Villa Muller acts as a culmination of Loos’ lifetime’s worth of architectural and theoretical activity. His collagist technique evident in the interior spaces appears to be bound by a set of parameters. The dialogue with society is clear in the expression of the façade and exterior form, contrasted against its complex interiors. Alluding to two socially constructed conditions of civilization and the individual, the connections between architecture and society often begin to be blurred as we evolve. The image of Villa Muller mediates between the conditions of society, creating a strong distinction between outside and inside. As Loos believed there to be a necessity to combine architecture and domesticity, this paralleled social and psychological needs for distinguishing the outer world from the inner world. This desire for boundary thus began to motivate his various methods and techniques pertaining to many aspects of the house.

4.1 - Collage representation of each of the floors and their programmatic representations

"We should build in the style of our forefathers who locked out the outside world" 1

4.2 - Axo view of the house

With Villa Muller, everything is on the surface. Since architecture is often charged by obscurity, the plain homogeneous exterior acts to enhance the interior. From the outside, its plaster-white façade hides indications of the inside. The walls possess an unknowable thickness, no definite centerlines exist and the scheme most definitely resists traditionally coordinated slab and column grids. The only lines that exist throughout are floor and ceiling lines, as well as the lines created by the perimeter of the building envelope. For Loos, enclosure is achieved through wrapping a thin membrane around the designated interior realm; interiors shaped by the ill-formed habits and incidences of those dwelling.

4.3 - Juxtaposition of differences of qualities of exterior and interior both sharing the same walls

It was believed by Loos that the true building is buried in the thickness of the walls, the weight of its structure and all its material specificity. His walls did not consist of an exterior with a backside, rather as two one-sided surfaces. Split between a white plaster exterior with an opulent interior, a schism runs through the space in between. Each of the surfaces on the interior belongs not to the wall assembly itself, but to the spaces in which they face. This technique used by Loos paradoxically acts as both a catalyst as well as an obstacle, enabling authenticity while hindering willful invention. It is through the two-faced nature of Loos’ approach that the authority of his technique was concretized.
Combining together Loos’ need for functionalism with the clients traditional views, Loos employed traditional technologies through the use of simple geometric footprints, distinct cladding materials, stabilized room symmetries, classical proportions and individual fenestrations. The defining characteristic of Loos’ architecture is ensuing tension between two subjects, demonstrated through the exterior-interior dialogue, as well as dialogues created by inhabitants between the interconnected spaces. This formula therefore informed the direction and language of the spatially gymnastic interior, emphasized by the integrity of the distinct volumetric modules of the domestic program.

Through the circular arrangement of prismatic boxes in correspondence to the site, the interior spaces begin to create a series of interconnected volumes. The spaces are characterized by a 2:3 rectangular footprint, a centrally located main stair and a general distribution of functions. Due to the rapid pace of construction, a resulting unconventional structural system found four main columns located within the centre of the house in order to accommodate the main stairwell; only two of the four columns are expressed however, and the other two hidden.

Some would contest that “...one who hides a bearing column made a mistake....one who builds a fake column commits a crime...”, though this was of no interest to Loos. His use of the Raumplan resulted in a remarkable arrangement of columns, staggered beams and bearing perimeter walls, creating a non-legible system.

The Raumplan acts as not a spatial element, rather an autonomous tectonic unit. Through the addition of non-structural columns and beams, a visual stability is established in each of the spaces. Even the two exposed columns near the centre of the house belong more to their own respective rooms rather than to the over structural system of the house. As a means to solve the plan in space and allow for free thinking in space, the three dimensional spatial articulation of program is verified through combining the authority of efficiency and empathy, restrained by the discipline portrayed by its prismatic shell.
Upon the cladding of the interiors, rules are applied similar to those used in the configuration of spaces. As each room in the house is distinctively formed and uniquely clad, ones experience of the interior acts as a sequence of linings. Loos often alludes architecture with the subject of clothing, paralleling clothing the body to housing the clothed body. Each of the materials in the lavish interior has links with their respective programmatic associations, ranging from green cipolin in the main hall to white lacquered wood paneling in the anteroom and opaxit tile in the entry vestibule; these materials are used by Loos with a predictable regularity, demonstrating a disciplined pre-selection.

The articulation of interior domesticity is characterized by the inward focus of the house. Its built-in furniture allows Loos to possess control over its inhabitants and their views. The furniture is placed in such a way that the seating is oriented towards the interior of the house, making it hard for the inhabitants to have a visual connection with the outside. Loos however does place a large window in the centre of one side of the façades acting as a keyhole into the house, as a result destabilizing the interior conditions through visual invasion.

The diametrically opposed notion of the interior acts as the design driver in Loos’ design, one that is directed strongly towards its inhabitants. Techniques as a result of achieving this begin to dictate the expression of the façade, structure and materials, as well as the arrangement of spaces through the concept of the Raumplan. The intent behind the analogous exterior as a means to protect and contrast the intricacies produced by the Raumplan allows for the creation of interesting, inwardly focused sections and spaces for the inhabitants.
Images:

Fig. 1, Fig. 2, Fig. 3, Fig. 4, Fig. 6, Fig. 7, 13, 20-30, 32, 34:

Fig. 5, Fig. 8, Fig. 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 31, 33, 35:

Drawings and Diagrams:

Endnotes:


Additional Sources: