Surrealism and Architecture

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SURREALISM & ARCHITECTURE
SURREALISM and ARCHITECTURE

Thesis Proposal is Presented to the Faculty of the Department of Architecture

By

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Architecture

Kennesaw State University
Marietta, Georgia

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Thesis Project Title: Surrealism and Architecture

Thesis Summary:
A different way of thinking about Architecture, to reconsider the rationalism that has been my Architectural education and to rediscover lost poetics in the practice of Architecture. As Bernard Tschumi said, I aim to, “reject functionalist ethics, to refuse the rational and to celebrate unrepressed delights.” A critique of rationalism, surrealism explores the irrational and the unconscious. It endeavors to create a supreme point of contradiction, a perfect union of the rational and the irrational, a duality of dream and reality resulting in a super-reality - all to the end of rejoining a connection with an ultimate truth that is believed to have been lost.

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Table of Contents

i. Appendix
   A. Glossary of terms
   B. What is a House?

I. Introduction
   A. Surrealism
   B. Design Process
   C. Research Process
   D. Journal of Dreams and Automatism
   E. Precedents in Film and Architecture

II. The Detritus House
   A. Collage Artifacts with Analysis in Section
   B. The Detritus House

III. Methodology
   A. Surrealism. Methodology and Process
   B. Assemblages
   C. Collages
   D. Exercise: 9 Houses
   E. Voyeur House III
   F. Voyeur House II
   G. Voyeur House I
   H. Dream House

Images

References
i. Appendix

A. Glossary of terms

1. Assemblage
   A sculptural technique of organizing or composing into a unified whole a group of unrelated and often fragmentary or discarded objects.1

2. Chimera
   An entity which is a juxtaposition of contradictory elements, includes Cyborgs and Minotaurs.

3. Collage
   An assemblage or occurrence of diverse elements or fragments in unlikely or unexpected juxtaposition.2

4. Cyborg
   A Chimera which involves both biological and mechanical elements, sometimes involving the use of a prosthetic.3

5. Heterotopia
   Described by Foucault as counter-sites that remain outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. A Heterotopia is a place which lives outside of all places, yet remains a functional affiliation with reality or real world places.4 Mirrors can be considered heterotopias because they are real, yet display a virtual world.

6. Labyrinth
   An in-between space. A heterotopic space lying between two spaces, such as a threshold, a stair, or a corridor. Like an actual labyrinth, these areas offer only one path, but possess an oniric quality of inner reflection.

7. Lychan
   Having the spatial or atmospheric properties of a David Lynch film.

8. Mastabatorium
   A place for childhood self-exploration, away from the prying eyes of parents.5

9. Maze
   Distinct from a Labyrinth in that a maze may included intersections, forks, and dead ends. The experience of a maze is more uncertain than a labyrinth and may offer choices. Whereas a Labyrinth offers self reflection, a maze compels us to explore the world or to look outward.

10. Minotaour
    An entity, often a Chimera, which acts as a place making object. Similar to the labyrinthian creature of Crete6, a minotaur is a prisoner of the space it inhabits.

11. Montage
    The technique of combining in a single composition pictorial elements from various sources, as parts of different photographs or fragments of printing, either to give the illusion that the elements belonged together originally or to allow each element to retain its separate identity as a means of adding interest or meaning to the composition.7

12. Nature
    The inherent character or basic constitution of a person or thing, essence.8 The true and natural reality or “hyper-reality” (surreality) pursued by the surrealists. True human nature.9

13. Oneiric
    A quality related to dreams or dreaming.

14. Prosthetic
    A device used in conjunction with the human body to replace or add to sensory experiences.

15. Spiritual
    Highly personal, relating to the spirit, soul, or ego of an individual.10 (Secular)

16. Womb
    “A warm bag in which to wrap oneself.”11

B. What is a House?12

A house provides shelter from something, traditionally the elements, but it is up to the architect what these “elements” are. A house contains multiple programs or ideas, they may or may not be in the same physical space. Houses can be inhabited, you can get in them.13 A house is a place. A house has purpose or an identity; beyond simply dwelling a house is hermetic; it can exist on its own.14 A house exists within space. A house is architecture, it is constructed.

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5. Veseley uses the standard religious connotation of the word, although he goes on to allude towards the definition I have given here. He writes, “The Surrealists were deeply convinced that man had lost the vital contact with reality, and that his primal links with nature, lost them, and since then more and more fervently persist in trying others that do not work.”
6. The Surrealists were deeply convinced that man had lost the vital contact with reality, and that his primal links with nature, lost them, and since then more and more fervently persist in trying others that do not work. The Surrealists were deeply convinced that man had lost the vital contact with reality, and that his primal links with nature, lost them, and since then more and more fervently persist in trying others that do not work. The Surrealists were deeply convinced that man had lost the vital contact with reality, and that his primal links with nature, lost them, and since then more and more fervently persist in trying others that do not work. The Surrealists were deeply convinced that man had lost the vital contact with reality, and that his primal links with nature
I. Introduction

An Exploration into the application of surrealist methodologies within the design of Architectural spaces.

How can we use Surrealist methodologies to generate architectural space?

A reaction against rationality.

“Surrealism and Architecture” began with no particular goal in mind. Much in the same way the surrealist “movement” began, it was a rejection of the rationalism that had previously made up the majority of my architectural education. Considering the lines from David Greene’s Archigram poem, “The love is gone. The poetry in bricks is lost.” I wanted to consider a different way of thinking about Architecture, and perhaps to rediscover, for myself, some kind of “lost poetics” in the practice of architecture. In the words of Bernard Tschumi, I chose to,

reject functionalist ethics, to refuse the rational and to celebrate unrepressed delights.”

The surrealists, for the most part, never moved past the mediums of drawing, painting, and sculpture, and into surrealism as architecture, or as space. To fill this gap of precedent I chose another topic which interested me, cinema. Specifically, the films of David Lynch and most notably Twin Peaks and Eraserhead, of which Lynch said, “…there were factories, industrial buildings, and neighborhoods, dark and forlorned, tucked in somewhere… sort of like you can’t get there from here, they are sort of lost in another type of place.” I desired to create these other types of places in my project. They are deep, meaningful, spiritual, places; places which are homely and yet terrifying, and simultaneously beautiful and horrible. The surrealist quality and atmosphere of the architecture and spaces of David Lynch fit perfectly into the research of my project.

At its core, “Surrealism and Architecture” was always about my own personal exploration, but as the project developed I found myself searching, and being asked, for other reasons why I was doing what I was doing, or for what the importance or reason of my project was. Truthfully, there never was and still isn’t a reason to “Surrealism and Architecture,” but as the project developed I began to see my research as a demonstration of the possibilities of alternative forms of design methodologies. Hopefully, it will serve to communicate some of these possibilities to others, as it has to myself.

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1 Cook, Peter. "Archigram“. 1999 p. 8-9
A. Surrealism

A rejection of rationalism, surrealism explores the irrational and the unconscious. It endeavors to create a supreme point of contradiction, a perfect union of the rational and the irrational, a duality of dream and reality resulting in a super-reality - all to the end of rejoining a connection with an ultimate truth, or original nature, that is believed to have been lost. Surrealism is not about "obvious formal artifacts, such as chesrubesque landscapes or buildings in the shape of breasts." Surrealism refuses the making of a form for aesthetic purposes. Rather, form is dictated by random chance or spontaneity and a sense of visual indifference, they are not purposefully interesting, beautiful, or even ugly. Form becomes dictated by the process for the selection, or the methodology of the spontaneous act. This may be through one, or a combination of several of the following methods.

Random Chance: Nonsense. Ripping, tearing, breaking, randomness, happenstance

Ready-Made: From a suspicion that life is without meaning. An object is chosen at random, with visual indifference, on the total absence of good or bad taste.

Useless Invention: In their uselessness, they exhibit their human side - mechanical objects with no use.

Collage, Assemblage, etc.: Painting or sculpture assembled from found objects. Indicates a "distinction between art and everyday life." (duchamp)

Convulsive Beauty: The object must enchant the viewer or induce some kind of shock.

Automation: Andre Breton describes automatism as the "true photography of thought," it is the writing or drawing without conscious interference.

Parasias-Critical Activity: Delirium, of interpretive associations - instantaneous and unexpected double figurations and associative mechanisms.

B. Design Process

Collage - An arrangement of fragments of found banal objects, juxtaposing man-made + natural, and mechanical + organic, considering tensions between fragments and an overall sense of balance.


- No preconceived ideas
- No aesthetic emotion

Characteristics should be spatial rather than simply forms

1. Generate Architecture using spatial collage - Dissect collages by drawing in section. Analyze and understand the tensions and balance at play within the object and dialogue between fragments, finding architectural spaces.
2. Using dissected collage drawings as a starting point, make dissections work as architectural spaces using plan and section
3. Change geometry, scale, proportion, etc. as needed - make the drawings work
4. Evaluate. Assess plans/sections/elevations architecturally, considering spatial qualities, proportion, and the types of spaces which emerge through the process.

It is instinctive, automatic, avoiding analytical thought, embracing the subconscious through random chance.

C. Research Process

1. Early Studies and Research

After initial background research to better understand the topic, my first exercise was to keep a dream journal, although these drawings would carry forward in my project very little, they were crucial to developing a first-hand experience with my research material.

Alongside my recording of dreams, I watched films that could be connected to the surrealist movement. My focus was on David Lynch and Andrei Tarkovsky, but I also examined works by Terry Gilliam, Stanley Kubrick, and others. It was important to understand how surrealism atmospheres could be created within spaces, and I was enamoured by Lynch's and Tarkovsky's ability to create meaningful spaces with strong senses of place, places which were not always comfortable, yet left a strong impression.

2. Development

After developing a small pool of research in art and film, I studied and search for architects which used surrealist concepts in their architecture - though not necessarily surrealist architects. I identified one or two projects from each of these architects that I believed would have the most to offer me in my research.

First, I settled on Adolf Loos. I chose to study the Muller house for its "theater boxes," curious thresholds, views through, into, and across spaces, overlapping rooms, and heterotopic atmosphere. Adolf Loos seemed to compliment very well the director David Lynch, as they shared the frequent use of stages, curtains, and screens, and I began to examine the two alongside each other. In addition to their similar formal styles, they both seemed to work in montage, and it was very easy to draw comparisons between the experience of the Muller House, and a scene from a Lynch Film.

Also from Loos, I examined his unbuilt project, the Josephine Baker House, which was starkly surreal. It dealt with themes like voyeurism, labyrinths and minotaurs, reflectivity, and split or inhabitable walls.

Le Corbusier was the second choice, although Corbu was distinctly a modernist architect and not a surrealist, he did design one outlier project, the Reistegui Apartment. It used contradictory protheses to see outside the house, irrational juxtapositions of forms, and other techniques which could have been deliberately surrealist. Corbusier's Villa Savoye was also studied, the juxtaposition and promenade of the central ramp was intriguing to me in the context of surrealism, and recalled Tarkovsky's camerawork, particularly in Stalker.

Third, I began to look at Friedrich Kiesler. Although his work on The Endless House never became a heavy part of my research, it did have some visible influences. Kiesler is likely the only architect who openly embraced surrealism and attempted to bring it into architecture. The Endless House proposed a different way of living, in line with the goals of the surrealists, though I believe it could be argued that Kiesler's methodology was entirely different.

3. Design Process

After developing a strong body of knowledge to pull from, I began design work. I began by identifying key surrealist vocabulary that had arisen during my research. The Dream House and Voyeur Houses came from this. After understanding more about these important terms, I began to explore the surrealist methodologies. I learned that understanding the techniques of collage were vitally important. I had already discovered David Lynch's interest in the banal and domestic life, but the importance of this became more evident. I chose the suburban house as my "site" for interrogation, and I began to use collage as my beginning point for design.

Through a series of exercises and artifacts, I developed the following process:

+ Collage, use domestic fragments as a starting point.
+ Analyze collage through drawing vertical or horizontal sections/elevations.
+ Translate the literal drawing into architectural spaces, alter scale, size, geometry, etc.
+ Post-rationalize, inject program based on understanding of spaces and research, adapt.

It took multiple trials and exercises to become relatively comfortable with such a foreign and irrational design process, but when I was ready I moved on to the final "test" of the methodology I had been studying. After choosing a program and a site, I began work on the Detectiv House.

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28 I think I missed an opportunity here, I would have liked to experiment more deliberately with designing architecture with no use or program.
29 This ended up being my primary method of process. Although I believe it made for some interesting results, I think I missed quite a few opportunities by not experimenting with a more diverse toolbox.
30 See "The Cat" Assemblage (fil.3.a.2) Although it was not as successful as an assemblage, it does possess a conclusive beauty.
32 I used this frequently in the post-rationalizations of architectural spaces and programs, associations based on proximity between collaged artifacts, and the naming of many of my exercises.
D. Journal of Dreams and Automatism

Personal preliminary studies of dreams were done as an introductory exercise to the research. In the moment after waking, dreams were recorded through drawing. On occasion, when dreams were not recalled, automatic drawing was practiced which sometimes caused dreams to surface. Some more tenacious dreams were rendered multiple times in different ways or hours after waking to allow the spaces to solidify.

These exercises helped to prime my “hand-mind coordination” for later practices in spontaneity and automatism. As research continued, the practice became sporadic and eventually dropped off entirely. This was due, in part, to the desirer or fetishization of the practice, which came about from pleasing results early on.
E. Precedents in Film and Architecture

The Surrealists did not venture too far into the realm of architectural space. Most surrealist material was limited to two-dimensional medium (painting, automatic drawing, etc.) or three-dimensional sculpture. Although there were some films made by the surrealists themselves,1 surrealism as architectural space can be best understood through films of a later era, by artists not directly related to the surrealist “movement.” The spaces and places in these movies bear similar qualities and themes to surrealism and are a good representation of the natural precursor to surrealism as architectural space.

1. Adolf Loos

a) Moller House

The Moller house was studied largely due to how well it exemplified Adolf Loos’s Raumplan.2 The almost secretive views within and through the spaces in the house were fascinating. Loos’s use of “theater boxes” as “rooms within rooms”, created a complex and intriguing layering of spaces and relationships between thresholds and barriers. Most interesting were visual connections between spaces, things which could be seen through but not passed through.3 Loos’s attention to windows, mirrors, and screens provided a lot of insight into the psychology of surrealism, as well as some of the ideas of Sigmund Freud, whom the surrealists were very interested in. The importance of self-reflection, and perhaps self-projection, and the relationships between perception and reality, became evident. The significance of a threshold was also revealed as a common theme, and something I kept in mind through my own design processes.

b) Josephine Baker House

Adolf Loos’s house for Josephine Baker was never built, but the design incorporated distinct surrealistic movements which helped me to formulate my ideas and better understand how the ideas of surrealism could be communicated in architecture. The most intriguing part of the house was that Josephine herself was not the primary subject of the house. Instead, it was the intruder, or the voyeur, coming to the house to view the spectacle, the modern myth, that was Josephine Baker.4 Josephine became a minotaur, trapped in the labyrinth of her own home.5

2. Le Corbusier

a) Beistegui Apartment

The Beistegui apartment is an outlier within Le Corbusier’s work. Although still modern, it has a distinctly different feel and could even be compared to the work of Adolf Loos. The design of the apartment has distinctly surrealistic moves. Firstly, it’s very existence is a contradiction; it is a home which was not designed to be lived in, as it was a party house for the Beistegui family. Electricity within the house was used only to operate doors and windows or cinematic projects, all lighting was done by candle. A formal contradiction existed within the juxtaposition of a round spiral stair in the corner of a sharply orthogonal room. Foremost, however, was the rooftop solarium, which was walled so high as to almost completely block out the view of the parisian skyline.

The cityscape, however, could be viewed fusing a prosthetic-like periscope accessed within the apartment.6

b) Villa Savoye

Although Villa Savoye itself is distinctly modern, it bore a few small elements which were useful to understanding how surrealism could translate into more “realistic” architectural space. The ramp, for example, creates a promenade through the house which offers different views. Le Corbusier’s own photographs of the house convey a nearly voyeuristic use of these windows, one in particular shot through a window along the ramp, towards a woman seated on the rooftop solarium, facing away from the photographer.7

Corbu’s photographs of Villa Savoye are perhaps even more useful than the building itself. Many give the impression that someone has just left the frame, such as the kitchen with a raw fish and a hat sitting on the table, while others give us a separated or removed experience from the figures in the frame.8

3. David Lynch

David Lynch’s films, and the spaces which inhabit them, are deep, meaningful, spiritual places. They are places which are lonely and yet terrifying, simultaneously beautiful and horrible, they are “other types of places”9

Most importantly, David Lynch explores domestic life, most often setting his films in small town suburbs, or the streets of Los Angeles. Lynch’s movies create something bizarre out of the ordinary, or the banal, he takes a place or a situation which we would consider perfectly normal, and inserts a very small seed or obstruction that disturbs everything else and creates something uncanny10, and often disturbing.11

4. Andrei Tarkovsky

Andrei Tarkovsky’s ménage places are mysterious, filled with a kind of spatial ambiguity which is sensed but not seen. There are unwritten rules to these spaces, and there are invisible boundaries of complete irrationality. Stalker follows three men through “The Zone,” a green and harsh, yet dirty and minuscule, post-war landscape on a convoluted and entirely irrational “path” towards a mythic “Room” which will realize anyone’s innermost desires.12

33 My architecture is not conceived in plans, but in spaces (chambers). I do not design floor plans, facades, sections, I design spaces. For me, there is no ground floor, first floor etc... For me, there are only contiguous, continual spaces, rooms, anterooms, terraces etc. Stories merge and spaces relate to each other. Every space requires a different height: the dining room is surely higher than the pantry – thus the ceilings are set at different levels.” (Adolf Loos)
34 "Loos houses encompass interlocking rooms and intimate nooks, split levels and surveillance platforms, plush surfaces and enveloping drapery - are areas for performance and observation.”
37 ibid, p.102-103
38 USC, p. 100-101
40 “There were factories, industrial buildings, dark and foreigned, tucked in somewhere, sort of like... you can’t get there from here, they are sort of lost in another type of place.” (David Lynch) “Eraserhead- Exploring Nowhere (Video Essay) on Vimeo.” 20 Sep. 2017, https://vimeo.com/154715756. Accessed (unknown)
41 Freud, “The ‘Uncanny’”. 1919.
43 Stalker, dir. Andrei Tarkovsky (Soviet Union: Mosfilm, 1972), DVD.
The Suburban Home

The typical suburban four member family house was chosen as the site and context for the majority of the exercises, including the final project. The family house was chosen as a prime example of the banal, an everyday common and familiar place, consistent with the work of the surrealists and the director David Lynch. Setting the project in a typical house creates a stronger sense of the uncanny when atypical elements are injected. Also judging from its familiarity, the house is also an ideal control for an experiment, it will show clearly the results of the process and methodology that is applied to it.

II. The Detritus House

Assembled from the Debris of Domestic Life

A. Collage Artifacts with Analysis in Section

1. Three-Quarters House
   The site model was constructed prior to being infiltrated by the domestic debris; chair, TV antenna, small branch, sneaker.
   a) X-ray/Multisection
      The multi-section shows all of the fragments at play within the house. This drawing was valuable for the quantity of forms available and the ambiguity created by so many overlapping elements. This became one of the easier sections to transform to architectural spaces.

2. Half-House 1 and 2
   The site model was constructed along with the domestic debris as a part of the process, then bisected.
   a) Vertical Sections, left and right
      The simple section drawings show the spaces created within the house after debris was added. Most notable in these drawings are the relationships between geometries; square, circle, triangle, amorphic.

3. Quarter House
   The leftover fragment removed from the Three-Quarters House, subsequently infiltrated by the domestic debris; coffee maker, coffee pot, mens dress shoe, sneaker. It displays very good balance overall and tension between different geometries and the repeated circle. The Quarter House became the main germ for the creation of the final Detritus House.
   a) Top View
      The top view was created to show the relationships between the different geometries at play in the house, particularly the repeated circle. The balance of the artifact is best understood in this drawing, which shows the house easily divided into four quadrants each with its own geometry, the fourth being empty.
   b) Front Elevation
      This drawing is likely the most influential drawing leading to the Detritus House, the tension here between the circle and triangle became very influential.
   c) Section 1
      Performed to understand the relationship between the cantilevered fragment on the left with the volume of the house on the right.
   d) Section 2
      A longitudinal section performed to understand the relationships and balance between the front, inside, and back of the artifact.
B. The Detritus House

1. Floor Plan 1

The First floor contains the parent’s bedroom and bathroom, and the kitchen. Outside is the car park, small reflecting pool, projecting screen, and the small side-yard amphitheater with tree.

2. Floor Plan 2

The second floor contains the living spaces; the viewing canister and a comfortable living room with windows looking directly onto the projection screen. The living room acts as a sort of neutral or buffer zone between the parents on the ground floor and the children on the third.

3. Floor Plan 3

The third floor is dedicated to family dining and the children’s “nest”. There is a dumbwaiter that allows food to be brought up from the kitchen on the ground floor to the dining area. The porch is also accessed from the third floor, easily accessible to the curious children.

4. Section A-A

Primarily shows the relationship between the left and right sides of the house which are divided by a “split wall.” At the end of this linear in-between space is a spiral stair accessing the three levels of the house.

5. Front Elevation

a) Projecting Screen

The Detritus house does not have a television. All entertainment media are displayed on a massive projector screen oriented directly in front of the house.

6. Section B-B

Displays the relationships between the different spaces of the house as well as the “screening” function of the projection screen in front of the house.

7. Axonometric

A study to understand the contrast, balance, and tension of the forms and geometries at play within the house. This was important to see and understand the way the repeating circles played off one another.

8. Details

Process sketches done to understand the joining of the double wall edge condition where the side of the “house” portion meets the split wall. It is meant to create a sort of rhythm and add to the idea of an extended threshold.

9. Esoteric Drawing

A post-rationalization of the design process.

10. Collage Section

Section of the house drawn using more domestic detritus.

11. Experiences

a) Street View

As the visitor approaches the house from the street they first encounter the large screen, projecting either from within the house or whatever media the family happens to be projecting. The visitor makes his/her way around the screen and turns to approach the front door.

b) Front Door

The Parents live in the front of the house on the first floor, their bedroom immediately visible to any visitor approaching the front door. This public orientation puts their life on display and allows them quick and easy access to the vital functions of the home.

c) Side Yard

The side yard amphitheater should be a multi-use space, primarily for family gatherings as a sort of outdoor living room, it could also be used for play by the children, or a reflective/meditative space.

d) The Porch

A sidewalk raised to the third story and overlooking the amphitheater, encircling the top of the tree and raised on either side by a standard chain-link fence. The sidewalk comes to an abrupt end in midair before the semicircle can be completed.

e) Viewing Canister

An intimate theater box perched on the edge of the living spaces, used to view and control the outside projecting screen. The ceiling here is very low to encourage sitting and watching through the windows.

f) 3rd Floor + Kids Room

The children live in the uppermost extremities of the house, away from the cluttered, publicized, and domesticated life of the parents. Here, in their mastabatorium, they are free to explore their own curiosities away from the prying eyes of their parents.


"Split wall" here starts to take on the meaning of an extended or inhabitable threshold. It also brings to mind the idea of reflection, or inhabiting a mirror, the inside of the wall in my Detritus House becomes an in-between place, possibly a nod towards the ideas of heterotopias - although I don’t think the inside of this “wall” has enough identity.


This was directly inspired by the Mystery Man and his secretive filming of the Macdonals within their own home in David Lynch’s Lost Highway.

Lost Highway, dir. David Lynch (France, United States: City 2000, 1997), DVD.

Colonna distinguishes between the subject of a house within Lous and Corbu houses as being either an intruder, or a visitor - someone who is about to enter a room, or who has just left. The subject of the Detritus House is a guest, like a guest in a theater house. He is present, watching, but outside of the action.

III. Methodology

A. Surrealism. Methodology and Process

1. Domestic Artifact

Assembled from fragments of domesticity with the aim of creating an artifact with architectural spaces which could be used to generate ideas of buildings or structures. This exercise furthered the design process into the design of an architectural space, and acted as a study for the same exercise performed in the design of the Detritus House. This was the last design exercise completed before the work that became the Detritus House was begun.

a) Analysis, Front Elevation

Displays the fair amount of balance and architectural spaces available in the construction of the artifact. The exercise of drawing was especially helpful in understanding the aesthetic relationships between the different domestic items - the mechanical properties of the toaster or TV tube, the more elegant proportions of the chair leg, the utilitarian form of the coffee maker, etc.

b) Sections 1-4

These sections represent the step in automatic drawing where the conscious mind finally begins to emerge and take control of the process. Although these designs are entirely independent from the final Detritus House, they do share some common elements which were eventually carried over, through both conscious effort and subconscious happenstance, into the final house. Regrettably, the “curtain” shown in Section 1 does not appear in any other drawings. The main difficulty and importance in exercising this method of drawing, was resisting the compulsion to draw too many floor plates, which ran the risk of eliminating the value of the entire design methodology. Of course, the point of automatism is to follow compulsion, eventually I learned how to find the correct balance between banal and abnormal/rational and irrational.

2. “The Cat” - In a bag / The Cat Out of the Bag

“The Cat” - as it has been called, was a difficult fragment to work with. It seemed to be the perfect domestic fragment yet it maintained too much identity as a hide and consistently set the artifacts to which it was integrated off-balance. The nature of the hide itself simply called too much attention to itself. However, the main problem of the cat also turned out to be its strong point. In a logical sense, the hide was no less banal than a fur coat, a leather jacket, or a simple house cat, yet, adding in the fact that it was dead - also a very normal and everyday element of life, caused people to react strongly to it - even without the plastic bag, zip ties, and broken glass. Although formally/tectonically the cat may not have been a success, it may have evoked a more “surreal” feeling than any of my other models/artifacts.

a) Vertical Section

To show the makeup of the artifact and the relationships between its parts

b) Horizontal Sections

To show the spaces created within the void of the artifact. The most noteworthy thing here is the layering of different types/materials of screens and their different textures and opacities.

3. Ship and A Bottle

The artifact was the first assemblage attempted and was fairly successful. Although it does not demonstrate architectural spaces, it does have a good sense of balance and tension between natural and man-made materials.

a) Vertical Section

The section further displays the architectonic qualities of the artifact.

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Curtains are significant in the work of both David Lynch and Adolf Loos. Curtains create a sense of “limited infinity,” or an ambiguous barrier, and are representative of a stage or theater (both of which are also important to Lynch and Loos). If I had the opportunity to correct my mistake, I would install a retractable sliding curtain on the underside of the “porch” raised sidewalk, around the amphitheater on the Detritus House project.

B. Assemblages

1. Assemblage 1
   Spray foam + steel wool. This object was a simple test in the collage of two materials, strong in ambiguity.

2. Assemblage 2
   Steel wool + tire rubber + tree fragments + square dowels. An evolution of Item 1, Item 2 incorporates more material and more variety, exploring relationships between organic and manufactured fragments.

3. Assemblage 3
   Dvd player case + door knob + paper packing material + sticks + plastic wrap + string + drinking straws. This object is the first that begins to explore space, the doorknob attempts to act as a place making object. Fragments may be balanced well but there is little to no tension between the elements.

4. Assemblage 4
   Clutch fan + plastic bag + wire + dirt. Perhaps too forceful of an attempt to create space within the artifact. It could benefit from an additional fragment for added balance or to add tension.

5. Assemblage 5
   Television with VHS player + dining chair leg + baseball glove + hairdryer. A good balance and assemblage of materials, interesting depth but perhaps more could have been done with architectural spaces. I would have liked to draw this in section.

C. Collages

A series of collages were done to begin to understand balance and tension between fragments. Some were done using randomly “found” objects while others were made deliberately with images representing domesticity or “theater.” An understanding of attempting to convey the idea of transparency or depth (without actually doing it) became evident through this process, and an attempt was made to carry these motions through to further studies.

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53 Thanks to my studiomates for letting me tear up their old boards to use for some of these collages; Jeremy Bowen, Andrew Mesa, Jenshe Floyd.
III.B.5.
D. Exercise: 9 Houses

Of nine total studies in material and subconscious model-making, three were selected as the most successful or with the highest potential to be carried forward through the first rendition of the surrealist method. Each of the nine models was constructed with a single material or concept which was spontaneously added to the floor plan of a typical suburban house.

1. Germs
   a) Consumption House
      Spray foam expands unpredictably to encompass living spaces. Erupting uncontrollably through apertures of the house. Spaces created are womb-like and continuous.
      The Consumption house allowed for the freest form of spontaneity and randomness, due to the nature of the spray foam insulation. An area was chosen at random, and a random amount of foam was injected into the cell of the house, from there on the construction of the model was up to the house itself. Additionally, the final step of carving spaces out of the foam was dictated through a combination of direction from the foam and my own consciousness. Apertures between spaces in the foam were generated randomly based on air pockets formed during the spraying process.
   b) Convoluted House
      Unwieldy convoluted tubing penetrates through spaces and walls. It creates extended thresholds of “non-space” between rooms of the house.
      Bends and openings in the tunnels were dictated by how the tubes reacted to my subconscious alterations to the forms.
   c) Torn House
      Ambiguous material envelopes surfaces and intersects spaces.
      Of the three “Germ” models, the Torn House felt to be the closest to automatism. Although there was a fair amount of control over the material, the lack of resistance from the material meant it was simple to let my subconscious mind take over to create the forms within the house. As in automatism, as the subconscious began a movement, my conscious mind would occasionally step in to complete it, or join two movements together, in an effort to create balance or tension in the piece.
      Added surfaces divide and separate through penetration. Rooms within rooms emerge.

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1. The spray foam in the house overwhelms the banality, offsetting the balance of the model.
2. Distinguish from the Consumption House, the convoluted tubing allowed a very good balance between what I was able to control/my level of involvement in the design, and what the material took over from me.
3. This house, even more than the Consumption House, reminds me of some sort of growth or parasite, like a wasps nest or weeds growing through a sidewalk. There is a good balance between this “alien” form and the binal, and the material qualities suggest a certain fuzziness that provide ambiguity.
4. "True photography of thought" (Breton) Writing or drawing without conscious interference. Knight, Stuart.
6. Consider Adolf Loos’s theater boxes in the Moller House. Rooms within rooms, spaces which gaze into other spaces.
2. Studies

The three germ models were each drawn in both section and floor plan three times, with consideration made towards one of the three architects which I chose as having the most potential for application to surrealism; Le Corbusier, Adolf Loos, and Friedrich Kiesler. This helped me to understand the methods each of these architects employed and how I could use them in my own design. Names were chosen for each house spontaneously.

a) Isolation House
Consumption House Origin with Corbusian Influence

b) Quiet House
Consumption House Origin with Loosian Influence. Collage was added as an early exercise in designing/understanding spaces through collage.

c) Smooth House
Consumption House Origin with Kiesler Influence

d) Seduction House
Convoluted House Origin with Corbusian Influence

e) Parasite House
Convoluted House Origin with Loosian Influence

f) Assimilation House
Convoluted House Origin with Kiesler Influence

g) Anger House
Torn House Origin with Corbusian Influence

h) Fractured House
Torn House Origin with Loosian Influence

i) Cell House
Torn House Origin with Kiesler Influence
Voyeurism

**DEFINE: VOYEURISM**

The obtaining of primal/instinctual pleasure or gratification by a prying observer through a curious or controlling gaze of unsuspecting individuals, the private, or the forbidden.84

**VOYEUR**

Webster’s Dictionary83

1: one obtaining sexual gratification from observing unsuspecting individuals who are partly undressed, naked, or engaged in sexual acts

broadly: one who habitually seeks sexual stimulation by visual means

2: a prying observer who is usually seeking the sordid or the scandalous

**SCOPOPHILIA**

Dictionary.com

"voyeurism," 1924 (in a translation of Freud), from Greek -skopia "observation" (see scope) + -philia.85

Freud isolates scopophilia as one of the component instincts of sexuality that exist as drives independently of the subject’s erotogenic zones: in scopophilia, the subject takes other people as objects of (sexual) pleasure by subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze…. Freud’s examples centre on the voyeuristic activities of children, and their desire to see the private and forbidden (e.g., curiosity about other people’s genital and bodily functions, about the presence or absence of the penis, etc.).

**E. Voyeur House III**

The third iteration of the Voyeur House alters the site/context of the house and creates a narrative of the voyeur and his relationship to his home. The site can now be considered the Voyeur’s house itself, which was once a typical suburban home identical to his neighbors, but has since been modified by the Voyeur to allow views into each of the surrounding houses. The detritus and waste produced by the Voyeur populates the spaces of the house which are not needed to see outside. Windows have been expanded and walls torn out to create optimal views.

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84 My own definition, derived from the following terms.


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85 The house is no longer a totality of raw voyeurism, an attempt has been made for balance between the binal reality of the suburban house and the strangeness of the parasitic relationship with the Voyeur.

Critique: Would have liked to have considered how the Voyeur House might have been inhabited differently, what if the context (surrounding suburbia) of the project was brought into the house - allowing the voyeur to live within the walls of the house and spy, unknown to the true inhabitants. This would create a deeper level of duality and tension much more indicative of surrealism.
F. Voyeur House II

The Second iteration of the Voyeur House places the house within a site, the suburban street - injecting the Voyeur’s house into reality. The house is limited in geometry (but not yet appearance) to other suburban houses.

WHAT DOES THE VOYEUR SEE?

Each room of the house is framed to look into a specific window in one of the Voyeur’s neighbors houses. A lonely man’s living room, a woman’s bathroom mirror, a teenager’s bedroom, etc.

Although the house is now located on a site, it still exists as voyeurism in a totality rather than a collage of ideas or forms. It does, however, provide a context or relationship to the real world through the specific destination/subjects for each view. Most importantly, the exercise lacks the qualities and characteristics that define a “house” (see I.C. “What is a House?”)
III.F.

Does the Vantage See

Domestic Violence
People Watching TV
Lone & Affection

Bathroom
Childhood Bedroom

Daily Dinners
Adultery

House of Disappearance
Room of Discovery

1. The House of Disappearance
   - Full front porch
   - Street sign

2. House of Loneliness
   - Empty rooms never used
   - Overgrown, but no meaning
   - Always dark
   - Always dark

3. House of Forever
   - Single but full
   - Lights always on

4. House of Perjury
   - Only visible window
   - Mysterious

5. House of Disappearance
   - Room of discovery
   - Backward of adventure

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

Level 4

Level 5
The house for the voyeur consists of many different rooms; each of the rooms of his house is dedicated to framing exactly what is going on in one of his neighbor’s houses. The voyeur sits in his great comfy reclining armchair and watches all that goes on. The recliner is built into the voyeur’s house along a track and chain, which pulls his chair through the house. The voyeur doesn’t mind what he sees, but he has to watch. He expects nothing but hopes for everything.

This first iteration demonstrates raw voyeurism as a totality, as such, it does not represent a collage by any means. There is no banality to offset the strangeness of the house, and similarly, no relation to reality to create a heterotopic space.

The armchair may be understood as a prosthetic, or as transforming the voyeur into a cyborg, with the juxtaposition of the biological and the mechanical.
H. Dream House

Reached only by a one-person rowboat, the dream house sits on a humble pedestal within a calm centerless sea, interrupted only by quiet ripples of thought.

A narrow staircase carves through the house transporting the lone inhabitant throughout its many levels. Using the stair, however, causes forgetfulness, and the events and realizations which occur in the rooms of the house are scarcely remembered. The rooms of the house are each places of memory and contemplation. At the top of the house is cut a great room which is open to the sky, the theatre of the mind. Many of the upper rooms look out onto the endless horizon or gaze upon viscous reflections on the surface of the sea. The lower rooms are dark and featureless, submerged below the surface in a thick pressure of introversion.

The exercise was helpful not so much as an exercise in surrealism but as a way to understand the different parts of the idea of a dream. As a design it was definitely too structured to be related to surrealism.
References


The sequence at the end in the bedroom is distinctly surreal, balancing high tech elements and lighting with antique furniture and decorum.

Lynch, David, director. Blue Velvet.

Blue Velvet shows, in typical Lynchian fashion, how typical small town domestic life is disrupted with sexual violence. There are also themes of voyeurism, and the main villain, Frank, could be said to have a biomorphic relationship with a gas drug which he breathes.


Colomina discusses multiple projects by the architects Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier. Most prevalent to my research being her evaluation of the Moller House, Josephine Baker House, Villa Savoye, and the Beistegui Apartment. She points out design movements such as thresholds, screens, windows, mirrors, and reflection; and each architect’s treatment of the gaze or view. She also discusses elements such as the “domestic character” of a space and compares and contrasts deeply the methods and spaces of the two architects, dealing with everything from spatial qualities to the atmospheres of their photographs.


Whether it is trustworthy or not, Zampano has some interesting commentary on echoes and labyrinths and other topics. The contrast and juxtaposition between the voices of Zampano and Traunt are worth noting. The structure and formatting of the book is interesting as well.

Lynch, David, director. Eraserhead, American Film Institute, 1977.

David Lynch’s “dream of dark and troubling things”, it deals with “banal” domestic life when an unexpected baby intrudes. It includes heterotopias, such as Henry’s apartment and the stage inside the radiator. Eraserhead has an atmosphere of uncanniness, even the location, technically Philadelphia although shot entirely in LA, is a contradiction.


Early in my research this film was helpful towards a better understanding of the history and background of Surrealism, as well as the movement which preceded it, dada.


"The Uncanny" covers the psychological significance of the term "uncanny" and provides interesting information the origin of the word and its relation to the German "unheimlich", or unhomely. Freud illuminates the psychology behind something which can be both familiar and frightening. Freud also examines the concept of "voyeurism" and compares it to childhood curiosity.


Includes interesting thoughts on the atmospheres of spaces.


An excellent surreal experience of collage/montage.


This film examines voyeurism and the invasion of domesticity through its main villain, the "mystery man," who has an almost cyborg/chimera-like relationship with a video camera. Like most of Lynch's films, Lost Highway exists within its own world - a heterotopia, which operates by its own rules.


Twin Peaks is an excellent case study for surrealism as space. Lynch uses a typical small town to expose the inherent uncanniness. As in most of his films, Lynch inserts one small element, in this case the death of Laura Palmer, as a way of exposing or creating strangeness out of the banal. The most important architectural spaces in relevance to my research are Laura Palmer's house and the "red room". Laura Palmer's house is a perfect example of everyday domestic life which has been disturbed by some outside force, it shows the domestic house as "a place for things to go wrong." The red room, on the other hand, is a perfect example of heterotopia, and the "kedge entities" which live inside it can be described as minotaurs or chimeras.


Richard Martin details the prime symbolic spatial types used by David Lynch; small town, city, home, road, and stage. He elaborates on how Lynch uses each of these as foundation for his films. Martin draws connections to Lynch between architects such as Adolf Loos, David Greene, Le Corbusier, Rem Koolhaus, and Bruno Taut. Martin also introduced the concept of the heterotopia, as defined by the philosopher Foucault. Martin was invaluable to my understanding of the relationships between film and cinematic spaces and atmospheres and architecture, and the interweaving of physical and psychological space.


Deals with issues of personal identity.


A brief explanation of Adolf Loos's unbuilt Josephine Baker House. Slesor draws parallels between Baker's mythic celebrity status and the identity of the house itself. She identifies Baker as a cultural sex icon, a subject of exoticism and desire. In relation to this she tackles voyeurism, noting the central moment in the house - Josephine's indoor pool, as well as the reflective qualities of its subterranean windows.


Deals with themes of desire and suffering.


Neil Spiller's book is a comprehensive catalog of surrealist art and architecture. The work most significant to my research including Marcel Duchamp (Nude Descending A Staircase), the works of Francis Bacon, Hans Bellmer, H.R. Giger, Anne Troutman, Diller Scofidio Renfro, FAT Architecture (Anti-Oedipal House), and Frederick Kiesler (Endless House).


A useful catalog of surrealist art and architecture in a more modern context. Spiller introduces works which combine different media, often "biomorphic", such as digital or mechanical combined with other forms of art or architecture.


Stalker deals heavily on the concept of desire, and what may happen when we achieve our innermost desires. I also examined it with the idea of reflection and architectural promenade. "The Zone" and "The Room" in Stalker are heterotopic, and their spatial and atmospheric qualities were important to understand.
Strange juxtaposition of different spaces and times, real and unreal historical events. Characters themselves could be considered surreal or uncanny, as grown men the size of children, in a film that seems like a children's movie for adults - contradiction.

Strange juxtaposition through more spatial and time scenarios. Multiple occurrences of people wrapped in plastic.

Veselý provides an excellent introduction to surrealism, shedding light on the philosophy of the movement and common misconceptions behind their goals. He elaborates on the perspective of the surrealists and their unconventional and less talked about methods. Frampton introduces Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier and identifies the surrealistic movements within their projects, including Corbu's Beistegui apartment. Knight provide a useful list of the functional processes and methodologies employed by the surrealists.

Vidler covers Freud's concept of the uncanny from a more architectural context. He talks about "the hidden terrors of the house" and compares the two distinct words "house and "home." He discusses relationships between the psyche and the dwelling, the body and the house. Vidler identifies the genesis of the architectural uncanny as a sensation best and first experience as an interior space, he also elaborates on the contribution of the rise of cities, and the disturbing or uncanny issues of scale and relationships that came with them.
Reflections

Although the title is “Surrealism and Architecture”, looking back on my project I believe that even more than surrealism, I was studying and interrogating the architectural design process. This project arose out of inspirational movies, images, and projects by other architects, and I wanted to learn how to think in the way that they did. I quickly learned that the final work we see in published architecture books is only a very small fraction of the work and thought behind the actual process. Part consciously, but mostly subconsciously, my project began to look deeper and deeper into this process, and I began to realize just how much of an architectural design lies in the process and methodology - or perhaps how much of the process and methodology of the project is no less of a design than the design of the architecture itself.

As an interrogation or an exploration, I do not think my project and findings could be classified as a “success” or “failure” as long as I learned from the process, and I certainly have. But, from my exploration into “Surrealism & Architecture” I can conclude that the methodology and process of design is just as important to the realization of a project as the design decisions themselves. The methodology and process make the design, and as different projects may demand different methodologies and design processes, I believe it is a vital architectural decision to craft and choose what is appropriate for the task at hand.