

The Stube

The etymology of Stube, or parlor, denotes a heated living space (the word shares the same origins as the English word “oven”). In our culture, the parlor is safely considered the central place of the house, its communal core. The two South Tyrolean folklorists Sebastian Marseiler and Hans Gschnitzer characterize the *Stube* as a “site of intimacy and a public place.” It offers shelter, yet can be opened to the outside. It is equally characterized by intimacy and transparency. The parlor is thus “one of the most important spatial artifacts in the history of central European home design.” The very first parlors date back to the late 12th century. At that time, the *stupa* (a term that first appears in a contemporary document) was still a living room for the nobility. It is increasingly referred to in sources from the 13th century, when parlors or *stuben* could be found south of the Alps (especially in South Tyrol and Carinthia) in castles, stately homes, and the like. By the 14th century, the room had arrived in farmhouses as well. Its main fixtures are a bench and a table (along with a heating stove). The accouterments of the parlor - whether designed for the nobility, the bourgeois, or farmsteads - were always very simple in design. The round, square or rectangular table stood diagonally from the stove, and the bench wrapping around it was supplemented with chairs.

The Modern Evolution of the Stube

After World War I, several Austrian architects attempted to find a modern design for the parlor. Among them were Tyrolean architects Franz Baumann, Clemens Holzmeister, and Holzmeister’s protégé Siegfried Mazagg. Parlors were built in hotel lobbies and funicular stations, as well as inns and villas - combining heavy ceiling beams with massive tables and chairs.

After World War II, the concept of the parlor steadily degenerated into what was known as “rustic tourist architecture” (Hans Gschnitzer, in *Die Stube*) during the 1920s. Up to the present day, there have been no attempts to create an authentic evolution.