

Transforming the magazine reader into a voyeur of the good life
- *Bo Bedre's* mediation of the home in the 1960s

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The lifestyle magazine *Bo Bedre* can be viewed as a strong mediator for the formation of a normative ideal of "the good life" in the Danish welfare society of the 1960s: the good life being the individualized pursuit of modernity's many new consumer goods and a personalized competence in creating and acquiring a contemporary home. By conveying instructive guidance regarding housing choices and interior decoration, as well as gardening and cooking, *Bo Bedre* sought to create highly qualified consumers and home makers. Yet their efforts were not a question of the home as an immutable refuge from society's rapid development. Modernity had infiltrated the private sphere of the home too, giving in to a modern, hedonistic consumer behavior. Therefore, indulging in consumption was not limited to the possession of attractive goods, but included pondering them closely through words and images.

In my paper, I will examine how *Bo Bedre* in the 1960s contributed to an alteration in the modern home ideal and its mediation [cf. 1, 2, 3]. The magazine distanced itself from the guidance literature of the mid- and post-war period, mainly undertaken by functionalist architects and designers. Through a distinctive "infotainment", *Bo Bedre* not only addressed readers as rational-beings seeking solutions to their needs, but appealed to the senses of the viewer, teaching them to see or covet the home as a creative "work-in-progress"; a performative project that required constant development, maintenance and moderate adaptation to changing trends. The home's potential for adjustments and improvements was seen as inexhaustible; a lifelong project, whose aim was to enhance the personal acquisition of objects and thereby generate an internalized sense of ownership.

In consequence, *Bo Bedre* paved the way, in part, for a trend within current mediations of the home. In various magazines, the home is now displayed as a highly attractive lifestyle domain, a prestigious scene for exposing aesthetic and proper preferences, as well as group affiliations. Moreover, magazines no longer address the "reader" as a critically conscious consumer and handyman, but rather stimulate the viewer towards voyeuristic consumption. Information-based housing guidance is replaced by sophisticated representations of the good life through photogenic displays of design in desirable home settings.

Keywords: Lifestyle magazines, mediating the home, photogenic displays of design, 1960's Danish welfare society, consumption

References

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