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**‘Of Space and Anxiety – an Inquiry into the
Uncanny of Memory’**

Dissertation for BA(Hons) Degree 2002 in Fine Art (Sculpture)

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Synopsis

In this thesis I intent to explore the idea of architecture being a psychoanalytical *subject*, therefore transgressing its intrinsic nature as object. I asked myself whether some of the consequences of an objectification or alienation of a psychoanalytical *subject* happen as a consequence of the subjectification of architecture? Or could it be that by identifying architecture with the subject as an Other would imply or suggest that the subject reverts him- or herself to an object? The clue to understand these replacements, I felt could be found within exploring a particular notion of 'empty space' laid out between architecture, its objects and *subjects*. Above all, I wondered if I could continue these contemplations in dialogue with architecture as a subject?

I mentally revisited Gassehaven 58, the home of my childhood, to evoke memories of its architecture. In understanding the memories of Gassehaven's architecture and its inverted spaces, an empty space created by a surrounding object, I used Rachel Whiteread's cast objects of inverted spaces. It was important to understand Whiteread's work, not as negative space of furniture or architecture, but as spaces between architectural elements of architectonic space, creating the possible notion of a psychic embrace.

Last, I revisited Gassehaven emotionally as it housed crucial experiences of the creation of psychic embraces or sanctuary spaces, taking the form of an inverted space as seen in Rachel Whiteread's sculptures. To place the importance of memory I took hold of an old memory technique called 'mnemotecnics,' which helps to recall and maintain memorised material by symbolic imagery formed as a journey.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Introduction	5
An Architectural Construction.....	9
And A Sense of White	11
A Memory of space	12
As a Solid Space	14
Inverted Space.....	16
Engrossed in Darkness	18
Afterthought.....	21
Bibliography	22

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Another immense source of inspiration has come from the actual building of Gassehaven 58, in which I grew up. Thank you to, amongst others, Martin Rubow who as part of a greater team working for Palle Suenson's Architectural Practice, created Gassehaven and who enabled a historical perspective. Thank you also to Hanne Loevgren from the borough of Soellerod Commune, Denmark for supplying me with the blueprint of Gassehaven 58. Moreover, thank you to Mark Cousin who initially inspired me enormously with his lectures on 'Space and Psyche' in the Architectural Association in London 2000 and 2001 and Rachel Whiteread, whose sculptures reverberate deep memories in its truest shape; created within the dialogue between her objects and their viewer.

Last, I would like to express my appreciation to Ulfson Arvidsson without whose persistent support conceptually and with the editing, this dissertation would have been articulated less sensitively.

Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to explore the relation between architectural space and emotional and mental development, keeping in mind the potential of architectural space in creating bodily anxiety. With bodily anxiety I am referring to the idea that the body is a container, enclosing the mind, the brain and some very complex neurological and auto immune systems involving both the emotional and mental life, which related to by surrounding spaces, can cause the individual to be prone to feelings of anxiety. This may mean a definite blurring of subject and object, i.e. the subject identifying itself with an architectural construction; it may mean a reverse of what we normally comprehend as being the subject and the object, such as an inter-change of the same. But it may simply mean a distinct confusion of the boundaries¹ between the two.

The emotional hub of the dissertation, from which all my research has sprung, is the house, Gassehaven 58, in which I grew up (see plate 1). Through research I have scrutinized this place to unearth lost spaces, physical as well as psychological, the disappearances of which have rendered my task of creating a completely coherent narrative difficult. Throughout the inquiry I have tried to keep in mind the article; 'The Uncanny' by Sigmund Freud, as it holds secrets to how the familiar and the unfamiliar suddenly appear to merge in to the same entity.

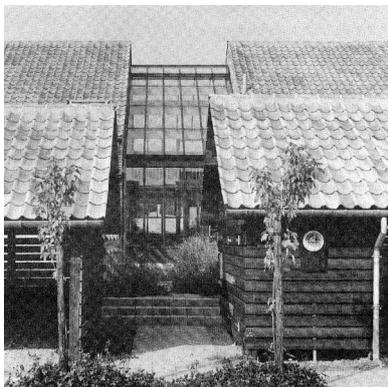


Plate 1 Facade view of a Gassehaven House

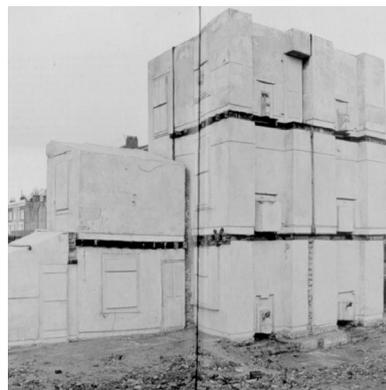


Plate 2 'House' (1993) by R. Whiteread

Plate 2, 'House' is a sculpture created by Rachel Whiteread. This cast of the interior of an old Victorian building, reflects the underlying mental blueprint of my investigation whose conceptual history occupies as important a place in this investigation as the actual house,

¹ Grosz, Elizabeth, From the essay 'Bodies-Cities' in Beatriz Colomina's *Sexuality & Space*, pp. 241-253

Gassehaven 58, 2840 Gl. Holte, Denmark (which will be referred to as GH in the captions). It is an exterior representation of the interior, which in a sense conveys as many blanks as my own narrative.

Arthur S. Reber, the author of ‘Dictionary of Psychology’ defines a *subject*² in relation to “the entire matrix of events, stimuli, persons etc. that make up the psychological environment,”³ therefore, I assume that this would include the architectural environment as well. But how might I realistically turn the *building* into the subject? And would that imply that I become the object? And from this point, how viable is it to enquire into the design and structure of the building in order to understand a possible amalgamation of identity between subject and object?

An investigation of a domestic space, a childhood home, a very specific space could, in reverse perspective, be seen as much as an exploration into the formation of identity, and consequently the developing relationships between the identity to that space and vice versa. Through an interest in and discourse with psychoanalysis,⁴ I have had the possibility to explore under specific guidance the creation of identity in relation to a personal and very specific space like Gassehaven 58, which I have found beneficial in questioning this matter. Now, if I, as stated above, could turn myself into the object, I wonder whether this general spatial analogy of psychoanalysis could apply to an architectural construction as well. I also wonder whether architecture, in becoming the subject or in the process of an amalgamation of itself as object and the subject, is in fact becoming a natural container for stability, in other words a substitute parent.

In ‘Architecture from the Outside’ Elizabeth Grosz asks, “Can architecture inhabit us as much as we see ourselves inhabiting it? Does architecture, in fact impose itself equally on us as we do on to it? And are we aware of the possible psychological infliction of architecture as ‘the other’ being imposed on us, and at what consequences? This idea is understood further in

² Throughout the dissertation I try to distinguish between the psychological subject and the more ordinary use of subject, and of the architectural and human subject. The use of italics will be in use when I speak of the psychoanalytical subject.

³ Reber, Arthur S., Dictionary of Psychology, p. 526

⁴ About psychoanalysis I would simply say the following: the experience is such that the subject, on a defined frequent basis, takes walks into the space of the mind and the feelings to uncover and discover areas or connections either repressed or lost in the course of traumatic events. These repressed and lost spaces and connections in the mind do appear to be directly responsible for the functioning of a subject

depth by what is put forward in passing, by Anthony Vidler in 'Warped Space' when he speaks of taking a

“poetic liberty of shifting the emphasis of Psychoanalytical interpretation from subject to object... [as if] a psychoanalysis *of* architecture might be possible - as if architecture were on the couch so to speak - that would reveal, by implication, and reflection, its relation with its subjects. Thus personified as the 'Other', architecture and its relationship to space may be, in Lacanian terms, figured as the mirror, and thence the frame of anxiety and shape of desire.”⁵

In my research I have come to cover three main areas, which have been structured in a particular sequence, thus maintaining the idea of a journey.

The first chapter called 'An Architectural Construction', I initiate by describing the actual construction of the house in question. This will be my entry point of understanding the physicality and functionality of the house. It will also anchor the design of the house within already developed ideas of contemporary architecture developed within space and spatial psychology. On the one hand, I have kept in mind Le Corbusier's ideas on architecture⁶ to create a tension in relation to the design of Gassehaven. On the other hand, I have undertaken to contrast my thoughts of the interior of Gassehaven 58 with Adolf Loos's ideas, which harbor strong ideas of duality.⁷ Ultimately, I hope that this will accommodate the need to provide a real physical environment for the more philosophical and psychological questioning composed in chapter two and chapter three.

In the second chapter, 'A Memory of Space', I will attempt to understand the relation between and possible amalgamation of 'subject' (the I) and 'object' (the non-I or other) as a consequence of the inherent fluid and forever moving properties of memory. By using the original blueprint of Gassehaven 58, to retrace an architectural space and as a map for resurrecting memories, I am in fact drawing material from an ancient idea of systematizing

⁵ Vidler, Anthony, *Warped Space*, p. 13

⁶ Stiles, Kristine & Selz, Peter, *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, Charles Edouard Jeanneret alias Le Corbusier on Purism, pp. 237-240.

⁷ Colomina, Beatriz, *Sexuality and Space*, pp. 74-98. In relation to this investigation, Adolf Loos's interiors appear somehow too 'crowded' to the general bare and naked ideas of modernism or contemporary architecture, which seem to speak of skeletal constructions, open spaces and transparency. However, his pieces of architecture also seem to play on the tension between interior and exterior, masculine and feminine etc., which is interesting as both a reference and a partly oppositional voice to that of Gassehaven.

memory called 'Mnemotechnics'. In 'The Art of Memory' Frances A. Yates is outlining this ancient Greek system with all its inherent history; this system is an "art belong[ing] to rhetoric as a technique by which the orator could improve his memory."⁸ The ideas, Frances A. Yates exposes, relates to how to store and memorize 'places', 'things' and 'words,'⁹ by placing images that relate to either three in architectural structures for future use. In this chapter, I attempt, in a sense, to reverse this idea as I use the blueprint of an existing architectural construction, explained in the ideas of mnemotechnics as the 'artificial memory'¹⁰, to uncover an area belonging to that of existing events, referred to in the aforementioned system as the 'natural memory'¹¹.

And last in the third chapter, 'Inverted Space', I attempt to grasp the relevance of reversed spaces, darkened by the actual embodiment of the surrounding object or architecture, and its relevance as 'the other' in providing a sanctuary for a child. As described earlier in the introduction, Anthony Vidler poetically plays on the idea of transposing the object to the subject – in this chapter, I am interested in researching this idea alongside Julia Kristeva's thoughts on the connection between the 'maternal' and the 'abject'. Could a possible unfulfilled and unidentified emotional bond between mother and child become transferred and hence projected upon the architectonic embodiment and thus create an imaginary womb in which the child feels safe? Could this unfulfilled emptiness be replaced by creating a sense of bondage between the child and the surrounding architecture that in turn function as a substitute sense of security disguising the underlying sense of disgust of the Self and the body. Therefore recreating an underlying repetitive pattern of rejection of the Mother, which again in the long run could prevent the child from developing its own identity. What would be the consequence of this unacknowledged projection in terms of the child's natural separation from the Mother and its own individuation as a human being?

⁸ Yates, Frances A., *The Art of Memory*, p. 2

⁹ *ibid*, p. 2

¹⁰ *ibid*, pp. 1-26

¹¹ In this chapter, especially, I find that Rachel Whiteread's casts capture spatial considerations, yearnings and memories, to which my thoughts of re-inventing a space merge well. Her pieces, although fragmentary, in themselves contain a completion of space that reflects both the ideas of the inverted space as well as recreating a blueprint out of lost and re-found memories.

An Architectural Construction

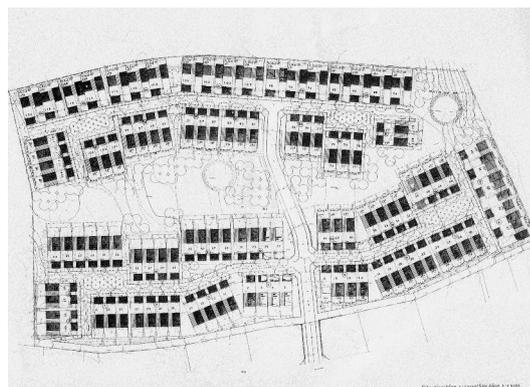
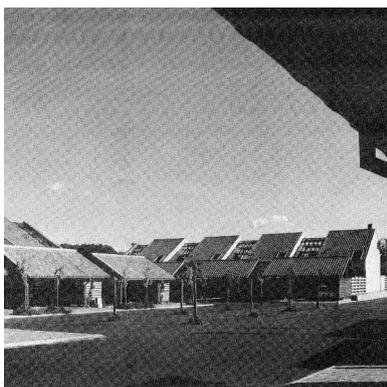


Plate 3 View of GH's Surroundings



Plate 4 View of GH's Surroundings

Gassehaven is placed amidst a very beautiful setting of fields, woods and a lake in the vicinity of the capital, Copenhagen (see plate 3 and 4). It consists of 108 two-floor row houses built in 1972. Of these 108 houses 23 measure 156 square meters and 85 measure 142 square meters, however the inherent conceptual construction of the house remains the same through both constructions (see plate 5). Each type of house would flank the tree-lined connecting roads with garages and tool sheds. The construction of the houses consists of one part built in yellow brick and another part in glass. The idea of the one and a half floor conservatory was new in Denmark at this point in time, but to renew the tradition of domestic housing was one of the priorities of Palle Suenson, the senior architect of the Gassehaven project. And as is written in the bibliography of this architect, the “winter garden of glass, gives the taller surrounding housing an interesting silhouette, the residents a recreation area and a good environment for everything from palm trees to parsley.”¹²



¹² Crone, Johan & Hancke, Peter, 'Arkitekten Palle Suenson', p. 335

Plate 5 One of Four Squares of GH

Plate 6 Blueprint Overview of GH (1972)

The residential setting was built in rows of four houses where small alleyways would lead one to large lawns connecting the four groups of buildings. This infrastructure supported the children who otherwise would have to walk great lengths to get to other parts of the blocks. It also created a community with interaction all across the site, between adults as well as between children (see plate 6).

When looking at the buildings of Gassehaven from the outside the brick building completely veils the internal part of the house whereas the interior of the conservatory is totally visible (see previous plate 1). Obviously the veiled part has windows and a front door, however according to the architects' considerations of opposing light with dark areas, these windows could be covered by large green shutters, only suggesting the shape of an enormous space hidden behind them¹³. The inside of the house is fully fitted with neutral wooden doors and wooden parquet floors, except in the conservatory where the floor is constructed of tiles of asphalt stone.

According to one of the architects, Martin Rubow¹⁴ the inspiration for the house had arrived from on the one hand, a particular Italian housing construction of functionality, with domestic quarters on the ground floor and workshop facilities above, and on the other the greenhouse seen in the yards of the gardener. The Italian idea using the space to its limit becomes apparent when one notices that the sleeping quarters are minute compared with the spacious conservatory and the living room upstairs, which could be used as both a studio space as well as for socializing. The conservatory, developed from the idea of the greenhouse, necessitated a reliable solution to work with the change of season in terms of heat and light (see plate 7).

¹³ Extract taken from telephone conversation between Martin Rubow and myself on the 28th of October

¹⁴ *ibid.*



Plate 7 Inside view of the GH Conservatory

Although Gassehaven was built in the very end of the so called modernist era and in the old fashioned building style of brick work, residual modernist ideas such as oppositional elements seem to have governed the choice of building materials as well as having influenced the overall concept and layout of the building. I am especially thinking of Adolf Loos' houses whose inhabitants could be thought of as "both actors in and spectators of the family scene, involved in yet detached from, their own space."¹⁵ Loos liked to think of the 'exterior as a seamless façade, as masculine, and the interior as the scene of sexuality and reproduction, the feminine.'¹⁶ These ideas of opposition are reflected in Gassehaven, resulting in structural encounters between private and public, internal and external, closed and open, dark and light. The most obvious example is the division of the house into one half made of glass, and one made entirely of brick, the transparent and the opaque. Another opposition is the upstairs and downstairs, parents belonging to the more secluded upstairs and their progeny occupying the downstairs, connected only by a staircase made in neutral solid wood. This architectonic experiment, beautifully constructed and intellectually stimulating, praises the simplicity of duality and binary functionality.

And A Sense of White

In 'Chromophobia' by David Batchelor, he introduces the reader by describing the interior of a house, that he once visited, as white, endlessly white 'like the inside of an eggshell.'¹⁷ He portrays white as a color of exclusiveness and exclusion and he depicts it as the color of cold

¹⁵ Colomina, Beatrix, *Sexuality and Space*, p. 80

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-98

¹⁷ Batchelor, David, 'Chromophobia', p. 16

perfection. He also defines it as aggressive, a white that repels everything inferior to it, a white that functions as bleach on its surroundings, a color that dissolves everything within it. “There lurks an elusive something in the innermost idea of white, which strikes more of a panic to the soul than the redness which affrights in blood.” He continues to describe the interior of this house, as “the horror of this space was its blankness and its emptiness.”¹⁸

As mentioned, the design of Gassehaven appears to have taken into account contemporary ideas of modernist standards with its tendency to transparency and open-planned rooms with high ceilings.¹⁹ And as for the color of the interior of the brick wall quarters, all the rooms were evened out with either a plaster or concrete produce painted pure white. A crisp and aesthetically pleasing pure white, which according to Le Corbusier and cited by David Batchelor in ‘Chromophobia’, could assimilate “Order. Reason. Purity. Truth. Architecture. Whitewash.”²⁰ The idea that white has come to occupy the western world in the 21st century as the color of minimalism and interior spaces, can at times feel exasperated, like an idealism “we can’t escape.” Nevertheless, could it be, as Batchelor says, “possible to unweave whiteness from within...?”²¹ This could be possible, but incidentally I find it more important to question whether ‘the idea of white’, like the interior of Gassehaven is able to take on an emotional form that inflicts itself upon the inhabitants?

‘Whiteness’ was a feature of Gassehaven that gave the impression of a somewhat pure and empty environment. An environment, which in one way enforced order and simplicity; but which also innately functioned as a blank canvas on which urges arose to obscure this whiteness, to paint it over, to create something other...

A Memory of Space

As established in the introduction, Frances A. Yates, author of the extensive ‘The Art of Memory’ explores how in ancient Greece, there were two kinds of memory, the natural memory and the artificial memory. Natural memory “is that which is engrafted in our minds,

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ In Anthony Vidler’s essay ‘Dark Space’ extracted from the book discussing Rachel Whiteread’s project ‘House’ in the east end of London the following is said about the modernist definition on architecture: “Architects, from Adolf Loos to Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright to Theo van Doesberg, theorized this new space, and quickly associated it to movement, speed, rhythm and above all transparency.” P. 64

²⁰ Batchelor, David, ‘Chromophobia’, p. 45

²¹ *ibid*, p. 19

born simultaneously with thought. The artificial memory is a memory strengthened or confirmed by training.”²² In order to improve the natural memory it was encouraged to train the artificial memory through the system of ‘mnemotechnics’.

What I find curious about this system transpires within the foundation of ‘mnemotechnics’. For example, if a general needed to convey a strategic speech, he would imagine a military camp, an architectural construction, in which he would place different weapons according to what would resemble that which he needed to remember.

It could then be argued that the relation between the artificial memory, where the subject would create an imaginary architectural construction, with plenty of different and distinct rooms together with the natural memory could set in motion the surfacing of possible and even latent memories.



Plate 8 Blueprint of the front of Gassehaven 58 (1972)

In an attempt to reawaken dormant memories, and in an effort to resurrect the inverted space of Gassehaven 58, I have with the aid of the original blueprint, imagined the architectural construction, and mentally revisited it (see plate 8). Still, as many of my own anchors to weigh early reminiscences had been lost in the course of time, this therefore complicated the retrieval of memories. The cerebral revisit to the long gone Gassehaven 58, however, shed light on disjointed memories of particular corners and of inverted spaces shrouded in darkness. I remembered a very personal space under my own bed where I created a sense of sanctuary, or underneath the staircase linking the downstairs conservatory to the upstairs living room, which in the back harboured a lovely corner with a view to the front terrace. The house seemed a fragmented ghost once inhabited by my family, and I. Now what was left was

²² Yates, Frances A., *The Art of Memory*, p. 5

the architectural structure, some pieces of furniture and a lot of invented and inverted spaces like the aforementioned space underneath the bed.

As a Solid Space

In the Serpentine Gallery between May and August 2001, Rachel Whiteread exhibited a retrospective of her work often referred to as casts of the negative space of furniture and architecture. I understand her work, not as negative space of furniture or architecture, but as spaces between architectural elements of architectonic space, whether these are furniture or architecture. This means that the division between the architecture as the medium of embodiment and protection, and furniture as functional objects in space has been dissolved. In the exhibition I experienced to my amazement that ‘architecture’ and ‘furniture’ ceased to have functions as functionally designed devices. These spaces simply existed in their own right as pieces of art, but mostly as pieces of memory, as I in the exposition experienced a sense of regression, a return to my own old home. I came to remember how I as a child would hide under the bed, behind the curtains or under the staircase or tables, and I remembered the sensation of getting dust in my nose and in my mouth. These places were unused spaces created by the embodiments of the furniture, but they were also protective spaces. Yet, rather than feeling excluded from Rachel Whiteread’s once accessible space, now made solid, it felt as if I reconnected to and even belonged within that solid space, once void. Now it was I who was that space. In the memory I became the contradictory solid void “like a translucent tomb...”²³

In another of Rachel Whiteread’s casts, titled ‘Ghost’ (see plate 9), I find an emphasis on space once familiar but now lost and in an attempt to recapture what once was, she thus solidifies the intangible²⁴. This work evokes in me a sense of pale resurrection, as though a space that once vanished has returned and now lingers like a phantom. As Whiteread’s casts evoked feelings long dormant, I came to revisit Gassehaven 58 imaginarily which, as explained in ‘mnemotechnics, re-activated feelings from the latent aspects of the mind. It

²³ Borchardt-Hume, Achim, Exhibition Catalogue of Rachel Whiteread, p. 9

²⁴ Lingwood, James, *House*, London, (Phaidon Press), 1995, In an interview Rachel Whiteread referred to a childhood memory in which she would spend much time in a cupboard on her own. Referring to this memory, she identified this early private space with her later wish to make casts of inverted objects once familiar but later lost.

became a revisit to what so imperceptibly is, through what once was so solidly present. Whiteread's piece appears as a grid of sections, depicting only a part of a whole interior. I interpret this fractional depiction as a possible metaphor for the fragmented nature of memory, which is then contained and solidified in the completion of the cast.



Plate 9 'Ghost' (1990) by R. Whiteread

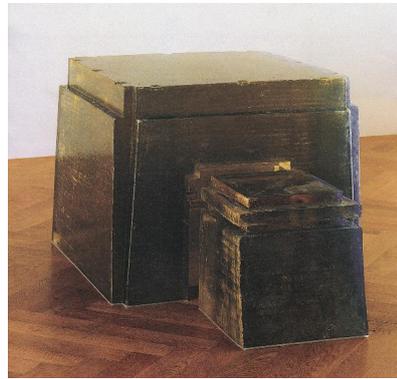


Plate 10 'Table and Chair' (1994) by R. Whiteread

Thinking of Gassehaven 58, the image of the building appears in my mind's eye in the conceptual shape of Rachel Whiteread's casts. When reflected in my mind, I imagine in terms of her pieces the contours of every single corner, entrance or level of any of the houses of Gassehaven. Somehow I recreate those inverted spaces so gracefully hidden by the principal division from brick to glass or glass to brick, knowing that behind the glass or brick is implied the void of space. In the 'Table and Chair' by Whiteread, (see plate 10), I find the idea of transparency as a solid, similarly exposed to Gassehaven, both contradictory and soothing. This contradictory solidity of transparency is exactly what is emphasized within the cast in resin through which shadows are cast. The empty space, wherein the subject lies, as in my childhood memories of specific spaces of Gassehaven, merges with its embodiment and allows for the psychic displacement of its subject into the object as the consequence of this transparent solidity. As the work's transparency contains the notion of void or emptiness within it, the uncanny feeling of the imagined amalgamation of subject and object then develops as a consequence of the notion of neither the inside nor the outside. In the memories of Gassehaven 58, as if anchored by the technique of 'mnemotechnics', the glass part appears as solid glass and the brick part as solid brick, each has emptied out the void and has become dense. I come to think of 'The Architectural Uncanny' by Anthony Vidler when he speaks about the modern metropolis. He emphasizes the reflective glass from which the buildings are

made; “glass, once perfectly transparent, is now revealed in all its opacity.”²⁵ In Gassehaven, with its manufactured divisions, it is as if “the architect allows one neither to stop at the surface nor to penetrate it, arresting us in a state of anxiety”²⁶ between that of the glass conservatory and that of the brick enclosure (see plate 11).

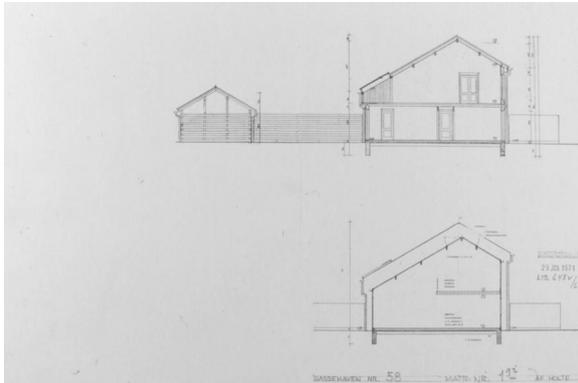


Plate 11. Blueprint of the side view of Gassehaven 58 (1972)

Inverted Space

In this chapter I aim to uncover some of the very contradictory consequences of the relation between the casts of Rachel Whiteread and my experience of inverted spaces of Gassehaven 58. For example, of what feeling and what memory does Rachel Whiteread’s inverted space in ‘Black Bed’ speak (see plate 12)? Could it be that the empty space made solid in her ‘Black Bed’ at the outset depicts a place of safety, a place that embraces the viewer or the *subject*? And could the blackness and the solidity of the object somehow suggest an unconscious aspect and maybe even a repelling stillness with its tacit surface? Personally, I experience something frightening about this isolated darkness, a fear, however, that also enabled me to feel the ability to disappear within it, as I used to in the inverted spaces that I created in Gassehaven as a child. There seem to occur a deep paradoxical fulfilment about a certain kind of darkness where the *subject* is both fearful and as a consequence of this unbearable fear becomes one with its surroundings. In ‘The Architectural Uncanny’ Anthony Vidler speaks of a similar paradox, where Eugene Minkowski, a phenomenologist/psychologist, describes a dark space as a place of both “depersonalisation” and “assumed absorption.” He writes of “‘black’ or ‘dark’ space, that space which, despite all vision - in the

²⁵ Vidler, Anthony, ‘The Architectural Uncanny’, p. 218

²⁶ Vidler, Anthony, ‘The Architectural Uncanny’, p. 223

dark, blindfolded - a subject might still palpably feel the space of bodily and sensorial if not intellectual existence."²⁷



Plate 12 'Black Bed' (1991) by R. Whiteread

Julia Kristeva, asks on behalf of the child in 'Powers of Horror – an Essay on Abjection,' "How can I be without borders?"²⁸ When I discussed Rachel Whiteread's inverted space of the 'Black Bed' above, I asked myself what would the need for these hard-edged borders imply? My answer seems to engage with two different, but mutually dependent themes: one being the practical resolve of Whiteread's artistic interest, and the other an inclination to recreate the inverted space, solidified by the nature of the chosen material i.e. opaque rubber, and appearing as the imprint of the architectural construction as an other. 'Black Bed', I perceive as proposing a *subject's* instinctive need to seek controlling boundaries, to recreate a sanctuary in spaces where darkness plays the part of protective Mother, and where he or she inverts the empty space into a nest, a lair or a womb, maybe even a place of power to fulfil inner longings. If the *subject* comes to identify safety with that of an embracing inverted space that surrounds and comforts it, the concept of 'Black Bed', will provide potential sanctuary and could become that potential Other, with all its projective implications. As cited by Anthony Vidler, Ludvig Binswanger explains that the "struggle of the existence [is] to create [a] space even in the nothingness of anxiety, a space in which it [the *subject*] can move freely, breathe freely, act freely - free of the unbearable burden of the dreadful."²⁹

At times, when boundaries, become blurred within a human subject's personal identity, the *subject* is less able to distinguish between inside and outside, the self and the other. These

²⁷ Vidler, Anthony, 'The Architectural Uncanny', p. 148

²⁸ Kristeva, Julia, Powers of Horror, p. 4

²⁹ Vidler, Anthony, 'Warped Space', p. 46

concealed boundaries may cause the identity, as Elizabeth Grosz puts it to “take up a position only by being able to situate its body in a position in space, a position from which it relates to other objects.”³⁰

However, why would anyone want to merge with something as apparently cold as an architectural object or space? What ‘want’ and what ‘need’ could be behind this necessity? In ‘Powers of Horror’, Julia Kristeva, describes the fundamentally difficult psychological and emotional process in growing from a mainly dependent child into a mainly independent adult. She says “essentially different from ‘un-canniness,’ [and] more violent, too, abjection is elaborated through a failure to recognise its kin; nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of memory.”³¹ She continues, “imagine a child who has swallowed up his parents too soon, who frightens himself on that account, ‘all by himself,’ and, to save himself, rejects and throws up everything that is given to him – all gifts, all objects.”³² It seems that Kristeva’s child, by metaphorically repudiating the Other or the given object, denies his own subjectivity to a degree where he objectifies himself. Given this symbolic interpretation of Kristeva’s child, the objectification (or solidification) of the complexities of subjectivity (or void) is what I perceive when Whiteread solidifies the inverted space.

Engrossed in Darkness

In Freud’s article on the ‘Uncanny’³³ he investigates the term ‘uncanny’, or ‘unhomely’ (Unheimlich in German). In order to arrive at an understanding of the ‘uncanny’ he investigates this term from it’s opposite nature, namely ‘homely’ (or Heimlich in German). What I propose is in a sense the reverse of Freud’s theory. In his research he tries to understand what makes the ‘homely’ become ‘unhomely’ or uncanny. Whereas in my reflection, in hiding underneath a bed, and by inverting this empty, naked, cold, unfamiliar space into an although temporarily, stable space, the apparently uncanny place turns into a

³⁰ Grosz, Elizabeth, ‘Architecture from the Outside’, p. 38 – This disposition proposes a whole area of complex psychological discourse. In terms of psychological terminology, however, I decided early on only to describe phenomenological experiences. Although I use the ideas from the psychological discourse, in order to grasp the deeper layers of my investigation, I have left out the actual terms of diagnoses such as ‘Psychasthenia,’ ‘phobia (including agora- and claustrophobia),’ ‘neuroses’, ‘psychoses’ etc. often referred to in discourses with a similar context. I found it more intriguing to enter the subjects intuitively and rather phenomenologically.

³¹ Kristeva, Julia, Powers of Horror, pp. 5-6

³² Ibid.

³³ Freud, Sigmund, Psychological Writings and Letters, pp. 120-153

somewhat 'homely' area. Taking this to its extreme I might say that when the familiar is distressing, a child like the one mentioned above in Julia Kristeva's text, acquires the ability to adapt to and to seek out the equally unsettling as a measure of familiarity. In the muted inversion of the architectural space, twisted into a sanctuary by this child, the indistinct boundaries of the real world, gradually surrender their rigorous hold. The symbolic merger of the *subject* with the object materializes as a safe confirmation of peace. Rather than feeling excluded from the solid space once void, Kristeva's child is now embodied by the empty space and it may be possible that this space embraces the very defenselessness he senses.

In this inversion of the 'unhomely' into the 'homely', I find a subtle inclination of turning the surrounding architecture into the subject. In 'submerging' himself with that of the reverse space of the architecture and/ or furniture, Kristeva's child objectifies himself through the process of subjectifying the architecture. The consequence of this becomes the turning point for the child's sense of safety. In abandoning himself to the safety of the embodiment of the architecture, the child has surrendered itself to an Other, hence another subject. This, however, implicates multitudes of complex emotional and mental problematic dispositions, and as mentioned before, without going into the discourse of psychology/ psychiatry, it is possible to imagine possible outcomes of such an intense reversion of subject into object and object into subject. Elizabeth Grosz, touches on this when she says

"Psychasthenia³⁴ occurs when the boundaries of personal identity are collapsed and the subject is no longer able to distinguish what is inside from what is outside, what is self and what is other... The body phantom is the condition of the subject's capacity not only to adapt to but also to become integrated with various objects, instruments, tools, and machines. It is the condition of the body's inherent openness and pliability to and in, its social context... Psychasthenia is a response to the lure posed by space for subjectivity. The subject can take up a position only by being able to situate its body in a position in space, a position from which it relates to other objects."³⁵

³⁴ "Psychasthenia, Pierre Janet's term for a disorder characterized by anxiety, obsessions and fixed ideas." Reber, Arthur S., 'Dictionary of Psychology', p. 611 "Psychasthenia, Pierre Janet's term for a disorder characterized by anxiety, obsessions and fixed ideas." Reber, Arthur S., 'Dictionary of Psychology', p. 611

³⁵ Grosz, Elizabeth, 'Architecture from the Outside', p. 21-38

By being able 'to take up a position *only* by situating its body in a position in space, a position from which it relates to other objects', the *subject* has surrendered its subjectivity to a place of objectivity, hence it may have allocated to the chosen architectural embodiment, the responsibilities of his own subjectivity.

Afterthought

I wanted to initiate a dialogue with architecture. In order to come within reach of this I deliberately contemplated the ideas of the importance of the architectonic influence inflicted upon us in childhood. I have spoken about reaching a sense of conciliation between the memories in relation to architecture and the reality of the architectural past. I also pondered the idea that some of us recreate inverted spaces with the surrounding architecture that as a possible substitute would create a sense of sanctuary.

Many cases described in the books of psychology endeavor to analyze how a certain individual became the way he/ she did. Many architects describe their housing projects in similar terminologies: each profession aims to protect the individual subject or object from either internal or external circumstances: external weather conditions being one, internal emotional conditions being another. The correlation and the physical and psychological inter-connection between the two is what I have tried to explore.

I set out to hear the omnipotent voice of the object, the other – of architecture. I have been engaged in a dialogue with aspects that I thought would enable me to approach it. Always, I seemed to come close – but to enable the object to become the subject seemed an impossible task. Instead, I described a journey of the human subject, objectifying him- or herself as an alternative possibility to conceive of the voice of the object, the other. Although, my ultimate task was unsuccessful and with some of my debates appearing farfetched and fragmented, I still hope that some ideas picked up within the particular architecture of Gassehaven 58, the art of Rachel Whiteread, and within the ideas acquired from the numerous and fantastic architectural, psychological and philosophical writings, altogether somehow created unforeseen, and coiled connections in relation to that of architecture as a subject.

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