

KEYNOTE LECTURE

James Putnam (Independent Curator, London UK) / The House of Dreams

In 1938 Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, fled to London from Vienna to escape Nazi persecution. He settled in a house at 20 Maresfield Gardens, bringing all his furniture and effects to recreate his original consulting rooms. Opened as a museum in 1986, the centerpiece of the house is the ground-floor study with Freud's large library and collection of antiquities as well as the famous couch. On this his patients would lie and be encouraged to re-live previous experiences. For Freud, the house could be equated with the mind and body, a container of the self and our deepest desires and thus our own more overt need to see our houses as extensions of our social selves. Freud's theories have been an ongoing influence to artists. Since the late 1990s, The Freud Museum has been an ongoing site-specific space for contemporary artists whose projects I discuss.

SESSION IV: INSIDE OUT, UPSIDE DOWN

Trista E. Mallory (UWO) / A Roof Under One's Head: The Model House Inverted

This essay will examine two upside down houses, Henry Roltair's Upside Down House (1901) and Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle's project Gravity is a Force to be Reckoned With (2010). Roltair's house, built on the midway of the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, is a carnivalesque gimmick, while Manglano-Ovalle's project takes up Mies van der Rohe's uncompleted plans for the House with Four Columns (1951). This house, though never built, was designed as modular housing for the masses. Manglano-Ovalle constructs this home inverted and at half scale in MASS MoCAs gallery. Both Roltair and Manglano-Ovalle's inverted structures mock the idea of the model home. Placing them in conversation with each other will help answer questions regarding the perennial fascination with this type of inverted model. What psychological affects do these upside down houses generate? How are they similar and different, and why do they cross from midway to art world?

Shelley Hornstein (York University) / Mass Modern: HomeWork on the Edge

In our times, urban sprawl - once considered the edge of the city - now explodes the intimate quality of city space to a super-scale: the sweeping vistas by David Maisel expands the dystopia of the Los Angeles suburbia, Cyprien Gaillard introduces housing projects as the new picturesque, Chris Mottalini chronicles the abandoned and rotting modernist vernacular aesthetic of houses by Paul Rudolph, and Isabelle Hayeur's Model Homes bookend these visions with her commentary on neo-style villas cut and pasted from treatises of the past as the solution for, or dissolution of, subdivision paradise. Buttressed by yet other house projects that bury, slice and eviscerate, this talk will explore concepts of demolition, destruction and ruin that riff on a central conceit about the claims of the Modernist ideal home.

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BREAKING+ENTERING

The House Cut, Spliced and Haunted

Conference Schedule

Thursday, February 3, 2010

4:00 – 5:45 “A Sense of Proportion”
– Bridget Elliott, Sandra Alfoldy, Tony Purdy

6:00 - 6:45 Tour of Exhibition with Iris Häussler

Friday, February 4, 2010

9:30– 10:30 “Memory Traces” (Moderator: Hillary Walker-Gugan)
– Christine Sprengler and Claudette Lauzon

10:30 Coffee break

11:00 – 12:00 “Cutting Loose” (Moderator: Jennifer Orpana)
– Adrian Blackwell and Kirsty Robertson

12:00 – 1:30 Lunch

1:30 – 2:45 “House of Dreams” – James Putnam (Introduced by James Patten)

3:30– 4:30 “Inside Out and Upside Down” (Moderator: Stephanie Radu)
– Trista Mallory and Shelley Hornstein

Thursday

SESSION I. A SENSE OF PROPORTION

Sandra Alföldy (NSCAD) / Survival Instinct: Craft, Ornament, Excess

This paper examines the connections between the popular culture vilification of craft as cluttered kitsch and the manner in which the artists Heather Benning, Wyn Geleynse, Iris Häussler and David Hoffos reference material reality, personal narrative, and obsession. What links the public conceptual investigations of the home by contemporary artists to the private excesses of largely female crafters? This paper will argue that both approaches share the desire to create personal narrative, regardless of their backgrounds. The fact that the majority of hoarders of craft are female opens up questions regarding the spaces available for women to create craft, the historically documented desire to over-ornament the home, and how the marketing of hobby crafts target female audiences and promote excessive consumption, thus providing the perfect fodder for contemporary artists to critique.

Bridget Elliott (UWO) / "All that concerns us is to save the remains, the fragments, the appearance": A Doll's House Déjà Vu

Taking its cue from Henrik Ibsen, whose famous play exposes the fragility of house and home, this essay revisits the history of western dollhouses to look at some of the more important devices they have used to stage domestic interiority. Drawing from Mark Sandberg's study of mannequins and missing persons, we will look at the flickering traces of human presence in a series of haunted interiors by artists David Hoffos, Wyn Geleynse, Heather Benning and Laurie Simmons, and avant-garde filmmaker Jan Svankmajer. Distorting our sense of scale and refusing to separate animate and inanimate, their works generate affects that are both playful and darkly disturbing.

Anthony Purdy (UWO) / Upstairs Downstairs: Performing House

In November 2008, as the Art Gallery of Ontario reopened to unveil its new Frank Gehry designed transformation, the oldest part of the AGO complex (and the oldest surviving brick house in Toronto), The Grange, invited visitors to descend belowstairs to witness the startling archaeological discoveries unearthed there. What they saw was a classic case of "staged authenticity" that worked to perfection. Until, that is, it was revealed that He Named Her Amber was not, after all, a behind-the-scenes look at an ongoing archaeological dig, but an immersive installation by Toronto artist Iris Häussler, who had spent a full year inventing and enacting the mystery of Mary O'Shea and transforming the basement of The Grange into a space in which authenticity could be first staged, then upstaged. This paper examines two of Häussler's performing house installations, *He Named her Amber* (2008-2010) and *The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach* (2006).

Friday

SESSION II: MEMORY TRACES

Christine Sprengler (UWO) / Past Failures and Future Promises: Domestic Architecture in Mark Lewis's Films

Since 1995, Mark Lewis has explored the way the creative possibilities of filmic forms and the social

failures of certain modernist architectural projects intersect. Despite the fact that Lewis's films are ostensibly situated in the last few years, I argue that that his thematic focus on modernist architecture evokes various notions of history, cultural memory, and past utopian ideals. Looking closely at *Children's Games: Heygate Estate* (2002), *Lawson Estate* (2003), *Tenement Yard* (2003), *Queensway: Pan and Zoom* (2005) and *Spadina: Reverse Dolly, Zoom, Nude* (2006), I argue that Lewis raises the spectre of the past to pose fundamental questions about domestic space, the legacy of modernist forms, and the cultural contexts and visual practices that mediate the experience of urban dwellings.

Claudette Lauzon (Cornell University) / "Relics from the Mansion of Sorrow": Melancholic Traces of Home in Recent Art

The recent past has witnessed a global pandemic of homelessness precipitated by war, civil strife, ongoing territorial disputes, and the radically uneven redistribution of wealth in the West and beyond, compelling contemporary artists to respond with representations of home that register its increasingly uncertain status as a locus of stability and belonging. In this paper, I argue for the emergence of a new aesthetic strategy in contemporary art that exposes home as neither a cipher for an idealized notion of comfort and security nor a menacing site of cloistered depravity, but instead as a space whose putative capacity to provide shelter to its inhabitants is increasingly compromised. But, as I argue, these works (including Paulette Phillips' *Floating House*, Renate Ferro's *Panic Hits Home*, and Wafaa Bilal's *Domestic Tension*) also point to home's tenacious, if tenuous, function as a site of belonging and a locus of memory.

SESSION III: CUTTING LOOSE

Adrian Blackwell (University of Toronto) / Foreclosed: The Single Family House as Apparatus of Capture

This paper uses two distinct meanings of the word foreclosure, contractual and psychoanalytic, to examine the single family home, and its dissection by contemporary artists, along two axes of power: one financial, the other micro-political. The first axis focuses on it as a stabilizing device, which traps citizens within a structure of debt. The second examines it as a support for the patriarchal family, which remains as a base for our macro-political systems. In both cases the concept of foreclosure names the traumatic cutting loose of a subject from a fundamental ordering system of late capitalist society: in the first case homeownership, in the second the symbolic structure of the nuclear family. By examining the work of contemporary artists such as Matta-Clark, Graham, Whiteread, Willats, and Debanné, the paper considers potential lines of flight from the forced choices between house and homelessness, or normalization and psychosis.

Kirsty Robertson (UWO) / Felt Space: Responsive Textiles, Fabric Dwellings and Precarious Housing

Recently, Ade Adekola, a Nigerian architect studying at London's Architects Association, developed a design for Surface Kinetic Integral Membrane (SKIM), a responsive textile composite that would monitor the mood of the human occupants in a room and adapt accordingly. His work, along with others such as the fleece jacket/building Sweaterlodge, (the recent Canadian entry to the Venice Biennale of Architecture), to several knitted houses, a room of breathing pillows, and carpet that traces the footsteps of a distant lover, artists, architects and designers have begun to ask how tactile space might encourage new modes of thought and being, and might lead to radical forms of community building. My argument, however, takes a slightly different path, and analyzes such structures in their very materiality, connecting them to other forms of fabric dwellings -- tents, bivouacs, emergency shelters -- that are often associated with precarity, exile, and loss of community.