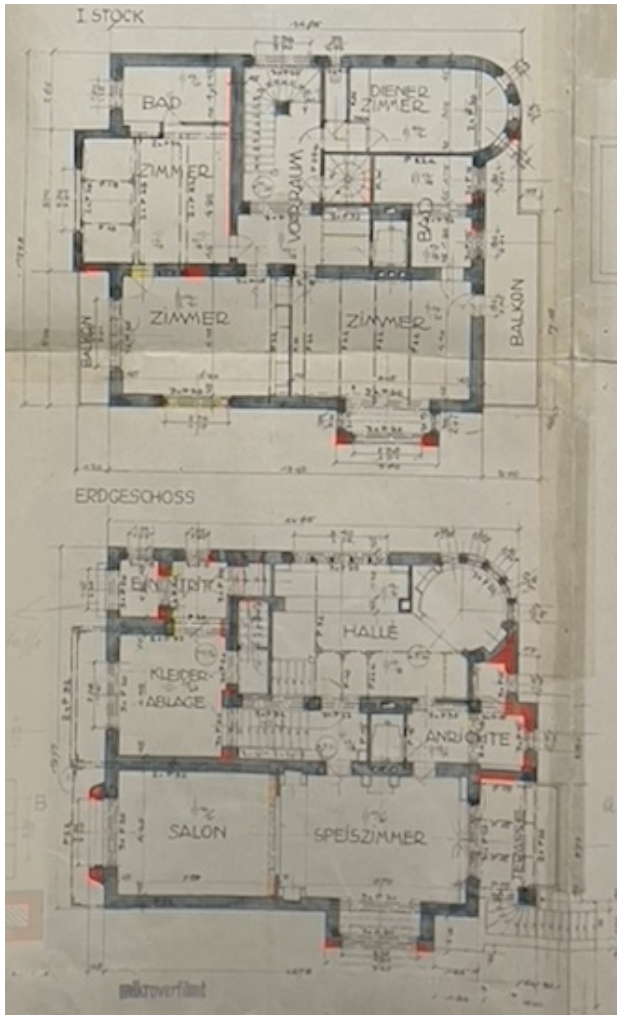
The conversion of Haus Strasser by Loos began in 1918, marking the first of two phases. Facade alterations in this phase left little resemblance to the original design (Figure 7). As portrayed by the street-facing façade, the main floor underwent more substantial alterations, distinguishing it from the upper floor, which remained largely unchanged and obtained a more unified appearance. Changes on the bedroom floor mostly mirror the alterations to the outer walls. A mansard roof addition on half the floor area accommodated the servant's living spaces and adjoining rooms (Figure 6).

Loos's key intervention was the re-programming of the entry sequence (Figure 5). Although not shown in the drawings, the existing space permitted for inserting an intermediary floor, resulting in a direct entry from the street level (Rosa, 2009). The original outer entrance was enclosed by new walls. After the redesign, two steps led to a set-back entrance door, followed by a vestibule and cloakroom. A central stairwell then guided visitors to the new centre of the raised ground floor.

The space left of this centre shaped the hall (Halle). The original stairwell was modified to serve only as a means to reach the upper levels from the main living floor. An inserted platform connected to the library (Bibliothek) on the new intermediary level, its decreased ceiling height resulting from raising the ceiling of the cloakroom below. The space of the hall was opened up through the breaking down of the former load-bearing wall, which was replaced by columns visible in the later 1919 drawings. The original outer walls were partially intercepted, and the garden-facing façade pushed outward by nearly a metre. A semicircular alcove was added in the outer corner of the hall.

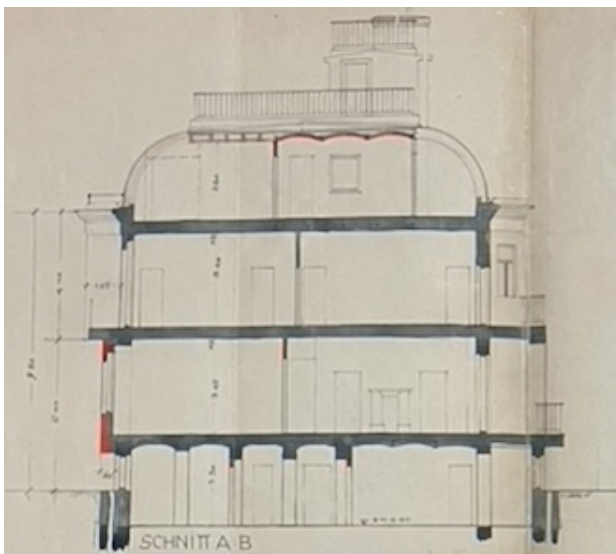
An elevator placed on the middle axis separated the circulation space for servants from the one for residents. Occupying merely the former pantry space (Speis), this portrayed a reduction of space for servants to a minimum, subtly keeping their activity in the background.

The dining room and salon retained their functions but were now clearly separated from the newly created semi-public living area. The alignment of the openings between rooms and outer walls created a directional flow, with the widened opening and the dining room door opening towards this emphasizing spatial connection. The eastern dining room opening was extended outward, creating a shallow niche. A newly centred, enlarged opening in the garden facing façade leads to a terrace, while the extended stairs leading to the garden suggest modifications to the terrain. An inserted podium introduces a right turn before the last two steps to the garden. Though not shown in the drawings, the wall between the salon and the former cabinet was removed. In its place, we find the music podium on the new intermediary floor. A short flight of stairs, marked by an inserted column, bridges the transition.



- 8 The street (bottom) and first floor (top) plans from 1919, with the first floor incorporating the street level and the second floor, display changes to the interior that influence the exterior.

Source: Stadt Wien, Planarchiv der Baubehörde (1919).



- 9 Section A-B in 1919 displays the reorganisation of the upper levels through a roof extension and addition of a roof terrace.

Source: Stadt Wien, Planarchiv der Baubehörde (1919).

1919: Extension and Refinement

The second phase of the transformation in 1919 reflects Loos's desire for refinement, further emphasizing the changes initiated in the first phase. This stage additionally reshaped the exterior expression through projections and recesses, as a result of the reconfiguration of interior spaces (Figure 10). An extension of the roof now covered the entire floor plan, along with the addition of a roof terrace. This expanded volume allowed for the rearrangement and extension of the servant spaces (Figure 9).

On the main floor, the façade opening in the salon projects 45cm beyond the former wall line, following the pattern of the pushed-out niche in the dining room created in the first phase, reinforcing the spatial flow between these two rooms (Figure 8). The formerly shallow dining room niche is further accentuated through an extension of over a metre beyond the wall line, with the bedroom space above mirroring this change. The mirrored opening direction of the dining room door redirects the focus toward the dining room itself, reinforcing its primary role in the representative spaces.

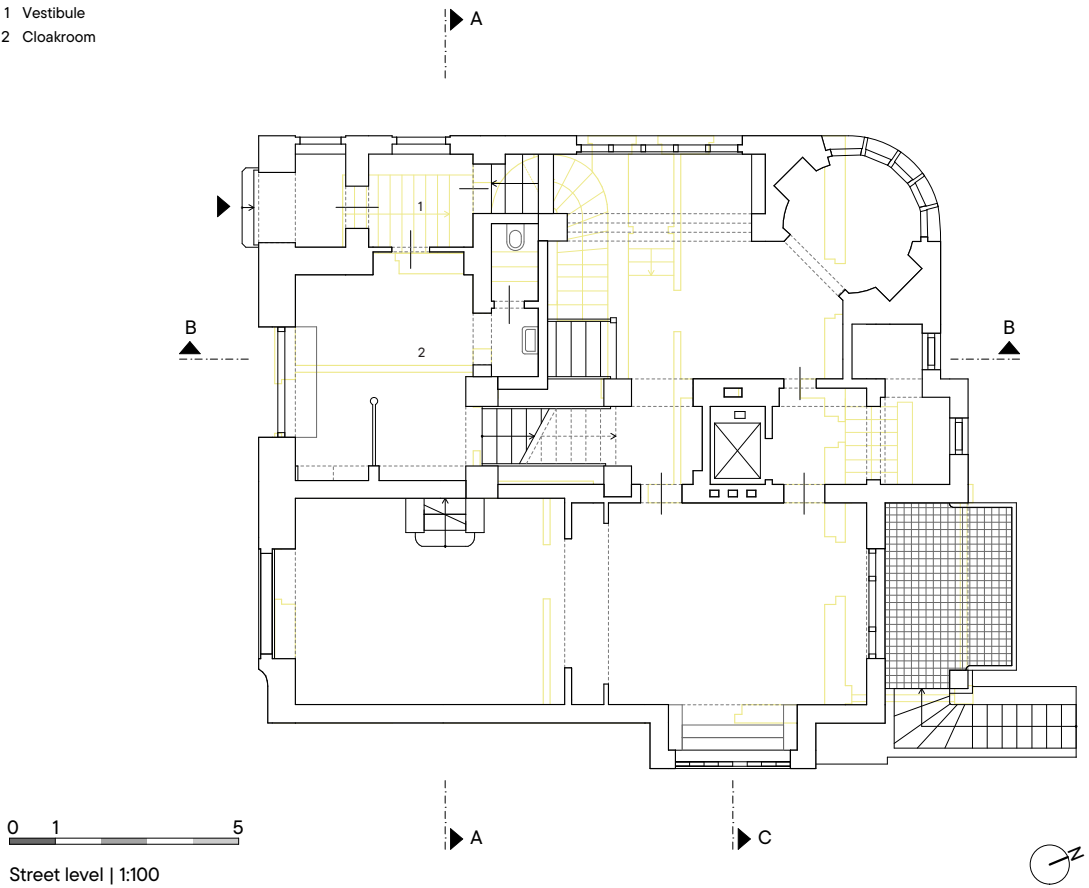
The terrace staircase was relocated to the opposite side, now projecting from the main volume. A subtle curve bridges the change in direction, from parallel to the façade to a direct path into the garden. The former staircase location now serves as additional servant space, further integrating the semicircular alcove in the hall into the overall building volume.



10
 The street-façade in 1919 portrays spatial refinements in the interior, which result in projections and recesses on the exterior.
 Source: Stadt Wien, Planarchiv der Baubehörde (1919).

Experiencing Haus Strasser After Its 1919 Transformation

- 1 Vestibule
2 Cloakroom



11 Street level floor plan post-transformation with the indication of the original layout in yellow.
Source: Stutzenberger (2025)



12
View of the cloakroom, although partitioned, opens up the space after exiting the narrow vestibule.
Source: ALA2595, Gerlach (ca. 1930)



13
Ascending perspective from the stairs towards the centre of the house, where the space opens up and light guides movement.
Source: Cacciari (1992)



14
Backward glance from the central space towards the music podium, revealing the multi-directional visual relationships
Source: Bock (2007)

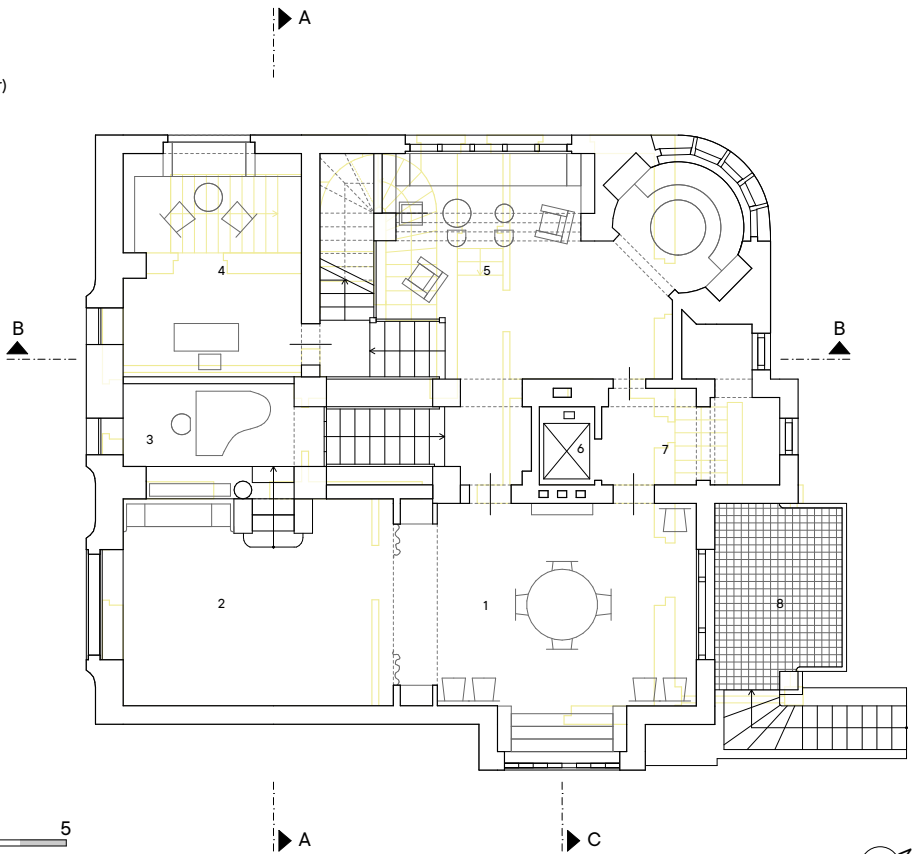
Arriving at Haus Strasser after its 1919 transformation meant encountering a restrained façade, relying on volumetric expression rather than varied materials (Figure 1). The main floor is marked by a subtle line in the façade, a form of expression of the shift from the intermediary floor to the regular floor level. This horizontal articulation continues upward, recalling a classical cornice marking the transition to the roof. The central axis of the interior is only legible with the knowledge that the middle window on the main floor lies along it. Higher up, the façade becomes more fragmented, articulated through projections and set-back terraces.

The off-centred entrance, clearly articulated, supports the internal logic of the house rather than contributing to a strict facade symmetry (Figure 11). After ascending two steps, one enters a niche with a low ceiling, perceived as narrow in contrast to the openness outside. A confined vestibule leads to the adjoining cloakroom, which, though partitioned, opens up the space slightly (Figure 12). Approaching the staircase leading upward, the space narrows again, and the dimming light results in a more subdued atmosphere. It is at this point that the vertical space opens, allowing light to guide the visitor's movement. The left wall opens toward the living room, while the right wall remains closed. Here, the incoming light, reflected by the white wood panelling, naturally draws the visitor towards the left.

Nearing the top of the stairs, a mirror on the opposite wall comes into view, creating the illusion of expanded space and altering the perception of the room's actual size. Arriving on the main living floor, one stands in the newly established centre of the house. Noticing our reflection, we also become aware of the mirrored image of an opening above the cloakroom, evoking a sense of being observed (Figure 13 and 14).

To the left of the centre lies the semi-public living area, beginning with the hall (Figure 16). The space conveys a domestic character through balancing the warmth of the wooden floor and Persian rugs with the lightness of white wall panelling (González, 2016). Alcoves with slightly lowered ceilings enhance the intimate atmosphere. On the right, a cylindrical seating alcove features a window, though the focus remains inward (Figure 17). An adjoining rectangular alcove along the façade accommodates a built-in seating area, orienting the seated person inward, with their back to an opening in the outer wall. Translucent curtains obstruct views to the outside from the hall. This arrangement places the person in a position where they can observe the room, particularly the house's centre. From a visitor's perspective, the backlit figure fades into the background, drawing attention instead to other elements, like the fireplace integrated into the open staircase. This turns the hall into a central point, contributing to the cosy atmosphere of the hall.

- 1 Dining room
- 2 Music room
- 3 Piano podium
- 4 Library (Herrenzimmer)
- 5 Salon
- 6 Lift
- 7 Preparation kitchen
- 8 Terrace



0 1 5
 Raised ground floor | 1:100

15 Raised floor plan post-transformation with the indication of the original layout in yellow.
 Source: Stutzenberger (2025)



16 The stairwell in the hall, with the inserted landing and fireplace integrated into the Raumplan composition.
Source: ALA2597, Gerlach (ca. 1930)



17 Hall alcoves form inward-facing seating zones and add layers to the space.
Source: ALA2598, Gerlach (ca. 1930)

The open staircase eventually leads to the upper levels. Through an inserted landing, one reaches the library (Figure 18).⁵ As a result of raising the ceiling of the street level floor, this new intermediary floor has a relatively low height (Figure 21 and 22). The room, with its dark wooden panelling and built-in bookshelves, creates an intimate atmosphere. A writing desk and seating below the window, the latter integrated into the built-in furniture, enhance the space, making it feel more like a private study or library. A right turn on the landing would lead further upward. The impression that remains when leaving is of a composed openness, where the unoccupied centre allows the fireplace to take on the role of the room's centre.

Back at the centre, oriented towards the right, we enter the areas predominantly used for the purpose of social representation, namely the dining room and music room with a music podium. As we step into these first two rooms, a change in ceiling height becomes apparent. This not only marks a spatial transition but also reinforces the shift from the more casual, semi-private living area to the formal dining space (Figure 19).

While the hall and centre form more of a unit in terms of materiality, the dining room sets itself apart through a more distinct material composition and spatial characteristics. What immediately stands out as one observes the room are the onyx marble panels as well as friezes and cornice zones that define the transition from wall to ceiling (Ottlinger, 1994). The room is organized around a large wooden table in the centre. Besides this, most furniture is again integrated into the walls, leaving the open space mostly unobstructed. The material choice draws most of the attention to it, resulting in the furnishings remaining subtle and in the background.

The space appears to fold outward towards a niche, yet visual connection to the outside is averted through a division with windowpanes and the use of dark, translucent curtains (Figure 20). The tall, room-height door leading to the garden is handled similarly, with its transparent part also covered with the same curtains. As a result, this element is pushed into the background, though in a different manner than the niche. Unlike a window that frames a view outward, the niche introduces a kind of spatial layering. It adds depth to the room, but the view is filtered and indirect, making the connection to the exterior feel more distant. This subdued openness leaves a somewhat ambiguous impression by suggesting outward expansion without fully delivering it.

Opposite the niche, a fireplace with a mirror above it underlines the room's more formal, representative character (Figure 23). Whereas the fireplace in the hall is more intimate and likely more functional, this one takes on a more decorative role. The reflection in the mirror above creates a shifting view, adding a layer of visual distance to the space, depending on where one stands.



18
The library, characterised by dark wood panelling and built-in shelving that accentuate its intimate atmosphere.
Source: ALA2599, Gerlach (ca. 1930)

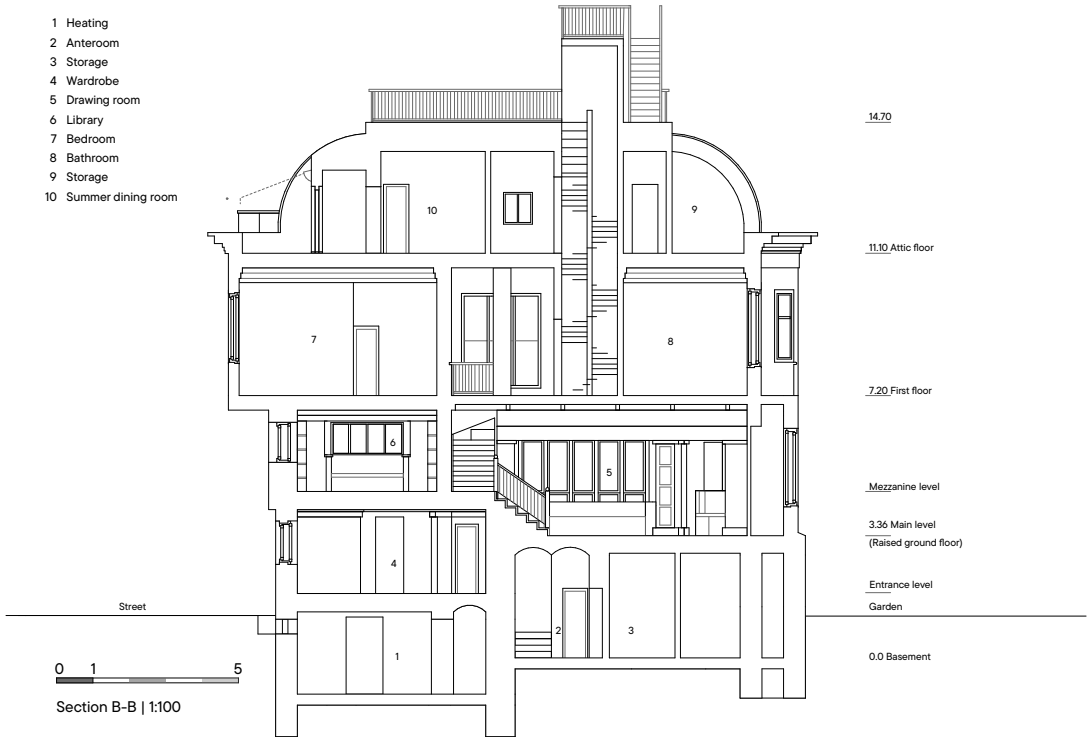


19
Dining room interior with increased ceiling height and decorative finishes distinguishing it from the semi-private living areas.
Source: ALA2602, Gerlach (ca. 1930)

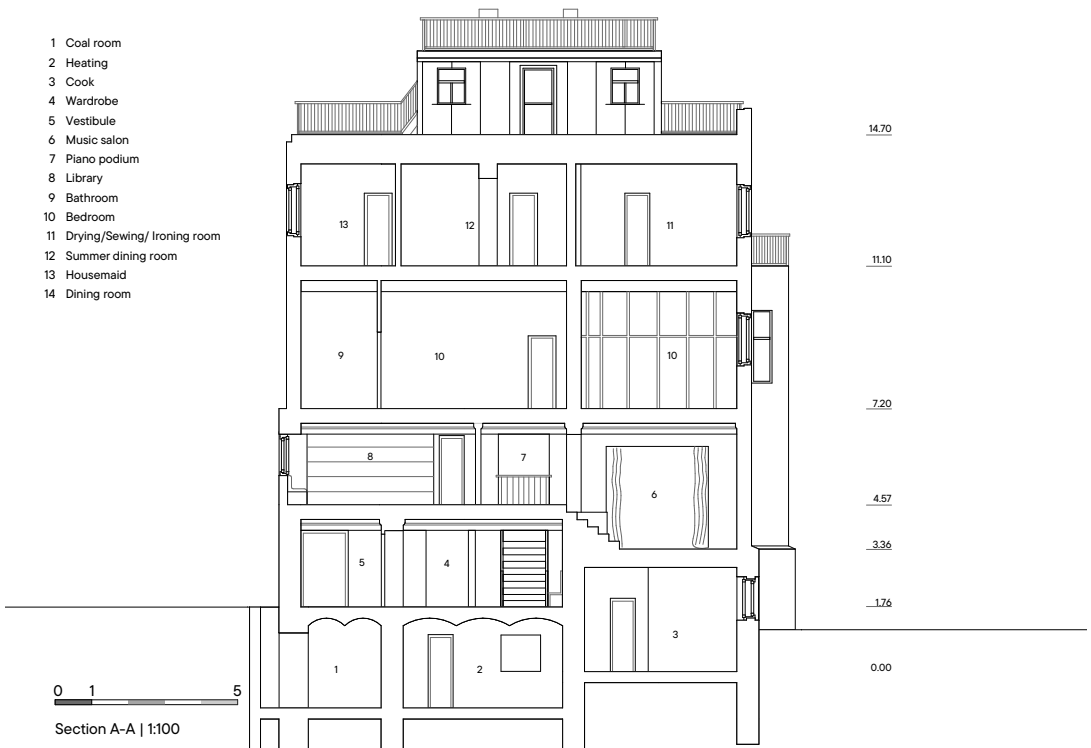


20
Niche within the dining room, with translucent curtains in front of the windows keeping the focus on the interior.
Source: ALA2600, Gerlach (ca. 1930)

⁵ Photographs marked "ALA" refer to images from the Albertina Archive, Vienna. The inventory number follows the initials.



21 Section B-B post-transformation, through the hall and library, showing split levels and circulation sequences. Source: Stutzenberger (2025)



22 Section A-A post-transformation, illustrating the spatial articulation between music room, podium, and intermediary library level. Source: Stutzenberger (2025)



23
View from terrace door towards the fireplace in the dining room.
Source: Zannier (1958)



24
Extended sightline from dining to salon, demonstrating the spatial layering of representative spaces.
Source: ALA2604, Reiffenstein (ca. 1930)

On the right, from where one had entered, a wide opening connects the dining room to the adjoining salon. This threshold can be softened by an opaque curtain, whose fabric, in contrast to the smooth, reflective surfaces of the onyx marble, helps dampen the acoustics and shift to a more intimate setting. Exiting the dining room, one steps into a transitional zone leading to the salon, where the ceiling lowers temporarily, allowing the frieze in the dining room to continue across the lintel (Figure 24). The opening spans between two parallel walls, with cabinets integrated in the enclosed space between the walls, and the opening on the salon side narrows by about a metre, contributing to the temporary narrowing of space.

The salon shares the same ceiling height as the dining room but differs in material composition. The cornice runs along the top edge of the white walls, while the lower portion is covered with white wood panelling whose vertical joints are accentuated with beading (*Perlstäbe*). A recurring Greek key motif (*Mäanderband*) appears on the walls, around the opening to the music podium, and in the dark wooden flooring. A few dark wooden steps, covered by a carpet runner, lead to the slightly elevated podium, with a marble column marking the change in level (Figure 25). Placed on the offset extension to the side of one of the steps, this is the only known column known to be used in a private interior by Loos (Vass, 2020). The landing also accommodates a glass vitrine, in front of it sits a chaise lounge, nestled into a niche between the outer wall and the flight of stairs.

The opening on the right wall of the music podium reveals a visual and spatial connection to both the centre and the hall (Figure 26 and 27). The observer's gaze falls once again on the mirror in the centre; this time we are in the observing position. From here, one can view both the stairwell coming from the cloakroom as well as the entry to either the semi-private living areas or representative spaces.



25 View towards the music podium in the salon, showcasing the elevated platform and its integration into the surrounding space.
Source: ALA2605, Gerlach (ca. 1930)

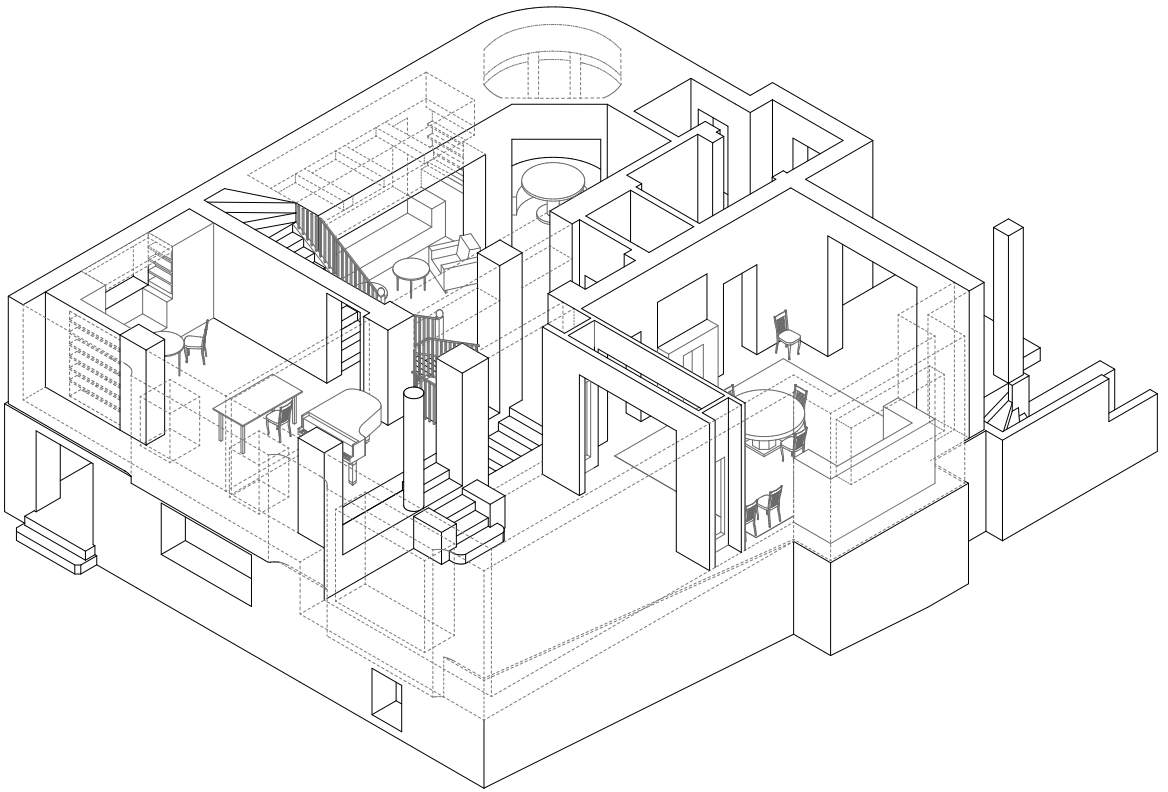


26 Wall opening at the music podium, offering an interconnection to the semi-private living area.
Source: Bock (2007)

Perspective from the podium overlooking the centre and hall, creating a visual and spatial connection.
Source: Bock (2007)



Raumplan Influence On Haus Strasser's Transformation



28 Isometric view of Haus Strasser showing the spatial layering and central stairwell after Loos's transformation.
Source: Stutzenberger (2025)

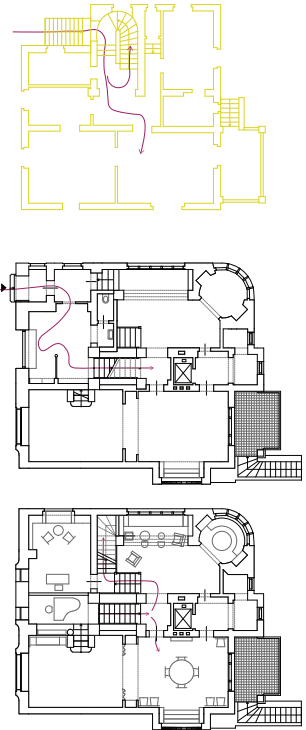
The redesign of Haus Strasser reveals a thought-out network of spaces where the principles of Loos's Raumplan concept contribute to redefining the relationship between spaces, reflecting his focus on how space could shape social interaction, privacy, and movement within the house. While Haus Strasser is not accessible for visits today, an excursion to several projects of Loos in Austria and the Czech Republic in February 2025, led by Ralf Bock, provided valuable spatial insight into how Raumplan principles operate spatially across his work.

At the heart of Loos's redesign of Haus Strasser lies the reconfiguration of the existing building volume. Loos introduced what Worbs (1983) describes as a 2:3-storey solution: three partial levels inserted within the two lower storeys of the house. The remodelling of the staircase played a crucial role in this. As Kawata (1998) describes, Loos removed the outer staircase and converted it into multiple staircases that connect the spaces within, making way for the concept of the unfolding of spaces throughout the house (Figure 29).

Increased layering and zoning within areas are particularly evident in the semi-public living areas, which were formerly used primarily by servants. Only the front door separated the external staircase from the internal circulation. Loos preserved privacy within by introducing an internal staircase leading to the centre and another from the hall to the upper floors, improving spatial efficiency (Park, 2008). Additionally, Loos reorganised the servant and resident areas more vertically than horizontally, relocating most servant spaces to a different level and reducing overlap on the main floor. This restructuring resulted in a clearer spatial organisation, creating a more flexible interior space.

Through the way Loos organises the circulation in Haus Strasser, González (2016) explains, he aligns with Josef Frank's view on staircases, as Frank (1931/2012) argues that while one sets a path, the one walking it, shouldn't be aware of the fact that they are being guided. Frank also suggests that staircases should make movement feel purposeful and give a sense of continuous progress. Loos achieves this by adding layers to the staircase, making more space accessible, while also giving the hall more meaning with an integrated fireplace, making it a central point within the living room.

This becomes evident in the newly established centre, where placing the stairwell on the central axis generates a more layered division compared to previous closed-off rooms. The stairwell becomes both a separating and connecting element, bridging two environments in one whole (Macedo Coll, 2022). While occupying distinct areas, they remain interconnected through their positioning around the centre and in the overall design.



29
Comparison of entry and circulation pre- (top) and post-transformation (middle and bottom) contrasts the original external stair with Loos's internal reconfiguration and layered vertical flow.
 Source: Stutzenberger (2025)



30
The view from the hall to the gentlemen's room in Haus Moller illustrates how the positioning of furniture towards the interior turns the seated person into an observer.

Source: ALA3193, Gerlach (1930)

Another Raumplan pattern manifests itself in the way Loos introduces a dual-direction flow from the street to the garden side, a feature present in both semi-private living areas and representative space.⁶ This enabled and enhanced the usability of the spaces. Loos expanded the spaces towards the garden, together with breaking up the load-bearing wall which formerly divided the space that the hall spans across now. As a result, different zones within the spaces were formed, and together with the formation of alcoves, introduced the “addition of a spatial layer” (Czech, 1989, p. 160).

Orienting the view inward through the placement of built-in seating along the window aligns with a pattern that Loos applies in many of his works (Kim, 2015). Colomina (2008) utilises Haus Moller (1928), as an example to make the comparison to a theatre box, which positions the resident as the spectator and the visitor as the actor observed as soon as they come into view (Figure 30). However, one might question whether this arrangement truly allows for rest, given that the resident is positioned in a way that seems to encourage both observation and relaxation simultaneously. Colomina challenges this concern by arguing that, in addition to the sensual dimension, the arrangement also engages the resident psychologically, offering a sense of control through observation.

This arrangement of furniture aligns with the concept of “centrifugal use of space” (Van de Beek, 2008, p. 53). Corresponding to an arrangement of built-in furniture along the walls, leaving the central space unobstructed. Bell (2011) explains that in Loos’s view, the architect was to take control of the walls, with little regard to how his clients chose to furnish their homes, as long as they felt at ease and secure in their environment. This, together with variation in height observed in both the semi-private living areas and representative spaces, contributes to the perception of hierarchy within the Raumplan, subtly guiding movement and introducing as well as emphasising the distinct character of each area.

While the centre, through the openness towards the hall, is considered to be more part of the former, the representative spaces present a relationship of their own (Kawata, 1998). Starting with the symmetrical arrangement of openings, along an axis that extends through the salon and dining room. Said niche sits on an axis which meets the aforementioned axis at a right angle and runs through a mirror and fireplace that lie across from it (Kawata, 1998).

Overall, the representative spaces stand apart from the semi-private living spaces, which have been altered so extensively that the original design seems no longer recognisable. In contrast, Loos decided to retain much of the pre-redesign planar structure, highlighting its potential and emphasising axially (Kawata, 1998). This approach hints at what the original structure had to offer in terms of what potential Loos saw in it, allowing for a reinterpretation of the space while preserving some of its original qualities.

⁶ For a comprehensive elaboration on the patterns of Raumplan, see van de Beek (2008, 52ff.)

Through the introduction of interior openings, Loos was able to stage views, encourage visual connections between spaces, and enhance spatial awareness. The elevated opening near the music podium gives the viewer a higher viewpoint, placing them above others and turning them from a passive viewer into an observer. Toral Guinea (2019) connects this directly to Loos's Raumplan approach, which aims to establish interconnected spatial relationships that engage with the individual's perception and movement through space. As Bell (2011) fittingly describes, Loos's spatial interventions, such as those in the transformation of Haus Strasser, foster an interactive relationship between inhabitants and their surroundings, as the interior is shaped and activated by those who live within it.

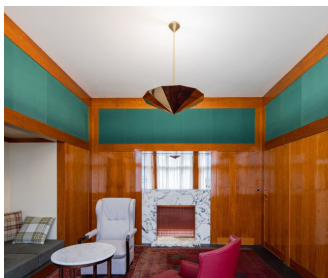
In his documentation of Haus Strasser in Raumplan versus Plan Libre, Max Risselada (2008) highlights the role of acoustics and music in the spatial composition of the house. This point was also emphasised during a conversation with him at TU Delft (personal communication, February 13, 2025), where he stressed how these elements contribute to the spatial experience in Haus Strasser. Combined with the choice of materials, this adds a dimension to the Raumplan that reaches beyond visual connection. Sound moves through the house even when spaces are visually detached, contrasting with the house's original state, where spatial interplay was limited to the rooms in use at a given moment, creating segmented experiences rather than one that supports layered, simultaneous settings.

Loos's material choices, particularly the use of continuous grain patterns, as seen in the dining room in Haus Strasser, emphasizes his desire to allow the material to express its characteristic qualities (González, 2016). These qualities not only define the distinct character of a space but also shape its perception. The placement of mirrors further contributes to this. In the hall, the brick fireplace creates a warm atmosphere, while in the dining room, a mirror above the marble-clad fireplace contributes to a more formal, representative feel. This design approach can also be observed in other Loos-related projects, such as the apartment for Dr. Josef and Stephanie Vogl (Pilsen, 1928), where the mirror above the brick fireplace enhances the space's cosiness, much like in Haus Strasser's hall (Figure 31). In contrast, the Semler residence's men's bedroom (Pilsen, Loos and Kulka, 1932-1934) features a mirror above a marble-clad fireplace, which somewhat diminishes the warmth of the space, similar to the atmosphere in the dining room of Haus Strasser (Figure 32).

31



32



31
The mirror above the brick fireplace in the apartment for Dr. Josef and Stephanie Vogl apartment (Pilsen, Loos, 1928) conveys a similar cosy atmosphere as observed in Haus Strasser's hall.
Source: ALA2641, Gerlach (ca. 1930)

32
The fireplace in the Semler Residence's men's bedroom (Pilsen, Loos and Kulka, 1932-1934) shares similar materiality with Haus Strasser's dining room, but in a more informal setting.
Source: Západočeská galerie v Plzni. (n.d.)



33
 The mirror in the stairwell of the Knize Tailoring Store (Vienna, Loos, 1910) reflects both the arrival of customers and foreshadows the space above, highlighting Loos' use of mirrors to connect spatial zones and shape visual experiences.
 Source: Torsten (2017)

The mirror in the centre of Haus Strasser serves as what Kawata (1998) describes as a point of penetration between the two primarily separate areas. From the perspective of a visitor who has just entered, the view through the mirror becomes slightly distorted, with light possibly influencing or blurring sight. However, from the elevated viewpoint of the music podium, the view and reflection are much clearer. A similar effect appears in Loos's design for the Knize tailoring store (Vienna, 1910), where a mirror in the stairwell both foreshadows what awaits upstairs and signals the arrival of customers (Figure 33). This parallel underlines how Loos consistently used mirrors to connect spatial zones and shape visual relationships across levels.

Exterior openings allow light to enter, though generally filtered by translucent curtains, shaping the perception of a person moving through the house (Toral Guinea, 2019). These openings cause lighter surfaces to reflect light, while darker ones absorb it. While windows are typically designed to connect the interior with the exterior, in Loos' work, and likewise in Haus Strasser, they prioritise the spatial experience and connections within the interior over views to the outside. This emphasis on the interior reflects Loos's view that it should take precedence over the exterior, with spaces created before their bodies, and floor plans developed before facades (Worbs, 1983), reinforcing his hierarchical approach to spatial design.

Understanding Raumplan Through Haus Strasser

This paper has highlighted how Loos's key interventions in the redesign of Haus Strasser shaped its spatial hierarchies, creating a cohesive architectural whole. Visiting several projects firsthand demonstrated Loos's values regarding the prioritisation of the experience of space over static representations through drawings or photographs. As Hevesi (1907) quotes Loos, "His rooms, when photographed, appear to be nothing. The people who live in them don't recognize them. Because this is not something to be drawn, but something to be experienced" (as cited in Jacob, Deschan, Fenske, Havekost, & Heinen, 2014). This insight resonated with my study of Haus Strasser, where interpreting plans, images, texts, and reconstructions was vital for understanding Loos' design interventions. In line with this philosophy of Loos, the transformation of Haus Strasser urges us to experience space to fully comprehend it.

The conversion reinterprets the former layout while simultaneously preserving, refining, and expanding upon traces of its original state. This highlights the importance of engaging with what is already there to reveal the true potential embedded within. Though 2D drawings serve as an essential starting point, they often cannot fully convey the lived experience of a space. The transformation of Haus Strasser remains a valuable example even today, demonstrating how Raumplan principles can shape such adaptations. What is often perceived as a limitation can instead guide design decisions and, in doing so, help refine the very concept of the Raumplan itself.

Haus Strasser also shows how Loos's approach to spatial organisation evolved. Kawata (2019) suggests that fragmentation in Loos's designs is not just a result of a focus on spatial efficiency; rather, spatiality and economy can emerge as by-products of this fragmentation. This is evident in how Loos chooses materials, like the durable marble cladding, which distinguishes the dining room from the living areas, despite their comparable sizes. As Kawata notes, these choices prioritise durability and quality, reflecting Loos's broader aim to create spaces that persist, even if elements appear excessive or deviate from strict spatial logic.

Ultimately, this paper has explored the historical significance of Haus Strasser and Loos' Raumplan principles in reshaping the space. Looking ahead, there is an opportunity to explore how these principles can be adapted and integrated in contemporary architectural practices, offering an interesting approach to today's building conversions and design solutions.

References

- Bell, D. (2011). The irritation of architecture. *Journal of Architectural Education*, 64(2), 113–126. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1531-314x.2010.01135.x>
- Bock, R. (2007). *Adolf Loos: Works and projects*. Skira.
- Cacciari, M. (1992). *Adolf Loos e il suo Angelo: “Das Andere” e altri scritti* (Reissue). Electa. (Original work published 1981)
- Colomina, B. (2008). The split wall: Domestic voyeurism. In M. Risselada (Ed.), *Raumplan versus Plan Libre: Adolf Loos / Le Corbusier* (pp. 32–51). 010 Publishers. (Original work published 1992)
- Czech, H. (1989). Der Umbau. In B. Rukschcio (Ed.), *Katalogbuch Ausstellung ADOLF LOOS* (pp. 160–172). Graphische Sammlung Albertina.
- Frank, J. (2012). *Das Haus als Weg und Platz* (Originally published 1931). In *Josef Frank: Writings, Volume 2: Published writings from 1931 to 1965* (pp. 316–323). Metroverlag.
- González, M. a. Á. (2016). ESTUDIO DE LA APLICACIÓN DEL COLOR EN SIETE VILLAS DE ADOLF LOOS. <https://doi.org/10.4995/thesis/10251/62175>
- Jacob, B., Deschan, A., Fenske, F., Havekost, K., & Heinen, H. (Eds.). (2014). *Adolf Loos - Der Raumplan entwerfen in der dritten Dimension* (2nd ed.). Beuth Hochschule für Technik Berlin.
- Kawata, T. (1998). On Adolf Loos' Raumplan and fragmentation in Villa Strasser. *Journal of Architecture and Planning (Transactions of AIJ)*, 63(509), 217–224. https://doi.org/10.3130/aija.63.217_4
- Kim, Y. J. (2015). Camillo Sitte's urban design language and its influence upon Adolf Loos' Raumplan. *Architectural Research*, 17(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.5659/AIKAR.2015.17.1.1>
- Kulka, H. (1979). *Adolf Loos: Das Werk des Architekten* (Original work published 1931). Löcker Verlag.
- Macedo Coll, A. (2022, July 7). *Adolf Loos: his interior linings* (Trellat Final de Grau). UPC, Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/2117/373247>
- Ottillinger, E. B. (1994). *Adolf Loos: Wohnkonzepte und Möbelentwürfe*. Residenz Verlag.
- Park, C.-I. (2008). A Study on the Characteristic of Raumplan based on the Architectural Thought of Adolf Loos. *Korean Institute of Interior Design Journal*, 17(6), 30–40.
- Risselada, M. (Ed.). (2008). *Raumplan versus Plan Libre: Adolf Loos / Le Corbusier* (Revised and updated English edition). 010 Publishers. (Original work published 1987)

- Rosa, J. (2009). Building descriptions. In R. Schezen, Adolf Loos: Architecture 1903–1932 (p.124). The Monacelli Press.
- Rukschcio, B., & Schachel, R. (1982). Adolf Loos: Leben und Werk. Residenz Verlag.
- Toral Guinea, M. (2019). Activación de los sistemas arquitectónicos compactos. La construcción del mecanismo de proyección diagonal en la obra de Adolf Loos. EGA Expresión Gráfica Arquitectónica, 24(37), 74–85. <https://doi.org/10.4995/ega.2019.10832>
- van de Beek, J. (2008). Adolf Loos – Patterns of town houses. In M. Risselada (Ed.), *Raumplan versus Plan Libre: Adolf Loos / Le Corbusier* (pp. 52–73). 010 Publishers. (Original work published 1987)
- Vass, A. (2020). Zur Entdeckung eines unausgeführten Loos-Projekts. *Zprávy / Reports: Umění / Art*, 68(3), 290–300. Akademie der Bildenden Künste Wien.
- Worbs, D. (1983). Der Raumplan im Wohnungsbau von Adolf Loos. In Akademie der Künste (Ed.), *Adolf Loos 1870–1933: Raumplan–Wohnungsbau* (pp. 64–77). Akademie der Künste.
- Zednicek, W. (1984). *Adolf Loos: Vierzig Photographien* (F. Kurrent, Essay). Edition Tusch.

List of Figures

Cover Figure: Gerlach, M. (ca. 1930). Haus Karl und Hilda Strasser, Wien XIII., Kupelwiesergasse 28, Salon, Durchblick zum Musikpodium [Photograph, ALA2605]. Albertina Archive, Vienna. [https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=\[ALA2605\]&showtype=record](https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=[ALA2605]&showtype=record)

Figure 1: Fiegl, J. (Photographer). (1981). Straßenfassade, Aufn. 1981 [Photograph]. In B. Rukschcio & R. Schachel, Adolf Loos: Leben und Werk. Residenz Verlag.

Figure 2-4: Stadt Wien, Planarchiv der Baubehörde. (1896). Eingabepläne Villa Ritter v. Loebenstein [Photograph of Architectural drawing]. Reproduced in personal correspondence with Ralf Bock, March 2025.

Figure 5-7: Stadt Wien, Planarchiv der Baubehörde. (1918). [Einreichungsplan] [Photograph of architectural drawing, plan signed by Adolf Loos]. Reproduced in personal correspondence with Ralf Bock, March 2025.

Figure 8-10: Stadt Wien, Planarchiv der Baubehörde. (1919). Einreichungsplan über herzustellende Abänderungsarbeiten [Photograph of architectural drawing, plan signed by Adolf Loos]. Reproduced in correspondence with Ralf Bock, March 2025.

Figure 11: Stutzenberger, J. (2025). Re-drawn and adjusted street level floor plan post-transformation with the indication of the original layout in yellow. Based on Stadt Wien, Planarchiv der Baubehörde. (1896). and Bock (2007).

Figure 12: Gerlach, M. (ca. 1930). Villa Karl und Hilda Strasser, Wien XIII., Kupelwiesergasse 28, Garderobe [Photograph, ALA2595]. Albertina Archive, Vienna. [https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=\[ALA2595\]&showtype=record](https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=[ALA2595]&showtype=record)

Figure 13: Cacciari, M. (1992). Adolf Loos e il suo Angelo: “Das Andere” e altri scritti (Reissue). Electa. (Original work published 1981)

Figure 14: Bock, R. (2007). Adolf Loos: Works and projects. Milan: Skira.

Figure 15: Stutzenberger, J. (2025). Re-drawn and adjusted raised ground floor plan post-transformation with the indication of the original layout in yellow. Based on Stadt Wien, Planarchiv der Baubehörde. (1896). and Bock (2007).

Figure 16: Gerlach, M. (ca. 1930). Haus Karl und Hilda Strasser, Wien XIII., Kupelwiesergasse 28, Treppenaufgang in der Halle [Photograph, ALA2597]. Albertina Archive, Vienna. [https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=\[ALA2597\]&showtype=record](https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=[ALA2597]&showtype=record)

Figure 17: Gerlach, M. (ca. 1930). Haus Karl und Hilda Strasser, Wien XIII., Kupelwiesergasse 28, Halle mit Runderker [Photograph, ALA2598]. Albertina Archive, Vienna. [https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=\[ALA2598\]&showtype=record](https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=[ALA2598]&showtype=record)

Figure 18: Gerlach, M. (ca. 1930). Haus Karl und Hilda Strasser, Wien XIII., Kupelwiesergasse 28, Herrenzimmer [Photograph, ALA2599]. Albertina Archive, Vienna. [https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=\[ALA2599\]&showtype=record](https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=[ALA2599]&showtype=record)

Figure 19: Gerlach, M. (ca. 1930). Haus Karl und Hilda Strasser, Wien XIII., Kupelwiesergasse 28, Speisezimmer [Photograph, ALA2602]. Albertina Archive, Vienna. [https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=\[ALA2602\]&showtype=record](https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=[ALA2602]&showtype=record)

Figure 20: Gerlach, M. (ca. 1930). Haus Karl und Hilda Strasser, Wien XIII., Kupelwiesergasse 28, Speisezimmer, Blick auf die Anrichte [Photograph, ALA2600]. Albertina Archive, Vienna. [https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=\[ALA2600\]&showtype=record](https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=[ALA2600]&showtype=record)

Figure 21: Re-drawn and adjusted Section B-B post-transformation, through the hall and library, showing split levels and circulation sequences. Based on Bock (2007). Drawing by Stutzenberger, J. (2025).

Figure 22: Re-drawn and adjusted Section A-A post-transformation, through the hall and library, showing split levels and circulation sequences. Based on Bock (2007). Drawing by Stutzenberger, J. (2025).

Figure 23: Zannier, I. (1958). Sala da pranzo di casa Strasser progettata da Adolf Loos, Vienna [Photograph]. Archivi Alinari – Archivio Zannier, Firenze. <https://rb.gy/jt4795>

Figure 24: Reiffenstein, B. (ca. 1930). Haus Karl und Hilda Strasser, Wien XIII., Kupelwiesergasse 28, Blick vom Speisezimmer in den Salon [Photograph, ALA2604]. Albertina Archive, Vienna. [https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=\[ALA2604\]&showtype=record](https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=[ALA2604]&showtype=record)

Figure 25: Gerlach, M. (ca. 1930). Haus Karl und Hilda Strasser, Wien XIII., Kupelwiesergasse 28, Salon, Durchblick zum Musikpodium [Photograph, ALA2605]. Albertina Archive, Vienna. [https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=\[ALA2605\]&showtype=record](https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=[ALA2605]&showtype=record)

Figure 26 and 27: Bock, R. (2007). Adolf Loos: Works and projects. Milan: Skira.

Figure 28: Stutzenberger, J. (2025). Isometric view of Haus Strasser showing the spatial layering and central stairwell after Loos' transformation.

Figure 29: Stutzenberger, J. (2025). Comparison of entrance and circulation pre- (top) and post-transformation contrasts the original external stair with Loos's internal reconfiguration and layered vertical flow. Stutzenberger, J. (2025).

Figure 30: Gerlach, M. (1930). Haus Hans und Anny Moller, Wien XVIII., Starkfriedgasse 19, Partie der Halle mit Aufgang zum Herrenzimmer [Photograph, ALA3193]. Albertina, Vienna. [https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=\[ALA3193\]&showtype=record](https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=[ALA3193]&showtype=record)

Figure 31: Gerlach, M. (ca. 1930). Wohnung Dr. Josef und Stephanie Vogl, Pilsen, Wohnzimmer (Kaminzimmer) [Photograph, ALA2641]. Albertina, Vienna. [https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=\[ALA2641\]&showtype=record](https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search#record/objectnumbersearch=[ALA2641]&showtype=record)

Figure 32: Západočeská galerie v Plzni. (n.d.). Herren Schlafzimmer, Semler Residence [Photograph]. Západočeská galerie v Plzni. Retrieved April 16, 2025, from <https://semmler.cz/>

Figure 33: Torsten. (2017, October 24). Knize – Renowned men's outfitter and tailor in Vienna [Photograph]. Sartorial Notes. <https://sartorialnotes.com/2017/10/24/knize-renowned-mens-outfitter-and-tailor-in-vienna/>

