

# Psychological aspects of space: house, psyche and body<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The house is explored as a site which suggests various possibilities with regard to psychological aspects of embodied experience in space. Some well-known links between architecture as site and the psyche as terrain are noted. Four readings of *house, psyche and body* are investigated with reference to core texts relevant to each. A first reading explores Jungian interpretations of the house as feminine. The next reading inscribes the house as masculine in its Freudian repression of nature. A third reading finds Freud's notion of the "uncanny" useful for the exploration of the feminine becoming-hysterical of the house. The fourth reading posits the house as being both masculine prosthesis and feminine prophylactic in accordance with the current poststructuralist practices of architects Elizabeth Diller, Ricardo Scofidio and others.

## Abstrak

Die huis word ondersoek as 'n terrein wat verskillende moontlikhede suggereer met betrekking tot psigologiese aspekte van beliggende ervaring van ruimte. Enkele bekende skakelings tussen argitektuur as plek en die psige as terrein word genoem. Vier interpretasies van *huis, psige en liggaam* word ondersoek met verwysing na kerntekste van toepassing op elk. 'n Eerste moontlikheid behels 'n Jungiaanse beskouing van die huis as synde vroulik. Die volgende interpretasie vertolk die huis as manlik in die Freudiaanse verdringing van die natuur. 'n Derde benadering tot die huis betrek Freud se siening van "das Unheimliche", die "uncanny", die "onheilspellende" met betrekking tot die vroulike historiese-wordende huis. Laastens postuleer 'n vierde moontlikheid die huis as synde beide manlike prostese én vroulike profilakse in ooreenstemming met die huidige poststrukuralistiese praktyk van argitekte Elizabeth Diller, Ricardo Scofidio en andere.

Working ... I am at present finding myself in that peculiarly precarious and exhilarating space and time — a few months before; exploring the parameters of; anticipating a new course entitled *Framing Spaces and Places* (to be lectured at the School of Art of Otago Polytechnic in Dunedin next semester). I

plan to introduce the students to different types of sites: sites which have histories; sites which live in memories; sites which can be fictional in a literal sense (such as when it is an architectural project and not built or never to be built); or fictional in a figurative sense (for instance a dream-site or a virtual site); or fictional in a metaphorical sense (possibly existing in a literary analogy); or fictional in an ideological or political sense (because we mediate sites, they are secondary codings).

Thus, I am thinking about sites all the time and for this paper I thought I would share with you something about what I am now reading and planning concerning one of these sites, namely the *house*. This site seems to be particularly relevant to this conference. For me, "living" the house is an obvious activity for a migrant who has no "home" anymore. Besides, the house has for a long time been a problematised zone and also for me: I come from a family of architects (from pre-modernists to modernists to postmodernists); architects constantly building and talking houses in a country of so many homeless bodies.

The house as a site could provide an opportunity for students to explore a "little" history (a short, small cross-cut) with regard to psychological aspects of space in shifting and overlapping focus in this century. We might explore four<sup>2</sup> readings of the house as site and core texts could be: the *Psychology of the House* (Olivier Marc, 1977); *Not at Home; The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture* (Christopher Reed, ed., 1996); *The Architectural Uncanny; Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Anthony Vidler, 1994); and *Flesh; Architectural Probes* (Elizabeth Diller & Ricardo Scofidio, 1994).

You will probably all be familiar with cross-references between architecture as site and the psyche as terrain (Figure 1). Marc writes: "When Jung

sought to describe the complexity of the human psyche at its deeper levels, he drew on his experience of a dream in comparing it to a building: The upper floor, he said, might have been built in the nineteenth century, the ground floor in the sixteenth, and a study of its construction might reveal traces of an eleventh-century tower. In the cellar there could be Roman foundations ...<sup>3</sup> Marc himself discovers that the entrance door (of a building) goes back to the most ancient part of his "inner house".<sup>4</sup> Gaston Bachelard says: "With the house image we are in possession of a veritable principle of psychological integration. Descriptive psychology, depth psychology, psychoanalysis, and phenomenology could constitute with the house the corpus of doctrines that I have designated by the name of topo-analysis. On whatever theoretical horizon we examine it, the house image would appear to have become the topography of our intimate being".<sup>5</sup> Marc states that "... the interior model ... had been a mother's womb, seen from the inside ... houses are wombs ...".<sup>6</sup> Bachelard talks of the passionate liaison with the "house which our body never forgets"<sup>7</sup> (Figure 2) and he quotes Rilke: "House, patch of meadow, oh evening light // Suddenly you acquire an almost human face // You are very near us, embracing and embraced".<sup>8</sup> Diller and Scofidio foreground "flesh" as the outermost surface of the body, bordering all relations in space. Writing about their work (in a keynote introductory section of the book) Georges Teyssot says: "D & S's works often deal with the situation of our "body" in society. Their projects retrace the various "folds" our bodies weave with the world. These creases, these grooves, are acquired by the human body through various physical and emotional, vital and affective, psychic and social experiences".<sup>9</sup> Diller and Scofidio themselves — talking at *The National Technology Conference in Phoenix Arizona 1993* — stressed the relationship between building and body: "Given the ... re-configuration of the contemporary body, spatial conventions may be called into question by architecture. Architecture can be used as a kind of surgical

instrument to operate on itself [on its own body] in small increments"<sup>10</sup> (Figure 3). Still about body, psyche and house one can also read Steve Pile's "The psychoanalysis of space" in *The Body and the City* (1996), in which he discusses "... the relationship between the body, the psyche and the subject's place in the world"<sup>11</sup>; that which is for Bachelard "... our corner of the world"<sup>12</sup>; and for Teyssot the "diseased domicile".<sup>13</sup>



Figure 1 : *Hallucinations* from the Cunningham Dax Collection of Psychiatric Art, in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal Of Psychiatry*.

As mentioned, one could focus on four readings, using the listed core texts, with regard to *house, psyche and body*. For a first reading, Olivier Marc's *Psychology of the House* is particularly relevant. Let me simplify and summarise within the timeframe of this conference paper: In this reading, the house is seen as analogous to the body, i.e. it is *like* the body. A hut can be like a womb; an entrance can be like a vagina (Figure 4); house shapes (igloo, yurt, house, tent ...) are analogies for the basic forms drawn by children to depict their own body. Marc uses diagrams to illustrate his thoughts in this respect. He shows how the basic drawing of a house and the basic drawing of a body are analogous. In this reading, the house is also seen as a home for the body, as the womb is home to the unborn child. The body is *in* the house and this, in turn, is seen as analogous for the centredness of the self. Jung's ideas about the mandala and the circumambulation of the centre come to mind here.<sup>14</sup> Bachelard writes about

roundness and quotes Karl Jaspers as saying: "Every being seems in itself round" ... [and] ...images of full roundness help us to collect ourselves...and to confirm our being intimately, inside. For when it is experienced from the inside, devoid of all exterior features, being cannot be otherwise than round ... in [the] rounded landscape, everything seems to be in repose. The round being propagates its roundness"<sup>15</sup>.

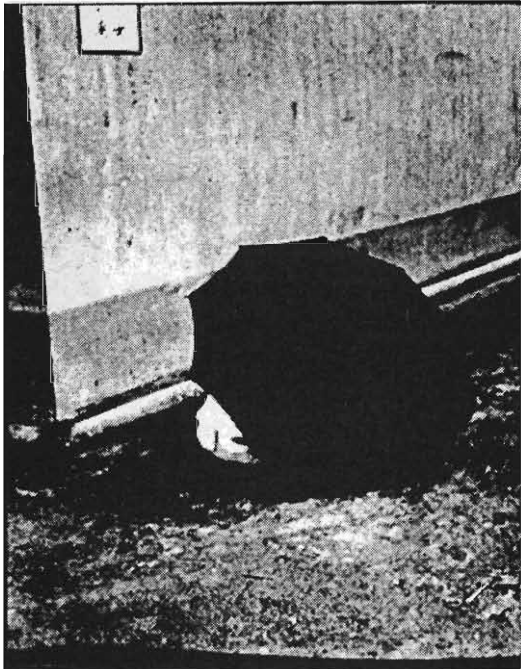


Figure 2. "The snug feeling of an enclosed space is naturally sought by children, even in the street", from Marc, 1977:128.

The Surrealist artist, Tristan Tzara, talks about intra-uterine architecture and the house: "From the cave (for man inhabits the earth, the "mother") through the Eskimo yurt, the intermediary form being the grotto and the tent (remarkable example of uterine construction which one enters through cavities with vaginal forms), through to the conical or half-spherical hut (Figure 5) ... the dwelling symbolises prenatal comfort."<sup>16</sup> Tzara discusses the interiors of such houses as dark, tactile and soft. He wants to recoup " ... what was torn away during adolescence and childhood ... well-being resides in prenatal desires [and it is] possible to reconstruct the circular, spherical, and irregular houses that mankind has conserved from the time of the caves to the cradle and the

grave ... in his vision ... of ... life, which knows nothing of that 'aesthetic of castration called modern'"<sup>17</sup>.

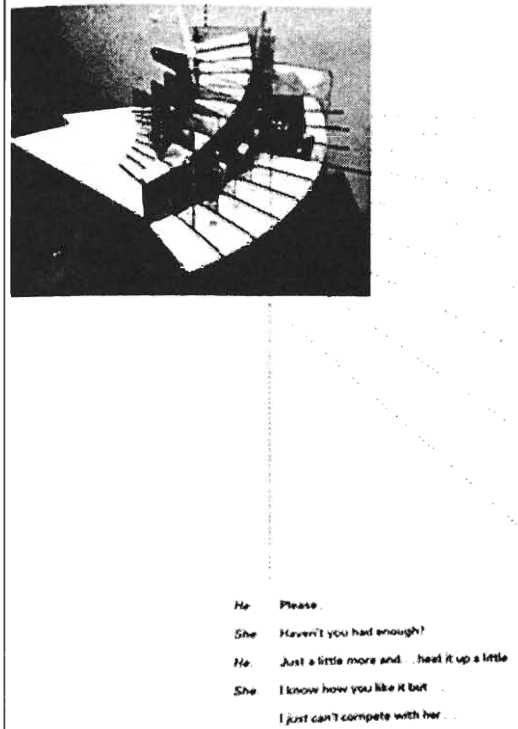


Figure 3. Slow House by Elizabeth Diller & Ricardo Scofidio, in *Flesh; Architectural Probes*, 1994.

Tzara's observations on the house were published in *Minotaure* following Michel Leiris' illustrations of Dogon huts in 1933. Anthony Vidler — in his "Homes for Cyborgs" — identifies a double nostalgia in Tzara's writings: On the one hand " ... the notion of womb as origin displays a familiarity with Freudian explanations of desire and the repressed or displaced routes of homesickness: "There is a joking saying that love is homesickness", Freud had written in 1919, 'and whenever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to himself while still dreaming: "This place is familiar to me, I've been there before", we may interpret the place as being his mother's genitals or her body'.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, Vidler also identifies nostalgia in " ... the return to archetypal forms [marking] an identification with the origins of civilization and an explicit critique of its technological results, human and material."<sup>19</sup> It is no accident that Olivier Marc — and many others who would agree with his reading of *house, psyche,*

and body — foreground the cluster of the hut, the feminine, the uterus, the child, the origin, the beginning, the tactile and the “primitive”. In *Gone Primitive; Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (1990), Marianna Torgovnick writes usefully about Georg Lukács’ notion of “transcendental home-lessness” as the modern condition. She discusses the work of ethnologist Bronislaw Malinowski, of Michel Leiris (historian of African art), of James George Frazer (of *Golden Bough* fame) and also the African sculptures in Freud’s study in terms of a homelessness in the West which leads to colonisation and appropriation of the Other. Vidler endeavours to contextualise it where he writes of: “‘Homesickness’, nostalgia for the true, natal home [as emerging] in the face of the massive uprooting of war and ensuing Depression as the mental and psycho-logical corollary to homelessness. It was in this context that philosophers from Martin Heidegger to Gaston Bachelard wistfully meditated on the (lost) nature of ‘dwelling’<sup>20</sup> ... the lost “... house the body cannot forget.”<sup>21</sup>



Figure 4. Tribal huts in Upper Volta, from Marc, 1977.

For a second interpretation of *house, psyche and body* a useful text is *Not at Home; The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, edited and introduced by Christopher Reed. In this alternative, the

figure is emphatically male, a male who definitely does not want to foreground women, children or the “primitive”. The house architect, Adolf Loos, writes in 1924: “Ornament of women ... answers ... that of the savage; it has an erotic meaning. [Ornament is for] ... the child, the Papuan and the women ... a natural phenomenon ... [but for modern man a] ... symptom of degeneration.”<sup>22</sup> In 1959, H.A. Witkin echoes something of this conflation when he states that “... strong-minded men are better at telling which way is up than women, neurotics and children.”<sup>23</sup>

On his upright houses, Loos preceded earlier in the century to strip away all decoration or ornament, later prompting Robert Venturi to say: “When Modern architects righteously abandoned ornament on buildings, they unconsciously designed buildings that were ornament.”<sup>24</sup> In *Not at Home ...* we read about Loos as a “... pioneer in the process of stripping away, which is so characteristic of modern interiors ... . In a now famous 1908 manifesto, Loos equated ornament with crime, arguing that the tendency to decorate manifested the same impulses as graffiti and tattooing, and that all were symptoms of degeneration, inappropriate to a forward-looking [and often homo-phobic] modernism.”<sup>25</sup>

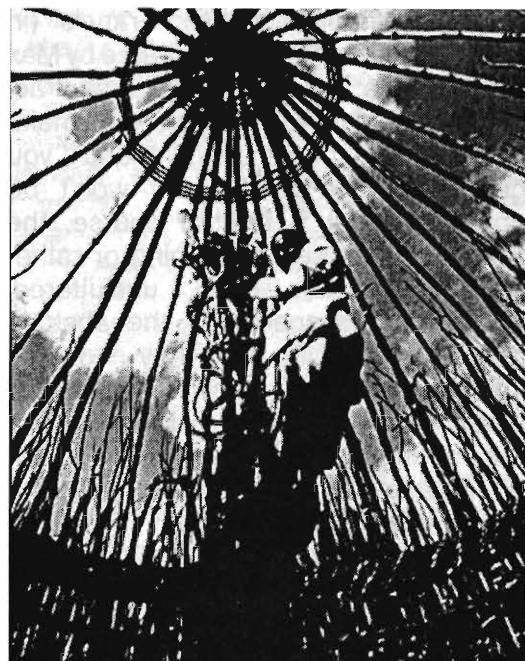


Figure 5. Hutbuilding, from Marc, 1977.

In *Privacy and Publicity; Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (1996), Beatriz Colomina discusses Loos' houses and argues that for him domesticity is not so much lived as staged. Elsewhere she is quoted as talking about one of his houses as " ... a house that excludes family life."<sup>26</sup> Christopher Reed tells us that " ... modernist architects have insisted ... vehemently ... on their antipathy to the home."<sup>27</sup> Frank Lloyd Wright abandoned his studio and family in 1909 due to his " ... anguish over the competing claims of his domestically focused ... practice and the anti-domestic imperatives of high modernism."<sup>28</sup> For the remainder of his long life he tried to counterbalance his house designs with a torrent of theoretical writings on technology and with high-tech designs through which he projected himself as a master architect and technocrat — an example being the Guggenheim Museum in New York, recently topical for us here in Dunedin with the exhibition of "Masterpieces from the Guggenheim". Modernism's most influential architect, Le Corbusier, also critiqued the so-called "cult of the house" and was determined to rather design a "machine for living in." Some remarks about this machine: Tristan Tzara called it "... the complete negation of the image of the dwelling."<sup>29</sup> André Breton saw it as a violent and cruel solidification of desire.<sup>30</sup> Francis in Leonora Carrington's "Little Francis" (in her *The House of Fear*, illustrated by Max Ernst), says: "... if you build abstract houses, the more abstract you make them the less there'll be there, and if you get abstraction itself there won't be anything at all."<sup>31</sup> But, of course, the Surrealists did see something or rather *someone* in the open, uncluttered, unornamented spaces of the abstract machine for living in. They saw the inflated male self, technological high modernism epitomized in the shape of the Father who could seem " ... more like a geometric figure than anything else"(Figure 6), to quote from *The House of Fear* again. With reference to the high modernist reading of *house, psyche and body*, the dwelling has been called distinctly "unhomely", a "cold storage warehouse cube" — this all being

discussed in Witold Rybczynski's *Home: A Short History of an Idea* (1987). He writes: "During the six years of my [modernist] architectural education the subject of [bodily] comfort was mentioned only once ... It was a curious omission from an otherwise rigorous curriculum; one would have thought that comfort was a crucial issue in preparing for the architectural profession, like justice in law, or health in medicine."<sup>32</sup> No, the cube house frames the father (as the hut frames the Mother). It is not home to the feminine; the organic body; not to nature; the "primitive"; not to childlike spontaneity; not to fluidity or formlessness. But, Reed writes about modernism's "domestic spectre": "What is apparently "othered", the repressed, does not go away, it always returns."<sup>33</sup> One could argue that, between Loos and the later Le Corbusier, it returns via the window (Figure 7). This is obliquely suggested where Colomina writes about Le Corbusier's villas in a chapter simply entitled "Window". Today, I can only focus on a few points here: Loos' cube homes are closed in on themselves. In the film *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* (1929) — directed by Pierre Chenal with Le Corbusier — the architect is the actor. He walks around in one of his own houses ... he pauses to contemplate the view ... he looks *out*. (Later, just before his death, he would write that he remains an impenitent visual, that everything is in the visual.) Previously, he had become focused on the window; enlarging it in comparison with other modernist windows; suppressing the sill; and changing it from the vertical to the horizontal. In *Urbanisme* he writes: "The horizontal gaze leads far away...we will get the feeling of being lookouts dominating the exterior world."<sup>34</sup> Suspended above mother earth on its pilotes — thin columns carrying the horizontal slab of the building — a *Villa Savoye* becomes "... a system for taking pictures ... the window is a lens, the house itself is a camera pointed at nature."<sup>35</sup> ("The *site* is first and foremost a [scopic] *sight*"<sup>36</sup> and Le Corbusier writes: "The dominant sign...is in the gaze."<sup>37</sup> The horizontal feminine; organic nature; the "primitive"; fluidity and formlessness

— all of this exterior is now inscribed *in* the dwelling via the view. But, Colomina focuses on another aspect when she writes of Le Corbusier's villas becoming engaged with the media (so frequently identified with the feminine): The window becomes a lens, the house becomes a camera, the masculine re-engages with the feminine ... but a feminine "... whose limits are defined by a gaze and whose status thus remains troubling."<sup>38</sup>

In her reading of Le Corbusier's houses, Colomina also states: "The organising geometry of architecture slips from the perspectival cone of vision, *from the humanist eye, to the camera angle*" (my emphasis).<sup>39</sup> This slippage is especially suggested in Le Corbusier's drawings. Colomina writes that on the stage of the modernist house, the "... subject becomes split between actor and spectator of its own play. The completeness of the subject dissolves [as the window dematerialises the wall] ..."<sup>40</sup>



Figure 6. Interior of the Villa Savoye, from Colomina, 1994.

In the drawings for *La Ville radieuse* the traditional humanist figure (the architect or inhabitant of the house) is made incidental to the camera eye; it comes and goes, merely a visitor, an estranged actor. Le Corbusier writes: "I perceive that the work we raise is not unique, nor isolated; that the air around it constitutes other surfaces, other grounds, other ceilings... the outside exists..."<sup>41</sup> With Francois de Pierrefeu he writes:

The eye is placed 5 feet 6 inches above the ground ... But we have left the ground in an airplane and acquired the eyes of a bird."<sup>42</sup> Colomina adds: Le Corbusier's subject [becomes] detached from

the house with the distance of a visitor, a viewer, a photographer, a tourist ... . The armoured subject is estranged and displaced.<sup>43</sup> Views multiply to become a collage, a montage with outside and inside; public and private; female and male no longer polarised ... views dissolve walls, engendering an infinity of new vistas.<sup>44</sup>

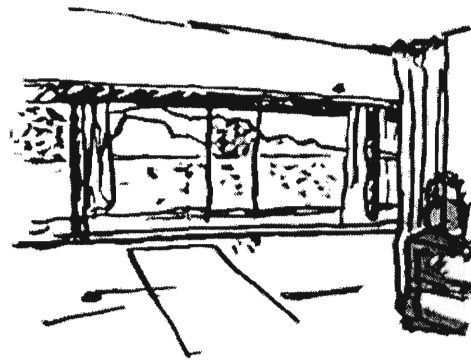


Figure 7. A Le Corbusier drawing of a horizontal window, from Colomina, 1994.

A third reading of house, *psyche and body* in the 20th century could have as a core text Anthony Vidler's *The Architectural Uncanny; Essays in the Modern Unhomely*. In this reading the house is framed as an estranging, dangerous place for the body, as a site of anxiety. Rooms have dark corners, stairs are vertiginous (Figure 8), objects come alive and lurk in the shadows. The familiar turns on its owners and become defamiliarised as if in a dream. Vidler introduces his interpretation of this reading by discussing Freud's essay on the uncanny, published in 1919. He writes: "... Freud took as his own starting point for an enquiry into personal and aesthetic estrangement the complex significations of the German word for "uncanny", *das Unheimliche*, only literally the "unhomely" ... the "unhomely" and the "uncanny" are such lame words for "das Unheimliche" which can intimate a spectrum ranging from strangeness to disorientation through to absolute terror and discorporation ... Freud himself wrote: "Some languages in use today can only render the German expression "an unheimlich house" by "a haunted house."<sup>45</sup>

Freud demonstrated that what once seemed "heimlich" (homely) could turn into something decidedly not so, the "unheimlich". Vidler adds: "Themes of anxiety and dread, provoked by a real or imagined sense of "unhomeliness",



Figure 8. Bruno Taut's vertiginous staircase from "The Glass House", in Foster, 1995.

seemed particularly appropriate to a moment when, as Freud noted in 1915, the entire "homeland" of Europe, cradle and apparently secure house of Western civilisation, was in the process of barbaric regression; when the territorial security that had fostered the notion of a unified culture was broken."<sup>46</sup> Vidler traces the reading of *house, psyche and body* in terms of "das Unheimliche" from the 18th-century fairy tale to short stories by Edgar Allan Poe to the 20th-century detective novel; from Benjamin Constant discussing estrangement in the aftermath of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Empire as a consequence of the centralisation of the state; through Marx for whom individual estrangement had become class alienation: ... the poor man living in the rent system, dwelling in someone else's house ...; through to more recent constructions of the uncanny ("das Unheimliche"). We read: "For Lacan, the uncanny formed the starting point for his examination of anxiety, the very image of lack; for Derrida, the uncanny lurks behind the unstable links between signifier and signified, the author and the text; for Baudrillard, its propensity...for the elision between reality and fiction...gives it a central role."<sup>47</sup>



Figure 9. From Max Ernst's *Une Semaine de bonté*, in Foster, 1995.

In his *Compulsive Beauty* (1995), Hal Foster considers Max Ernst's text-collagès, such as those in *Une Semaine de bonté* (1934), based on Jules Marey illustrations for *Les Damnés de Paris* (The Damned of Paris) — an 1883 novel of murder and mayhem — as examples of the uncanny. He writes: "In his appropriation Ernst relocates these particular scenes in psychic reality through the substitution of surrealist figures of the unconscious [or the "primitive", also read: the "feminine"]... this melodramatic return of the repressed is registered not only in the becoming-monstrous of the figures but also in the becoming-hysterical of the interiors"<sup>48</sup> (Figure 9). Lynn Herschman's *Room of One's Own* (1993) is an uncanny contemporary peepbox (Figure 10) into which (Figure 11) the viewer can gaze, leaving the inhabitant no privacy ... no home. Vidler writes: "As a concept, then, the uncanny has ... found its metaphorical home in architecture: first in the house, haunted or not, that pretends to afford the utmost security while opening itself to the secret intrusion of terror."<sup>49</sup>



Figure 10. Lynn Hershman's *Room of One's Own* (outside) (1993) from Moser, 1996.

In the later 20th-century, the house opens itself to the omnipresence of technology. Some images foreground the “arrival of the *cyborg*” — half mechanism / half organism. Donna Haraway states: “A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction ... I am making an argument for the cyborg as a fiction mapping our social and [psycho-]bodily reality and as an imaginative resource suggesting some very fruitful couplings [e.g. between the old binaries of “culture” and “nature”]... ”<sup>50</sup> Elsewhere we read:

... for the first machine age, the preferred metaphor for the house was industrial, a ‘machine for living in’, ... the second machine age would perhaps privilege the medical: the house as at once prosthesis and prophylactic [for the psycho-body]... enter cyborg, a potentially gender-free mutant, and its home is no longer a house as a mythological configuration, this having approached its end with Le Corbusier (as Walter Benjamin observed some time ago)...<sup>51</sup>

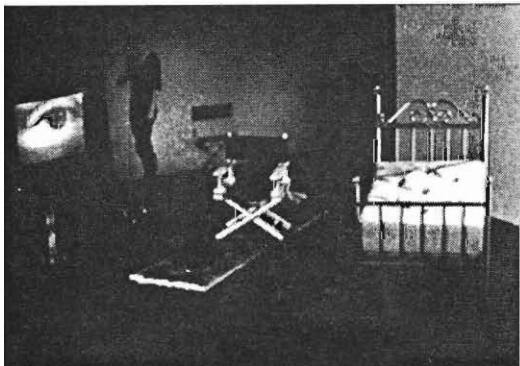


Figure 11. Lynn Hershman’s *Room of One’s Own* (inside) (1993) from Moser, 1996.

Some have lamented the “death of the house” as a mythological configuration. An image which comes to mind is the 1979 *Lost House* by Alice Adams (Figure 12), which consists of a wooden framework in an exterior site; a framework of walls perforated by windows; a ruin of the house; a memory of the house form; a reference to an antiquated idea...? Adams says: “The “Lost House” is all about *not* being able to go home again... it confronts the inevitable gap between memory of the

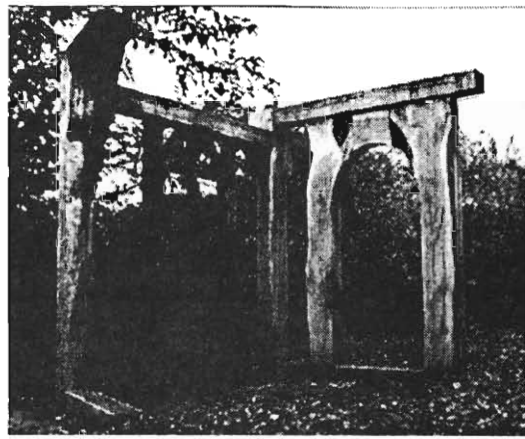


Figure 12. *Lost House* by Alice Adams (1979) from Reed (ed.), 1996.

past and practical engagement with the here and now.”<sup>52</sup> The 1994 *Dwelling* by the Korean-American artist Yong Soon Min is a dress become container for personal memorabilia, suspended over books topped with a volume open to mutilated pages on history and capped with a tiny house. In a later version of this piece, the house disappeared and the books were charred.<sup>53</sup> Catherine Richards’ *The Curiosity Cabinet at the End of the Millennium* (Figure 13) dates from 1996 and about this work we read “... this [is a]retreat from the chargedness of media culture, from the drive of technology and technological thinking, [we look] at a figure in an openwork latticed cage; an interior which is [also] at once an exterior.”<sup>54</sup>

In *The Return of the Real* (1996), Hal Foster discusses technology — with reference to Freud in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” of 1920 — as both an excessive stimulus, a shock to the body, and as a protective shield against such stimulus-shock, with the stimulus converted into the shield (which then invites more stimulus, and so on and on). He discusses the trope of extension ... the ecstatic body wired to the world ... the prosthetic body ... at the same time threatened by demonic mutilation and horrific castration ... thus also the trope of amputation presupposing the male body and the split subject ... a subject in lack. He asks whether we have exceeded this logic today; whether the cyborg vaults us *beyond* these tropes in constant binary opposition. Foster thinks *not* and rather posits a new intensity of discon-



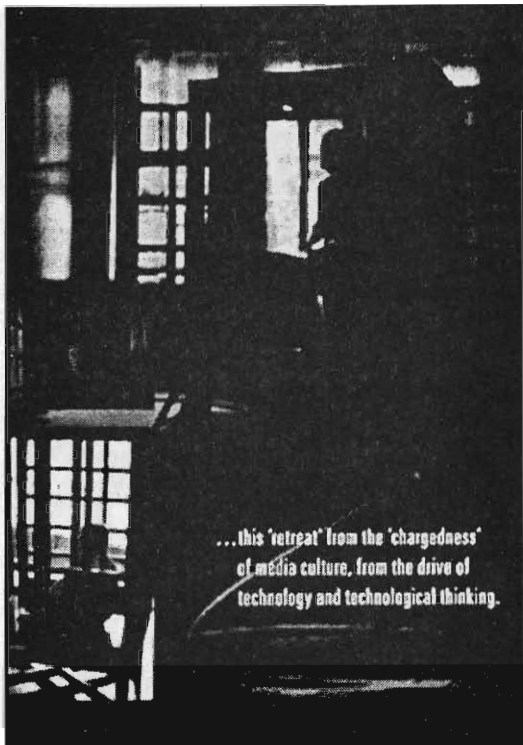
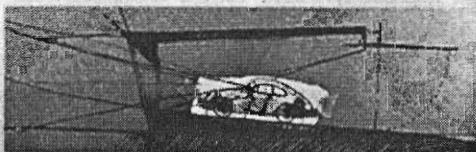


Figure 13. The Curiosity Cabinet at the End of the Millennium (1996) from Dyson, 1996.

nectedness as the postmodern condition, an uncanny condition for which there seems to be no cure.<sup>55</sup>

A fourth reading of *house, psyche and body* can have as a core text Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio's *Flesh; Architectural Probes* (1994). D & S do try to vault beyond the opposition between the tropes of extension versus amputation. They explore the house as being at the same time masculine prosthesis and feminine prophylactic. The fluid, feminine movement of the very flesh of the architecture of their *Slow House* — started in 1991, building interrupted,

garage to country garage. vwhen the car f the city due to the heavy pre-weekend rush. Traffic on the B.Q.E. and the ad." The road terminates by deflecting up



d artifact. The passage resumes by foot to

Figure 14. *Slow House* by Elizabeth Diller & Ricardo Scofidio, in *Flesh; Architectural Probes*, 1994.

project complete "... admirably "built", down to the smallest "'etails", de-tails (in the etymological sense, i.e. *dé+ tailler* = to cut, in French) ... ." <sup>56</sup> — is simply a door that leads to a window: tactile physical entry to optical, scopic departure ... (Figure 14). It is a passage from artifice (the city = culture operating at its most apparent) to nature (the view = culture operating at its utmost subtlety), D & S tell us. The view is replete ... amniotic, semiotic water stretching as far as the eye can see from the Hamptons, Long Island, New York's migratory vacation culture site. The house is a complex relational network of views relayed to video and TV sets; it is an ultimate prosthesis (Figure 15), a remote

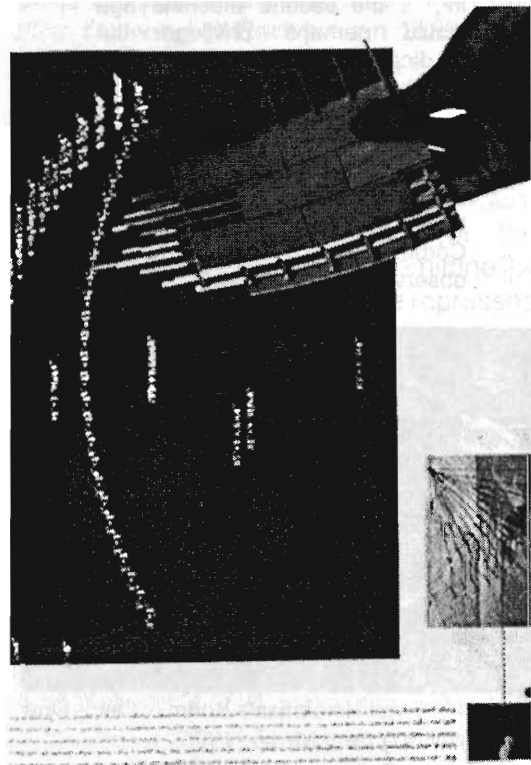


Figure 15. *Slow House* by Elizabeth Diller & Ricardo Scofidio, in *Flesh; Architectural Probes*, 1994.

control (no longer merely a camera); and also an overcrossing to *jouissance*, a prophylactic for Oedipal (s)triangulation. Within the body of the house, the formerly centred, unified subject in control of the view is teased off-centre, off-balance (Figure 16) by the decisively anti-perspectival split passage with no direct visual axes, only constantly changing optical tangents splintering from the

curve. The only direct view is at the end of the fluid wall, through the picture window, out toward the horizon. The view through the approaching car windshield, the view through the picture window and the video and TV views (which electronically reconstitute the portions that they block) are grafted together (Figure 17) as different representational modes as montage. D & S tell us that the house is also a mechanism of arousal, it elicits an optical desire and feeds it, slowly this desire begins at the moment of departure from the city, the getaway to the vacation house<sup>57</sup> where the body can sink into a recliner with remote control in hand manipulating the view but never being able to realign the broken, grafted horizon<sup>58</sup> "Thus, the [late 20th-century] gaze is arrested at the window's surface and forced to contemplate the instrument of its contemplation."<sup>59</sup>

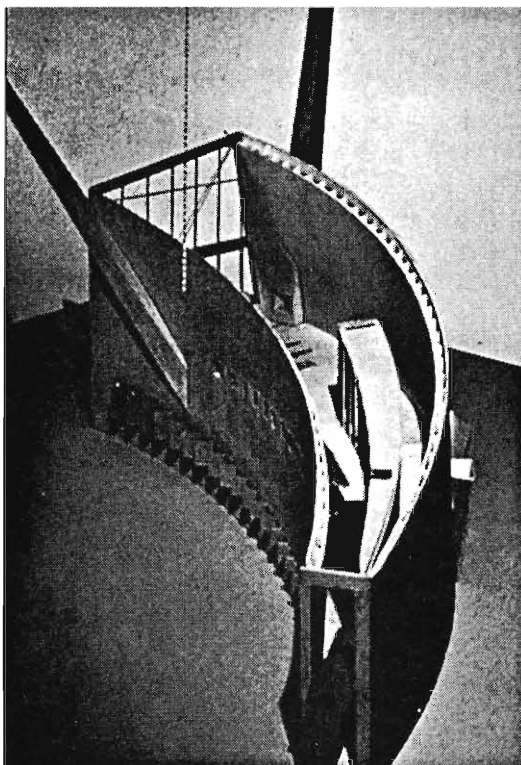


Figure 16. Slow House by Elizabeth Diller & Ricardo Scofidio, in *Flesh*; *Architectural Probes*, 1994.

Krzysztof Wodiczko's 1988 *Homeless Vehicle Project* also involves the house as both prosthesis and prophylactic. This project was a response to New York City eviction policies with regard to the homeless.

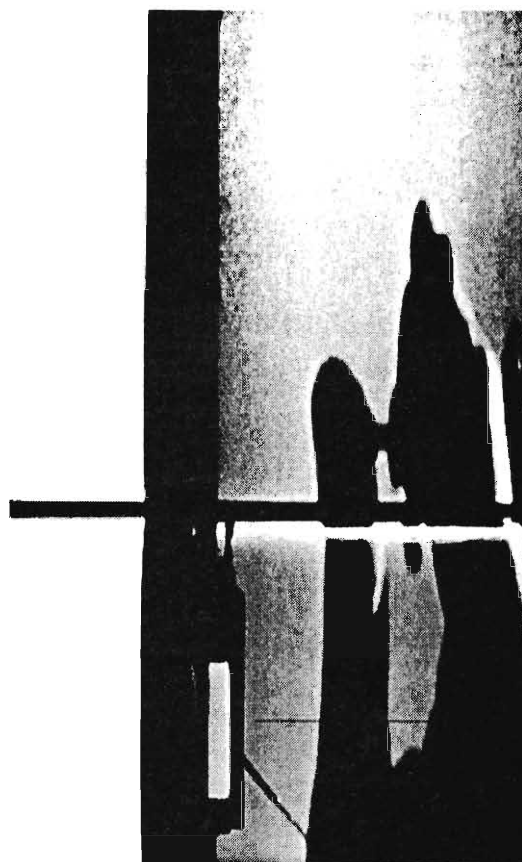


Figure 17. Slow House by Elizabeth Diller & Ricardo Scofidio, in *Flesh*; *Architectural Probes*, 1994.

Wodiczko's object — his project — became the nucleus of a protest against these policies; not a solution, but a challenge. He designed the "homeless vehicle" in consultation with several homeless men who collect, sort and sell used bottles. The vehicle has place for storage and is mobile, an important consideration for such work [Figs.18 & 19]. It is a vehicle (a prosthesis of sorts) and a shelter (a prophylactic of sorts); it can expand, fold and offers minimal facilities for eating, sleeping, washing, storage of bottles and so forth. It provides the homeless with a minimal, moveable "corner of the world". Rosalyn Deutsche reads it as an alternative to traditional spatial knowledge suppressing rupture in the city.<sup>60</sup> This brings to mind other frames ... Julia Kristeva linking "das Unheimliche" and "strangers in the city" ... Homi Bhabha reappropriating the uncanny to speak of migrants, minorities, the diasporic returning to the city — Bhabha using a feature of the house, the *threshold*, to frame a "... contentious

internal *liminality* that provides a place from which to speak both of, and as, the minority, the exilic, the marginal and emergent.”<sup>61</sup>

But, this now shifts into and across other sites further and further away from wistful meditation on the “the house the body cannot forget”. Thus I conclude with one last example of the house as prosthesis and prophylactic: recently a student at The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture of The Cooper Union in New York designed a *Shelter for Abused Women* (Figure 20). In her workbook she wrote:

A young couple offered me a ride while hitchhiking across the Southwest. The woman’s face and arms were covered with deep blue bruises... They wanted me to stay with them in their rented trailer, but I declined, quickly pressing the woman’s hand against mine before departing...

There are estimates of twenty-eight million battered women in the United States. Recently I read that federal cuts in social services have forced shelters for abused women in New Mexico to accept only women who are married, and insist a woman bring her marriage license with her as proof. I think of the young woman I met in Santa Fe and wonder if, when she makes the decision to seek help, she will be able to find her marriage licence in time, if she indeed has one? She is eighteen, just beginning her womanhood. My thesis is dedicated to this woman.<sup>62</sup>

Thus — quite another configuration of *house, psyche and body* than the passionate liaison of which Bachelard speaks.

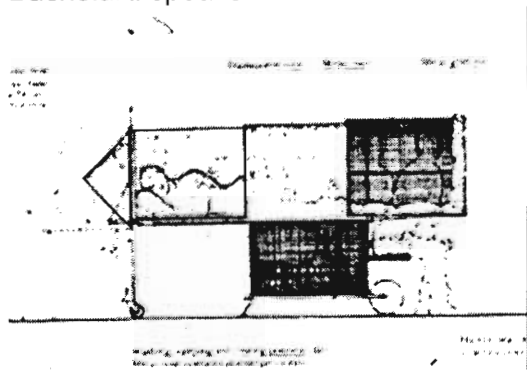


Figure 18. Krzysztof Wodiczko’s Homeless Vehicle Project (1988) from Deutsche, 1996.

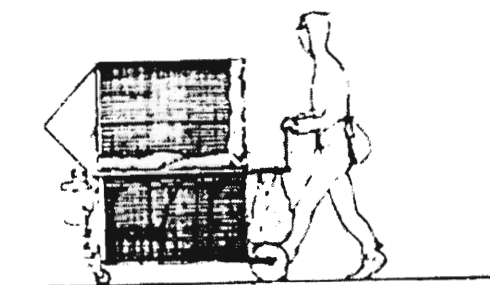


Figure 19. Krzysztof Wodiczko’s Homeless Vehicle Project, 1988, from Deutsche, 1996.

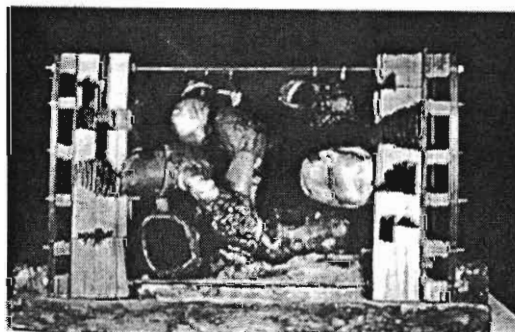
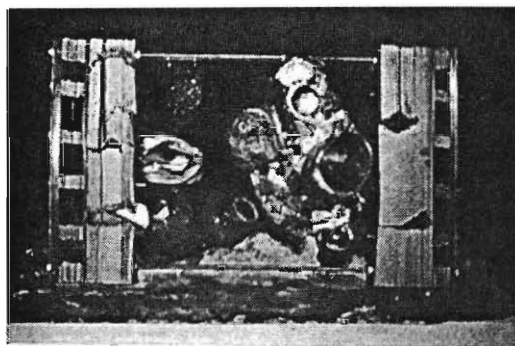


Figure 20. Shelter for Abused Women, student project at The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture of The Cooper Union, from Diller, Lewis & Shkapich, 1993.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This article was delivered as a paper with full visual accompaniment (of which a small sample is included here for publication) at the *First New Zealand Conference On The Arts and Psyche* on 26 April 1997 at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery in Dunedin, New Zealand.

<sup>2</sup> It is not my intention to suggest that there are not many more than four possible readings with regard to the cluster of *house, psyche and body*

<sup>3</sup> Marc, 1977: 9.

- <sup>4</sup> Ibid
- <sup>5</sup> Bachelard, 1994: xxxvi
- <sup>6</sup> Marc, 1977: 13
- <sup>7</sup> Bachelard, 1994: 15
- <sup>8</sup> Op cit.: 8
- <sup>9</sup> Teyssot in Diller & Scofidio, 1994: 09
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> Pile, 1996: 167.
- <sup>12</sup> Bachelard, 1994: 4.
- <sup>13</sup> Teyssot, 1994: 73
- <sup>14</sup> Jung, 1963/1978: 222.
- <sup>15</sup> Bachelard, 1994: 234 & 239.
- <sup>16</sup> Tristan Tzara in Reed, ed., 1996: 164.
- <sup>17</sup> Op cit. :165
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> Vidler, 1994: 7.
- <sup>21</sup> Bachelard, 1994: 15
- <sup>22</sup> Colomina, 1996: 37.
- <sup>23</sup> H.A Witkin, 1959: 50-56
- <sup>24</sup> Venturi, 1972: 163.
- <sup>25</sup> Reed, 1996: 8.
- <sup>26</sup> Op cit. : 9.
- <sup>27</sup> Op cit. : 8.
- <sup>28</sup> Op cit. : 14.
- <sup>29</sup> Op cit. : 163.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> Rybczynski, 1987: vii
- <sup>33</sup> Reed, 1996: 15.
- <sup>34</sup> Colomina, 1994: 306.
- <sup>35</sup> Op cit. : 311 & 312.
- <sup>36</sup> Op cit. : 318.
- <sup>37</sup> Op cit. : 334
- <sup>38</sup> Op cit. : 335
- <sup>39</sup> Op cit. : 335.
- <sup>40</sup> Op cit. : 329.
- <sup>41</sup> Op cit. : 330
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>43</sup> Op cit. : 327.
- <sup>44</sup> See Jacques Derrida on the citational graft in "Signature Event Context", in *Glyph 1*, 1977: 185.
- <sup>45</sup> Vidler, 1994 : 17.
- <sup>46</sup> Op cit. : 10 - 11.
- <sup>47</sup> Op cit. : 9 – 10
- <sup>48</sup> Foster, 1995 : 177
- <sup>49</sup> Vidler, 1994 : 11
- <sup>50</sup> Haraway, 1993 : 149 & 150
- <sup>51</sup> Reed, 1996 :161
- <sup>52</sup> Op cit. : 262.
- <sup>53</sup> Op cit. : 265
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>55</sup> Foster, 1996 :220-221.
- <sup>56</sup> Teyssot, 1994 : 8
- <sup>57</sup> Diller & Scofidio, 1994 : 225.
- <sup>58</sup> Op cit. : 248.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>60</sup> Deutsche, 1996.
- <sup>61</sup> Vidler, 1994 : 10-11.
- <sup>62</sup> Diller, Lewis & Shkapich, 1993 : 205.

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