

CONSTRUING FREE INHABITATION IN THE DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE OF THE SILENT SUBVERSIVES (1950s to 1960s)

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ABSTRACT

Construing free inhabitation in the domestic architecture of the Silent Subversives (1950s to 1960s)

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This thesis investigates the socio-spatial inhabitation of the domestic architecture of a collective of South African architects – the ‘Silent Subversives’ - during the heyday of apartheid (1950s to 1960s). The research re-evaluates and expands on limited writing surrounding this young post-war cohort.

The study argues that the post-war notions of ‘Freedom, democracy and equality’ were characteristic of an international ‘contemporary’ condition to which our agents aspired. Therefore, the enquiry rethinks any stylistic constructs and emergences in place for these architects. Instead, the thesis posits that the domestic architecture of the Silent Subversives indicates a shift from their predecessors towards finding domestic means – a silent subversive-ness – to transcend any economic and political constraints that they spontaneously expressed in socio-spatial and material conceptions. Adopting Bourdieu’s *habitus* theory, the study suggests that the condition of everyday living reciprocated with the structured spatiality of their domestic architecture indicates a notion of ‘freedom’ beyond stylistics. With regards societal domesticity, the exploration proposes that the silent reforms introduced in the 1950s sowed the seeds for the ‘class of the 1960s’. In light of current debates on housing densification, the study demonstrates the possible lessons that future researchers can draw with regards dwelling settlements.

Firstly, the thesis contextualises the lifetime dispositions of the agents in relation to international and local political conditions. Then, a dialectical enquiry interprets stylistic ideologies revolving around the debates of ‘internationalism’ and ‘regionalism’. This enables a re-evaluation of historic stylistic labels assigned to the ‘emergence’ of our generation. Thereafter, a hermeneutic approach allows for a socio-spatial architectural conception relative to the post-war and apartheid socio-political circumstances. Finally, the theory construes the notion of ‘free inhabitation’ as a contributing lesson towards debates concerning housing densities.

Keywords: Apartheid, Dispositions, Habitus, Inhabitation, Socio-spatial, Stylistic, Transcend.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree Philosophiae Doctor in Architecture in the Department of Architecture in the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology at the University of Pretoria, is in accordance with Regulation (4e) of the General Regulations (G.57) for dissertations and theses.

I further state that no part of my thesis has already been, or is currently being, submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at this or any other tertiary institution.

I further affirm that this thesis is substantially my own work. Where I refer to the works of others, I indicate that work as fully acknowledged in the text and lists of references.

The thesis is 79 303 words long.

Thomas Frederick de Bruyn

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