

Columbia GSAPP Adv VI

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Logistics:

Class meets every Monday and Thursdays

Travel: March 5-9, Location: Japan (Tokyo, Kyoto, Nara)

Assignment:

Studio will proceed along the dual-track of Research and Design, with Research assignment being carried out on Mondays while Design on Thursdays.

Research project will collect analytical and empirical information, produce graphic representation and printed matters.

Design project will produce physical models of subject being investigated.

Evaluation:

Students are graded using the standard GSAPP metric:

HP (high pass) = a superior level of work

P (pass) = an acceptable level of work

LP (low pass) = work that meets minimal standards

F (fail) = work that is unsatisfactory

Grading rubric:

- 40% Design assignment
- 40% Research assignment
- 20% Participation and development

The evaluation of the work will consider the levels of inventiveness, preparation, resolution, effort and engagement, and graphic and verbal presentation.

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to attend all classes for the entire scheduled meeting time and are responsible for completing assignments and for knowing the material covered in class. Students are allowed one absence without a final course grade reduction for all seminar courses and two absences for all studio courses. After the allowed absence a student's final course grade will be reduced one-half level for each additional absence.

## The House Today

The House today is in crisis, and a fertile site for critical discourse. The subject being described is conceptually destabilized under increasing stress, which sets the stage for the emergence of entirely new species of domestic spaces we will come to inhabit.

To move forward, we ask the most elemental questions. What do we do in our homes? We sleep, we eat. We keep ourselves busy and then we rest. We need privacy as well as to socialize. We need to put our books and clothes somewhere, but sometimes, we also need to be away from them. And what about in our houses? Where does work begin and where does play end?

The challenge to reimagine domestic space today is to reclaim the house from the economical, and to liberate the home from the technological. It is to contemplate its architecture as a process to knit labor, ownership and identity together. It is to restore the house as social tool for making cities as well as the home as site for making culture. By interrogating the spatial and material relationship between the self and the other, we investigate the possibility of a society formed out of domestic spaces and lives lived productively here.

## Short History of the House as Real Estate

At this moment, it is important to reflect on the fact that the House as we know it is a relatively recent and inextricably capitalist product/construct. One can argue that the wealthy Dutch merchant's home such as the one depicted by Vermeer was its first full fledged incarnation, and the Trump family portrayed in their gilded penthouse its most recent.

Etymologically, the word *house* is likely derived from the Old High German *hus*, a place for temporary protection of people or other things (such as grain or livestock) from the elements. People hardly lived in *hus*. Italians lived in *casa* (a structure that holds together), French in *maison* (a place to remain), Slavic in *dom* (a dominating construction) and Chinese in *wu* (a roof over the head).



The House's transformation from ancillary function to status symbol.

As the seventeenth-century Dutch merchants amassed impressive wealth and cultural commodities, *huis* - shelter for ancillary activities and possessions - became a display of taste and refinement and burgeoned into a status symbol. However, the underlying functional structure stayed. The *huis* consisted of separate rooms (bedroom, kitchen, dining room etc), connected by a corridor. The *huis* was the storage of property and functions in discrete compartments.

The elevated status of the *huis/hus* were subsequently cemented by industrial revolution and consumerism. More and more objects are to be produced, desired and accumulated in our houses, which in turn also come to define much of our identity. 2008 exposed that the permanence that they are seemingly endowed with was in fact an illusion and has fallen prey to capitalism's deadliest sin - greed. As the House was turned into derivatives to be traded in modern day "bucket shop", the envelope deteriorated. The inhabitant - the "I" - has become dangerously exposed, ready to be heaped up and dumped by the invisible hands.

The affordability crisis in privileged places did not make sleeping well at night attainable either. The same invisible hands pressure the dwellers of metropolises, closing in until they suffocate or snap. In a mirroring effect to the bucket shop, the "I" is inconsequential and worthless. Throw in climate change, sea level rise and the digital revolution's thirst for data mining in these most intimate spaces, The House is besieged.

*In a house besieged lived a man and a woman. From where they cowered in the kitchen the man and woman heard small explosions. "The wind," said the woman. "Hunters," said the man. "The rain," said the woman. "The army," said the man. The woman wanted to go home, but she was already home, there in the middle of the country in a house besieged.*

*"In a House Besieged," Lydia Davis (1986)*

## The Projects

All domestic structures, from *maison* to *wu*, played an important role in establishing a relationship between the individual and the societal, placing us in the safe zone between belonging to none and to all. But they did so quiet differently. To imagine new species of domestic spaces outside the current one in the real estate market, we need to discover other genetic variations - that is, dormant, overlooked and forgotten types that produce different outcomes.

At the same time, it is imperative to consider the environment in which domestic spaces operate in. Human race is faced with imminent biological alterations, brought about by molecular and genetic research and new territory of understanding and creating intelligence. Similarly, the whirlwind disturbance the technological and ecological double helix is causing in human habitat can be felt all around us and will likely intensify exponentially in the near future.

The exercise is to probe the uncharted territory rather than proposition of solutions. Reference to historical events are meant to be understood as provisional tools rather than coordinates mapped within a closed world. To start, we design along three possible paths the House can develop in the near future.

## 1. The Freudian House

In the Freudian sense, home is a metaphorical extension of the “self”. Its walls are conceptual membranes that construct a reflective interiority against the wilderness beyond. This constitutes the most elemental yet significant spatial and relational experience that distinguishes the subject from the object, and ensures the autonomous operation of one’s self.

Examples:

The Cushicle and Suitaloon, Archigram

Infinity Room, Yayoi Kusama

Artist’s Loft, Donald Judd and many others

Cocoon House, Paul Rudolph

Breath for MINI LIVING, SO-IL

Evolutionary Viability:

Total human occupation of the earth combined with ultimate personal mobility make it possible for the House to be everywhere and nowhere simultaneously. Wearable technology, autonomous vehicle and space travel corroborate into intelligent personal spatial device whose elastic membrane harnesses autonomy through reflectivity, offers instant connectivity through transparency with an array of curated discretion in between. The Freudian House is a sensing body, hunting for input in the wilderness.

## 2. The Marxian House

Throughout most of human history, all but an extremely small number of people were peasants or proletariat. Farmers built houses on the land they cultivated, shop owners stored their goods and also lived on premise and factory workers were packed into housing provided by their employers or the state. In the Marxian sense, the House is foremost the site of or ancillary to production, prioritizing output instead of input.

Examples:

Shaker Villages, Kentucky/Massachusetts/New Hampshire

Canal Houses, Amsterdam

Modernist Housing Projects, Socialist and Communist countries

Artist’s Loft, Donald Judd and many others

Evolutionary Viability:

As robotic evolution takes off and human race is liberated from the need to work in order to survive physiologically, it is fascinating to imagine what we will produce then in order to maintain meaningful existence. Imagination? New intelligence? Culture? As we will live and work among a world of robots, will the House of Production be the new urbanism?

## 3. The Euclidean House

If the philosopher and consumer pursue the Freudian House, the economist and politician the Marxian, then the architect and priest’s love affair with the Euclidean House is persistent. It is a fundamental human nature that when untethered to the earth, other human beings, and things of memory and meaning, we wrestle with the sense of exile. Houses, through the rituals they perform, connects us to a place in time.

Example:

Siheyuan (courtyard houses), China

The Tanikawa House, Kazuo Shinohara

The Schindler Chase House, Rudolf Schindler

Live-in-Environment, Aleksandra Kasuba

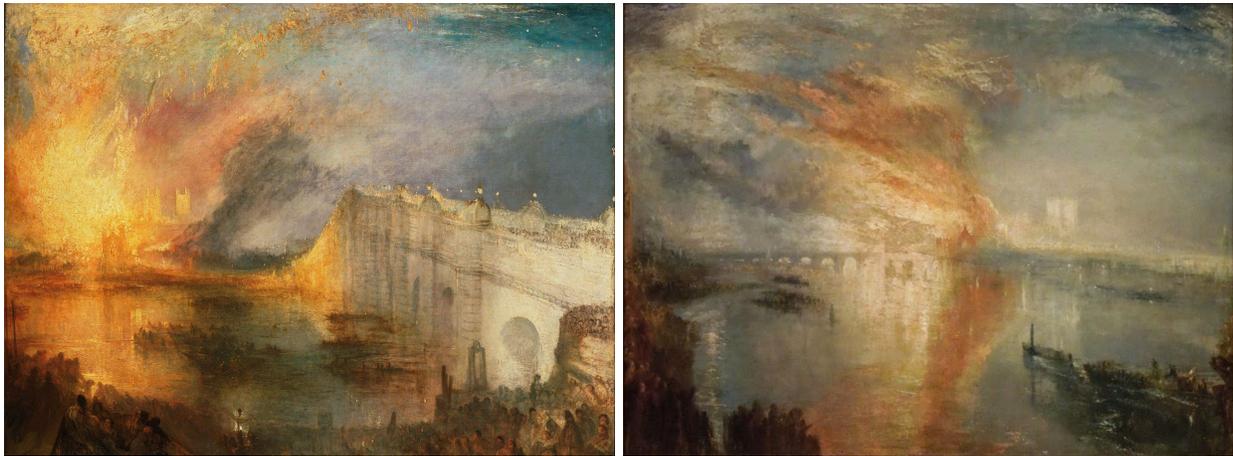
"Pao 1" Tokyo Nomadic Girl, Toyo Ito

Evolutionary Viability:

Chinese place prodigious importance on Fengsui in the design of Houses. Japanese animism - Shinto - has guided its architecture from the ancient to the contemporary. One may even argue that the early modernists' social and environmental transformation through domestic spaces are deeply rooted in the believe that they can calibrate our relationship with nature and each other. This implies the world is a closed system, with no need to regard real input or output, but only chaos vs. equilibrium, known vs. unknown within it. But is it true? Is there really no unknown unknowns?

## The Research

The studio surveys four unique sites across the US where The House as we know it is no longer a viable or sustainable proposition. In Cleveland OH, Omaha NE, Philadelphia PA and Houston TX, recent economic, cultural, technological and environmental events have distressed the House for many. Grounds for radical transformation have opened up.



Two paintings of J. M. W. Turner depicting the fire that broke out at the Houses of Parliament in 1834. Right: "The Burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons" at Philadelphia Museum of Art. Left: "The Burning of the Houses of Parliament", Cleveland Museum of Art.

In the Kent State University studio, the site is located in the post-industrial Cleveland. Being acutely aware of the urgent need of economic production and mining the heritage of making and cultivating, the Marxian House is tested in multiple disciplines - the agricultural, urban, cultural and economic, driving new models of collective living through both the process of producing Housing and the production that Housing yields.

In the University of Pennsylvania edition, the context is the rapidly transforming urbanism, particularly through two distinctly different migrant groups, refuge from New York City and from war zone countries. The Freudian House turn the whole city into a laboratory of social and cultural experimentation. Its nomadic nature enables a hyper opportunism that paradoxically creates cultural equity across the city.

In Omaha, persistent divestment in Malcolm X's birth place has led to the once thriving neighbourhood to become one of the poorest neighbourhoods in the United States, with more than 80% of the housing stock stuck in the downward spiral of the low-income tax credit cycle. With the richest person (Warren Buffett) also in town, the city seeks a model of housing that is also a tool for more equitable city making process.

In Houston, environmental uprooting put the house in a position responsible in locate its inhabitants in the ecologies of the place, hence the Euclidean House. The House and Housing projects created here are foremost a device for calibration in a chaotic system, even if sometimes it means being washed away or burned down.

At GSAPP, we examine this collection of projects, investigations and propositions. Through drawing, mapping, and reporting, we aim to lift the veil of the architecture of the domestic space and tell new stories about what can happen there.