

And Then We Moved In

Post Factum Documentation of the House

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- 1 Working drawings are produced, when a house is designed, to envisage an imagined building. They are a tangible representation of an object that has no tangible existence. These working drawings act as a manual for constructing the house; they represent that which is to be built. The house comes into being, therefore, via this set of drawings. This is known as documentation. However, these drawings record the house at an ideal moment in time; they capture the house in stasis. They do not represent the future life of the house, the changes and traces the inhabitants make upon a space, nor do they document the path of the person, the arc of their actions, within the space of the house. Other types of documentation of the house allow these elements to be included. Documentation that is produced after-the-event, that interprets 'the existing', is absent from discourses on documentation; the realm of *post factum* documentation is a less examined form of documentation. This paper investigates *post factum* documentation of the house, and the alternative ways of making, producing and, therefore, thinking about, the house that it offers. This acknowledges the body in the space of architecture, and the inhabitation of space, and as a dynamic process. This then leads to the potential of the 'model of an action' representing the motion and temporality inherent within the house. Architecture may then be seen as that which encloses the inhabitant.
- 2 The word 'document' refers to a record or evidence of events. It implies a chronological sequence: the document comes after-the-event, that is, it is *post factum*. Within architecture, however, the use of the word documentation, predominantly, refers to working drawings that are made to 'get to' a building, drawings being the dominant representation within architecture. Robin Evans calls this notion, of architecture being brought into existence through drawing, the principle of reversed directionality (Evans 1997, 1989).
- 3 Although it may be said that these types of drawings document the idea, or document the imagined reality of the building, their main emphasis, and reading, is in *getting to* something. In this case, the term documentation is used, not due to the documents' placement within a process, of coming after the subject-object, but in referring to the drawings' role. Other architectural drawings do exist that are a record of what is seen, but these are not the dominant drawing practice within architecture. Documentation within architecture regards the act of drawing as that process upon which the object is wholly dependent for its coming into existence. Drawing is defined as the pre-eminent methodology for generation of the building; drawings are considered the necessary initial step towards the creation of the 1:1 scale object. During the designing phase, the drawings are primary, setting out an intention. Drawings, therefore, are regarded as having a prescriptive endpoint rather than being part of an open-ended improvisation.
- 4 Drawings, in getting to a building, *draw out* something, the act of drawing searches for and uncovers the latent design, drawing it into existence. They are seen as getting to the core of the design. Drawings display a technique of making and are influenced by their medium. Models, in getting to a building, may be described in the same way. The act of modelling, of making manifest two-dimensional sketches into a three-dimensional object, operates similarly in possessing a certain power in assisting the design process to unfurl.
- 5 Drawing, as recording, alters the object. This act of drawing is used to resolve, and to edit, by excluding and omitting, as much as by including, within its page. Models similarly made after-the-fact are interpretive and consciously aware of their intentions. In encapsulating the subject-object, the model as documentation is equally drawing out meaning. This type of documentation is not neutral, but rather involves interpretation and reflection through representational editing.
- 6 Working drawings record the house at an ideal moment in time: at the moment the builders leave the site and the owners unlock the front door. These drawings capture the house in stasis. There is often the notion that until the owners of a new house move in, the house has been empty, un-lived in. But the life of the house cannot be fixed to any one starting point; rather it has different phases of life from conception to ruin. With working drawings being the dominant representation of the house, they exclude much; both the life of the house before this act of inhabitation, and the life that occurs after it.
- 7 The transformations that occur at each phase of construction are never shown in a set of working drawings. When a house is built, it separates itself from the space it resides within: the domain

of the house is marked off from the rest of the site. The house has a skin of a periphery, that inherently creates an outside and an inside (Kreiser 88).

8 As construction continues, there is a freedom in the structure which closes down; potential becomes prescriptive as choices are made and embodied in material. The undesignedness of the site, that exists before the house is planned, becomes lost once the surveyors' pegs are in place (Wakely 92). Next, the skeletal frame of open volumes becomes roofed, and then becomes walled, and walking through the frame becomes walking through doorways. One day an interior is created. The interior and exterior of the house are now two different things, and the house has definite edges (Casey 290). At some point, the house becomes lockable, its security assured through this act of sealing. It is this moment that working drawings capture.

9 Photographs comprise the usual documentation of houses once they are built, and yet they show no lived-in-ness, no palimpsest of occupancy. They do not observe the changes and traces the inhabitants make upon a space, nor do they document the path of the person, the arc of their actions, within the space of the house. American architects and artists Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio have written of these traces of the everyday that

10 punctuate floor and wall surfaces: the intersecting rings left by coffee glasses on a tabletop, the dust under a bed that becomes its plan analog when the bed is moved, the swing etched into the floor by a sagging door. (Diller & Scofidio 99)

11 It is these marks, these traces, that are omitted from the conventional documentation of a built house.

12 To examine an alternative way of documenting, and to redress these omissions, a redefinition of the house is needed. A space can be delineated by its form, its edges, or it can be defined by the actions that are performed, and the connections between people that occur, within it. To define the house by what it encapsulates, rather than being seen as an object in space, allows a different type of documentation to be employed. By defining a space as that which accommodates actions, rooms may be delineated by the reach of a person, carved out by the actions of a person, as though they are leaving a trace as they move, a windscreen wiper of living, through the repetition of an act.

13 Reverse directional documentation does not directly show the actions that take place within a house; we must infer these from the rooms' fittings and fixtures, and the names on the plan. In a similar way, Italo Calvino, in *Invisible Cities*, defines a city by the relationships between its inhabitants, rather than by its buildings:

14 in Ersilia, to establish the relationships that sustain the city's life, the inhabitants stretch strings from the corners of the houses, white or black or grey or black-and-white according to whether they mark a relationship of blood, of trade, authority, agency. When the strings become so numerous that you can no longer pass among them, the inhabitants leave: the houses are dismantled; only the strings and their supports remain ... Thus, when travelling in the territory of Ersilia, you come upon the ruins of the abandoned cities without the walls which do not last, without the bones of the dead which the wind rolls away: spiderwebs of intricate relationships seeking a form. (Calvino 62)

15 By defining architecture by that which it encapsulates, form or materiality may be given to the 'spiderwebs of intricate relationships'. Modelling the actions that are performed in the space of architecture, therefore, models the architecture. This is referred to as a model of an action. In examining the model of an action, the possibilities of *post factum* documentation of the house may be seen.

16 The Shinkenchiku competition The Plan-Less House (2006), explored these ideas of representing a house without using the conventional plan to do so. A suggested alternative was to map the use of the house by its inhabitants, similar to the idea of the model of an action. The house could be described by a technique of scanning: those areas that came into contact with the body would be mapped. Therefore, the representation of the house is not connected with spatial division, that is, by marking the location of walls, but rather with its use by its inhabitants.

17 The work of Diller and Scofidio and Allan Wexler and others explores this realm. One inquiry they share is the modelling of the body in the space of architecture: to them, the body is inseparable from the conception of space. By looking at their work, and that of others, three different ways of representing this inhabitation of space are seen. These are: to represent the objects involved in a particular action, or patterns of movement, that occurs in the space, in a way that highlights the action; to document the action itself; or to document the result of the action. These can all be defined as the model of an action.

18 The first way, the examination of the body in a space via an action's objects, is explored by American artist Allan Wexler, who defines architecture as 'choreography without a choreographer, structuring its inhabitant's movements' (Galfetti 22). In his project 'Crate House'

(1981), Wexler examines the notion of the body in a space via an action's objects. He divided the house into its basic activities: bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and living room. Each of these is then defined by their artefacts, contained in their own crate on wheels, which is rolled out when needed. At any point in time, the entire house becomes the activity due to its crate:

- 19 when a room such as the kitchen is needed, that crate is rolled in through one of the door openings. When the occupant is tired, the entire house becomes a bedroom, and when the occupant is hungry, it becomes a kitchen ... I view each crate as if it is a diorama in a natural history museum — the pillow, the spoon, the flashlight, the pot, the nail, the salt. We lose sight of everyday things. These things I isolate, making them sculpture: their use being theatre. (Galfetti 42–6)
- 20 The work of Andrea Zittel explores similar ideas. 'A–Z Comfort Unit' (1994), is made up of five segments, the centrepiece being a couch/bed, which is surrounded by four ancillary units on castors. These offer a library, kitchen, home office and vanity unit. The structure allows the lodger never to need to leave the cocoon-like bed, as all desires are an arm's reach away.
- 21 The ritual of eating a meal is examined in Wexler's 'Scaffold Furniture' (1988). This project isolates the components of the dining table without the structure of the table. Instead, the chair, plate, cup, glass, napkin, knife, fork, spoon and lamp are suspended by scaffolding. Their connection, rather than being that of objects sharing a tabletop, is seen to be the (absent) hand that uses them during a meal; the act of eating is highlighted. In these examples, the actions performed within a space are represented by the objects involved in the action.
- 22 A second way of representing the patterns of movement within a space is to represent the action itself. The Japanese tea ceremony breaks the act of drinking into many parts, separating and dissecting the whole as a way of then reassembling it as though it is one continuous action. Wexler likens this to an Eadweard Muybridge film of a human in motion (Galfetti 31). This one action is then housed in a particular building, so that when devoid of people, the action itself still has a presence.
- 23 Another way of documenting the inhabitation of architecture, by drawing the actions within the space, is time and motion studies, such as those of Rene W.P. Leanhardt (Diller & Scofidio 40–1). In one series of photographs, lights were attached to a housewife's wrists, to demonstrate the difference in time and effort required in the preparation of a dinner prepared entirely from scratch in ninety minutes, and a pre-cooked, pre-packaged dinner of the same dish, which took only twelve minutes. These studies are lines of light, recorded as line drawings on a photograph of the kitchen. They record the movement of the person in the room of the action they perform, but they also draw the kitchen in a way conventional documentation does not.
- 24 A recent example of the documentation of an action was undertaken by Asymptote and the students at Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture in their exhibition at the Venice Biennale of Architecture in 2000. A gymnast moving through the interior space of the pavilion was recorded using a process of digitisation and augmentation. Using modelling procedures, the spatial information was then reconstructed to become a full-scale architectural re-enactment of the gymnast's trajectory through the room (Feireiss 40). This is similar to a recent performance by Australian contemporary dance company Chunky Move, called 'Glow'. Infra-red video tracking took a picture of the dancer twenty-five times a second. This was used to generate shapes and images based on the movements of a solo dancer, which were projected onto the floor and the dancer herself. In the past, when the company has used DVDs or videos, the dancer has had to match what they were doing to the projection. This shifts the technology to following the dancer (Bibby 3).
- 25 A third way of representing the inhabitation of architecture is to document the result of an action. Raoul Bunschoten writes of the marks of a knife being the manifestation of the act of cutting, as an analogy:
- 26 incisions imply the use of a cutting tool. Together, cuts and cutting tool embrace a special condition. The actual movement of the incision is fleeting, the cut or mark stays behind, the knife moves on, creating an apparent discontinuity ... The space of the cut is a reminder of the knife, its shape and its movements: the preparation, the swoop through the air, the cutting, withdrawal, the moving away. These movements remain implicitly connected with the cut as its imaginary cause, as a mnemonic programme about a hand holding a knife, incising a surface, severing skin. (Bunschoten 40)
- 27 As a method of documenting actions, the paintings of Jackson Pollack can be seen as a manifestation of an act. In the late 1940s, Pollack began to drip paint onto a canvas laid flat on the floor; his tools were sticks and old caked brushes. This process clarified his work, allowing him to walk around it and work from all four sides. Robert Hughes describes it as 'painting "from the hip" ... swinging paintstick in flourishes and frisks that required an almost dancelike movement of the body' (Hughes 154). These paintings made manifest Pollack's gestures. As his arm swung in space, the dripping paint followed that arc, to be preserved on a flat plane as pictorial space (Hughes 262).

²⁸ Wexler, in another study, recorded the manifestation of an action. He placed a chair in a one-room building. It was attached to lengths of timber that extended outdoors through slots in the walls of the building. As the chair moved inside the building, its projections carved grooves in the ground outside. As the chair moved in a particular pattern, deeper grooves were created: 'Eventually, the occupant of the chair has no choice in his movement; the architecture moves him.' (Galfetti 14) The pattern of movement creates a result, which in turn influences the movement.

²⁹ By redefining architecture by what it encapsulates rather than by the enclosure itself, allows architecture to be documented by the *post factum* model of an action that occurs in that space. This leads to the exploration of architecture, formed by the body within it, since the documentation and representation of architecture starts to affect the reading of architecture. Architecture may then be seen as that which encloses the inhabitant.

³⁰ The documentation of the body and the space it makes concerns the work of the Hungarian architect Imre Makovecz. His exploration is of the body and the space it makes. Makovecz, and a circle of like-minded architects and artists, embarked on a series of experiments analysing the patterns of human motion and subsequently set up a competition based around the search for a minimum existential space. This consisted of mapping human motion in certain spatial conditions and situations. Small light bulbs were attached to points on the limbs and joints and photographed, creating a series of curves and forms. This led to a competition called 'Minimal Space' (1971–2), in which architects, artists and designers were invited to consider a minimal space for containing the human body, a new notion of personal containment. Makovecz's own response took the form of a bell-like capsule composed of a double shell expressing its presence and location in both time and space (Heathcote 120).

³¹ Vito Acconci, an artist turned architect by virtue of his installation work, explored this notion of enclosure in his work (Feireiss 38). In 1980 Acconci began his series of 'self-erecting architectures', vehicles or instruments involving one or more viewers whose operation erected simple buildings (Acconci & Linker 114). In his project 'Instant House' (1980), a set of walls lies flat on the floor, forming an open cruciform shape. By sitting in the swing in the centre of this configuration, the visitor activates an apparatus of cables and pulleys causing walls to rise and form a box-like house. It is a work that explores the idea of enclosing, of a space being something that has to be constructed, in the same way for example one builds up meaning (Reed 247–8).

³² This documentation of architecture directly references the inhabitation of architecture. The *post factum* model of architecture is closely linked to the body in space and the actions it performs. Examining the actions and movement patterns within a space allows the inhabitation process to be seen as a dynamic process. David Owen describes the biological process of 'ecopoiesis': the process of a system making a home for itself. He describes the building and its occupants jointly as the new system, in a system of shaping and reshaping themselves until there is a tolerable fit (Brand 164).

³³ The definition of architecture as being that which encloses us, interests Edward S. Casey:

³⁴ in standing in my home, I stand *here* and yet feel surrounded (sheltered, challenged, drawn out, etc.) by the building's boundaries over *there*. A person in this situation is not simply in time or simply in space but experiences an event in all its engaging and unpredictable power. In Derrida's words, 'this outside engages us in the very thing we are', and we find ourselves subjected to architecture rather than being the controlling subject that plans or owns, uses or enjoys it; in short architecture 'comprehends us'. (Casey 314)

³⁵ This shift in relationship between the inhabitant and architecture shifts the documentation and reading of the exhibition of architecture. Casey's notion of architecture comprehending the inhabitant opens the possibility for an alternate exhibition of architecture, the documentation of that which is beyond the inhabitant's direction.

³⁶ Conventional documentation shows a quiescence to the house. Rather than attempting to capture the flurry — the palimpsest of occupancy — within the house, it is presented as stilled, inert and dormant. In representing the house this way, a lull is provided, fostering a steadiness of gaze: a pause is created, within which to examine the house. However, the house is then seen as object, rather than that which encapsulates motion and temporality. Defining, and thus documenting, the space of architecture by its actions, extends the perimeter of architecture. No longer is the house bounded by its doors and walls, but rather by the extent of its patterns of movement. *Post factum* documentation allows this altering of the definition of architecture, as it includes the notion of the model of an action. By appropriating, clarifying and reshaping situations that are relevant to the investigation of *post factum* documentation, the notion of the inhabitation of the house as a definition of architecture may be examined. This further examines the relationship between architectural representation, the architectural image, and the image of architecture.

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