Research Article

Étienne-Louis Boullée and Pierre Chareau: Two Approaches to an Emerging Utopian Idea in Interior Design

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Abstract

The idea and concept of Utopia have been widely discussed in the contemporary world, and there is a wide post-utopic discussion regarding it. Furthermore, throughout history, the idea of utopia and its relation to architecture has also been discussed in many studies and can be observed in many resources. In other words, the idea and concept of Utopia and its relation to architecture and design thus have been widely discussed. A point of view to consider, however, is that there has been little discussion about how Utopia has changed the way of handling the design of interior spaces and perceived the emergence of new ideas about modern interior spaces. This paper aims to observe and gain insight into the idea of Utopia in interior design through the lens of two different designers and see the change of approach to how the Utopian Idea in interior spaces has evolved throughout the centuries. To achieve this, the architect Étienne-Louis Boullée (1728-1799) and the designer Pierre Chareau (1883-1950) have been analysed and their works observed through the lens of searching for an emerging utopian idea in interior architecture/ design. This study thus spanned throughout centuries, focusing especially on the 17th and 19th Centuries to analyse specific works done by the designers mentioned above, either in drawings or finished projects, and focusing especially on their interiors. It has been observed that the idea of Utopia offered a new way of considering spaces from a humanistic perspective, and that it has changed throughout centuries, manifesting possibly new different views of Utopia in interior spaces.

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INTRODUCTION

The late 19th Century is regarded as one of the most dynamic time periods in the history of Europe. The Industrial Revolution resulted in the invention of many technological advancements. This shift and the sudden, violent creation of technology and intellectual approaches also changed humanity in general. People have used this advancement to define themselves, their immediate environment, and consequently, other areas of their life. This created a leap, with changes occurring on systems of thought, systems of governance, of production, and political systems. Among these, one idea is crucial to the human psyche: That of Utopia. How did Utopia affect the human psyche, their immediate environment and their way of perceiving interior spaces? This is the main query.

In 1516, renowned writer Thomas More used the word 'Utopia' to describe an island where the highest republic existed (Britannica, 2024: paragraph 1), an ideal society that had solved all its human problems. This key starting point describes the word Utopia fundamentally with the word 'human' and 'problem'. Utopia, then, must be in relation with humanity and its myriad societal problems. Additionally, its translation in terms of architectural and interior architectural design elements and principles also started to appear with these new notions. As the idea of Utopia marched on through centuries, various meanings were attributed to it. The field of architecture and design were no different in this regard, and two distinct names especially come forth to mind, one at the start of the 18th Century, and the other at the start of the 19th, both of whom tackled the idea of Utopia in interior architecture and design. Their works are well woven into Utopia in interior spaces because they are distinct in how they tackled Utopia in interior spaces, bringing new ideas into the discussion, and consequently capturing the metamorphosis of Utopia throughout the centuries. the crucial touchstones are Étienne-Louis Boullée and Pierre Chareau: They are prominent architects/ interior designers who brought the idea of Utopia into interior spaces, translating a Utopic vision into interior architecture/ design with various design fundamentals. While there have been other designers who have used similar techniques and styles, both Boullée and Chareau have produced unique oeuvres that have influenced later generations to search for utopia in interior spaces. Étienne-Louis Boullée produced a series of drawings between 1873 and 1875 that would influence the designers of subsequent centuries, while Chareau's 'Maison de Verre', finished in 1932, would become a focal point in understanding early modern architecture and how novel materials (for their time) were used in juxtaposition to each other. Utopia, as a concept and idea in architecture, has been widely discussed in the field of architecture, and has many post-utopic discussions regarding it. However, not much has been written in depth about the concept of Utopia itself, as a translation to interior /design and how it is presented in it.

Thus, providing a base framework to understand and analyse how Boullée's and Chareau's interior design projects influenced the human

physiology and human psyche is paramount. Based on French philosopher Paul Ricœur's ideas, architectural practice is structured on two main parts: Narration (thinking) and Doing (constructing) (Ricœur, 2016: 36-37). This research will focus on how the idea of Utopia translated into Boullée's and Chareau's design process, their projects and their interior architectural iterations. For this purpose, the architects' sketches, drawings, and texts were analysed and subsequently compared to each other. To achieve this, specific case studies were chosen, and analysed according to two distinct aspects: The experiential aspect that focused on analysis points such as Perception, Scale, Light, Material, and Colour, while the social aspect focused on how these interiors were perceived after being experienced, and how communal/ gathering areas were designed and moulded into the interiors to create areas that would lead to communication and engagement. Finally, further questions related to these names were asked: Where do they converge/ diverge in terms of tackling Utopia? What are the different interior experiences they offer to their users? How did the word Utopia gain its meaning in the field of interior design through the works of two different architects/ designers?

THEORETICAL DISCUSSIONS REGARDING UTOPIA

The word Utopia has to do with human beings and their specific political and thought systems. To relate it to interior architecture and design, it is important to understand what characteristics of Utopia can be translated into design and how they can be perceived in interior spaces.

According to Coleman, '(...) a discernible utopian dimension of architecture or urbanism (no matter how partial the claim to Utopia may be) entails a sustained consideration of both social process and spatial closure' (Coleman, 2014: 17). This statement implies that while interior architecture/ design does create spatial closures, it cannot be related to Utopia without a connotation to either experiential or social encounters, possibly needing both. This point is crucial in understanding how a space can be related and translated to Utopia.

Green states, 'The affinity of architecture and Utopian thought is easy to understand. When visionaries define the ideal life, they lay out a physical setting to establish and enhance its existence' (Green, 1993: 1). But what about the interior of these proposed physical settings? And what about their effect on the human mind as it experiences said interior settings? Coleman proposes that both a social and a spatial setting is necessary. Thus, a physical setting is not enough to understand how Utopia can be translated into interior spaces. These settings need experiential aspects as well as social aspects, as humans exists by being physically present (the physical setting) and mentally aware (the cognitive and social aspect).

Balot, quoting from Kateb, explains '(..) by "utopia" we mean a rationally ordered society that aims at social unity or wholeness and

individual happiness; and by "happiness" Utopians have typically meant pleasure, peace, material bounty, perhaps virtue, and perhaps the intellectual life' (Balot, 2008: 75). This quote can also be related and attributed to interior architecture and design, as it has counterparts in the form of design principles. Rationality, order, unity, wholeness are all examples. However, the social setting, the setting that provides 'pleasure' or 'social unity', is above all necessary to observe and understand Utopia in interior design.

Greene explains the importance of architecture and how it plays a leading role in the narrative of utopian efforts as '*From (…), to the late-eighteenth-century French visionary architecture of Étienne-Louis Boullée and Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, implicit in the thoughtful construction of space is the urge to change and better society*' (Greene, 2011: 6). Bettering society is both an idea and a question. How can society be bettered? How far can betterment be pushed? Can there be a point of reaching Utopia by this betterment? The translation of different concepts and ideas into other areas of human existence is of crucial importance here. Ricœur, in a text provided by the Editorial Committee, provides a parallel between architecture and narrativity, citing that architecture is to space what narrative is to time (Ricœur, 2016: 31). The skill and craft involved in relating these elements within an analogy is important here, for Utopia, in the same vein, also shows a parallel with social aspects.

The advent of technology and the usage of new materials in the architectural field led to major shifts in how architecture was viewed. This shift led to a new perspective on how architecture and interior architecture/ design could be perceived and experienced. Renowned 20th Century author Scheerbart states that closed rooms are the places where most humans live, and the environment in which culture grows. He proposes that for the culture to 'rise' to a higher level, architecture must change, and that this can only be done if its closed nature is removed, and glass is introduced. (Scheerbart, 2020: 17). The idea of rising or elevating oneself or something to reach a higher level was already translated into architecture and design as early as 1914. The theoretical conceptualization of Utopia was being discussed; however, it was not being defined or named properly.

These discussions show that Utopia has a physical and formalist aspect but is also related to social and spatial experiences. By translating these theoretical discussions into a concrete and observable state, it becomes possible to perceive the existence of the experiential and social aspects of Utopia in interior architecture / design. These aspects have elements that guide us to understand how Utopia is embodied in interior architecture/ design. The experiential aspect focuses on how data is primarily cognized, while the social aspect focuses on how data is perceived. The experiential aspect is primarily focused on human physiology, while the social aspect is focused on the human psyche. This work will focus on how this argument will find a body in the work of these two architects/ designers. Creating this frame of reference, with

experiential and social aspects is an important origin point. According to Allen and Tate, '*Interior design, as we must constantly bear in mind, is an applied art, not a fine art. It has a program of requirements for physical function, for psychological function that are or should be part of the goal of a designer*' (Tate and Smith, 1986: 562). The concept of Utopia must also find a translation of both these aspects in interior architecture and design. Another important discussion regarding Utopia is the concept of space theorised by Henri Lefebvre, who posits that spaces are constructed, and they form a conceptual triad. These are 'Spatial practice', 'Representations of Space' and 'Representational Space'. This triad provides a way of reading spaces (Lefebvre, 33, 1991).

METHOD

How can Utopia be translated into interior design through design elements and principles? This query was defined as the research question of the study, with the point of view of the designer taken into consideration. Within this scope, the research is grounded upon case studies, and the method of the research is determined as document analysis that aims to gain insights into how Utopia could exist in or be translated to interior architecture/ design. In the analysis, drawings or projects were analysed according to two major aspects defined above. According to Tate and Smith, '*An interior is a space that is enclosed by walls, floors, and ceilings. It has one or more entries/ exits, and usually one or more openings, such as windows, for light and ventilation. Those enclosing elements may be composed of any number of materials and formed of countless shapes*' (Tate and Smith, 1986: XIV). The experiential aspect has thus different principles that focus on 'Scale, Light, Material, Colour, Circulation, and Perception', all principles defined as essential to interior architecture/ design. The social aspect focuses on how the interior is primarily perceived, followed by what types of convergence and common areas the spaces provide. Pile and Gura state, '*The new paradigm of the interior designer is no longer the decorator who simply chooses fabrics and arranges furniture. In fact, the latter term is gradually falling out of use, with increased efforts to establish standards that elevate the status of interior designers to that awarded to other professions, such as architecture and engineering*' (Pile and Gura, 2018: 470). Pile and Gura continue to explain that interior designers have evolved into multitalented and respected professionals who can plan intricate configurations and reconfigurations (…) (Pile and Gura, 2018: 470). The social aspect, thus, has principles that focus on how these spaces are configured to create interior areas that facilitate the desired effect. The conclusion provides observable insights into how the idea of Utopia could relate to the interiors. These principles can be briefly defined and presented below as:

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Table 1. Framework for understanding utopia in interior areas.

EXPERIENTIAL ASPECTS	SOCIAL ASPECTS
SCALE	PERCEPTION
LIGHT	CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING
MATERIAL	CONVERGENCE AREAS
COLOUR	APPEALING, INVITING AREAS
CIRCULATION	COMMON AREAS
COGNITIVE RELATIONS	

The experiential aspects focus mainly on how the interior is cognized. This first step is important as it provides insight into what the designer aimed to give the user as a first impression. How did the designer consider the idea of bodily experience and experientiality? This also includes cognitive relations, which in this regard, relate to how the interior space is learned and understood. The social aspect is crucial in understanding what the designer aimed for its user to experience after having spent time in it. It should be noted once again that this aspect is not from the perspective of the user, but rather the designer's perspective. How did the designer consider the social aspects? What were the configurations in the interior architectural design that formed the spaces? How were spaces meant to be perceived? Which spaces were meant to be used as gathering or congregating points? Which areas were meant to guide the user towards it? In this framework, the materials of the study are the works of the architects/ interior designers Etienne Louis Boullée and Pierre Chareau. Boullée's drawings, consisting mainly of public spaces designed for governmental interiors, were primarily used, and Chareau's widely considered masterwork, The 'Maison de Verre', was used. Boullée's drawings, in this regard, reflect an idea that emerges from interiors, while Chareau's building is a reflection of the same idea through technology and constructed interiors.

ÉTIENNE LOUIS BOULLÉE AND HIS VISION/ STYLE

At the turn of the 18th century, a different approach to architectural theory was emerging: Risebero explains that architectural theorists of the 18th Century were caught up by the dynamism of the '*philosophes'*. It was thought that buildings should express the essential grandeur of man both by their sublimity and by their reference to his dignified past (Risebero, 2001: 185). This thought process also meant that buildings should have a specific form and character: Risebero continues that what was expected of buildings was for them to be large, simple, sombre, cavernous and mysterious (Risebero, 2001: 185). Louis Etienne Boullée was one such architect. His projects and drawings paved the way to create a window to the idea of utopia as an interior space (Risebero, 2001: 185). Boullée never committed himself to a political point, nonetheless the connection between Utopia and the characteristics related to it are observable in his work. This connection presents itself chiefly in the form of social aspects and the importance given to the interior areas in his drawings. The idea of discourse, discussion and the flow of information play an important

role in his interiors and the idea of congregation towards a central point is paramount.

His ideas regarding the experiential aspect, on the other hand, rested chiefly upon light and scale, which would influence other elements heavily.

According to Duchêne, Boullée is an architect and brilliant theorist, inspired by the progressive ideas of the 18th Century, who pushes the evocative force of art very far. His building projects with pure, straight lines that still astonish with their gigantism and solemnity, have multiple vocations: aesthetic, of course, but also pedagogical (Duchêne, 2021).

A final question then presents itself: Did the search for a utopia also bring the search for new buildings and interiors? Was this search created not only by new advances in technology, but also by advances in schools of thought? Risebero puts it as '*As social awareness increased, new building-types were required; everywhere architects were inventing forms for buildings designed to promote health, welfare and social responsibility: hospitals, prisons, schools, model factories, housing estates, monuments and Temples of the Moral Values*' (Risebero, 2001: 185).

His style focused heavily on the sphere, symmetry and scale. Frampton explains this vision as '*(…) he remained obsessed with imagining the monuments of some omnipotent state dedicated to the worship of the Supreme Being*' (Frampton, 2020: 17). His cenotaphs and drawings promised grandiose buildings, far above the human scale, with light emanating into interiors and permeating gently through them. His views, as summarized by Duchêne, are '*Bathed in the ideas of the Enlightenment, he considers that humans must be led to understanding, for the progress of society and those who compose it*' (Duchêne, 2021). Duchêne explains that Boullée believed an enlargement of the horizon of thought was necessary for humans (Duchêne, 2021). His works were about leading the human collective towards an enlightened, superior form of being. To achieve this, architecture and interior design needed to play an important role.

Boullée mostly produced drawings, but they paved the way to understand how utopia could be present in interiors and how it could be perceived through interior design elements. In the library drawing made for the king (Figure 1), Boullée explains his view as 'A *library, is, indisputably, the most precious Monument of a Nation, because it encloses acquired knowledges*' (Boullée, 1785, gallica.bnf.fr). How Boullée approached this interior project is important. With a very strong middle axis dominating the drawing, the space is symmetrically divided into two, with columns supporting a vast vault-like ceiling that takes inspiration from the Pantheon, with a similar opening in its middle. While in the Pantheon, this would be the Oculus, here the form it takes is much more rectangular and allows for the interior to be bathed in light. Boullée also comments on this in his treatise with '*We have cited the advantages of the Library of Rome, whose galleries start from a common centre, with the assurance that, from this very centre, we can see everyone who is in the library*' (Boullée, 1785, gallica.bnf.fr). Boullée, then, takes inspiration

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from the old, classical buildings present in Western Europe. In his treatise, he continues with *'My design would transform a courtyard, 300 meters long and 90 meters wide, into an immense basilica lighted from above'* (Boullée, 1785, themorgan.org). This is an important point, as Boullée's predominant feature in this building suggestion would be the idea of it being bathed from above with sunlight. In this interior light plays a crucial role in the design. Another important experiential aspect of it is the symmetry and scale. His scale dramatically increases both horizontally and vertically compared to human proportions. A rough calculation reveals that the ceiling height is designed at around 15 to 20 meters. The cognitive aspect then, is that of light and scale foremost.

The perception of the space is of a large, imposing building that nonetheless offers easy access to its main service, which are books, and provides gathering spaces for discussion and socialization. Boullée explains this aspect with '*A simple inspection of the plans will allow the observance of a distribution where marching becomes easy, noble, and henceforth vast beyond anything one could hope for*' (Boullée, 1785, gallica.bnf.fr). Boullée also mentions the ease of usage once again, citing '*Service would be quick as the request, not to mention that this would avoid the dangers that often result from the use of ladders*' (Boullée, 1785, themorgan.org).

Duchêne also explains, '*(…) His lines are smooth, without flourish: The purity of his lines evoke that of the spirit*' (Duchêne, 2021). Numerous architectural elements exist gently in this austere interior, without much ornamentation. There is an austere look despite all the architectural elements present in it. The white present in the drawing is only partially changed into a darker grey to the left of the drawing, where books are highlighted. This lack of colour is very reminiscent of a classical style. This leads to the material usage in the drawing. The space seems to use a white, polished marble, with hints of grey. This material choice, would, in effect, emphasize the light falling into the space and bathing the whole interior. Usage of such a marble would also emphasize the books and their cover, allowing them to be more easily seen amongst the gigantic space while also providing smooth surfaces. Kauffmann elaborates on how the materials emphasized the scale with 'Extreme *frugality of ornament contributes also to the impression of size. Thus, Boullée preferred quite smooth wall surfaces*' (…) (Kauffmann, 1939: 224).

Figure 1. Vue de la nouvelle salle projetée pour l'agrandissement de la bibliothèque du roi (Boullée, 1785)

Searching for a utopian public interior in this regard leads to some specific design elements that emerge continuously. Scale and the importance given to light are predominant. Other design choices, then, would all lead to support these two elements and emphasize them where possible. In this project, Boullée placed a major importance on light and how it affected the large, imposing interior. Another important aspect he placed on was the idea of transparency: The ability to perceive all the users inside the library was important, as he mentions it in his treatise (Boullée, 1785: 43). This also directly ties to the social aspect: The drawing shows congregations, discussing freely and existing inside the space, with a clear line of sight on all users inside the space.

In his next drawing (Figure 2), the interior view changes from that of a library to that of a metropole, a centre of power where the state demands and exerts its power and influence over the land.

Light rays are emphasized, bathing the interior space. Following the shape the rays create, one could also surmise the dimension of the oculus needed to produce such a light effect. The scale of this interior is vaster than the library: Here, the ceiling seems to reach well into 30 or 40 meters, and in proportion, humans seem minuscule and overwhelmed by the grandeur of the building rather than a higher being.

The circulation is solved with a heightened central area and steps to reach it. The sheer scale of all the elements in this hypothetical interior give way, by extension, to easily accessible areas. However, the circulation is also designed effectively.

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Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

In terms of colour, a white to grey smooth marble or stone dominates the interior. This would allow light to permeate the interior and put a stronger emphasis on the idea of purity via association.

In terms of social aspect, it can be observed that either vast spaces for gathering and discussion are present, or there are pockets of areas where congregation is possible. This is, by design, the 'revolutionary' aspect of Boullée: His interiors are vast, he is well above the human scale, but still, he specifically designs areas where discourse and communication are made possible, and approaches interiors as places where congregations should be held. The central focal point of the drawing is where all the direction, and consequently, circulation is moving towards. This is further elaborated by the height difference between the spaces and the steps. One will be looking at the focal point from a height disadvantage and to reach it, one must exert himself, or give something from itself.

This drawing of a museum, made by Boullée in 1783 (Figure 3), presents another gigantic building, with an immense vault held by columns, and a central dome with an oculus. The sheer scale of the interior again catches the eye, and the multitude of steps all coalesce one into the other, as if to form bigger, larger steps made for a larger being. Rosenau adds that Boullée here is loosely using the term of museum and is drawing a precinct devoted to the arts rather than a repository for arts (Rosenau, 1976: 10-11). The light operates differently compared to his other drawings, as here, it is directed primarily towards the centre of the drawing instead of permeating slowly. Colours are muted, and the material feels like marble or stone.

Boullée's ideas towards Enlightenment and the betterment of the individual with the guidance of the State have been plain to see from his drawings. According to him, '*The Grand Princes have always favoured the means which could contribute to improving the Arts and Sciences*' (Boullée,

1785: 1). These drawings, show, in effect, the idea of reaching towards a unique interior, where natural sunlight is slowly permeating, where many steps must be taken to reach it, an interior designed with the idea of having bigger beings in it. These all are, in effect, allegories to reach utopia.

This drawing perhaps is the one that conveys the idea of Utopia the most: A multitude of human figures, all vying to reach the middle area, with imposing columns separating the space and a central light once again drifting towards the centre. According to Rosenau, '*His philosophical interests were centred on the concept of analogy which to him illuminated the relationship between art and nature*' (Rosenau, 1976: 10). Reaching towards a utopia might have been one of those analogies. Perceiving it is possible. This possibility presents itself in the form of several specific interior design elements and common relationships have emerged in terms of both experiential and social aspects. Scale is one such element. According to Laroque, '*Obviously, Boullée's drawings achieve a measure which no longer has Man as its matrix. The violent contrast of colossal buildings and tiny men (…)*' (Laroque, 2007: 121). This scale discrepancy represents an idea as strong as Utopia.
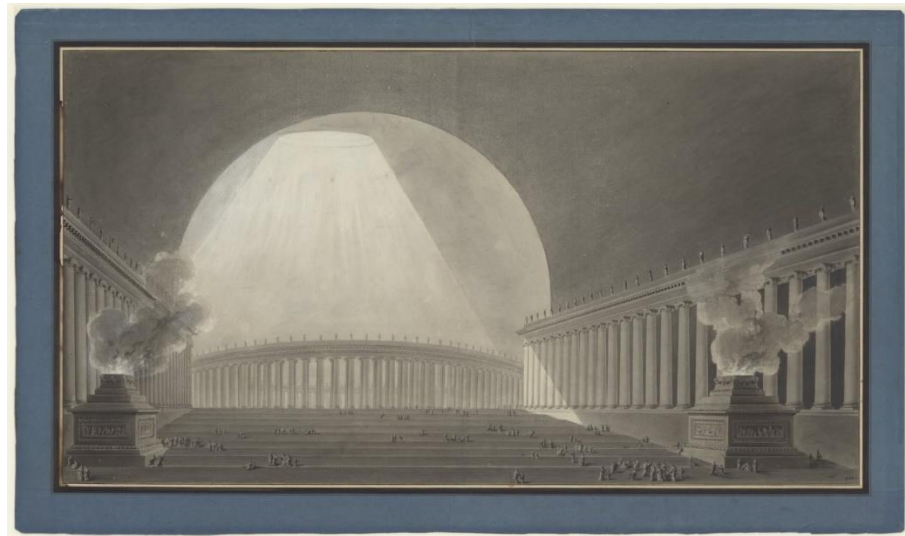
Figure 3. Vue intérieure d'un Muséum prise à un autre niveau, coupe géométrale (Boullée, 1783)

Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

The sphere specifically is another element. Boullée, here, presents the idea of a sphere as such '*The conclusion of all these observations is that a sphere, is, in all respects, the image of perfection. It combines strict symmetry with the most perfect regularity and the greatest possible variety*' (…) (Boullée, 1797, Rosenau, 1976). For Boullée, the sphere was the perfect element, and reaching that perfection was paramount.

This idea of perfection naturally flourishes towards symmetry and can be observed in his plan as well (Figure 4). Boullée here quotes Montesquieu, who suffixes that symmetry is pleasing to the eye because it is the image of clarity and that the mind easily grasps it while seeking understanding. Boullée adds to this that symmetry is pleasing because it is the image of perfection and order, as incorporated into Rosenau's book (Rosenau, 1976: 87-89). Rosenau explains that this plan is a quatrefoil

and inspired by Roman architecture (Rosenau, 1976: 14-15). Symmetry is related to order, and order invites social interactions by defining the environmental setting, which Boullée amply provides. This, in effect, is the translation of Utopia into interior spaces. In terms of existential and social aspects, these drawings show a real analogy of utopia to interior design. Boullée's drawings and designs exhibit a clear sense of purpose and distinct interior architectural elements that offer an emergence of Utopia. He aspires to create interiors where humans interact, discuss, and above all, experience it together. His drawings all present a collective movement towards an area bathed in light, usually on a higher surface that can be reached through steps.
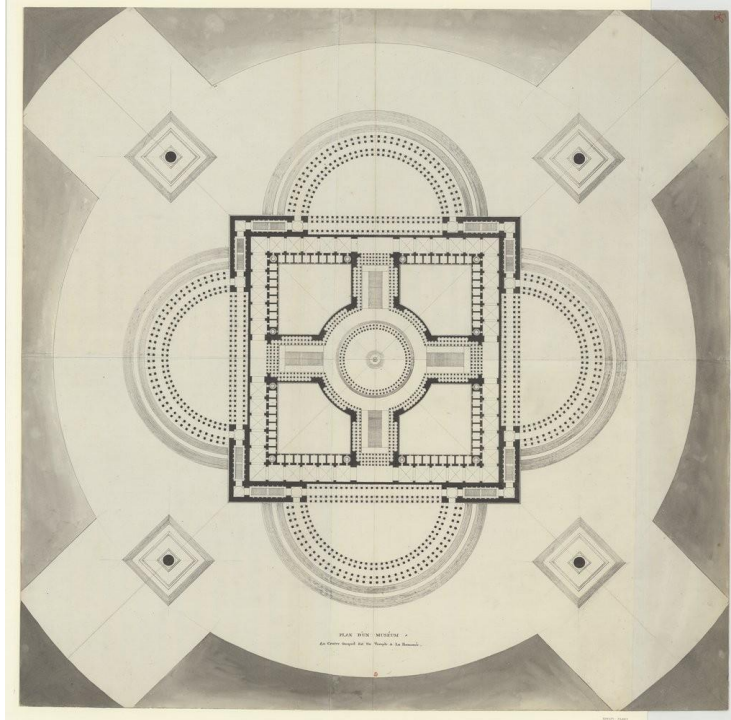
Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 4. Plan d'un Muséum au centre duquel est un temple à la Renommée (Boullée, 1783)

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PIERRE CHAREAU AND HIS VISION/ STYLE

At the turn of the 19th century, a second utopian emergence takes places: That of Pierre Chareau and Bijvoet. The 'Maison de Verre', a house composed of a glass façade, with an austere interior, evokes the calmness and tranquillity of a private, silent space while still maintaining a human scale that welcomes the user into it and envelops them serenely. According to Frampton, 'Maison de Verre' is a key interior space in that it is the first designed house in France made of steel and glass (Frampton, 1969: 77). The 'Maison de Verre' would become a strong and crucial translation of Utopia into interior architecture/ design.

An apt description of the house can be given as '*The house's design emphasized three primary traits. Honesty of materials, variable transparency of forms, and juxtaposition of 'industrial' materials and fixtures with a more traditional style of homes décor*' (Wikiarquitectura, 2024).

Chareau created a unique interior environment. Unlike his peers at the time, he had no formal education as a designer, but worked with other architects to pursue a career in design. According to Frampton, '*He studied in Paris and at 17 hesitated between painting, music and architecture. He decided in favour of a career as a decorator* (…)' (Frampton, 1969: 84). He collaborated with Bernard Bijvoet to design and produce the Glass House.

The idea of utopia evolved as the century changed: The scale diminished to human proportions, the space became welcoming, warmer, and useable, while also losing its grandeur and sense of magnificence. This led to a different understanding of the space, but the translation of utopia into interiors was still strongly present without losing any meaning. In this regard, the emergence of the idea of utopia was enriched and it introduced various changes without losing its utopian essence.

In stark contrast to Boullée, Chareau was mostly interested in the 'new'- new materials, new interiors, new forms, new ways of incorporating light. The 'Maison de Verre' is considered his masterwork and is known internationally. Frampton explains how, during that time, there were no structures which used glass lenses as the primary, exterior protective skin, except for the '*Maison de Verre*' and the '*Deutsche Werkbund Ausstellung*', and that especially as a walling technique, glass lenses were incorporated into 20th Century architecture rather late (Frampton, p.77, 1969). However, the most important point of the building along with its unique walling technique is its interior and how the exterior shell feeds into it.

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Figure 5. Exterior view of the 'Maison de Verre', (François Halard/ Trunk Archive)

Vallye explains '*His approach was premised on deft and daring juxtapositions of nominally industrial forms and materials (cast iron, hammered-steel plates, ball-bearing hinges) with elegant detailing and luxury materials (brocade, lacquer, exotic wood veneers) that bespoke conspicuous consumption*' (Vallye, 2017: 406). This juxtaposition created a dynamic yet very modern feel, and it also allowed the structure to become alive, as if its interior elements were accoutrements. Pile and

Gura, more succinctly, state that Chareau is best known for his House of Glass, a building that made use of steel framing and large areas of glass block and plate glass (Pile and Gura, 2018: 366).

The hall viewed from the interior paints quite a different picture compared to the exterior. Here, the naked steel structure is observable, placing its back to the large, imposing glass brick wall that refracts the light and allows for a suffusion of sunlight into the interior. This effect dominates the interior and is the focal point of the space, but other structural elements that have been moulded into the interior space should also be noted. Each observable furniture in this photograph has been designed to fit the interior space, forming a holistic whole with the overall design approach. According to Pile and Gura, '*His furniture designs included both chairs of rich woods with heavy upholstery and simple folding seating with metal framing and wicker seats and backs, (…)*' (Pile and Gura, 2018: 366).

An imposing element that dominates the space is still present. The main focal point is the suffusion and diffusion of light into the interior via the glass façade. Antonini explains the Maison de Verre as '*the façade was made of a wall of translucent glass while interiors could be continuously modified thanks to sliding and rotating screens in glass, sheet metal, and perforated metal*' (Antonini, 2024). Frampton explains this translucency as '*The walls of the Maison de Verre are predominantly translucent. Hence its composition is ordered primarily through a transparency which is phenomenal rather than literal*' (Frampton, 1969: 80).

In Figure 7, the usage of strong constructional elements contrasting a rich wood material can be observed. Perhaps the importance given to circulation seems lessened, but it is important to note that this is mainly the grand hall, a 'general use' space in which every user had to pass through if they entered. This main hall, also sitting next to the glass

Figure 6. Interior hall view of the 'Maison de Verre', (François Halard)

façade, proposes an interior bathed in light, filtered through the glass bricks. This 'filtered transparency' is essential in how the experiential aspect of the house is viewed. According to Scheerbart, '*With this type of lighting the whole glass house becomes a big lantern which, on peaceful summer and winter nights, shines like fireflies and glow-worms*' (Scheerbart, 2020: 49). While this is not the perfect glass house that Scheerbart posits about, it does offer a similar experience with its emphasis on light. Scheerbart also continues, '*One could easily become poetic*' (Scheerbart, 2020: 49). It is exactly this impulse that is important for an interior to have. To sway or influence the human psyche to behave in a specific manner.

Another point to consider is the openness the space provides. Here, the interior is not comprised of small boxes, but rather interior spaces that flow one into another, quite resembling the design philosophy of Lloyd Wright. This social aspect of the interior is another way of influencing behaviour.

The comparison between Boullée and Chareau is compelling, as Boullée produced mainly drawings instead of finished works, while Chareau is chiefly known for one singular finished work. The focal point in which they converge is light. While their approaches to apply light can vary in materials used, both gave heavy emphasis to natural light in their designs, allowing it to diffuse into the interior and bathe the space with it. This approach seems intrinsic: Human beings cannot live without sunlight, but the manner in which both presented their solution points towards a similar aim. Both designers viewed sunlight as a being that would envelop the user or compel the user to be drawn to it. Just as the idea of Utopia would draw the human intellect towards it like a moth to a flame, so did their light usage do in interiors. The light, in those settings, is like an appendage, or an extension, of a higher being that is extending it towards the experience of the interior. The controlled use of it is also of note as the light is always controlled either from the ceiling, or the wall. It doesn't just enter the interior; it is either directed or refracted.

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Figure 7. Interior aerial view of the hall of 'Maison de Verre', (François Halard)

The main divergence point, however, is scale. In Boullée's case, the sheer scale and grandeur of the interior is domineering, while in Chareau's Glass House, the scale is much more human and inviting. Here, the scale of the interior does not provoke awe or prostration, rather a gentle warmth that surrounds the user. While in both, the scale of the space envelops the user, in Boullée's case, it crushes, in Chareau, it blankets. This is a major divergence, and possibly also how the idea of Utopia changed throughout the century. This change did not occur only in this space, but in many other fields and schools of thoughts. The rigidity and sheer strength of the Utopian Ideal was much more humanized, changing from being a towering force to an equal friend.

This main divergence is also the origin of many other points of change. The materials used also changed accordingly, with the stone and marble giving way to wood, glass and steel, and muted greys and whites gave way to different hues of accent colours. This colour change also shifts the perception of how a Utopian Idea is viewed: It is not cold and distant, it is now close, with warmth to give. It is not a destination point anymore, but part of the journey.

FINDINGS

A notion that did not change from the 18th to the 19th century as how utopia could be perceived in interiors over these two designers is the idea of light and how it affected the interior space. Indeed, this aspect is the most prominent one: Architectural elements, interior designs and furnitures all contributed to the ease and permeation of light throughout the interior space. This could indicate a close relation of utopia and light, and the association that light is part of Enlightenment as well. In any case, allowing either direct or indirect sunlight into the spaces was an important aspect. What was different, however, was that for public spaces, direct light was chosen over indirect light, while in a personal setting, indirect sunlight was favoured over direct sunlight. Beyond privacy concerns, this also allowed for a more controlled approach in design towards working the light into interiors. Nevertheless, the permeance of light and its presence throughout the spaces is observable and it transforms the spaces considerably. Boullée and Chareau may not have operated on the same scale, but the experiential effect they gave to their spaces was still similar in how light operated within.

Another poignant aspect would be the change of scale. The public interiors, even for their usage, had a gigantic scale that would dwarf any human in it, while later, this scale changed considerably to reflect living in a personal space and to accommodate, unwind and ease the user into the space.

The usage of colours and materials, and how they differ between the two designers is also important. For Boullée, the materials and colours were austere, and in his drawings, he focused on the light and especially on shadow play that the architectural elements created. Boullée himself stated, '*This type of architecture based on shadows is my own artistic*

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discovery' (Boullée, 1968: 90). While for Chareau, colour and material were essential and had to have character in order to create a modern, unique atmosphere that was welcoming. He used mostly glass, supplemented it with iron, and finished with wood. His strength came from using materials in ways that were not combined or used together previously, without making them feel as intruders. Paul Scheerbart's ideas about a utopian project for a future '*culture of glass*', for a '*new glass environment which will completely transform mankind*' seem to have translated into Chareau's interior (Scheerbart, 1914: 9-10).

The comparison between Boullée's and Chareau's works are distinct in almost all the experiential aspects used to analyse them: Boullée focuses on grandeur, while in Chareau, the space is very modest. This also affects the scale in which the spaces are designed, as in Boullée, the scale is not of a humane proportion while Chareau deliberately focuses on this aspect. However, both interiors mostly use the same approach when it comes to light, as both spaces have ample light usage that bathes the interior in it, and both spaces use light as an important element of the interior. In terms of material, while the spaces use different materials (Boullée's polished stone to Chareau's glass and wood) they both use the same characteristic that the materials have, and that is their smoothness and honesty. The materials used form simple combinations as opposed to complex, compound materials and exuberate an austere feeling.

All these experiential aspects, when combined, form distinct cohesive wholes: They generate a sense of serenity and calmness inside their interiors, as if an ephemeral presence is inside them. This is further compounded in how the spaces use light once again to create rays of sunshine or light in them.

In terms of social aspects, it can be observed that both have designed either grand, vast spaces where convergence is possible, or designed areas where amassment was possible. Boullée, with his immense scale, nevertheless still had drawn small pockets where people could gather, or he had large, empty areas away from the main circulation areas where people could gather. Chareau's main hall also is an example of this, with several areas that would allow social interactions and communal gatherings such as the piano or the bookshelf area. Although on a smaller scale, the effect is still present.

CONCLUSION

Observations have yielded that the re-imagination of light in a controlled manner seems to be paramount to experience a space that aims to express the idea of Utopia. The suffusion and diffusion of light into interior spaces seems to create an atmosphere that lends itself to this feeling. There exists quite an observable relationship between light and utopia, and using light in this controlled manner seems to reinforce the idea of utopia. This, in turn, may lead to emotions or a state of understanding that could open new futuristic possibilities in the pursuit of the creation and design of new interior spaces. This has been especially

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observed in the 18th and 19th Centuries, with new interior spaces being thought of and created as ideas, to then be translated into the physical world. This state of renewal and the creation of new spaces/ interiors is still possible and forms the basis of interior architecture and design.

Another observable point is the scale. While the scale changed from immense to human-sized, the idea of Utopia did not. In this way, conveying Utopia with different scales was still possible, even if this drastic change led to more different approaches in other major elements.

Material, and subsequently colour also shifted considerably from cold, distant, and high, to warm, close, and equal. This shift in interior design also paralleled the changing intellectual thought towards Utopia as well. The idea of Utopia changed from never being able to reach it to becoming a part of human life. This shift in perspective is very important. In one understanding, it is imperative that it must be reached, but in the second, it must be nurtured. This is an important distinction in how the perception changed and evolved. The materials used changed from marble and stone, referencing the neoclassical approach, to glass, steel, and wood, referencing the modern approach. This shift, subsequently, also changed the colour usage. The muted and cold colours also shifted to warmer tones. Paralleling the Utopian Idea, these divergences nonetheless were able to present the Idea of Utopia successfully. Both experiential and social aspects were skilfully mixed to create interior spaces that were presenting a utopia in themselves subconsciously. In doing so, two translations of Utopia into interiors were present.

This leads to the final understanding that things which can be transferred into the future regarding architecture and interior design are the atmosphere/ bodily and emotional experience of the spaces along with their social messages. The re-embodiment of these messages carries a potential for the re-imagination of new interiors. While their body of work are vastly different from each other, each of them showed, in their projects and artefacts, that Utopia was present in them.

In conclusion, the major element Utopia addresses is the social and experiential aspects of interior spaces. It is crucial to understand that anything that can be thought about the futuristic side of architecture and design cannot be independent from the humanism charged with the social and experiential associations. To think about these two elements as independent is not possible. Only in correctly attributing these two elements together can one perceive how the idea of Utopia emerged in interiors and subsumed itself into the profession and the discipline of interior architecture/ design. In this regard, Utopia is now not unreachable; it is a part of design and of the human intellect. Paul Ricœur states, '*In sum, the first step of living in a community starts with the narratives of life that we exchange'* (Ricœur, 2016: 33). This is, then, the narrative of Utopia: It is the first step of a commune, it is ever present, it must be reached, but it must also be nurtured.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS/NOTES

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Resume

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