

Object Report

ObjectID: 91.401.1

Object Name: House

Title: Dymaxion House, 1945

Created Date: 1945

Object Report

Remarks: The Dymaxion House: A New Way of Living

How would you like to live in a round house built of aluminum, steel, and plastic, suspended on a mast like a giant umbrella, with built-in closets and shelves and a bathroom the size of an airplane toilet?

R. Buckminster Fuller thought this house, which he called the Dymaxion House, was just what the American public wanted. Fuller, an engineer, philosopher and innovative designer, conceived the house in 1927 and partnered with the Beech Aircraft Corporation in Wichita, Kansas, to produce prototypes in 1945. Although Fuller designed his house so that it could be mass-produced, only one was ever built and lived in.

Beginning October 26, 2001, visitors to The Henry Ford will be able to visit the Dymaxion House. Join us now on a virtual tour of the Dymaxion House and see if you think the Dymaxion House would be the house of your dreams.

A New way of Living?

Fuller Houses, Inc. claimed that this innovative house could change the way people lived. The 1,017 square foot house, with a foyer, living/dining room, two bedrooms, and kitchen and laundry, was all anyone needed for living. It was:

- big enough for everyone in the family
- small enough to be cozy
- lovely to look at
- easy to clean

How might living in this unusual round house change the way you live? Take a close look at the house design and consider the following:

1. The exterior is highly-polished aluminum that does not require painting. If everyone lived in a Dymaxion House, how would you be able to tell your house from your neighbor's? Would you enjoy not having to paint this house, or would you dislike the fact that your house looked like everyone else's?
2. The house was 1,017 square feet with pre-set rooms - and there's no basement. It's now 2001 and your newly-divorced daughter, her three kids and big dog have moved in. Where do you put them? Do you tell them not to join you?
3. The kitchen is a long, thin galley with appliances nicely built into the frame. The refrigerator has gone on the fritz and the design of this kitchen does not offer much room for a replacement. What do you do?
4. The "pods" or dividers between rooms allow little room for furniture to be placed up against them. They have interesting shelves and closets built into them so you don't need furniture taking up floor space. You love antiques and you have just inherited a large chest of drawers known as a "Highboy." Where do you put it? Can you even get it through the airplane-door thresholds?

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5. The stamped metal bathroom resembles an airplane bathroom-it is self-contained and quite small. You are 8 ½ months pregnant with twins and your girth is considerable. It's impossible to turn around in this bathroom! Whoops!

Designers offer solutions to problems in the objects they design and create for us. There's no question that "things" can change the way we live. The Dymaxion House could have, in all sorts of different ways, changed the ways we live. Think about how living in the Dymaxion House might change the way you live. And consider how your house affects the way you live within it.

Check out our Dymaxion House web site.

-Nancy E. V. Bryk, Curator

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

Conceived and designed in the late 1920's but not actually built until 1945, the Dymaxion House was Fuller's solution to the need for a mass-produced, affordable, easily transportable and environmentally efficient house. The word "Dymaxion" was coined by combining parts of three of Bucky's favorite words: DY (dynamic), MAX (maximum), and ION (tension). The house used tension suspension from a central column or mast, sold for the price of a Cadillac, and could be shipped worldwide in its own metal tube. Toward the end of WW II, Fuller attempted to create a new industry for mass-producing Dymaxion Houses.

After WWII, Fuller convinced Beech Aircraft of Wichita, Kansas, to work with him to bring his Dymaxion House to life. The aircraft factory was the perfect choice as materials used in both the Dymaxion House and airplanes were very similar. Unfortunately, "Bucky" would not compromise his design which led to disagreement among the associates of the newly formed Fuller Houses Inc. and ultimately to the collapse of the company. The only two prototypes of the round, aluminum house were purchased by investor William Graham. In 1948, Graham constructed a hybridized version of the Dymaxion House as his family's home; the Grahams lived there into the 1970s.

The Dymaxion House's round shape minimizes the amount of materials needed and heat lost, while maintaining maximum strength and mobility. It was designed to be about 1,100 square feet or about the size of a small Cape Cod-style bungalow. It was supposed to cost about \$6,500 in 1946, approximately the cost of a high-end automobile. With just two bedrooms, it was most convenient for a single family of no more than four people.

Some of the features you might find are: two bedrooms, foyer, living room, dining room, kitchen, kitchen storage, stainless steel fireplace, optional folding stairs to the balcony, accordion doors, O-Volving shelves, revolving shoe and clothes rack, tie and hat rack, and the Dymaxion bathroom.

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[Source: <http://www.thehenryford.org/dymaxion/index.html>]

USER HISTORY:

Members of the Graham family remember the Dymaxion House as simply a round area at the end of their ranch-style home. The children enjoyed running around the circular floor plan. No one has ever lived in a complete Dymaxion House, so we can only imagine what it would have been like to have panoramic views of the neighborhood, hear the low rumble of the ventilator rotating in the wind, and take showers in a fine water mist.

[Source: <http://www.thehenryford.org/dymaxion/index.html>]

Creator: Fuller, R. Buckminster (Richard Buckminster),
1895-1983

Material: Aluminum

Dimensions: Diameter 36 ft

Subject(Geographic names): United States, Kansas, Wichita

Subject(Topical Terms): Mass production

THF389



THF388



THF387



THF386



THF385



THF384



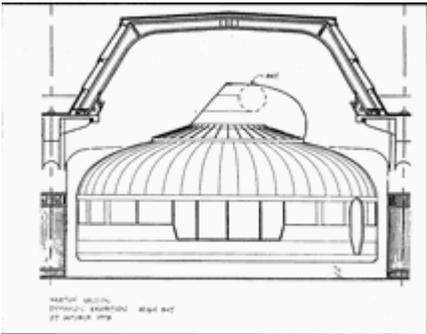
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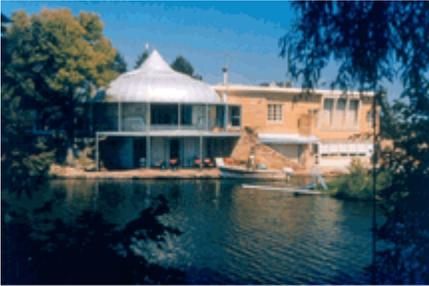
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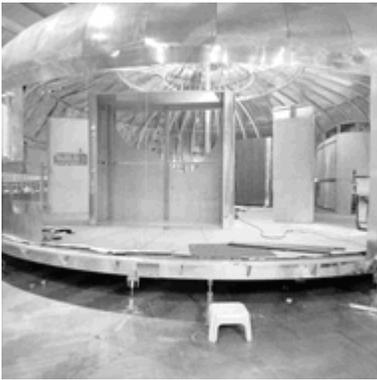
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