AUTOMATIC CITIES

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The Architectural Imaginary in Contemporary Art

Robin Clark
with an essay by Giuliana Bruno

Published on the occasion of the exhibition *Automatic Cities: The Architectural Imaginary in Contemporary Art*, on view in La Jolla, California, from September 26, 2009 to January 31, 2010.

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FOREWORD

In important and purposeful ways 2009 has been a year of architecture at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego. We began the year with the Master Architects Lecture Series, a program developed in collaboration with the Salk Institute for Biological Studies to celebrate Louis Kahn and his iconic Salk Institute building. The series presented an impressive roster of internationally renowned architects—Frank Gehry, Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, David Adjaye, Enrique Norten, and Thom Mayne—who discussed their current and recent projects. Then we followed with *MIX: Nine San Diego Architects and Designers*, an exhibition presenting the work of leading San Diego-based firms that are redefining housing design and development in San Diego and beyond. Estudio Teddy Cruz, Luce et Studio Architects, Sebastián Mariscal Studio, Public (James Brown and James Gates), Rinehart Herbst (Todd Rinehart and Catherine Herbst), Lloyd Russell, and Jonathan Segal represent a generation of architects and designers whose design forms reflect a critical understanding of the economic and social context of contemporary architecture in the region.

Having considered both international and regional architectural production, we now turn our attention to the influence of architecture on the visual arts. *Automatic Cities: The Architectural Imaginary in Contemporary Art* explores the aesthetic, social, psychological, and political influence of architecture on the artists of our moment. The term "architectural imaginary" refers to architecture in the broadest sense, comprising images of sites and cities built and unbuilt, rising from collective experience and imagination. This dynamic is mapped in an international context through the work of thirteen individual artists and one artists' collective from eleven countries: Belgium, Cuba, Denmark, England, Ethiopia, France, Iceland, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United States.

Automatic Cities is organized into four thematic groupings: architecture as language; architecture as memory; architecture as model; and architecture as surveillance. Paul Noble's drawings of a fictional city constructed from a typographical font, Matthew Buckingham's installation inspired by the garret where Samuel Johnson penned the first English language dictionary, and Ann Lislegaard's 3D animation based on J.G. Ballard's novel *The Crystal World* all address relationships between architecture and language. Memory projected onto the architectural surround is the topic of the videos by Hiraki Sawa and Saskia Olde Wolbers, while Rachel Whiteread's sculptures and related drawings make material the idea of architecture as a locus of somatic memory. The third theme, architecture as model, is revealed through installations by Los Carpinteros, Catharina van Eetvelde, Matthew Ritchie, Katrín Sigurdardóttir, and Michaël Borremans. Los Carpinteros creates work that humorously and poignantly speaks to failed utopian

dreams in Cuba, while Sigurdardóttir's installations use models to evoke the coastline and folklore of her native Iceland. Paintings and drawings by Borremans demonstrate the uncanny potential of architectural models, while Matthew Ritchie presents an inundated, three-dimensionally rendered city. Catharina van Eetvelde's drawn animations of architectural elements morphing alternately into plant life, computer circuitry, and animal forms are also part of the architecture as model section. The final section of the exhibition addresses the theme of surveillance. Julie Mehretu's layered paintings provide chaotic and polemic images of a militarized urban surround. Sarah Oppenheimer's installation, conceived as a "movie made with architecture," consists of constructed portals that frame views which in turn are animated by the movement of visitors: it's a mutual surveillance that has losses and opportunities for the viewer and the viewed. Jakob Kolding's collages and posters critique the shortcomings of urban renewal while simultaneously embracing the cultural collisions made possible by the density of cities.

It is our pleasure to conclude this year with *Automatic Cities: The Architectural Imaginary in Contemporary Art*. While the critical positions of the featured artists are diverse, their works reflect a shared interest in the capacity of cities (and the buildings that comprise them) to conjure and represent the desires, fears, and memories of the people who live in them. Taken together, the works in this exhibition reflect the vital influence of the architectural imaginary on contemporary art at the end of the twenty-first century's first decade.

Dr. Hugh M. Davies
The David C. Copley Director

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We offer our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the realization of this exhibition and publication. Above all, we thank the talented artists who have inspired and participated in *Automatic Cities*: Michaël Borremans, Matthew Buckingham, Los Carpinteros, Catharina van Eetvelde, Jakob Kolding, Ann Lislegaard, Julie Mehretu, Paul Noble, Saskia Olde Wolbers, Sarah Oppenheimer, Matthew Ritchie, Hiraki Sawa, Katrín Sigurdardóttir, and Rachel Whiteread. The artists have been generous with their time and their work, flexible in a challenging economic climate, responsive to questions, and helpful with logistics. In some instances they created new work for the exhibition, in others they helped secure key loans.

Automatic Cities would not have been possible without the generosity of public and private lenders who have graciously parted with cherished works during the course of the exhibition: galerie anne barrault, Paris; Karin Bravin and John P. Lee; James Cohan Gallery, New York; Gagosian Gallery; Greenberg Van Doren Gallery, New York; Gail and Tony Ganz, Los Angeles; Hort Family Collection; Sean Kelly Gallery, New York; Jean-Pierre and Rachel Lehmann, New York; Luhring Augustine, New York; Mehretu-Rankin Collection; Murray Guy, New York; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Maureen Paley, London; PPOW Gallery, New York; The Project, New York; Jill and Dennis Roach; Stephanie Roach; Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York; Team Gallery, New York; Joel Wachs; Diane Wallace, New York; Nicolai Wallner Gallery, Copenhagen; and Monica and David Zwirner, New York. Special thanks are due to the following people who helped facilitate these loans: Elyse Goldberg at James Cohan Gallery; Candy Coleman, Ian Cooke, and Brennan Wadlington at Gagosian Gallery; Dorsey Waxter at Greenberg Van Doren Gallery; Boshko Boskovic at Sean Kelly Gallery; Matthew Lyons at Lehmann Collection; Lisa Varghese at Luhring Augustine; Harmony Murphy and Sarah Rentz at Julie Mehretu Studio; Janice Guy and Margaret Murray at Murray Guy; Paul Schimmel with the assistance of Naomi Abe at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Cornelia Butler and Christian Rattemeyer with the assistance of Kathy Curry at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Susanna Chisholm, Oliver Evans, and Patrick Shier at Maureen Paley; Wendy Olsoff and Penny Pilkington at PPOW; Kajette Bloomfield at The Project; James Case Leal at Matthew Ritchie Studio; Jordan Bastien and Renee Reyes at Andrea Rosen Gallery; Miriam Katzeff at Team Gallery; Judy Kahl, assistant to Dianne Wallace; Frank Demaegd with the assistance of Koen Van den Brande and Jelle Breynaert at Zeno X Gallery; and Hanna Schouwink with the assistance of Jessie Chien, Stephanie Daniel, and Jessica Witkin at David Zwirner.

For the publication we owe special thanks to guest author Giuliana Bruno, Professor of Visual and Environmental Studies at Harvard University. Her perceptive essay contrib-

utes new knowledge to the field of art history. Ursula Rothfuss's elegant book design together with Mary Ann Steiner's careful shaping of the text offer a clear and compelling presentation of disparate and at times challenging materials to a wide audience.

We acknowledge museum staff across departments for their invaluable assistance with the publication and exhibition. Stephanie Hanor provided unwavering logistical and moral support. All members of the curatorial department were indispensable to the exhibition: Ame Parsley, Joshua Hartsough, and Jeremy Woodall for skilled design and installation of the exhibition; Anne Marie Purkey Levine and Therese James for coordinating the loans and travel of works in addition to securing image permissions for the catalogue; Jenna Siman for ably tracking the schedules and budgets for both the exhibition and the publication; Gabrielle Wyrick and Elizabeth Yang-Hellewell for an engaging schedule of exhibition-related programs; Chelsea Jones for her tireless work on the exhibition checklist; and Rochelle LeGrandsawyer and Karen Noble for their careful work on the bibliography. The fundraising efforts of Anne Farrell and Cynthia Tuomi were critical to the project's success. We are grateful for the guidance and assistance provided by Charles Castle and his administrative staff. Denise Montgomery and Claire Caraska enthusiastically shared this project with regional, national, and international audiences.

Numerous colleagues and friends outside of the museum contributed their good counsel and support to this exhibition. We are pleased to recognize and thank them here: Judy Aronson, Jen Collins, Jan and Ronnie Greenberg, Betti-Sue Hertz, John Hoal, Michael Freund and Nancy Siteman, Catharina Manchanda, Daniel Marcus, Elliot Zooey Martin, Renee Mertz, Eleanor Moore, Emily Rauh Pulitzer, Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn, Isabel Moore Shepley, Delia Solomons, Elisabeth Sussman, Hamza Walker, Matthias Waschek, Anabeth and John Weil, and Lynn Zelevansky.

To organize an exhibition of this scope and international breadth, MCASD counts on a wide range of funders. The Museum is particularly grateful to our Trustee David Guss, whose generous contribution helped make *Automatic Cities* possible. The exhibition and catalogue were also funded by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency, the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts, and the American-Scandinavian Foundation. The Nimoy Foundation generously funded the residency of Sarah Oppenheimer, and the Danish Arts Council provided funds to support the participation of Jakob Kolding and Ann Lislegaard. The Museum is also grateful to the local government agencies that provide critical support: the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture, and the County of San Diego Community Enhancement Fund.

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Curator

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ESSAYS

Robin Clark

AUTOMATIC CITIES: The Architectural Imaginary in Contemporary Art

With cities, it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed, but even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that conceals a desire or, its reverse, a fear.
—Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

The homes we dream of inhabiting and the cities we devise to accommodate our collective needs all derive from an architectural imaginary that is fed by ambition, anxiety, and idealism. This phenomenon describes architecture in its broadest sense, comprising images of cities built and unbuilt, rising from collective experience and imagination. The psychological import of architecture, from the intimacy of domestic spaces to the overwhelming expanse of urban sprawl, has been a resonant topic for visual artists since the advent of industrialization and has become even more relevant today. Key investigations of the architectural imaginary in twentieth-century art include: the Dada practice of montage, which juxtaposes disparate fragments of text and images to spotlight the contradictions and irrationality of modern life; Surrealist adaptations of Freud's theory of the uncanny, particularly as it relates to domestic space; the Situationist technique of psychogeography (a subjective method of navigating cities); and forms of institutional critique practiced by artists in the 1960s and 1970s to highlight the ways that museums structurally and administratively frame the art they display. With its reference to the Surrealist practices of automatic writing and automatic drawing, the title of this exhibition and publication acknowledges the influence that certain Surrealist ideas continue to have on contemporary artists preoccupied with the architectural imaginary. While rejecting the occultism and club politics historically associated with Surrealism, the fourteen artists featured in *Automatic Cities* nonetheless engage and build upon Surrealist notions of architecture as a fluid and organic system that can trigger pleasure, terror, or inspiration. Indeed, as architecture is at times imagined as the embodiment of desire (or fear) rather than simply desire's object, these artists and the exhibition as a whole give strong evidence of the architectural imaginary at work.

Opposite: Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting 32*, 1975. Five gelatin silver prints, cut and collaged, 40 ¾ x 30 ¾ inches. Courtesy the estate of Gordon Matta-Clark and David Zwirner, New York

The symbolic qualities of home and the city have long stimulated creative writers, so it is not surprising that a prehistory of the architectural imaginary in contemporary art may be found in literature. An early example of the displacement of romantic love and eroticism onto an architectural site is Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, a sixteenth-century love story disguised as an architectural treatise.[1] Another is the eighteenth-century novella *The Little House*, in which the author so deftly interweaves the dynamics of an amorous tryst with descriptions of the space wherein the liaison unfolds that distinctions between architectural and psychological space break down: "Indeed, so voluptuous was this salon that it inspired the tenderest feelings, feelings that one believes one could only have for its owner."[2] Perhaps the most influential example of the architectural imaginary in recent literature is Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, a collection of seventy-two brief vignettes that describe a constellation of remarkable cities.[3] The book also narrates the platonic seduction of Kublai Khan by Marco Polo, who secures the patronage of an aging king with colorful stories of the young explorer's journeys to foreign cities. As his tale unfolds, Polo explains that each place he visits reveals its meaning in layers. He learns to understand them in the movement of his body through their spaces:

It is the mood of the beholder which gives Zemrude its form. If you go by whistling, your nose a-tilt behind the whistle, you will know it from below: window sills, flapping curtains, fountains. If you walk along hanging your head, your nails dug into the palms of your hands, your gaze will be held on the ground, in the gutters, the manhole covers, the fish scales, waste paper. You cannot say that one aspect of the city is truer than the other.[4]

Polo's narratives are punctuated by interludes during which he engages Kublai Khan in philosophical discussions. There are also times when the king indulges in internal monologues that express anxiety about his legacy. During one such reverie the king reflects upon a bitter irony of his long reign: his empire has become bloated with its own success. Although he longs for "cities light as kites … pierced cities like laces, cities transparent as mosquito netting, cities like leaves' veins, cities lined like a hand's palm, filigree cities …" Kublai Khan actually sees his kingdom as "covered with cities that weigh upon the earth and upon mankind, crammed with wealth and traffic … swollen, tense, ponderous."[5] The pitfalls of utopia are a recurring theme throughout Calvino's book and in much of the work featured in *Automatic Cities*.

1. Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili: The Strife of Love in a Dream*, trans. Joscelyn Godwin (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999). Originally published in 1592 as *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*.
2. Jean-François de Bastide, *The Little House: An Architectural Seduction*, trans. Rodolphe el-Khoury (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), p. 67. Originally published in 1758 as *La Petit Maison*.
3. Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1974). Originally published as *Le città invisibili* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1972).
4. Calvino, p. 66.
5. Calvino, p. 73.

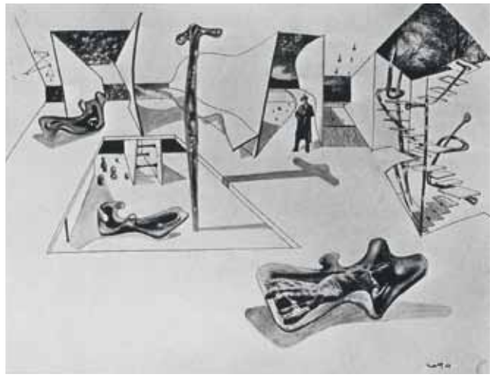
A schematic history of twentieth-century avant-gardes

A dizzying array of sources informs the contemporary architectural imaginary. Drawing primarily from the fields of modern philosophy and sociology, Giuliana Bruno has provided a nuanced theoretical and historical framework for understanding the concept in her essay, "Construction Sites: Fabricating the Architectural Imaginary in Art," which was commissioned for this volume.[6] Aspects of several twentieth-century avant-garde movements, especially Dada and Surrealism, have substantially influenced contemporary visual explorations of the architectural imaginary. A brief discussion of Dada and Surrealist work by Marcel Duchamp and Roberto Matta in relationship to the architectural interventions performed by Gordon Matta-Clark will serve to schematically link avant-garde practices in modern visual art that are engaged with architecture. Given that Matta-Clark was Roberto Matta's son and Marcel Duchamp's godson, a slippage exists between the intellectual and familial definition of these artistic generations. Perhaps this is only fitting, as notions of home and homelessness are central to the concept of the architectural imaginary.[7]

Dada, which flourished in Europe from around 1916 to 1924, used poetry, impromptu theatrical events, and visual art to make an informal and hostile response to the bourgeois culture and rationalism that its proponents believed to be responsible for the carnage of World War I. Poets Tristan Tzara and Guillaume Apollinaire along with visual artists Hannah Höch and Marcel Duchamp were among the movement's active members. Höch pioneered the practice of photomontage, or the collaging of photographic elements, to create biting social commentary by turning the imagery of propaganda back against its creators. Duchamp's development of the "readymade," i.e., a quotidian object elevated to the status of art through the artist's designation of it as such (examples include a snow shovel titled *In Advance of the Broken Arm*, 1915, and a urinal titled *Fountain*, 1917) applied a similarly destructive logic to the notion of authorship. The *Boîte-en-valise*, 1935–41, was Duchamp's most influential work in terms of the architectural imaginary, because it functioned as a portable museum (or as a conceptual model for architecture to house art). Conflating the form of a traveling salesman's sample case and a retrospective exhibition, *Boîte-en-valise* is a cloth-covered portfolio (the *boîte*) containing miniature reproductions of Duchamp's own works. In the deluxe edition, the box itself is contained within a leather suitcase (the *valise*) which underscores the itinerant (and in some sense homeless or houseless) condition of the artist. As with Alice in Wonderland, the shrunken retrospective of *Boîte-en-valise* was eventually restored to its original size. In 1963, Walter Hopps and Duchamp installed the full-scale works on which the miniature reproductions were based in a retrospective exhibition at the Pasadena Art Museum.[8]

Marcel Duchamp, *Boîte-en-valise*, 1935–41. Leather valise containing miniature replicas, photographs, and color reproductions, 16 x 14 ¾ x 4 ½ inches (closed). Philadelphia Museum of Art; The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection

6. Giuliana Bruno has written a number of influential texts theorizing the intersections of art and architecture, including *Public Intimacy: Architecture and the Visual Arts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007) and *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (London and New York: Verso, 2002).
7. This truncated discussion of the artistic and biographical relationships between Matta, Duchamp, and Matta-Clark is taken from my Ph.D. thesis, "Artist-Proposed Museums: Polemical Projects by Claes Oldenburg, Robert Smithson, and Gordon Matta-Clark, 1965-1978" (New York: CUNY Graduate Center, 2004), pp. 147-207. For an exhibition catalogue that treats this material in depth, see Betti-Sue Hertz, *Transmission: The Art of Matta and Gordon Matta-Clark* (San Diego: San Diego Museum of Art, 2006), which includes illuminating essays by Hertz, Briony Fer, Justo Pastor Mellado, and Anthony Vidler.
8. The exhibition *Museums in Miniature: Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Cornell* is on view at MCASD in La Jolla concurrently with *Automatic Cities: The Architectural Imaginary in Contemporary Art*. It includes Duchamp's *Boîte-en-valise*, on loan from the Norton Simon Museum, the successor to the Pasadena Museum of Art.



Roberto Matta, *Untitled,* 1938. Published in *Minotaure,* n. 11 (May 1938)

Duchamp's Dada play with the form and function of art museums influenced a number of artists working in the 1960s and 1970s. Prominent historical examples of artists who continued Duchamp's manipulation of the art museum include Robert Smithson, Claes Oldenburg, and Gordon Matta-Clark. Smithson's critiques of museums range from his polemic writings, such as "Some Void Thoughts on Museums," 1967 ("museums are like tombs and it seems that everything is turning into a museum"), to *Plan for a Museum Concerning the Spiral Jetty*, 1971, one of several drawings in which Smithson imagines a museum buried beneath his monumental earthwork.[9] Oldenburg's *Mouse Museum*, 1977, and *Ray Gun Wing*, 1977, are exhibits contained within their own traveling architectural surrounds that Oldenburg described as "small museums-on-my-own-terms."[10] Gordon Matta-Clark's rough embrace of the art museum began with a moldering installation titled *Museum*, 1970 (made from boiled sea algae and studio detritus), and continued with *Conical Intersect*, 1975 (in which he framed a view of the Centre Pompidou through a demolished townhouse) and *Circus*, 1978 (in which he dramatically perforated the floors, ceilings, and walls of a building belonging to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago). In the pages that follow, we will see how Duchamp's notions of portable architecture as well as architecture functioning as a conceptual model continue to be fruitfully mined by a number of the artists working today.

Surrealism, too, has provided intellectual points of departure for generations of artists since André Breton's release of the first Surrealist manifesto in 1924.[11] In endorsing techniques that attempt to produce text and images flowing directly from the unconscious mind, the Surrealists were springboarding from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories,

9. Smithson's article, "Some Void Thoughts on Museums," was first published in *Arts Magazine* (February 1967) and is reprinted in Jack Flam, ed. *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 41–42.
10. Oldenburg quoted in Judith Russi Kirshner, *The Mouse Museum, The Ray Gun Wing, Two Collections/Two Buildings by Claes Oldenburg* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1977), p. 62.
11. See André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," in *Manifestoes of Surrealism,* trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1969), pp. 3-47; Alfred Barr, *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936) and William Rubin, *Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1968). For a contemporary interpretation on the legacy of Dada, see Andrei Codrescu, *The Posthuman Dada Guide: Tzara and Lenin Play Chess* (Princeton University Press, 2009).
12. Rubin, p. 63.

Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting,* 1974. Gelatin silver prints, cut and collaged, 32 x 22 3/4 inches. Courtesy the estate of Gordon Matta-Clark and David Zwirner, New York

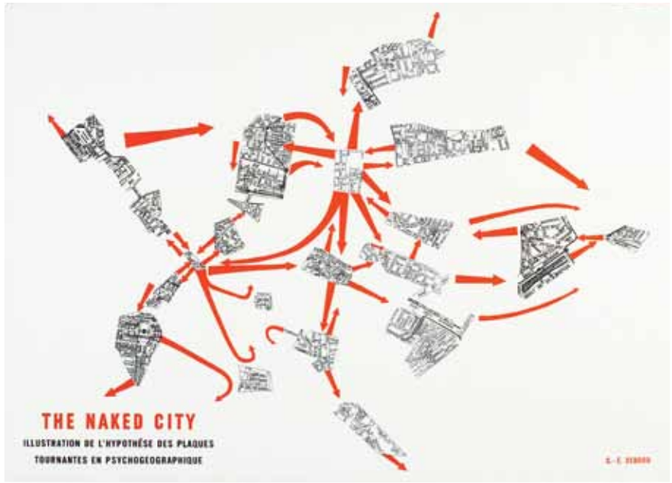
particularly his notion that information transmits productively between an individual's dream and waking states. As William Rubin has pointed out, that which Freud used in therapy became philosophy for Breton.[12] Although Breton was a poet, he actively recruited visual artists to the Surrealist circle. One of the most prominent of Breton's recruits was Roberto Matta, a native Chilean who studied architecture before moving to Paris where he worked in the studio of the modernist architect Le Corbusier in the mid-1930s. Matta abandoned architecture after befriending the Surrealist painters Gordon Onslow Ford and Salvador Dalí and accepting Breton's invitation to join the Surrealists officially. As a way of marking the transition between these two pursuits, Breton commissioned Matta to write an essay that applied Surrealist principles to architecture. Matta's essay, "*Mathématique Sensible—Architecture du Temps*," was published in a 1938 issue of the Surrealist journal *Minotaure* and was illustrated with one of his untitled collages of the same year. The collage depicts an International Style interior infected by biomorphic forms suggestive of human internal organs. In the accompanying article, Matta wrote,

"we must have walls like wet sheets that deform and fit our psychological fears," and later in the text he described "an unformulated course delineating a new architectural, habitable space."[13] Since Matta had given up architecture proper, he did not endeavor to create these environments in three dimensions. Rather, he turned to rendering fantastic spaces on paper and canvas in a series he referred to as "psychological morphologies." A generation later, Gordon Matta-Clark took up the challenge of constructing "walls that deform and fit our psychological fears," although not through the womblike constructs imagined by his father, who had concluded his essay with the statement, "we'll ask our mothers to give birth to a piece of furniture with lukewarm lips." While Roberto Matta painted a universalizing, amniotic environment with fixed axonometric coordinates, the subject's position in Gordon Matta-Clark's work is not fixed. Rather it relies upon the specific experience of a particular subject moving through three-dimensional space and time. This was the case with *Splitting*, 1974, a private house that Matta-Clark bisected and split open before inviting his friends to explore it. The performative role of the artist as he wielded chainsaw and crowbar in the course of the building's deconstruction (or, as he described it, "undoing") was transferred to the viewers as they moved through the space. Observing one another across the ever-widening gap of the interior, visitors animated the space and were in turn animated by the sense of danger and surprise inherent in the exploration of a destabilized structure. Matta-Clark's strategy of framing views and creating installations that heighten the viewer's awareness of their own physical presence within the space has informed the work of several artists in this exhibition.

Psychogeographies

Another twentieth-century avant-garde movement that influenced the contemporary architectural imaginary is the Situationist International (active across Europe 1957–1972). Led by Guy Debord, the Situationist International included artists still interested in the notion of a socially liberating project. SI participants developed several key notions for conceptually navigating cities: psychogeography (a personalized map, or cartography based on the psychological effects of places on people), *dérive* ("drift," the capacity to move through space without a pragmatic goal), *détournement* (semantic shift, appropriation and recombination of existing symbols), and unitary urbanism (integrated city creation, typically with the goal of developing massive yet fluid city structures).[14] Debord's work, *The Naked City*, 1957, is a psychogeographic study in which bold red arrows link numerous fragments cut from a street map of Paris. The subtitle reads, "illustration of the hypothesis of psychogeographical turntables." As with Dada photomontage, a key element of psychogeography is that of appropriation. Cities are built by networks of financial and political powers; however, given this context, an individual may appropriate the environment into his or her own physical/social/psychological matrix. Rather than simply illustrating this idea, Debord's screenprint in some sense enacts it. As Thomas McDonough points out in his analysis of *The Naked City*, Debord borrowed the title from an American film noir of 1948, which itself quoted a book of crime photographs by Weegee published in 1945.[15] The fact that the "naked city" referenced in the film and the book of photographs was Manhattan did not deter Debord from adopting the title for his social geography of Paris.

This essay is also a psychogeography of sorts. It is too large a task and not our focus to comprehensively describe all the ways that the fourteen artists featured in this exhibition relate to the architectural imaginary in western literature, or to twentieth-century avant-garde movements, or even to each other. In scanning the territory, however, certain motifs have emerged repeatedly, and I have appropriated them as navigational tools for the remainder of the essay. In the pages that follow, the works in the exhibition have been organized into four thematic groupings: architecture as language; architecture as memory; architecture as model; and architecture as surveillance. These groupings are open-ended, experimental rather than definitive, and offered as points of entry into the broad range of practices by artists represented in the exhibition.



Guy Debord, *The Naked City*, 1957.
Screenprint, 13 x 18 ¾ inches.
Constant archive, RKD The Hague

13. Matta Echaurren, "Mathématique sensible—Architecture du temps," published in *Minotaure*, n. 11 (May 1938), p. 43.

14. For a discussion of the relationship of the Situationist movement to Surrealism and for a definition of its terms, see Peter Wollen, "Bitter Victory: The Art and Politics of the Situationist International," in Elisabeth Sussman, *on the Passage of a few people through a rather brief moment in time: The Situationist International, 1957–1972* (Cambridge, MA and Boston, MA: Institute of Contemporary Art and MIT Press, 1989).

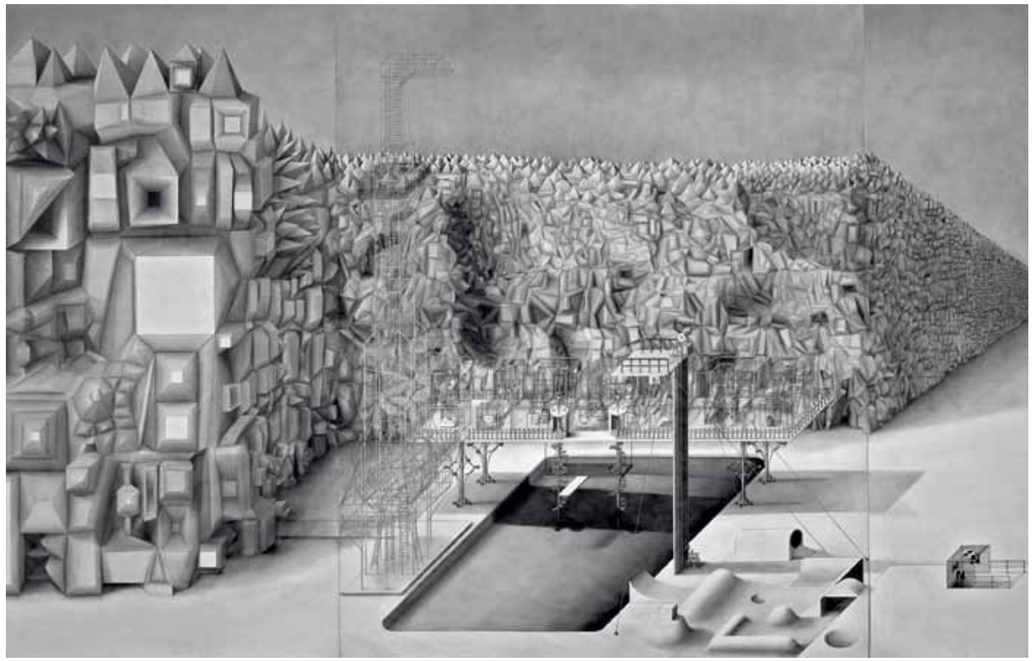
15. Thomas McDonough, "Situationist Space," *October*, Vol. 67 (Winter, 1994), p. 61.

Architecture and Language

In works by Matthew Buckingham, Paul Noble, and Ann Lislegaard, architecture becomes a laboratory for language, is constructed by language, and has language projected upon it. Buckingham begins each work with archival research of a given site. In the case of *Definition*, 2000, his chosen site is the garret in London where Samuel Johnson is said to have written the first English language dictionary. A single projected image of Johnson's attic and a steeply angled ramp form *Definition*, an installation that considers the capacity of one small room to be the incubator for the first formal survey of the English language. Employing a mellifluous recorded narrative, Buckingham ruminates on Johnson's personal relationship to the language and his desire to define its words for the world. The narrator explains that, "the years Samuel Johnson spent in this room were 'the dictionary years,' when his identity slowly merged with his project—a man of letters deeply immersed in the alphabet." In the Buckingham installation, Johnson's enterprise also merges with the space in which it was produced, the attic of a house that was rented with the advance funds Johnson was paid to write the dictionary. The narrative Buckingham created inverts the image of Johnson's garret as housing for the dictionary by likening the dictionary itself to architecture. "Dictionaries, like all books, take up space. They're made up of space—portable space for storing ideas."

Paul Noble's work also constructs a relationship between architecture and language. In the mid-1990s, the artist began to sketch the parameters of a fictional city, the development of which has occupied him for nearly fifteen years. Nobson Newtown began life as a video animation, in which Noble wrote a creation myth for a town that is curiously unpopulated, its boom and bust cycle accelerated so that many of the buildings were abandoned before they were completed. The video *Intronob*, 1996–2000, consists only of scrolling text, so it would appear to be free of images, yet the dense text is written in a font that Noble designed using modernist building forms: each letter is both a character from the alphabet and a drawing of a building. For Noble his "nobfont" is a way of exploring "the potential of a language that occupies a geographical or pictorial space."[16] The video was initially conceived as a one-off project, but it became a self-fulfilling prophecy in that it actually spawned the city it purported to introduce. From *Intronob* grew a body of work comprising over thirty large-scale drawings, a guidebook, a cinematic projection, and a graphic novel. Noble drafted a map legend for Nobson Newtown that he elaborated in the drawings. Each of the Nobson Newtown drawings begins with a word/building articulated in Noble's architectural font. The word is then "illuminated" in the medieval tradition of embellishing texts with images of flora and fauna, although Noble prefers dripping faucets and overturned paint buckets to doves and lilies. For example, embedded in the title of the drawing *Lidonob* is the word "lido,"

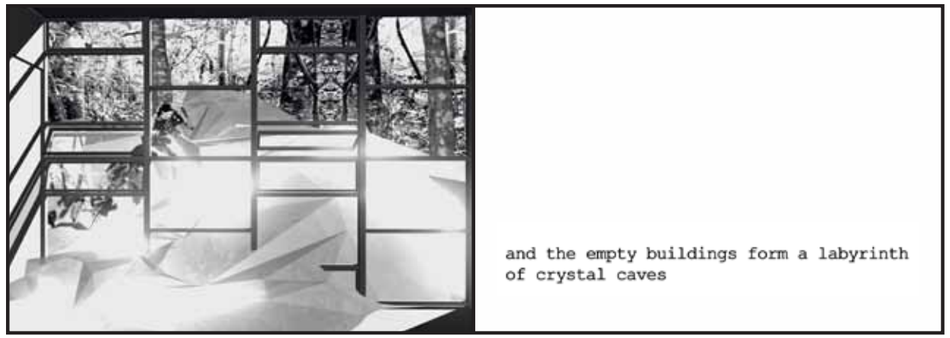
16. Email correspondence with the author, February 21, 2009.



Paul Noble, *Lidonob*, 2000. Pencil on paper, 118 ⅛ x 177 ⅛ inches. Collection of Karin Bravin and John P. Lee. Courtesy of Maureen Paley, London

an Italian term for a public swimming area, followed by the suffix "nob" which identifies the place as a site within Nobson Newtown. More bucolic than many of the Nobson Newtown drawings, *Lidonob* depicts a recreation park that includes a pool and a playground surrounded by crystalline outcroppings. Yet a more careful look at the scenario reveals an aura of menace: the scaffolding above the pool is dangerously rickety; the pool itself may be empty; and the jagged crystal cliffs glow with an otherworldly light. Each of Noble's drawings contains multiple layers of information that come in and out of focus. This proliferation of detail resists coherence because it is impossible to absorb the works in their entirety. Noble acknowledges the linguistic paradox inherent in the Nobson Newtown project. He explains that he wanted to "make a big, Gaddis-like novel," but Noble concedes that "the irony of this is that the Nobson drawings are, essentially, one word poems."[17]

17. Email correspondence with the author, February 21, 2009. William Gaddis (1922–1998) was an American novelist known for his lengthy, complex, and allusive works. Gaddis's first novel, *The Recognitions* (1958), is the 956-page story of a minister's son who makes a living by forging paintings.



Ann Lislegaard, *Crystal World (after J.G. Ballard)*, 2006. 2-channel, 3D animation, black and white, silent, 12 minute combinations over three hours. Courtesy of the artist and Murray Guy, New York

The relationship between architecture and language is different in Ann Lislegaard's installations, which are often based on literary sources. Her most recent body of work translates science fiction novels into three-dimensional animations. The installation *Crystal World (after J. G. Ballard)*, 2006, credits its primary source up front. *The Crystal World* is a novel by British author James Graham Ballard that tells the story of a physician who travels to a rainforest where he discovers that a fallen meteorite is causing the landscape and its inhabitants to transform into crystals. In Lislegaard's interpretation of the narrative, the lush jungle vegetation is rendered in crisp black and white forms so that it seems embrittled even before the advance of the crystals. Lislegaard engages the architectural imaginary by staging the piece in and around a glass house designed by the Brazilian architect Lina Bo Bardi (the original novel was set in Africa and contains no references to modernist architecture). Text extracted from Ballard's novel becomes a material element in the piece when Lislegaard juxtaposes phrases set in Courier font (suggesting that it has been typewritten, perhaps as a journalistic dispatch from the jungle), with images of Bo Bardi's house. Text reading "what surprises me the most" appears beside a dead tree that has somehow fallen inside the house, and another text with the words "and the empty buildings form a labyrinth of crystal caves" appears beside an image of crystals flowing through a grid of window panes. The dialogue between architecture and language was expanded further when Lislegaard had occasion to project *Crystal World* onto the façade of the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts, a minimalist building designed by Tadao Ando with a silky smooth concrete surface. For Lislegaard, projecting Bo Bardi's glass house onto Ando's concrete wall was like "creating a parasite architecture," and projecting Ballard's text onto the façade was akin to "tattooing the skin of the building."[18]

18. "Ann Lislegaard in conversation with Robin Clark," in Camran Mani, ed., *The Light Project* (St. Louis: Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts, 2008), unpaginated.

Architecture as Memory

Somatic memory is integral to an understanding of physical space. According to architect and theorist Juhani Pallasmaa, "an embodied memory has an essential role as the basis of remembering a space or place. We transfer all the cities and towns we have visited, all the places we have recognized into the incarnate memory of our body."[19] For Calvino, "the city which cannot be expunged from the mind is an armature, a honeycomb in whose cells each of us can place the things he wants to remember."[20] Memory embedded in architecture and architecture embedded in memory are fertile territories for contemporary artists including Rachel Whiteread, Hiraki Sawa, and Saskia Olde Wolbers. Rachel Whiteread's sculptures make material the concept of architecture as a locus for somatic memory. By casting household objects (and once an entire house) she records the physical history of domestic spaces, indexing evidence of time's passing on buildings (and, by extension, on the inhabitants of those buildings). Indeed the human form is both absent and present in Whiteread's sculpture, because casts of negative spaces (a fireplace, the space underneath a chair) suggest cavities of the body, while positive casts of domestic objects (such as mattresses which support the body) may drape or lean anthropomorphically. The German poet and novelist Rainer Maria Rilke pursued Whiteread's approach to the ghostly evidence of human habitation nearly a century before, when Rilke extrapolated the history of a demolished house based on the traces it left on the wall of a neighboring building:

There stood the middays and the sicknesses and the exhaled breath and the smoke of years … the sweet, lingering smells of neglected infants was there, and the fearsmell of children who go to school, and the sultriness out of the beds of nubile youths.[21]

Like Gordon Matta-Clark, Whiteread sometimes works with places that have been scheduled for demolition. In one such instance, Whiteread was offered the opportunity to cast a room at the BBC's British Broadcasting House that was thought to have been George Orwell's office when he was employed there during the 1940s. As rendered in Orwell's iconic dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Room 101 is one of the most chilling examples of the architectural imaginary in twentieth-century literature, a torture chamber that contains the "worst thing in the world," psychologically tailored to summon the deepest fears of each inmate.[22] The overt reference to literature displayed in *Untitled (Room 101)*, 2003, is atypical within Whiteread's oeuvre, but it lends a provocative dimension to her exploration of the architectural imaginary, speaking to a collective memory initially visualized in fiction.

19. Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (London: John Wiley and Sons, 2005), p. 72.
20. Calvino, p. 15.
21. Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, trans. M. D. Herter Norton (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992), pp 47-48. First published 1910.
22. George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1949). For a discussion of this work, see Charlotte Mullins, *Rachel Whiteread* (London: Tate Publishing, 2004), p. 108.

Rachel Whiteread, *Untitled (Room 101)*, 2003. Mixed media, 118 x 253 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Collection Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne/ Centre de création industrielle, Paris

Saskia Olde Wolbers, *Kilowatt Dynasty*, 2000. Video for projection, voice over by Jean Lee, 10 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Maureen Paley, London

Memory functions differently in the work of Saskia Olde Wolbers. Unlike Whiteread's practice of charting the indexical relationship of the body to architecture, Olde Wolbers makes videos for which she constructs architectural models as stage sets that affiliate architecture with the body and with somatic memory. She does this primarily by shooting her models in an underwater tank, which causes them to be read as fluid and organic, and then pairs them with complex, lyrical narratives that explore the intersections of memory, imagination, hallucination, and madness. In *Kilowatt Dynasty*, 2000, Olde Wolbers makes selective use of Surrealism's malleable, psychologically inflected approach to architectural space and the vicissitudes of memory. The piece opens with the sound of a ringing gong and the image of an abstract, transparent form shaped like a belly or a man-of-war. A voice begins the narration with, "Let's try to imagine that I am going to be born in seventeen years … let's in our heads go forward to the year 2016."

The ensuing story describes a glass shopping mall constructed on the site of a valley that was inundated to create the Three Gorges Dam in China. The narrator predicts the mall will be popular because "people will still be able to watch their old valley … while being seduced into buying a washing machine." The bulbous building reads simultaneously as a womb for the disembodied narrator and as a lens through which those people who lived in the valley before the flood might view and remember the sites of their former homes.

Memory is an important component of Hiraki Sawa's videos, including *Trail*, 2005. Like many of Sawa's videos, *Trail* is shot in black and white and unfolds in the artist's own apartment. It opens with a series of slow-fade establishing shots, accompanied by the soundtrack of a modified music box. Animal figures in the form of cast shadows move through the space. Small, ghostly camels journey along the basin of a dripping sink, traverse a windowsill, trace the perimeter of the doorjamb. Memories or fantasies of a circus begin to materialize: layers of shadows and layers of sound describe a daydream state in the bedroom where the camels process along the top of a pillowcase, a ferris wheel spins above the bed, and snow falls on the quilt. The chiaroscuro effects of the shadows combine with evocative childhood images to create a space saturated with melancholy and mystery. Sawa's images exist in the liminal space between memory and wishful imaginings (according to Calvino, "desires are already memories").[23] While his touch is light, Sawa makes a compelling case for domestic space as both site and metaphor for the imagination.

Architecture as Model

Whether they function as idealized proposals, speculative explorations, or tools for describing systems, conceptual models expressed through the language of architecture are indispensable to a number of the artists featured in *Automatic Cities*.[24] For example, Katrín Sigurdardóttir creates, and sometimes conflates, models of architecture and landscape to address themes of displacement. With two works from 2008, she engages conceptual models by taking on the utopian notion of the megastructure. Popularized in the 1960s by modernist architects and theoreticians such as Philip Johnson, Buckminster Fuller, and Fumihiko Maki, the megastructure is imagined as both very large and infinitely expandable. The megastructure has been most commonly understood as a city, but it also has some foundations in planned or realized large-scale landscapes. According to Wikipedia (itself an ever-expanding structure), the best example of a terrestrial megastructure is the Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras, a 4,000-square-mile agricultural landscape.[25] Sigurdardóttir's *Untitled (drawer unit)* is a discrete shelving system for miniature landscapes, while *Megastructure* proposes five stacked artificial

23. Calvino, p. 8.
24. For a concise essay on the use of conceptual models in contemporary art, see Catharina Manchanda, *Models and Prototypes* (St. Louis: Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, Washington University, 2006).
25. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Megastructure. Accessed March 19, 2009.

Katrín Sigurdardóttir, *Untitled (drawer unit)*, 2009. Beech, resin, and pigments, 19 x 30 x 34 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Greenberg Van Doren Gallery, New York

terrains that would each be 600 stories high. Although the megastructure sculpture in particular is speculative, implying that it exists in the imagination or in the future, this artist understands it as a futuristic vision projected from the past. Sigurdardóttir's *Megastructure* expresses no nostalgia for lived experience, but instead refers to a moment when the idea of exponential growth was considered a positive goal.

Displacement and its attendant loneliness also inform Sigurdardóttir's earlier works. *Green Grass of Home*, 1997–98, catalogues way stations on Sigurdardóttir's journey as an itinerant artist. It is a compact wooden box that contains seventeen tableaux, each of which represents a park from a city in which the artist has lived—Manhattan's Central Park, San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, and Reykjavik's Miklatún are among the most prominent parks that the artist has replicated with a model hobbyist's attention and materials. In this conceptual model, monumental public spaces are rendered private and portable. Sigurdardóttir can be seen to adopt the structure of Duchamp's *Boîte-en-valise* in this piece, but rather than creating a miniature retrospective of her artworks, she has fabricated an encyclopedia of the places for which she has been homesick. Models are nothing if not adaptable.

Michaël Borremans represents model-making as a compulsive yet emotionally uninflected activity. The hands of the characters in his drawings and paintings are always at work, fashioning models of landscapes, models of buildings, models of fantastic monuments, and models of models (human figures acting as sculpture). Under the watchful eyes of a supervisor, dour women sew a "mattress soaked with tears" in *Manufacturers of Constellation*, 2001. The desktop model of a mountain produced in a series of works titled *The Journey* is absurd in its scale and indoor placement; the absurdity is amplified through repetition of the drawing in warm and cool tones, with and without text. In pragmatic models, figures are often provided to orient the viewer as to scale. Borremans subverts this convention to provoke disorientation, sometimes including contradictory indicators of scale within the same drawing. "We are conditioned to deal with images in a way that provides clear answers," Borremans explains, "I try to work in the opposite direction."[26]

Matthew Ritchie's use of models is more speculative and interactive than those discussed thus far. Many of Ritchie's works relate to the Holographic Principle, the idea that the visible universe is itself only a model for a more complex structure existing in another dimension. For the exhibition *Working Model*, 1995, Ritchie developed his own cosmology expressed through an elemental chart and an interactive abacus sculpture through which visitors were invited "to play with the universe."[27] In the ensuing decade, Ritchie has continued to model, layer, and sublimate his cosmology in works like *The Holstein Manifesto*, 2008, which weaves together several utopian traditions.

26. Telephone conversation with the author, April 30, 2009.
27. Matthew Ritchie in conversation with Jenifer Berman, *Bomb*, Spring 1997, p. 61.

Michaël Borremans, *The Journey*, 2002. Pencil, watercolor, coffee, white ink, and varnish on cardboard, 6 x 9 inches. Collection of Dianne Wallace, New York

Michaël Borremans, *The Journey (Lower Tatra)*, 2002. Pencil, watercolor, white ink, and varnish on cardboard, 8 x 9 inches. Collection of Joel Wachs

Matthew Ritchie, *Remonstrance (San Diego Version)*, 2009. Digital animation, dimensions variable, 22:21 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York

According to Ritchie, Holstein was the last Saxon kingdom to openly worship at an Irminsul, or world tree, which was thought to connect heaven and earth. The sculpture represents the world tree while also referring to the Shukov radio tower built in Moscow during the Russian Civil War to "broadcast manifestos of an imaginary future" (Ritchie's tower has collapsed and fragmented; the Shukov tower still stands but has been pronounced unstable).[28] Ritchie was further inspired by several nineteenth-century novels that anticipated the fall of London in the twenty-first century.[29] Embedded in *The Holstein Manifesto* is a film titled *Remonstrance*, 2009, that features intensely lyrical images of a drowned city and the collapse of the tower itself. The sculpture becomes a model for the film of its own demise.

Architecture as Surveillance

Given its potential and periodic use as a tool to control, organize, and oversee society, architecture's relationship to surveillance is a rich topic for some artists engaged with the more menacing aspects of the architectural imaginary. In his analysis of the writings of Surrealist author Georges Bataille, Denis Hollier contrasts two opposite but equally bleak models of coercive architecture; one controls through open aggression and another is more insidious:

Bataille's prison derives from an ostentatious, spectacular architecture, an architecture to be seen; whereas Foucault's prison is the embodiment of an architecture that sees, observes, and spies, a vigilant architecture. Bataille's architecture—convex, frontal, extrovert—an architecture that is eternally imposing, shares practically no element with that of Foucault, with its insinuating concavity that surrounds, frames, contains, and confines for therapeutic or disciplinary ends. Both are equally effective, but one works because it draws attention to itself, and the other because it does not.[30]

For artists like Sarah Oppenheimer, Julie Mehretu, and Jakob Kolding, each of whose projects pose questions about personal agency, the strategies for navigating both spectacular and vigilant architectures are paramount. Aspects of Situationist psychogeographies and the practice of *détournement* (appropriation and recombination of existing symbols) appear in their works as methods for reclaiming an embodied, subjective experience even in potentially overwhelming spaces. For example, some of Julie Mehretu's paintings provide chaotic and polemic images of militarized urban surrounds, while others represent vast and potentially dehumanizing structures like sports arenas or public housing projects that envelop city blocks. In Mehretu's *Projects*, 2008, drawings of massive structures are densely layered but also vigorously erased, while

Matthew Ritchie, installation view of *Working Model*, Basilico Fine Arts, New York, 1995.

28. Email correspondence with the author, April 24, 2009.
29. These include Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 2000–1887 (London: Ticknor and Company, 1887); Richard Jefferies, *After London or Wild England* (London and New York: Cassell and Company, 1885); and Mary Shelley, *The Last Man* (London: Henry Coburn, 1826).
30. Denis Hollier, *Against Architecture: The Writings of George Bataille* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), p. x.

Julie Mehretu, *Congress*, 2003.
Ink and acrylic on canvas, 72 x 96 inches.
Collection of Ann and Robert Fisher

in the painting *Immanence*, 2004, abstract marks take on the quality of characters that, in Mehretu's words, "respond to the megastructure of the previous layers."[31] Mehretu is explicit about the theme of personal agency in her work. "I am inspired by and interested in the subversive, anti-establishment impulse of various Situationist projects as well as others that share this impulse … I am also interested in the potential of psychogeographies, which suggests that within an invisible and inventive creative space, the individual can tap a resource of self-determination and resistance."[32]

Through social experiments in video as well as complex architectural installations, Sarah Oppenheimer explores the ways that individuals navigate constructed space. She describes her work as a "feedback loop between constructed space and pedestrian motion." For *Horizontal Roll*, 2008, Oppenheimer used a museum's architecture to create a filmic experience that explored the coded space of the building. Shaped holes punctured interior walls, framing direct vistas into adjacent galleries in the museum. Each hole operated as a collection of filmic frames, animated by the body of the viewer. The body's horizontal motion animated the vignettes visible within each frame. The form of each hole was based on the structure of a camera lens and, in concert with the motion of the viewer, comprised a cinematic "shot." The viewer determined the

31. Email correspondence between Julie Mehretu and Olukemi Ilesanmi, "Looking Back," in *Julie Mehretu: Drawing into Painting* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2003), p. 15.
32. Email correspondence between Julie Mehretu and Olukemi Ilesanmi, "Looking Back," in *Julie Mehretu: Drawing into Painting* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2003), p. 14.

Sarah Oppenheimer, *Horizontal Roll*, 2008.
Site-specific installation at the Saint Louis Art Museum.

combination of "shots" by his or her movement through the museum, so that there were many possible sequences to the "film." Oppenheimer describes this work as "an active cinema … *Horizontal Roll* allows viewers to choose the sequence of their navigation through the built filmic space. Visitors determine the narrative by their procession through the exhibition. They are at once camera and audience."[33] Foucault's notion of a vigilant architecture is inverted in Oppenheimer's work, which stages opportunities for heightened participation on the part of the viewer.

Jakob Kolding uses the traditional propaganda media of posters, collage, and montage to pose questions about the way cities are planned and used. The final results may be displayed as semi-legal wheat-pasted flyers at constructions sites around a city, as free posters distributed in museums, or as more intimate, framed collages hung on gallery walls. Shifts in scale and context are important in his work, which always suggests a creative and curious investigation of cityscapes. A collage like *Architecture 2000*, 2009, shares affinities with works by Katrín Sigurdardóttir and Matthew Ritchie because it relies on archival source material that describes a historical vision of the future (the title and futurist font are taken from the 1971 textbook *Architecture 2000: Predictions and Methods*); indeed, Kolding titled his recent exhibition *Memories of the Future*.[34]

33. Sarah Oppenheimer in conversation with Robin Clark in *Currents 102: Sarah Oppenheimer* (St Louis: Saint Louis Art Museum, 2008), unpaginated.
34. Charles Jencks, *Architecture 2000: Predictions and Methods* (New York: Praeger, 1971).

Jakob Kolding, *Movements* (detail), 2008. Collage, graphite, and colored pencil, 28 x 39 ½ inches. Courtesy of the artist and Team Gallery New York

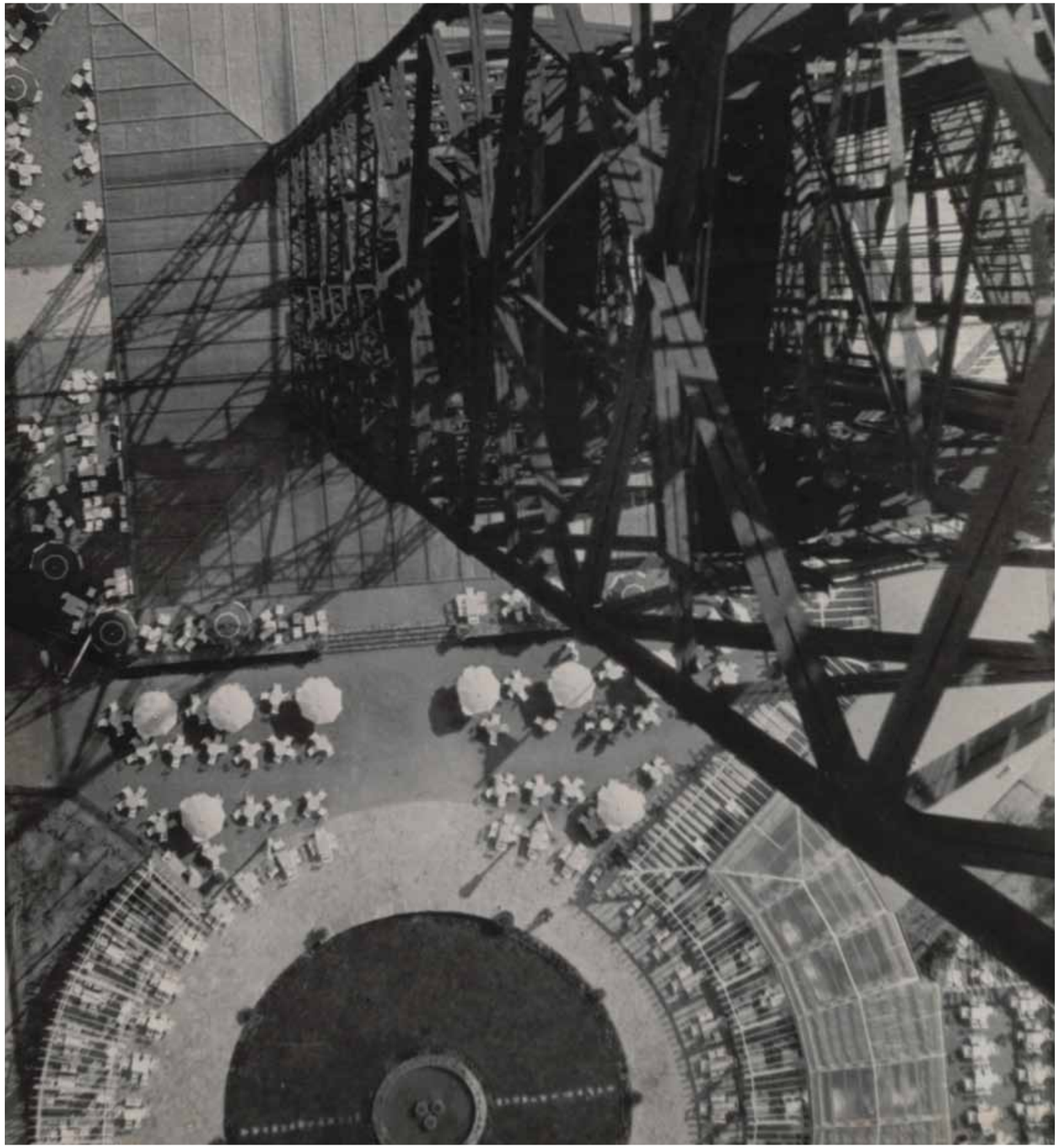
Opposite: Cover of *The New Yorker*, June 6, 2005 issue, artwork by Christoph Niemann © Condé Nast

The Kolding collage titled *Movements*, 2008, unites Hannah Höch with a contemporary British DJ, joining references to art movements (Dada), dance movements (dubstep), and massive International-style housing projects on the same horizon line. While some of Kolding's works, particularly the posters, ask leading questions such as, "have there been any attempts, through planning, to either discourage or promote certain patterns of behavior in your neighborhood? (which/how?)" that seem confrontational, his approach is not solely propagandistic. Kolding samples and recombines the aesthetics of urban studies rather than simply perpetuating them. While polemics, both overt and implied, are part of his project, Kolding explains that his artworks are "done from a position of love for the potential possibilities in cities."[35] Kolding critiques the shortcomings of urban renewal while simultaneously embracing the cultural collisions made possible by the density of cities.

Speaking in Floor Plans

We have seen that the architectural imaginary can occupy spaces as small as the tiniest model, modest as a student flat, vast as a megastructure, and fantastic as an underwater city. Architecture as a psychological construct has proven itself to be extremely accommodating, equally available to house phobias, speculation, restlessness, and daydreams. In a sense, the artists in this exhibition can be said to speak in floor plans, expressing hopes, fears, and disappointment through their visualization of domestic and public space. Through poetic, polemic, and persuasive means, the works featured in *Automatic Cities* reflect the pitfalls as well as the liberating capacity of a fully conscious engagement with the architectural imaginary.

35. Email correspondence with the author, April 30, 2009.



Giuliana Bruno

CONSTRUCTION SITES: Fabricating the Architectural Imaginary in Art

The history of architecture is a history of spatial feelings.
—August Schmarsow

The door . . . transcends the separation between the inner and the outer.
—Georg Simmel

A window cuts out a new frame for looking. Walls put up barriers, but their borders easily crack. The perimeters of the room change into boundaries to be crossed. Doors open up new access, morphing into portals. Entrance way becomes gateway to an inner world. A mirror shows specular prospects for speculation and reflection. Objects of furniture turn into lively objects of an interior design. A bed tells sweaty stories of love, lust, and dreams. The couch can couch new forms of dialogue and exchange. A staircase takes us up to a whole new level of intimate encounter, and we rise and fall along with it. Well, to tell the truth, we mostly fall. But then a washing machine washes away the stain of pain. And, finally, the stovetop cooks up some great new life recipes. How can you resist? The offerings of this imaginary kitchen are deliciously hot. For here, in architectural space, you can taste morsels of the imagination.

In the galleries of the museum we can encounter imaginative forms of building, taste the imagistic power of architecture, and be seduced by imaginary space. A widespread phenomenon is taking place in contemporary art: it is melting into spatial construction, and, as a consequence, architecture has become one of the most influential forms of imaging. A virtual version of architecture is increasingly produced in visual representation, and we can witness creative architectural constructs and inventive ways of spatial thinking take shape on gallery walls, floors, and screens. The visual arts are intertwined with a particular "architecture": with our sense of space, urban identity, and experience. They have become sites for the building of our subjectivity and the dwelling of our imagination. We may call this phenomenon a display of the "architectural imaginary." It is an alluring concept, yet one whose definition is not at all obvious or easy to pin down. I will reflect upon this notion and offer a conceptual navigational map for the present exhibition, addressing some of its specific artistic manifestations by way of conclusion. Along the way, we will encounter a vast cultural "construction" that encompasses many realms of fabrication and layers of representation as it traverses the visual arts.

Opposite: Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, *From the Radio Tower, Berlin* (detail), 1928. Gelatin silver print, 13 11/16 x 10 1/4 inches. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Thomas Walther Collection. Gift of Thomas Walther

Giorgio Vasari, *View of Florence* (detail), 1530. Fresco, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, Italy.

Image and Imaging

What is an architectural imaginary? In unpacking its layers of meaning it is useful to begin by noting that image is inscribed in a spatial imaginary. Think of the city, whose existence is inseparable from its own image, for cities practically live in images. A city can be a canvas to be imaged and imagined, which is the result of a composite generative process that supersedes architecture per se and even actual building to comprise the way the place is viewed from a variety of perspectives. This includes the ways the city is rendered in different media: how it is photographed in still frames, narrated in literature as poem or tale, portrayed in paintings or drawings, or filmed and circulated in different forms of moving images. An image of the city emerges from this complex scenario: a process that makes urban space visible and perceivable. The city's image is thus creatively generated in the arts, and the city itself cannot but end up closely interacting with these visual representations, becoming to some extent the product of an artistic panorama.

If we consider the history of urban space, we can see that it is inextricably connected to artistic forms of viewing. The city became historically imaged in the visual arts when paintings of city views were effectively recognized as an autonomous aesthetic category. In the late seventeenth century, following a growing interest in architectural forms, a flurry of urban images emerged in art, making the city a central protagonist. Known in Italy as *vedutismo*, the genre of view painting was an actual "art" of viewing. View painting did not simply portray the city; it essentially created a new aesthetics and mode for seeing. The genre, as practiced by Dutch artists, gave rise to the "art of describing."[1] This descriptive architectural gaze was intensely observational, and it developed further in later forms of urban observation. In the nineteenth century, the city re-entered the frame of art and enlarged its perimeter with panorama paintings. Perspectival frames exploded and expanded as the city filled the space of painting, extending it horizontally. Representing the life of the site in wide format, the urban panorama captured its motion in sequential vistas, narrative views, and more fluid time. In portraying the city as a panoramic subject of observation, these views contributed to establishing modernity's particular way of seeing.[2] Panorama paintings created "panoramic vision" and anticipated the work of pictures that would be brought about by the age of mechanical reproduction. With photography, it became possible to observe space at the actual moment it was captured. Later, with motion pictures, it became possible to map a spatio-temporal flow and fully experience a sense of space in visual art.

The Architectural Imaginary: Collective and Collecting Images

The image of the city is as much a visual, perceptual construction as it is an architectural one. This is because in one sense a place can only be understood in its "imageability"—the quality of physical space that evokes an image in the eye of the observer.[3] Although it is important to acknowledge this visibility, the image of the city nevertheless should not be seen as singularly optical or construed as a unifying vision. An architectural image is not a unique view, a still frame, or a static construct, for it endlessly changes, shifts, and evolves in representation.[4] Pictures and visions are constantly generated, and they, in turn, change the very image of the city. Art plays a crucial role in this process of constructing a mobile architectonics of space. As the kinetic installations of Matthew Ritchie make palpable to us with their fictional universe of morphing fields and energetic alchemy, space is activated and constantly reinvented in art. The fiction of a city develops along the artistic trajectory of its image-movement.

This spatio-visual imaginary can only come into being across the course of time. An urban image is created by the work of history and the flow of memory. This is because the city of images comprises in its space all of its past histories, with their intricate layers of stories. The urban imaginary is a palimpsest of mutable fictions floating in space and residing in time. Mnemonic narratives condense in space, and their

1. See Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
2. See Stephan Oettermann, *The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium*, trans. Deborah Lucas Schneider (New York: Zone Books, 1997).
3. Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960).
4. Although Lynch pioneered a form of experiential understanding of the city, his view of the image of the city resulted in the unifying vision of "cognitive mapping." I argued for a different, fluid notion of the urban imaginary, more open to different forms of imagination, in my books *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (London and New York: Verso, 2002), and *Public Intimacy: Architecture and the Visual Arts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007). On the architectural imaginary, see also Andreas Huyssen, ed., *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalized Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); and James Donald, *Imagining the Modern City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

Matthew Ritchie, installation view, *Ghost Operator* exhibition. May 20–June 28, 2008, White Cube, London

material residue seeps into the imaginative construction of a place. The density of historical and mnemonic interactions builds up the architectural imaginary of a city. The process becomes visible in the visual arts, which are capable of capturing temporality and memory. Artworks can fabricate traces of existence and exhibit the sedimentation of time. In art, we can feel the texture of an image and the substance of place when layered forms come to be visible on the surface and mnemonic coatings become palpable to our sensing. The actual folds of history and the fabric of memory can thus be "architected" in art, which can expose the density of time that becomes space.

In this sense, an architectural imaginary is a visual depository that is active: it is an archive open to the activities of digging, re-viewing, and re-visioning in art. In this urban archive, doors are always unlocked to the possibility of re-imagining spaces, and archaeology here is not simply about going back into the past; rather it enables us to look in other directions, and especially forward into the future, in active retrospective motion. This is because the urban archive contains more than what has actually occurred or already happened. It is made up of trajectories of image-making that are varied, some not yet existing or materialized, others not even achievable. This construct contains even the unbuilt or the unrealized. In other words, the urban imaginary contains all kinds of potentialities and projections, which are creative forms of imagination. It is this potentially projective form of imaging that creates new urban archaeologies in art and makes the visual matrix that is the city a moving one.

The image of a city is a moving one because it is also formed collectively as a product of cultural experience. It does not emerge or evolve as an individual act but rather depends on how the site is imagined and experienced by a collectivity, which is made of real and virtual inhabitants. As Walter Benjamin said, "streets are the dwelling place of the collective. The collective is an eternally unquiet, eternally agitated being that—in the space between the building fronts—experiences, learns, understands, and invents."[5] In this sense, architectural space is not only the product of its makers but also of its users, the consumers of space. And it is these users who have the power to activate it. Architecture per se does not move, but those who make use of it can set buildings, roads, and sidewalks in motion. The street, in particular, can become such a moving structure. Siegfried Kracauer declared that, "the street in the extended sense of the word is not only the arena of fleeting impressions and chance encounters but a place where the flow of life is bound to assert itself."[6] A special traversal occurs on the urban pavement, and this is not simply a physical act but an imaginary activity. Structures themselves become perceptually mobilized as people traverse them, changing into transitory forms of imaging and fleeting places of encounter where the flow of life itself becomes architected.

5. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 423.
6. Siegfried Kracauer, "Once Again the Street," in Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 72.

Julie Mehretu, *Rising Down*, 2008. Ink and acrylic on canvas, 96 x 144 inches. Collection of Nicholas Rohatyn and Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn

As a form of collective image-making, the architectural imaginary is actually a product of social space. The dynamic, gestural canvases of Julie Mehretu remind us that in mapping the vortexes of urban experience and forces of public agency, space is always the expression of social conditions, which can be externalized or transmitted, and subject to change in architecture. In this sense, an imaginary is a very real and material concept, which emerges out of substantial negotiations with the environment and built space. The abstract, imaginary power of architecture is an everyday reality, for architecture functions daily as the place where social relations and perspectives are modeled. Space provides a material kind of "modeling": it fashions our social existence. Our mode of social interaction and our position as subjects are affected by where we live. Architecture houses the multiple shapes of our diverse, quotidian, collective experience and figures their styles. It plays a crucial part in the fashioning of social forms of connectivity and in the actual modeling of intersubjectivity.

The Urban Imaginary as Mental Image

If an imaginary is a collective image that is formed and transformed in the flow of social space, this process involves not only subjects but also subjectivities. In a seminal essay from 1903, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," the German sociologist Georg Simmel gave a pioneering introduction to this essential component of the architectural imaginary when he saw the urban dweller as a subject partaking in a novel, destabilized form of subjectivity that is proliferating on the urban terrain. Simmel conceived the city as an experiential site of interaction and a stirring place of intersection that produces intense sensory and cognitive stimulation. His city is a real experience; he pictures it as a subjective space of sensations and impressions, a place inundated by shifting representations:

The psychological foundation, upon which the metropolitan individuality is erected, is the intensification of emotional life due to the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli ... the difference between present impressions and those which have preceded ... the rapid telescoping of changing images, pronounced differences within what is grasped at a single glance, and the unexpectedness of violent stimuli ... The metropolis creates these psychological conditions—with every crossing of the street, with the tempo and multiplicity of economic, occupational, and social life—it creates ... the sensory foundations of mental life.[7]

If we follow this view, architecture becomes experienced not only as exterior world. The city becomes a collectively lived experience that is internal as well as external—an affair of the mind. As the metropolis shapes the self and the dynamics of intersubjectivity, it creates "the sensory foundations of mental life." In the city we feel the rhythm of perceptual and mental processes and are immersed in the sensory ambience of representational flow with its "rapid telescoping of changing images." Our being in social space is dependent on our ability to sense and activate this mental space. Ultimately, the dynamics of the city evoke an inner force—the movement of mental energy.

Conceptual Foundations

The "psychological foundation" upon which Simmel erected his argument permits us to dig a foundation for the conceptual construction of this exhibition. The architectural imaginary, as it emerges in art, shows clear signs of psychic formation. This visualized city exists in physical space as a creative, mental figuration: it is a projection of the mind, an external trace of mental life. In other words, what we experience in art is architecture as a particular mental condition—a state of mind. In this sense, an architectural imaginary is much more than a cognitive space. A state of mind is, after all, an emotional place as well as a mental one. This aesthetic metropolis is an internal state of feeling. It rests on delicate psychic foundations in that it is built on that restless ground that is "the intensification of emotional life." Its effects are affects; its motion is an emotion.

In this imaginary site, "foundation" does not refer to a concrete pillar but rather it stands for a mobilized psychosocial underpinning. To speak of an architectural imaginary, then, means to understand architecture in the broadest sense: as space, comprising images of built or unbuilt places that are part of a diverse collective practice marked by multiple histories, social perspectives, and intersubjective imagination. Ultimately, an urban imaginary is this mental image: a form of representation of the way we imagine our lived space. This is an image of place that we carry deep within ourselves. It is a material mental map, redolent of mnemonic traces and energized by subjective experiences. In this sense, an architectural imaginary is a real inner projection. It is an interior landscape—a psychic map that is as "moving" as it is affecting.

Aesthetic Connections and Relational Imaginaries

In the historical sense, the notion of an architectural imaginary is fundamentally a twentieth-century concept that emerged with the theorization of modernity, to which Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin all contributed. Architecture came to be conceived and understood as space only with the entrance of the modern era. Our modern concern with the inner projections of space, in particular, has a specific origin in German aesthetics, which produced psychological theories of *Raum* as space and place.[8] This discourse emerged in the late-nineteenth century as the findings of philosophical aesthetics, psychology, and perceptual research were combined with art and architectural history to provide a theoretical framework to explain the human response to objects, images, or environments. One thinks in particular of the work of philosophers Theodor Lipps and Robert Vischer, and of the art historians August Schmarsow, Heinrich Wölfflin, and Alois Riegl, among others.[9]

These theories can help us dig further into the conceptual foundations of this exhibition, for they changed the aesthetic viewpoint on architecture in palpable ways. For example, from Schmarsow's theory of spatial creation, we have come to accept that the perception of space is not the product of the eye and of distance from a stationary building-form but a more kinetic affair produced in engagement with the built environment.[10] Architecture is a place activated by bodily movement and mobilized by concrete perceptual dynamics. It is particularly dependent on the sense of touch, which offers us the possibility of sensing our existence in space.

These properties of touch can also shape our relation to the art space. When tactility is culturally emphasized, a more spatial understanding of art can be achieved. Alois Riegl showed that art can extend beyond the optic into the haptic, a mode of percep-

7. Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, ed. Donald N. Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 325.

8. See Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, eds., *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873–1893* (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994).

9. On the emergence of space as a modern concept, see Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

10. For a useful summary, see Mitchell W. Schwarzer, "The Emergence of Architectural Space: August Schmarsow's Theory of Raumgestaltung," *Assemblage* 15 (August 1991): 50–61.

tion based on the sense of touch.[11] Schmarsow, who expanded on Riegl's ideas of tactile art and the haptic perception while incorporating tactile sensations in space, arrived at a form of spatial thinking that engaged what he called "art architecture." A spatial imaginary—comprising a kinesthetic sensation of motion and sensory interaction—is the foundation of modern "art architecture."

The modern aesthetic rested on the understanding that a place, like an art object, cannot be separated from the viewer: the aesthetic experience is haptic when it tangibly establishes a close, transient relationship between the work of art and its beholder. After all, the term *haptic*, as Greek etymology tells us, refers to more than just touch, for it means "able to come into contact with." As a surface extension of the skin, then, the haptic is that reciprocal con*tact* between the world and us that "art architecture" embodies.

Theodor Lipps also embraced the diminishing sense of aesthetic distance and added psychic closeness and exchange as further components of proximity to aesthetics. In his 1905 essay, "Empathy and Aesthetic Pleasure," Lipps claimed that the reception of art is a process of encounter: it depends on the ability to sense an inner movement that takes place between the object and the subject.[12] Such movement is the basis of empathy, which is not only a psychic state of closeness and interaction but also a condition of pleasure. Ultimately, he conceived of empathy as a series of projections inward and outward, between that which moves in an art object and that which moves (in) the beholder.

What is particularly interesting about Lipps is that he joined art and architecture in significant psychic motion, thus providing a key to approach this confluence in contemporary art. If empathy is activated as a mimicry or transfer between the subject and her surroundings, the boundaries between the two can blur in close aesthetic encounter with the art space. In this view, one can empathize with the expressive, dynamic forms of art and architecture—even with colors and sounds, scenery and situations—and these "projections" include atmospheres and moods. In the end, aesthetics and empathy could then be joined in the very fabrication of the architectural form that is imaginarily engaged here.

Following this theme the art historian Wilhelm Worringer wrote of empathy as the enjoyment of self that is projected in an object or a form. In his book *Abstraction and Empathy*, he described this projective moving space:

In the forms of the work of art we enjoy ourselves. Aesthetic enjoyment is objectified self-enjoyment. The value of a line, of a form consists for us in the value of the life that it holds for us. It holds its beauty only through our own vital feeling, which, in some mysterious manner, we project into it.[13]

11. For a discussion of Riegl's notion of the haptic in ancient art and of the different uses of haptic in theories of modernity, see Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993).
12. Theodor Lipps, "Empathy and Aesthetic Pleasure," in *Aesthetic Theories: Studies in the Philosophy of Art*, ed. Karl Aschenbrenner and Arnold Isenberg (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965). See also "Aesthetische Einfühlung," *Zeitschrift für Psychologie und Physiologie der Sinnesorgane* 22 (1900).
13. Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, trans. Michael Bullock (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1997), p. 14.

Empathy (*Einfühlung*) is, literally, a "feeling into" that can migrate. So empathy can be understood as a spatial transmission of affects—that transfer that we have identified as foundational for the architectural imaginary, and that, as we are about to see, informs a contemporary form of "art architecture" on view in this exhibition.

Contemporary Models of Art Architecture

Haptic space, kinesthetic motion, memories of touch, the inner movement of mental life, and the psychic transfer of empathy became key concepts for understanding our material world and building our modern sense of aesthetic space. Today we can experience this relational movement in the mobilization of space—both geographic and architectural— that takes place in the articulation of spatial art. When art joins architecture in this tangibly moving way, turning contact into communicative interface, it can construct real architectural imaginaries, for these are, indeed, about the movement of habitable sites and how, in turn, these movements shape our inner selves.

In contemporary art, architecture has become a definitive screen on which we sense the relational motion that places inspire in us. Art shows ever more clearly that architecture is a generative matrix, visualizing its tactile construction as the collective product of a perceptual, mental, affective imaginary. The artists in this exhibition make particularly inventive use of architecture in this sense: for them, architecture is a fabricated construct, a tangibly constructed affair of the mind, whose task is to convey haptic, dynamic, imaginative space. Many of the artworks included here are haptically conceived or drawn as maps of memory, fragments of lived space, states of mind, fluid inner and outer constructions. They require relational engagement from mobile viewers and empathy with spatial forms. Here, architecture is far from being abstracted space, rather it becomes the envelope, the skin of our inhabitation. After all, as we have claimed, an architectural imaginary is a fully habitable concept: it is the very delicate fabric we live in. And thus it is no wonder that this particular spatial fabrication would take place materially in visual fabrics.

Miniature Worlds

If you want to experience directly the tactile fabric of architectural space, explore the gallery spaces of this exhibition. When you encounter Michaël Borremans's drawings you will need to take a close look, and look into, rather than at, architectural construction.[14] As you do so, you will discover a tactile architectural model, for the form of Borremans's drawing is delicate to the touch. Never pristine or neutral, it makes you feel the material support of the drawing. The paper is often old, bears traces of previous existence, and exposes marks of some former history. There are many signs of distress, in the form of

14. On Borremans's historical use of drawing, see Michaël Amy, "The End is Near," in *Michaël Borremans: Whistling a Happy Tune*, exh. cat. (London: Ludion, 2008).

Michaël Borremans, *Drawing*, 2002. Pencil, watercolor, and white ink on cardboard, 6 x 4 inches. Collection of Stephanie Roach

stains and tears, creases and folds, tarnishes and blemishes, blotches and scratches, marks of erasure and writing inscriptions. These textural aspects all contribute to the creation of the drawings' atmosphere. A mnemonic mood is felt on the surface of the work. It exudes from the folds of the paper and the pleats of the 1940s dresses worn by the enigmatic figures that populate the space. By sensing these "superficial" historical marks, you are transported into an architectural elsewhere, into other temporal spaces, and become immersed in uneasy mood. In the presence of these distressed surfaces, you end up intimately aware of the distressed ambiance. Here, in this soiled soil, you can sense the affect in which space is "drawn."

The viewer can remain in no way static when looking into Borremans's delicate way of picturing. In order to experience these works and the emotion they provoke, one must make a motion. As Borremans forces the viewer to move in, to grasp up-close the quality of the paper, its mnemonic figuration and a puzzling sense of scale, he defies the flatness of drawing for a certain three-dimensionality. These drawings may be ostensibly flat, but they function as if they were sculpted environments, which come to life in mobile, architectural reception. Their sculptural dimension is haptically drawn into the picture, for as the spectator imaginatively moves into the work and around it, she experiences its inner activity in "superficial" encounter, feels a work imaginarily constructed for a kinesthetic sensing on the surface.

For Borremans, a state of mind emerges from the state of things. When the size and scale of his objects shift, they haptically affect our own sense of dimension. A miniature world is often figured in the drawings, evoking a disorienting sense of connection as well as estrangement. In its many forms, Borremans's world can be described as a *Cabinet of Souls*, 2000, a collection of disquieting inner pictures. As we are emotionally transported into this imaginary world, meaning sometimes liquefies as a "feeling into" the picture takes over the space of viewing. We are "drawn into" this architectural model in which people insistently fiddle with things, toy with objects, and manipulate bodies. Absorbed in the inner activity of the actors intent on their uncanny tasks, we empathize even unwillingly with these people, who painstakingly try to handle their miniature worlds. In this sense, we, the art viewers, become film spectators. As in film, we become subjects of viewing insofar as we are subject to empathy with the miniature fictive worlds shown on a screen. We can see this process visualized in the form of *Milk*, 2003, a drawing in which liquid, radiant space appears illuminated by light as if it were literally a film screen. We become immersed in such a screen, for its fluid, geometric space of light projection can shape many of our own inner "projections." And thus the museum effectively turns into a movie theater.

Michaël Borremans, *Milk*, 2003. Pencil and watercolor on paper, 7 x 9 inches. Private collection, Los Angeles

Sarah Oppenheimer, *619-3356*, 2008. Aircraft grade plywood, framing structure, view into neighboring yard across the street; dimensions variable. Installed at the Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh.

Sculpting Haptic Sites and Screening Museum Space

According to Michel de Certeau, "space is a practiced place." By that, he means that space is generated by the operations that orient and situate it and is actuated by the movements that are carried out in it.[15] The idea that space is a moving, experiential map that informs our definition of the architectural imaginary is a necessary creative condition for two artists in this exhibition—Sarah Oppenheimer and Katrín Sigurdardóttir. Their art mobilizes different views, frames of mind, and forms of inhabitation that result from spectatorial engagement and acts of screening that reconfigure the environment. For them, architecture becomes a sculpted, haptic space of viewing, functioning as a fundamental, internal experience of mobilization that turns space inside out.

Oppenheimer subjects the practice of architecture to inventive, analytic operations that question the inner structure of our forms of dwelling. She performs radical interventions on space, revealing its intrinsic construction and patterns of fabrication in post-minimalist ways. Her work activates Simmel's notion that "objects remain spellbound in the merciless separation of space."[16] Space is cinematically cut and cut out, configured and reconfigured, in order to explore borders of places, connective frames of representation, and reciprocal syntaxes of looking. These artistic interventions lay bare the building of a place, exposing, in shot-countershot, the structure of its visibility and invisibility in order to change the potentials of these conditions for us. A typology of holes and a dictionary of absences, Oppenheimer's analysis of space is a dissection, the performance of an anatomy lesson on a site that creates a new spatial body in filmic form.

In many of her installations Oppenheimer performs a cut on sectioned walls, allowing the viewer to see the fabric of the space as if through a periscope: the new openings yield different access to the space of viewing. The perspective haptically changes with the presence of viewers, with their appearance and disappearance and their motion through space. Oppenheimer's kinesthetic art makes the art viewer into a moving spectator. Her repackaging and mobilizing, unfolding and refolding, and intervening in the gallery spaces of the museum not only brings about surprising reconnections between artworks that once stood apart, but also puts viewers in touch with each other as her framed views provoke an encounter of gazes and a meeting of glances. In reconfiguring the museal walk, Oppenheimer shows that an art collection is an imaginative assemblage—a form of montage made in the eye and mind of the museum viewers who walk through the space, making creative associations and reciprocal connections. In this moving way, she transforms the visual architecture of which the museum space is made and, ultimately, makes us experience the space itself of the museum as a mobile architecture of imaginary re-collection.

Icelandic artist Katrín Sigurdardóttir also makes haptic installations animated by spectatorial movement that, in turn, activates the space imaginatively. *Untitled*, 2004, for example, consists of a long jagged wall that, in formal terms, resembles a Nordic coastline, which museum-goers can imaginarily visit by wandering through the installation. Appearing to fold in on itself, this large architectural structure unfolds for us the image of a distant landscape. Nature and culture become connected here, as they do in *Island*, 2003, which resembles a miniature island and produces the same effect in a different sculptural scale. In both works this form of imaginary architectural traversal enables different experiences of habitation to unfold as a creative geography.

Sigurdardóttir's work reminds us that the production of space is a complex phenomenon, in which perceptual and representational aspects cannot be separated from function or use. As Henri Lefebvre wrote in his book *The Production of Space*, there is a triadic relation between conceived, perceived, and lived space.[17] Sigurdardóttir works with a representational space that is conceptually used and perceptually lived. Her space shows the marks of living, so that for her the image of a city is a truly moving internal assemblage: it is that mental map we carry within us of the place in which

15. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press), p. 117.
16. Simmel, "Bridge and Door," in *Rethinking Architecture*, ed. Neil Leach (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 66 [translation slightly modified].
17. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

Katrín Sigurdardóttir, *Untitled*, 2004. Gypsum board, foamcore, steel, wood, paper, and electricity, dimensions variable. Site specific installation at the Reykjavik Art Museum, Iceland. Courtesy of the artist

we live. Displacements and condensations take place on this artist's map as her imaginary traversal of sites weaves unconscious material into it and envelops mnemonic fabrication. The work of recollection shows in *Green Grass of Home*, 1997, a suitcase/toolbox with multiple compartments that fold out. As we open this particular suitcase, the baggage of memories unfolds. Each compartment contains a model of a park or a landscape that, at one time or another, was near the artist's home in the different cities she inhabited. This composite memory landscape takes us from Reykjavik to New York, San Francisco, and Berkeley. The mnemonic suitcase was made by an artist in transit and functioned as a mobile studio, traveling as luggage with her, and carrying with it the journey of dwelling.

The inside of the suitcase is an exterior landscape that in turn contains the traces of an interior world. And thus the internal map of a lived space becomes fabricated as a foldout—a structure that turns things inside out. Interior and exterior show as two sides of the same architecture, and we experience the type of reversal that exists in reversible fabrics, where inside and outside are not distinct but rather made to be exchangeable. Sigurdardóttir's installations are fashioned as if architecture could be textile, a space dressed with reversible fabric so that everything that is inward can turn outward, and vice versa.

Virtual Interiors and Luminous Worlds

For Ann Lislegaard, a Scandinavian artist based in New York and Copenhagen, video animation becomes a tool for constructing the palimpsest of a *Crystal World (after J.G. Ballard)*, 2006. Lislegaard layers her video installations with complex fabrics of references, ranging from literary to architectural and art historical, which contribute to creating the fabricated texture of her world. In an ongoing dialogue between architectural fiction and science fiction, she builds imaginary worlds of compelling visual density. Based on Ballard's novel, Lislegaard's work, *Crystal World*, represents fragments from a journey into a crystalline universe, shown in a dual-screen projection that explores liminal experiences. The moving-image installation combines in multiple planes several imaginaries: the visionary dreams of Bruno Taut, the architect of the 1914 Glass Pavilion, based on prismatic reflections of light; the luminous modernist dreams of Italian-Brazilian architect Lina Bo Bardi; and the mirrored architectural diagrams of Robert Smithson. The virtual textures of these structures are fused in her animated video world, creating displaced rooms of temporal flow and spatial mutation.

If for Lislegaard the installation space is a prismatic, reversible form of liminal travel-dwelling, Hiraki Sawa creates a virtual reversal that takes place in magical animations of living and migration. Fantasies haunt this artist's imaginary architectural world, which often consists of the simple interior of his own flat. Airplanes suggest stories of migrancy in dwelling as, in video animation, they move around his cramped London apartment in *Dwelling*, 2003. The same interior is re-animated in *Migration*, 2003, by little figures that appear to have emerged from Eadweard Muybridge's nineteenth-century, prefilmic locomotion studies. As these figures pensively walk on every surface of the apartment, from windowsills to radiators, countertops to stovetops, sinks to bathtubs, they animate the imaginary construction of everyday life.

Top: Ann Lislegaard, *Crystal World (after J.G. Ballard)*, 2006. 2-channel, 3D-animation black and white, silent 12 minute combinations over three hours. Courtesy of the artist and Murray Guy, New York

Bottom: Hiraki Sawa, *Dwelling*, 2002. Black and white single-channel video, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist and James Cohan Gallery, New York

Architectural Fabrics as Art Fabrications

The uncanny character of everyday life has long been part of the fictional "cast" of Rachel Whiteread, a British artist who is especially celebrated for casting the interior space of houses and the space contained by furniture.[18] Whiteread makes sculptures out of the insides of rooms and objects of daily use by filling them with liquid substances that then harden into sculptural elements. The artist works inside out and outside in, casting the negative volume of furniture and architecture, and morphing void into solid form. In such a way she makes all that is invisible visible, and turns this (in)visibility into a place of "domestic" reflection. By casting the air inside the space we occupy and the air space that rests in between the objects of design on which we sit, eat, sleep, bathe, or store our clothes, she not only makes us aware of our architectural existence

18. See, among others, Beatriz Colomina, "I Dreamt I Was a Wall," in *Rachel Whiteread: Transient Spaces*, exh. cat. (New York: Guggenheim Museum 2001).

Rachel Whiteread, *Place (Village)*, 2006/2008. Mixed media, dimensions variable. Installation view from *Psycho Buildings: Artists Take on Architecture* at the Hayward Gallery, London.

but casts us in the role of witnesses to our everyday life. In a haptic way, and in reversible form, her casts enable us to palpably sense the space we live in.

The sensation that derives from this haptic encounter brings us close to matter itself, and to matters of experience such as life and death. The material of the cast creates empathy with forms and, when cast in the negative and plastically exposed in solid form, this interior space induces relational feelings. The process gives us a sense of intimacy with space and puts us in touch with the self that occupies it. The experience is so close that we seem to acquire personal knowledge through architectural exploration. Working in large scale or in miniature, and moving easily between the two, Whiteread probes the actual scale of living, putting her personal dimension on public display and exposing the public intimacy of inhabitation.

We empathize in the presence of Whiteread's work, for an emotional texture is physically offered back to us, rendered in a negative that, like film's own "negative," contains the impression of being peopled. As we look closely into her sphere we sense permeable traces of multiple existences. Whiteread reminds us of Benjamin's famous remark that "to live is to leave traces," and "the traces of the occupant also leave their impressions on the interior."[19] Those traces are cast with precision, reversing the relations of positive and negative with the indexical force of a blueprint or a photographic, filmic imprint.

Whiteread casts the objects with which we "furnish" our lives, and those include our memories. The mnemonic imprint of a staircase or a house corridor contains an archive of stories just as the materialized interior library of *Untitled (Book Corridors)*, 1997–98, does. A memory space is offered back to us in the shape of reversible surface: the history and stories contained in books morph into mnemonic traces in the cast form of inner space turned outward. This inner library cast as a memory archive returns in Whiteread's *Holocaust Memorial*, 2000, in Vienna, where memory becomes unmonumental public memorial. This "nameless library" is a building whose outer surface is covered with thousands of texts, spines inward. In such a way, time and again, Whiteread exposes the inner work of recollection, building the very architecture of memory through encounter with tangible textures that reveal the tense materiality of suspended historicity. Her memories are fabricated with plastic effects, as traces mummified. They are fossilized in space, cast as moving fossils on the surface of time.

We empathize with the form of this fabrication because Whiteread has given us surfaces that talk to us. The fabric of the work speaks "volumes" to those who encounter it. The inner life of matter is activated through the surface of the outer mass. A "feeling into" a tangible surface responds to shifts in psychic space, with all its furnishings. The superficial plasticity, transparency, and translucency of lived-in objects are essential

19. Walter Benjamin, "Louis-Philippe, or The Interior," in Leach, ed., *Rethinking Architecture*, p. 36.

components of this fabricated, furnished inner world. In *Untitled (Hive)*, 2007–08, as in other resinous works, the inherent transparency showing both inner and outer structure is activated by the light, which pulls the viewer into the resinous surface-texture. Lightly projected outward, this museum of private life is a real "superficial" experience: an intimate acquaintance with the depth of psychic surface.

Whiteread renders this living surface in the interstices where the "air" of a place turns into tangible atmosphere and mood. As light plays a major part in this process, it is not surprising that the artist would try to capture this invisible yet most palpable substance by any means possible and even try to "cast" light. In the miniature ghost town of *Place (Village)*, 2006–08, which melancholically floats away on shipping crates, the light casts shadows in which the absence of habitation is painfully felt, as it is also felt in the peeling texture of the wallpaper and the veiling of curtains. And thus ethereal particles become as solid as cast plaster, and the mental condition of an architectural imaginary is returned to us, cast in light, as light.

Rachel Whiteread, *Holocaust Memorial*, Judenplatz, Vienna, 2000. Concrete, 148 ¾ x 276 x 393 ½ inches. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian Gallery

Fabrics of History, Sheets of the Past

Go up a ramp of stairs and see the projected light. A slide is projected on a wall: you are in a room in which light filters through a window. The space is bare but the fabric of light speaks to you. You are inside Matthew Buckingham's installation *Definition*, 2000, where a voice invites you to listen to the stories of history. The voice announces that this is the room in London where the first dictionary of the English language was written. You imagine this may be one of the houses where Samuel Johnson lived, but as you keep listening and the definitions continue, you aren't so sure. The only thing you know for certain is that you are in this room, which begins to feel like a camera obscura. Although you remain in the room, the window could take you outside; and if you let it, it could become a portal to another world. As you let your imagination wander in this way, other rooms with filtered light may come to mind. Here you are, in front of this contemporary wall of light, but you could be facing an art-historical portrait. Or the room could be a scholar's study, for it resembles that mental landscape portrayed in multiple figurations throughout the history of art.[20] The room, for instance, could remind you of the windowed one Dürer engraved for *St. Jerome in His Study*, 1514, which was a particularly enlightened mental space. As you stand in this space, the installation can transport you in condensed creative geographies, becoming a live archaeology of the present. You can feel the projective work of history here, for, as Buckingham himself has remarked, "the fiction of history is to imagine the real. History makes reality desirable ... Stories condense time the way maps miniaturize space."[21] And thus you finally experience our architectural imaginary as it collectively and fictionally accrues, in the form of a stratified image, imbued with the voices of all those who have mapped and traversed its lived space. In this room, the fabric of the architectural imaginary itself comes to light, as that image we carry within us unfolds texturally, delicately dressed, sporting layers of mnemonic fabric—its surface draped by "sheets of the past."[22]

Matthew Buckingham, *Definition*, 2000. Slide projection with sound in constructed space, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist and Murray Guy, New York

Opposite: Albrecht Dürer, *St. Jerome in His Study*, 1514. Engraving, 9 ½ x 7 ½ inches. Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Germany

20. For an interpretation of the historical significance of Buckingham's work, see Mark Godfrey, "The Artist as Historian," *October* 120 (Spring 2007): 140–72. Godfrey suggests a parallel between this installation and Carpaccio's *St. Augustine in His Study* (1502–04).
21. Matthew Buckingham, "Muhheakantuck—Everything has a Name," *October* 120 (Spring 2007): 179. This piece, from which I quote, is the text of the voiceover of the film of the same name Buckingham made in 2004.
22. Gilles Deleuze uses this expression in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlison and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 99.

ARTISTS

Sarah Oppenheimer, *P-41*, 2009.
Milled plywood, two foil mirrors, and view through existing architecture, dimensions variable. Courtesy of Duve Berlin and PPOW Gallery, New York.

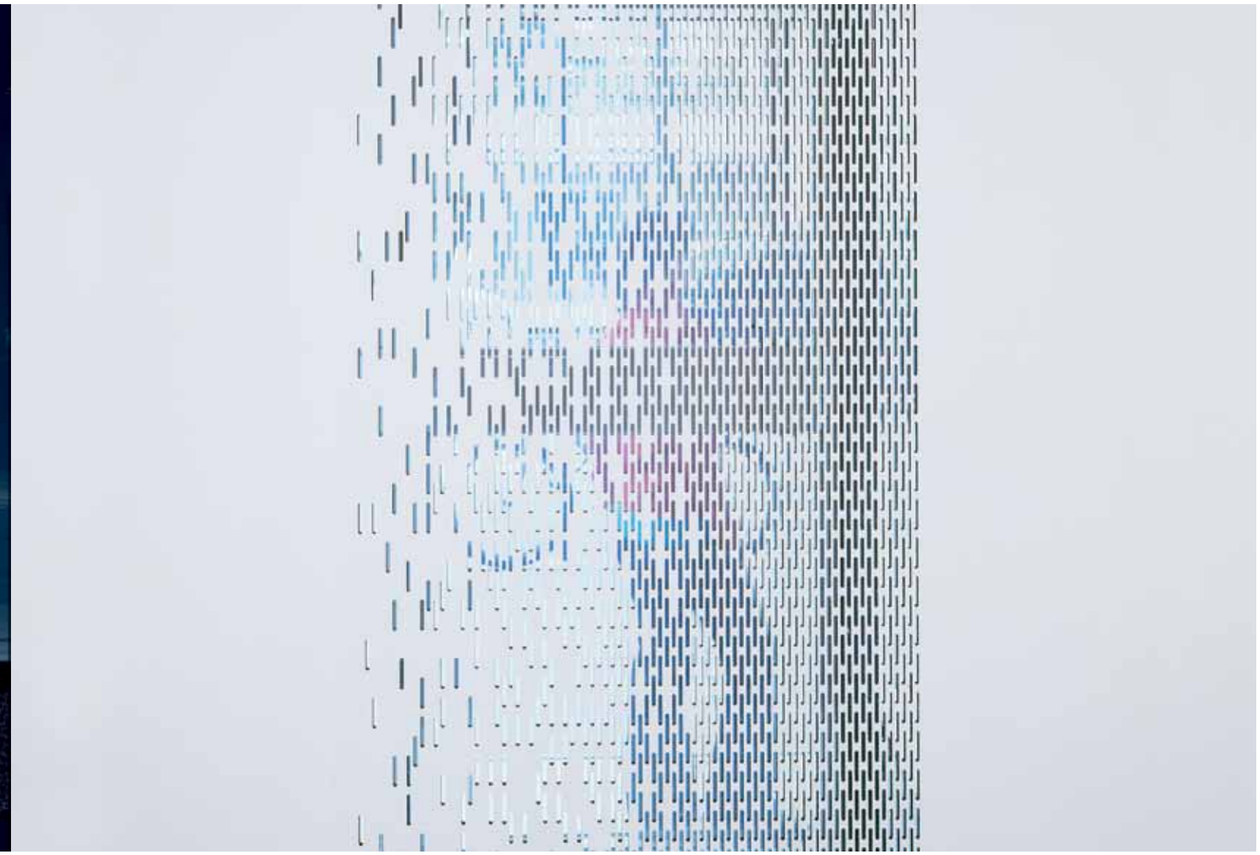
SARAH OPPENHEIMER

An interest in behavioral psychology and attention to the mechanics of visual perception thread through Sarah Oppenheimer's projects. In *Field Study/Control*, 2004, she mounted a video camera on the ceiling of a Tokyo subway to record the newspaper folding patterns of passengers; for *Screen*, 2005, she constructed an intricately perforated wall that pixilated whatever was viewed through it (pp. 114–15). With *Screen*, Oppenheimer recently amplified the theme of reciprocity, i.e., the notion that a subject is both viewer and viewed. She has developed a series of architectural installations that explore "self-conscious voyeurism," an awareness that one animates and experiences space both by seeing and being seen moving through it.

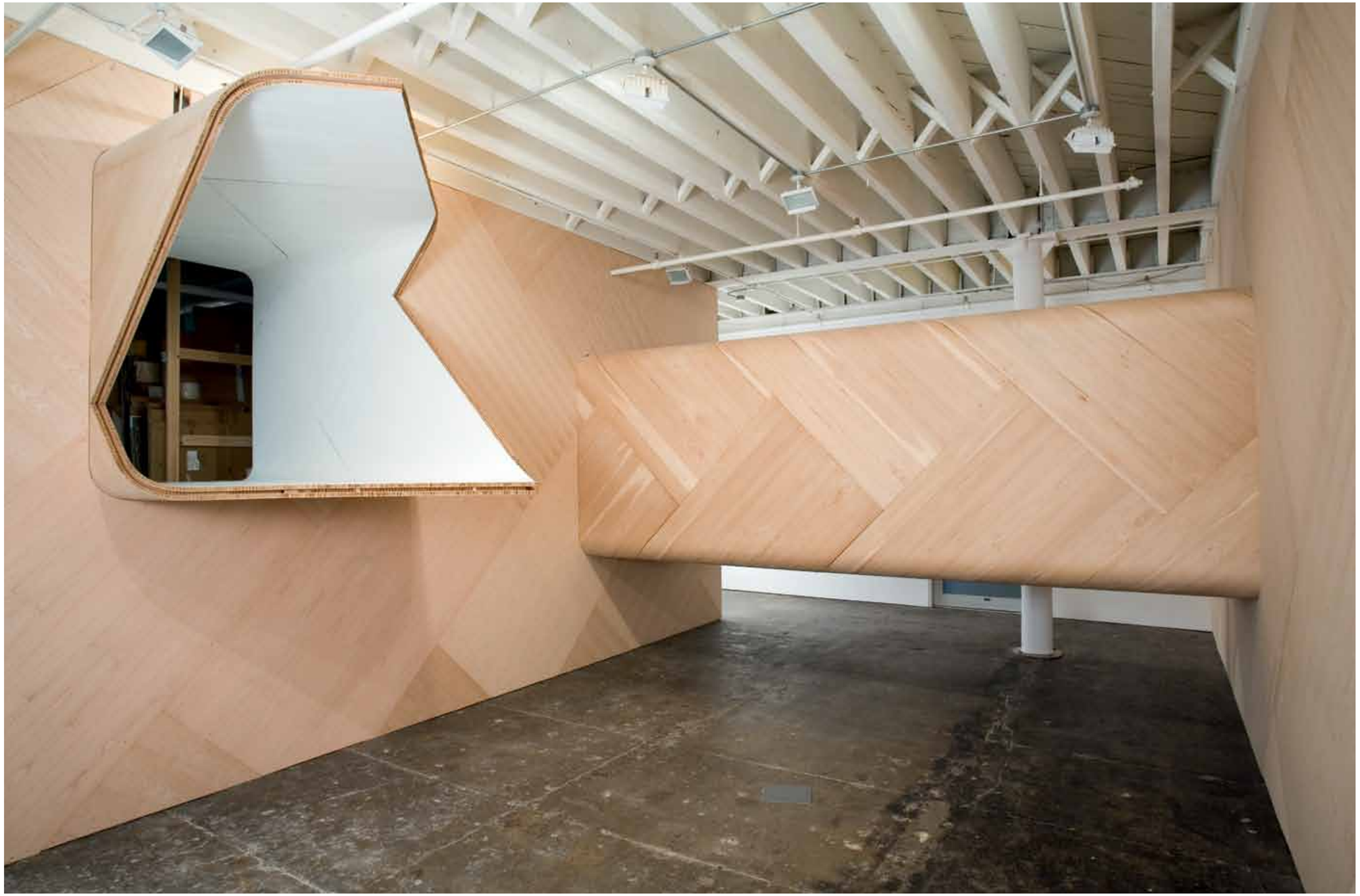
Lately Oppenheimer has developed a classification system she refers to as a "typology of holes" which helps her think about the ways that changes in vision affect the perception of space. Her 2008 site-specific installation *610-3356* is an example of what Oppenheimer calls the "wormhole" (p. 48). In this work, Oppenheimer cut through the floor of a third-story gallery and inserted a plywood cone that traverses the floor below and juts out an exterior window. When a viewer first enters the room, all that is seen is the plywood element that seems to be resting on the floor, but as the person approaches, a view of the backyard belonging to the adjacent property is vertiginously framed. The effect of the wormhole is to bring two distant spaces into immediate, disorienting proximity. For one visitor, "the artwork didn't just accept my gaze the way a painting or sculpture might, but it re-directed it … Oppenheimer is changing the way we look, the way institutions relate to their audiences, their neighbors, and their communities."[1]

As installed at the gallery Duve Berlin, *P-41*, 2009, is an example of Oppenheimer's "cinema hole." Two parallel, horizontal apertures were inserted into the wall dividing the gallery exhibition space and the office space beyond. A visitor to the gallery saw no objects on view, but only the bifurcated and reversed image of activity normally hidden from the public. The apertures are designed so that the viewer sees directly through the one while the other is a periscope-like structure that doubles the image and inverts it. From the public side, visitors would see gallery staff at work, but the bottom halves of their bodies would appear in the upper register, and vice versa. Oppenheimer's work has been compared to an approach sometimes referred to as "institutional critique." Pioneered in the 1960s by artists like Daniel Buren and Michael Asher, installations affiliated with institutional critique rejected the notion that museums are neutral spaces, demonstrating instead the ways that exhibition spaces (and all spaces) are coded with specific meanings. Oppenheimer's technique of exposing the back rooms and unseen corners of exhibition spaces can have the same effect, but that is not her primary aim. Rather than focusing on the intellectual and physical frame of the art museum, Oppenheimer's installations endeavor to refocus attention of the viewer on themselves and on other viewers.

1.Tyler Green, "Sarah Oppenheimer at the Mattress Factory II," *Modern Art Notes*, http://www.artsjournal.com/man/2008/05/sarah_oppenheimer_at_the_mattr_1.



Sarah Oppenheimer, *Screen*. 2005. Existing wall, spackle, packaging materials, Syn-Ply, dimensions variable, opening dimensions: 84 x 36 inches. Exterior and interior views. Courtesy of the artist



Sarah Oppenheimer, *554-5251*, 2006.
Site-specific installation at PPOW Gallery,
New York.