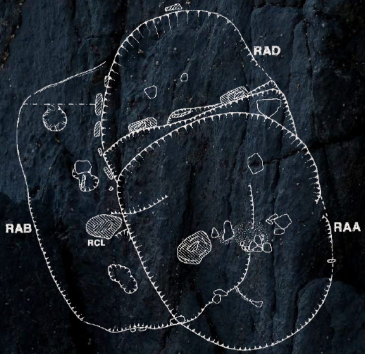
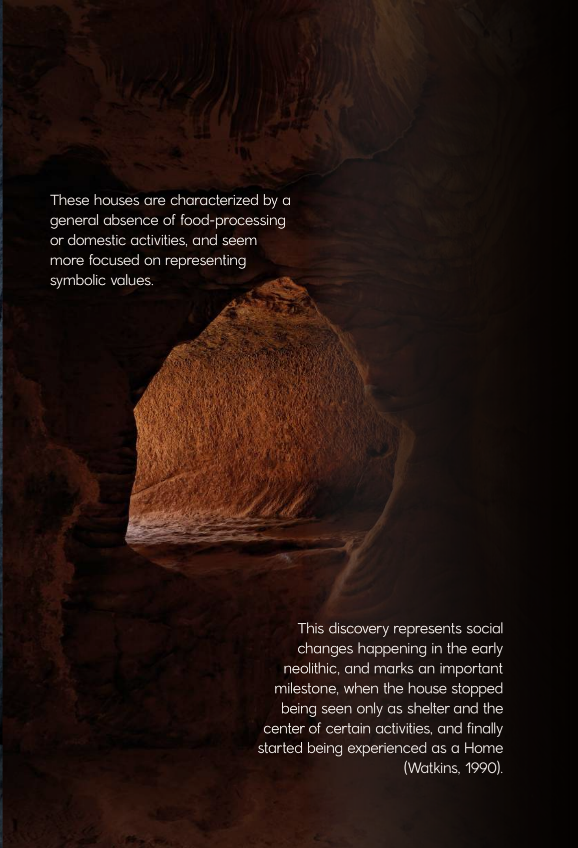
Nostalgia.

Its Greek roots: νόστος (nóstos): "return home", "homecoming", and ἄλγος (álgos): "grief”, "distress".

Qermez Dere is an excavation site in today’s northern Iraq, dating back to 8500-7900 BC, therefore between the epi-paleolithic and early neolithic periods. The excavation has revealed three semi-subterranean houses constituted by single, overlapping chambers, named RAB, RAA and RAD.

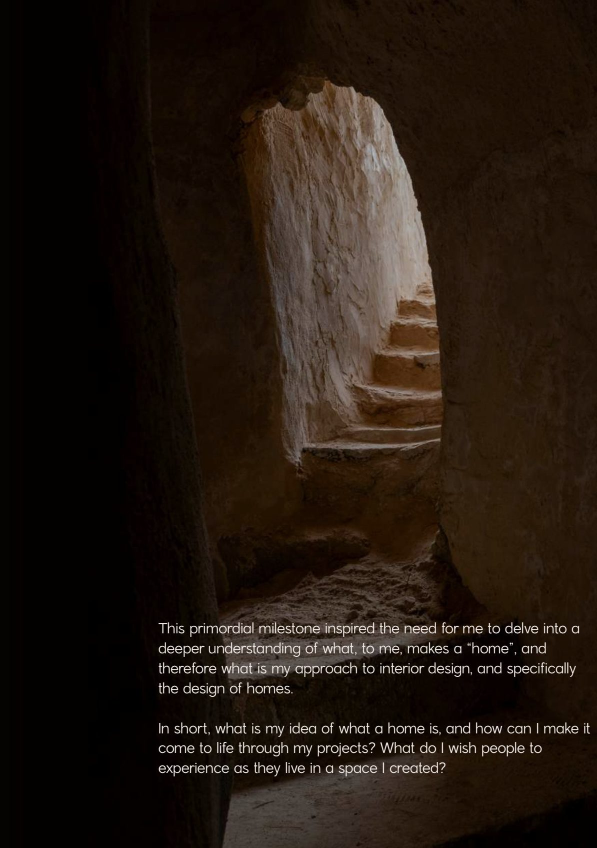
These houses present a shape in between rectangular and oval, with round corners. They are plastered with lime and red clay, and the transition from the walls to the floor is smoothly modeled. All three houses present an imposing, non-structural clay pillar in the center, which probably had a symbolic importance.





These houses are characterized by a general absence of food-processing or domestic activities, and seem more focused on representing symbolic values.

This discovery represents social changes happening in the early neolithic, and marks an important milestone, when the house stopped being seen only as shelter and the center of certain activities, and finally started being experienced as a Home (Watkins, 1990).



This primordial milestone inspired the need for me to delve into a deeper understanding of what, to me, makes a “home”, and therefore what is my approach to interior design, and specifically the design of homes.

In short, what is my idea of what a home is, and how can I make it come to life through my projects? What do I wish people to experience as they live in a space I created?

House and Home

What a home is can vary based on the specific culture we are observing, but it seems to be settled that for the majority of cultures there is a particular significance given to the “home”, and surprisingly even among nomad populations “the concept of home is not entirely absent” (Barone, 2019).

The importance the concepts of house and home have for human being and therefore the interest they spark in both researchers and the general population, is explained because the domestic dimension, the need for the protection a house offers, is something that all humans experience; more humans have a certain, rather vast amount of agency when it comes to co-creating their home.

The relationship between the person and the home reflects one’s lifetime journey, making “seeking out an ‘ideal home’ […] a lifelong pursuit” (Barone, 2019).
Homemaking becomes “part and parcel of a larger project such as ‘putti down roots’” (Barone, 2019). Therefore, the interest in the concept and experience of the home resonates with every human being on a deep and personal level.

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The concepts of “house” and “home”, and their distinction, have been a much debated matter of discussion and reflection in anthropology and other disciplines for decades, and are agreeably perceived as related but distinct. The relation between them, besides the direct, straightforward correlation of one with the physical structure and the other with the inside of that structure, probably lies in the sense of protection that both a house and a home provide to a human being. The house gives physical shelter, protection from the physical external threats of the world, while the home offers “the comforting thought of returning to a physical place of security and familiarity” (Jackline, 2025).

As for what differentiates the two concepts, the “house” is mostly intended as the material form; the tangible structure giving physical shelter, the container of one’s possessions, as well as the shell, the exterior structure of the home.
On the other hand, the “home” is predominantly referred to the interior, the intimate; it is “accompanied by the emotional state of entering personal space” (Jackline, 2025), intended as both the tangible space and the intangible environment it creates. “The interior of the house represents the heart of the home and is a safe space for the most “unguarded” and relaxed behavior. […] the place where we can feel our most comfortable sensation of belonging” (Barone, 2019).

Home as belonging

“The notion of ‘home’ emphasises the subjective sense of being rooted within the world” (Samanani & Lenhard, 2019). Going beyond anthropological research, we find similar reasoning in architectural exploration, and in particular in the philosophy of Christian Norberg-Schulz, who reinterprets Heidegger's thinking of dwelling and his concept of human suffering from “existential homelessness”, losing their root connection to the earth because of the progression of technology and mass-production. Norberg-Schulz observes this phenomenon in the relation between people and the built environment of his time, and argues that architecture has the ability of restoring a sense of "being at peace in a protected space" in humans, by making the home not just a shelter from the weather, but the ultimate existential center of human life, a “psychological retreat”. He argues this can be achieved by designing homes in a way that makes humans feel safety, comfort and warmth against the unpredictability and chaos of the outside world.

Taking a step forward, we can try to understand what exactly about a home can provide humans with this sense of belonging, rootedness, identity; why achieving this is so crucial for human beings, and is achieving this the ultimate goal?

Home and Human: mutual reflection and co-creation

If we recognize people not only experience the space as it is, as it was designed, but have agency in shaping it through time, in enriching it with their own memories, their own personal objects, their own meanings, then we are in front of a process of mutual influence, a neverending process of exchange, co-creation, between the space and the person.

On a general, societal and cultural level, this was observed by Levi-Strauss in “House societies”, as he observed that houses themselves can make and reproduce society (Barone, 2019); later on, Bourdieu’s study of the Kabyle house revealed a strong correlation between the Berber group’s worldview and how these not only were reflected and “manifest in the very layout, furnishings, and domestic routines” (Samanani & Lenhard, 2019) which made up the Kabyle house, but were also reproduced by the house itself.

He claimed that “the structured, material form of the house became the primary ground for social reproduction”, sites for learning embodied habits and internalising specific values” (Samanani & Lenhard, 2019), a theory he called “habitus”, defined as “a system of predispositions inculcated by the material circumstances of life” (Bourdieu, 1970).

An organizing order of our actions that acts on us without our full awareness.

The concept was later retaliated by Daniel Miller on a smaller scale. In his text "Stuff", with his theory of objects and the "humility of things", he expresss that objects (even and especially within the domestic environment, as in his study) "don't shout at you […] but theyhelp you gently to learn how to act appropriately. […] objects make people. Before we can make things, we are ourselves grown up and matured in the light of things that come down to us […]. These unconsciously direct our footsteps, and are the landscapes of our imagination" (Miller, 2009).

Objects, therefore, have the unique capacity of making themselves so obvious in the space that they almost disappear, becoming so expected to the human perception that we become not even aware of their presence anymore, and, through their hidden presence, they begin to shape our movements, behaviour, and ultimately our identity.

Putting our focus more and more on the home - as Miller would say "houses are the elephants of stuff" - we find the same argument in a more recent range of works on the home "focused on emotion and affect, where affect denotes forms of bodily perception that slip below conscious detection and are frequently hard to put into words. Affects often have a strong material basis, which is why the material arrangement of homes can serve to suffuse them with specific atmospheres of feeling" (Samanani & Lenhard, 2019).

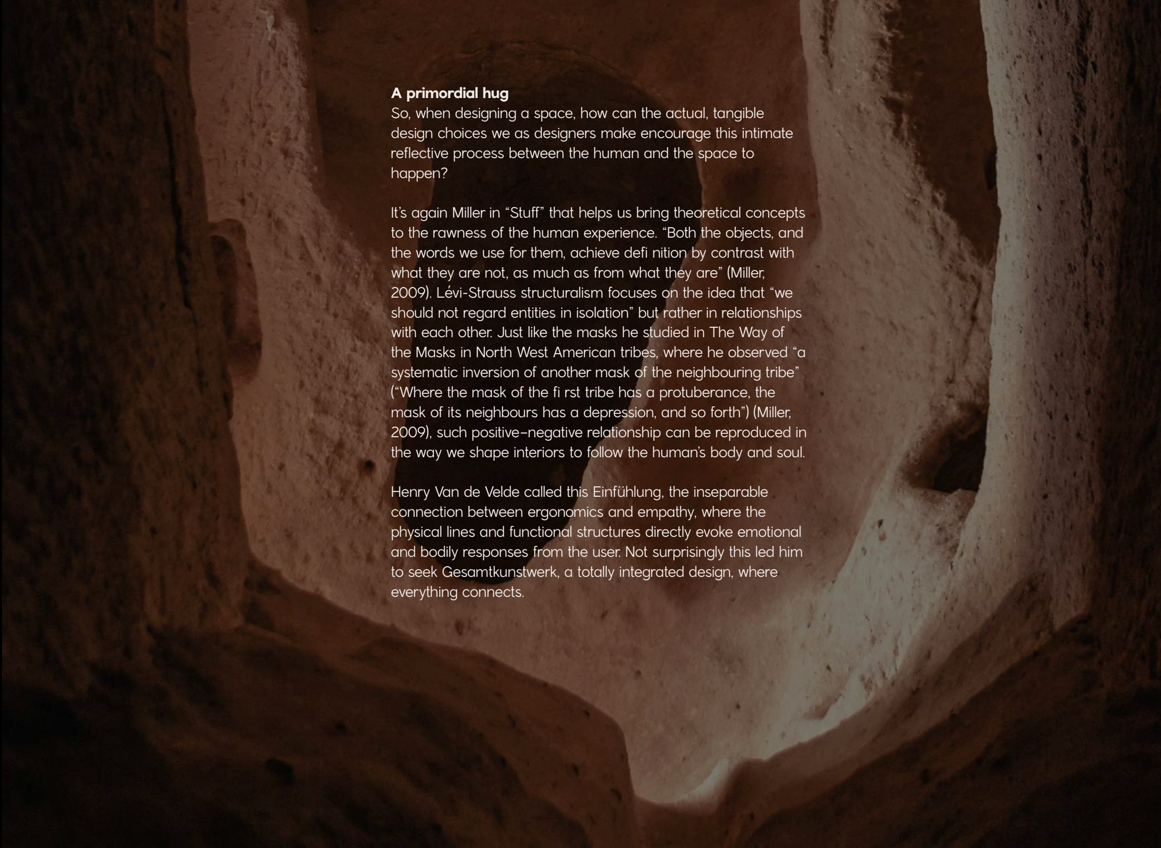
We can therefore say that the meaning of "Home", as opposed to the concept of "House", after all is by no means detached from the tangible, but instead of being defined by only that, it correlates to the moment the tangible meets, and shapes, the body and spirit, and viceversa. In this neverending and intertwined, reciprocal relationship between the human's body and soul and the space they wander in, a home creates the person while simultaneously the person creates the home, blurring the distinction between object and subject.
This process doesn't happen just for its own sake.

Just like in Hegel's phenomenology, the more humans develop a consciousness in relation with their external environment, the more they develop an awareness of the self and viceversa.
A simultaneous process of 'accommodation' and 'accommodating' (Miller, 2009). In its process of reflection of the humanbeing who inhabits it, the home creates self-awarenessin humans, self-awareness that supports them in their growth, or, hopefully, happy degrowth.

People have an opportunity for this process to happen in different stages of life. Miller reports Jean-Sébastien Marcoux's examination of this process happening during moving homes. "When moving house they (people, A.N.) discard some of their stuff but, in contrast to the house itself, many other possessions move with them. As such, moving house allows people to reconstruct their personal biography as represented in memories of associated objects [...].
Certain relationships with other people get discarded along with the objects that memorialized them, while others come to the fore and are used prominently in the decoration of the new home.
So people have a chance to, as it were, work on and repair the way they represent themselves and their own histories to themselves, and to the world [...] moving home is a way of rewriting one's autobiography, inscribed in things" (Miller, 2009).
We can argue that the same opportunity also arises when a person builds their new home, or decides to renovate their current home.

For this reason, this process of mutual creation between the home and the inhabitant is precious, sacred as one of the deepest forms of intimacy between the human and his habitat. Only by letting this reflective process to happen, a home can counteract the alienation humans can be subjected to in the outside world where the tangible we interact with is not self-produced, bringing us back to the concept that the overall of the home, the selection of, and the physical permanence of the objects within it, and the memories tied to them produce our sense of identity and belonging (Miller, 2001).

Therefore, the interior designer's role is that of facilitating for this self-recognition in one's own living space to naturally happen between the owner and their home, not to make the process manifest or explicit, but to direct it towards the growth the owner is meant to achieve.



A primordial hug

So, when designing a space, how can the actual, tangible design choices we as designers make encourage this intimate reflective process between the human and the space to happen?

It's again Miller in "Stuff" that helps us bring theoretical concepts to the rawness of the human experience. "Both the objects, and the words we use for them, achieve definition by contrast with what they are not, as much as from what they are" (Miller, 2009). Lévi-Strauss structuralism focuses on the idea that "we should not regard entities in isolation" but rather in relationships with each other. Just like the masks he studied in The Way of the Masks in North West American tribes, where he observed "a systematic inversion of another mask of the neighbouring tribe" ("Where the mask of the first tribe has a protuberance, the mask of its neighbours has a depression, and so forth") (Miller, 2009), such positive–negative relationship can be reproduced in the way we shape interiors to follow the human's body and soul.

Henry Van de Velde called this Einfühlung, the inseparable connection between ergonomics and empathy, where the physical lines and functional structures directly evoke emotional and bodily responses from the user. Not surprisingly this led him to seek Gesamtkunstwerk, a totally integrated design, where everything connects.

Therefore, where elements of an interior space are all connected, where the distinction between the envelope (the walls, floor, ceiling) and the addition (the furniture) blur, where the furniture connects with the structure of the room, where the interior element and the human body dance and meet in a convexity–concavity bond, this is where the home comforts - hugs - the user, to the fullest.

This is where interiors can truly evoke, embody, that longed for sense of warmth and security humans seek from their home. In accompanying humans in their daily movements, supporting their full presence in a space, the home can make you feel fully tended to, like in a primordial, maternal hug.

The longing for a home that humans feel is rooted, like all other species, in the need for protection. That sense of belonging and safety a home gives is the kind of dignity that every human being deserves to receive.

Thus, the home achieves its ultimate function: welcoming the chasm of the spirit.

The essential

“What we cannot assimilate oppresses us”. Visual clutter created by an abundance of objec forms, and unnecessary elements can hinder ou pursuit of peace and calm within our home. Miller explains this concept in “Stuff” (Miller, 200 by reporting Simmel’s theory that, for example, living in a big city can expose us to many more opportunities, but often what happens is that on single person doesn’t have the capacity of assimilating it all, so the contrary tends to happe and in the attempt to relate to many things, we can end up becoming indifferent to the world ar ourselves. A similar process tends to happen in homes. We can gain something from objects or elements only when we have the capacity to assimilate them. Otherwise, a great amount of objects, visual clutter and abundance of options and things can have negative effects on us, depriving us from the opportunity to assimilate what we actually could, and ultimately grow with the support of the space around us.

A better approach is that of letting the space showcase the essential of what we desire to be represented in that moment, allowing the interio to symbolize our personal biography through fe meaningful objects that embody our most intim memories, personality traits, history; objects collected and selected over time through a process of constant construction and destructio refinement, of our identity.

Carla Procida
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Inspiration

Casa Tarasana | Mexico by Estudio MA

“We aspire to create spaces that transcen
become meaningful experiences, capable
lasting emotional connections.”

d function and
of generating

“Architecture here is designed less to be seen, and more to be felt.”

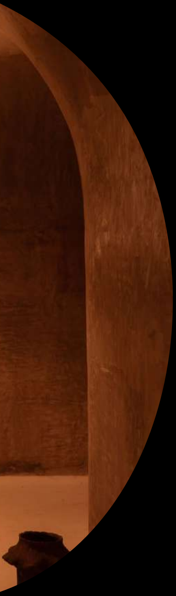
“Casa Tarasana by Estudio MA is conceived as a sanctuary for birth — a space where architecture supports care, protection, and reconnection with the body. Rather than functioning as a conventional dwelling or wellness space, the project is shaped around atmosphere, intimacy, and sensory presence.

Inspired by the geometry of the torus, the architecture explores continuity and balance between opposing conditions: light and shadow, enclosure and openness, organic softness and structural clarity. The spatial experience is fluid, allowing movement to feel calm and inward-facing while maintaining a close dialogue with nature.

Its material and luminous qualities are documented through analog photography by Eduardo Oropeza, emphasizing texture, softness, and the emotional weight of space. The project becomes a refuge — one that holds the body gently while framing birth as a deeply spatial and natural experience.

The project is organized through toroidal spatial logic, using curved geometry, filtered light, and tactile materiality to create a protective and sensory environment.

Into the Wild | by Earthscape



“Mud is not a material palette, the beautiful thing in earthen architecture is not only about using the materials, but also about the artisans. Traditional lime plasters from India flows along smoothly on the floor and the furnitures giving a luxuriant feel inside the spaces. […]

These folds and curves feels like entering a cave giving a wild experience. The windows open to the sylvan view on the outside from the lower level bringing the cold air into the space. Vent openings protrudes out from the structure at each space for the hot air to escape creating a stack effect. The light play from each vent creates a dramatic feel inside the spaces. […]

We believe that Interiors are not about purchasing and arranging inside a space. All the furnitures are in-built in accordance to the space. The bed, cushions and the fabrics are customized in accordance to its own shape and play creating an opulence feel. The bed, bar counter, pantry, seating are all done with arise finishes giving a lap of luxury at each space. The bathrooms are done with arise finish which acts as a natural chemical free water proofing. The wood used in doors, bench, cabinets are collected from the scrap wood. The stone door handles and stone bench are carved at site where the stones are sourced from the site.

The Organic House was born from the idea of creating a space adapted to the person, taking into account his environmental, physical and psychological needs; I return to know its origins in nature and its historical antecedents. The aim was to seek out spaces close to the mother's cloister, to the animal shelters, to the man who initially adopted the unmodified caverns, to the igloo, to all the comfortable spaces; concave like the mother's arms that curl the child; continuous, wide, integral spaces, liberating lights and changing shapes that match the natural rhythm of the human movements.

The proposal of the Organic House is based on the requirements of the elemental functions of human beings: a space for living, with living room, living room and kitchen, and another for sleeping, with dressing room and bathroom. The floor of the house is covered by a sand-colored shade, with the idea of identifying the morada with the earth. This same color is applied to the walls and the ceiling to achieve a chromatic continuity. The interior of the room is accessed by going through the caracol that leads to the tunnel; if it was intended to give the sensation of entering the earth, of entering the space of being, cooking and cooking or, even more importantly, the sleeping area.

Casa Orgánica | by Javier Senosiain

For the construction process, a moldable material was needed for the design of the house: for this reason it was decided to use ferrocement; This material, originating from concrete armor and forgotten for a long time, promises a monolithic, resistant, moldable and highly elastic sculpture.

The interior of the room is accessed by going through the caracol that leads to the tunnel; if it was intended to give the sensation of entering the earth, of entering the space of being, cooking and cooking or, even more importantly, the sleeping area. In the summer the curved wind increases the visual perspective and keeps a lid, equivalent to the beating of the eyes that are used to protect oneself from the sun, dust, wind and rain. The twenty-year-olds oriented themselves towards the best views, looking for the surface so as not to miss the sun in winter. Keeping the house free and indoors offers little resistance to the wind because it is an anti-seismic shelter
Those designed by Javier Senosiain are undoubtedly surreal architectures and dwellings: crossed by sensual paths, born from the idea of creating a habitat in between the primitive cave and the maternal womb.
There are no beams or pillars, the floor is also the ceiling, while the furniture are directly generated from the walls.