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**Haptic, Habituated and Higher Dwelling:
The MOMA Exhibition “Endless House:
Intersections of Art and Architecture”**

**Sarah Breen Lovett
Post-Doctoral Research Fellow
University of Sydney
Australia**

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Athens Institute for Education and Research
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209 Email: info@atiner.gr URL:
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**Haptic, Habituated and Higher Dwelling:
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Sarah Breen Lovett

Abstract

This paper proposes that haptic, habitual and higher states of dwelling are explored in the art and architectural works presented in the MOMA exhibition titled “Endless House: Intersections of Art and Architecture” from June 27 2015 to March 06 2016 curated by Pedro Gadanho and Phoebe Springstubb. This exhibition “considers the single family home and archetypes of dwelling as creative endeavours of architects and artist.” It has been criticised for a lack of curatorial coherency, but has been noted as examining universal themes of architecture. This paper is the first attempt at a fuller discussion of these themes. The comparison is carried out against a framework of theories by Walter Benjamin, James Gibson, Elizabeth Grosz, Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, followed by an in-depth examination of work and theories by featured architect/artist Frederick Kiesler (1890-1965), and a comparative summary of all the works in the exhibition. Some of the most well-known architects in the exhibition include Mies van der Rohe, Frank Gehry, Peter Eisenman, Rem Koolhaas, Smiljan Radić and Asymptote; alongside artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Bruce Nauman, Mario Merz, and Rachel Whiteread. This approach views Kiesler’s theories as a benchmark the other works may continue from or push against. The broad spectrum of examples in the exhibition outlines a cohesive body of work to illustrate the significance of the re-occurring themes in the exhibition.

Keywords: Dwelling, Habitual, Haptic, Higher, Kiesler.

Introduction

What makes a work of architecture eligible for selection in an art exhibition? Why is this relevant to the discipline of architecture? This paper proposes one answer to these questions through observing of some key works within the 2016 MOMA exhibition titled *Endless House: Intersections of Art and Architecture*. This exhibition, curated by Pedro Gadanho and Phoebe Springstubb, presents 67 of the most well-known and oft-discussed works at this interdisciplinary intersection. This exhibition has been criticised by many reviewers for being too general and non-committal to a curatorial agenda.¹ Even Gadanho, in his essay and panel discussion on *Endless House* explains this looseness to be in the spirit of the ‘endless,’ like featured artist/architect Frederick Kiesler would want.² However, this exhibition requires examination because of its significance for the discipline of architecture, which is drawn from the multiple statements that ‘universal themes’ of architecture explored in the exhibition.³

Despite the potential fertility of the topic (the ‘universal themes’ of architecture), no curator, critic or historian has undertaken an analysis of what these themes could be in relation to this exhibition. Attempting to discuss this is a difficult and, perhaps, naive task. It is acknowledged that experiences and understandings of architecture are culturally and socially informed, so to venture into a universal account is impossible. Any reading of the works in the exhibition is subjective, and defined by one’s own world view – like most curatorial statements or critical reviews. However, upon in depth examination of Kiesler’s *Endless House*, followed by an analysis of writings and theories behind all works in the exhibition some re-occurring themes do emerge.

Across multiple buildings, time frames, continents and cultures three dominant themes in the exhibition come into focus. While each of these is interconnected, and individual works have elements of all three lines within them, they are discussed here separately so we may observe the various ways each emerges. Firstly, one can observe the common argument that many people experience dwelling in a haptic, corporeal interface with the built environment. Numerous works in the exhibition act to amplify this. Secondly, there are various notions of dwelling which are considered to be quotidian and habitually part of ourselves. Many of the works challenge these ideas. Thirdly, experiences of

¹A. Katz, “MoMA’s “Endless House” Exhibition Misses the Mark,” in *Blouinartinfo* (2015); J. Fargo, “Review: ‘Endless House’ Expands the Definition of Home,” in *The New York Times* (2015); A. Khachiyani, “MoMA’s “Endless House” Is a Bleak Affair,” in *Metropolis* (2015).

²P. Gadanho, “Open-Ended Matter,” in *Endless Kiesler* (ed.) F. Bollinger and K. Medicus (Switzerland: The Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation Birkhauser, 2015), 220-231; Gadanho, “Panel Discussion and Book Launch Endless Kiesler,” in *IoA Institute of Architecture University of Applied Arts Vienna* (2016)

³E. Tettamanti, “Endless House. Friederick Kiesler at the MoMA,” in *Eight Art Project* (2015); P. Gadanho and P. Springstubb, “Endless House: experimental archetypes of dwelling,” in *The Architectural Review* (2015); V. Gintoff, “MoMA Mines Its Unparalleled Holdings for Its “Endless House” Exhibition,” in *Arch Daily* (2015); A. Bifulco, “Mostra MoMA New York Endless House,” in *Floor Nature Architecture and Surfaces* (2015).

dwelling that are perceived to be beyond, transcendent or higher than everyday architecture are explored by several of the works in the exhibition.

This link between the haptic, habitual and higher self can be related to theories by scholars such as Walter Benjamin, who examines how the human relationship to architectural surroundings exists in a distracted state of tactile appropriation.⁴ This means that we habitually and haptically experience architectural assemblages, but are not necessarily aware of this because of the quotidian nature of our relationship to architecture. This idea can be further explored through psychologist James Gibson's notions of *affordance*. Affordance suggests that the implied purpose of certain objects can impact the way we perceive the limits of our bodies. Affordance does not dictate the way humans relate to the world around them; rather, it opens possibilities for action. For example, Gibson says, "horizontal, flat, extended, rigid surface affords support. It permits equilibrium and the maintaining of posture with respect to gravity, this being a force perpendicular to the surface."⁵ Hence the way we physically and mentally encounter a surface is, in part, prescribed by the way we perceive it to be related to our physical body.

The way that thinking through the habitual and haptic can lead to experiences of higher dwelling can be seen through philosopher Gilles Deleuze's reading of Henri Bergson. Here we can understand habit does not restrict us, but rather it is a construct that we respond and react to. This is evidenced when Deleuze quotes Bergson saying, "it will be seen that the progress of attention results in creating a new, not only the object perceived, but also the ever-widening systems with which it may be bound up."⁶ This could be extrapolated to mean that when a person realises they are part of a system, they are becoming aware of themselves in relation to a construct that exists outside of themselves. As theorist Elizabeth Grosz says, seeing the notion of habit through this lens, enables it to be shifted from something that restricts us, confines us and determines our actions, to become a creative entity which we can respond to and push forward from into the future.⁷ That is, there needs to be something to push from in order to be *free*. Grosz goes on to argue that it is only because of the unconscious way that we relate to our surroundings that we have the energy to go beyond this, explore and consider our environment from new points of view that challenge the normative understandings that we have.⁸

Such a challenge to the way we habitually understand the parameters of the body can also be thought through Deleuze and Felix Guattari's notions of a *Body*

⁴W. Benjamin, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Marxists* (1936); A. Ballantyne, "Architecture, Life and Habit," in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 69, no.1 (2011): 43-49; M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1945); E. Manning, *Relationescapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy: Technologies of Lived Abstraction* (Cambridge: Mass.: MIT Press, 2012), 7, 14.

⁵J. Gibson, "Theory of Affordances," in *People, Place, Space* (ed.) J. J. Gieseking (New York: Routledge, 2014), 57.

⁶G. Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 46.

⁷E. Grosz, "Habit Today: Ravaisson, Bergson, Deleuze and Us," in *Body and Society* 19, no. 2&3 (2013), 217-25.

⁸*Ibid*, 226.

Without Organs in A Thousand Plateaus.⁹ Amidst the complex exploration of mental and physical conditions that Deleuze and Guattari touch upon, one motif is pivotal, this is: the fundamental freeing of definitions of the physical and mental, the real and the imagined. This loosening of preconceptions defines the way we use the body; “The body without organs is not a dead body but a living body all the more alive and teeming once it has blown apart the organism and its organization,”¹⁰ “Why not walk on your head,” write Deleuze and Guattari, “sing with your sinuses, see through your skin, breathe with your belly.”¹¹ Deleuze and Guattari explore these types of experiences that de-territorialize the body through altered mental states such as schizophrenia, or the effects of taking of intoxicants that dislocate the body into an altered space.¹² This can be thought of as a state of dwelling that goes beyond the corporeally bound haptic circumstances or our quotidian habitual relationships into another higher realm.

Extending this line of inquiry, the works in the exhibition simultaneously contemplate the ordinary in order to promote the extra-ordinary, or encourage an exploration of the extra-ordinary in order to critique the ordinary. The works, turn a lens on ourselves and can collectively be seen as a fundamental desire to further understand the act of dwelling.

Haptic Dwelling

Kiesler says to really understand architecture we must first examine ourselves, this is evident in his observation that “the technological environment is produced by human needs. Investigation on this crucial point cannot be based upon the study of architecture but must be based upon the study of the life processes of man.”¹³ Specifically Kiesler’s *Endless House* addressed this by “striving for an expression of fundamental needs – not of primitive needs, but of needs which are fundamental to our well-being,”¹⁴ which he goes on to point out are “eating, sleeping and sex.”¹⁵ This builds upon Kiesler’s main driving force behind the design of the *Endless*

⁹G. Deleuze and F. Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: B. Massumi Trans, University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 161; E. Kaufman and K. J. Heller, *Deleuze & Guattari: New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy, and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 6; A. Ballantyne, *Deleuze & Guattari for Architects* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 34-36. It must be noted that the term *body without organs* was first used by in: A. Artaud, “To Have Done with the Judgment of God,” in *Anton Artaud Selected Writings* (ed.) S. Sontag (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 562- 571.

¹⁰Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 2005, 3.

¹¹Ibid, 151.

¹²G. Deleuze, “Thirteenth Series of the Schizophrenic and the Little Girl,” in *The Logic of Sense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 150.

¹³CBS Camera 3, “Fredrick Kielser. The Endless House,” in *Endless Kiesler* (ed.) F. Bollinger and K. Medicus (Switzerland: The Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation Birkhauser, 1960), 240-241.

¹⁴Ibid, 240.

¹⁵F. Kiesler, *Inside the endless house: art, people, and architecture: a journal* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), 246.

House, which is to “resolve problems of health, hygiene and comfort.”¹⁶ Kiesler says the only way we can advance architecture is if we consider it foremost from the point of view of our health, because it is a machine to keep us alive.¹⁷ All other reasons for designing architecture are secondary to this.

The womb-like nature of Kiesler’s *Endless House* is the most obvious aspect of their physical design. Formed out of a reaction to modernism’s cube like shapes, which he thought created a feeling of being “encompassed” and “hampered.”¹⁸ In contrast, he sees the *Endless House* as a place for the encouragement of “organic force as it relates to the dynamic equilibrium of body-motion within encompassed space.”¹⁹ This can be seen as a way of wrapping architecture around ones’ self. Other examples in the exhibition that have a curvilinear design are David Jacob’s *Simulated Dwelling For a Family of Five* and Asymptote’s *Wing House*.

While these contemporary parametric versions of the *Endless House* are have a much more aerodynamic and lighter aesthetic, the closed curvilinear form of *Endless House* alludes to a heavy weighted building, as though it is carved away from a solid. One can imagine, not feeling inside a house that is placed on the land – but embedded within a heavy mass. Wrapped. Enveloped. Overwhelmed. Almost weighed down by the solid/void relationship. Other geometric compositions of dwelling in the exhibition where this potential haptic experience is evident include Raimund Abraham’s *House Without Rooms*, Charles Gwathmey *Residence*, Frank Gehry’s *Winton House*, and Simon Unger’s *T-House*. Another way the solid/void relationship explored in the exhibition is through works such as Rachael Whiteread’s *House* and Kevin Appel’s *House – South Rotation Red: 4 West*. In these drawings access to the dwelling is obliterated, so that the only way to enter them is with the mind. In this way, these works potentially heighten their corporeal experience because imaginary access by the body is denied.

Architecturally, Kiesler pursued the curvilinear form of *Endless House* through a “continuous tension construction”.²⁰ Here, the floor becomes the wall, which becomes the roof. This was also because it informs the number of connections in a buildings structure. This was important to Kiesler because he foresaw that every joint allows the “process of disruption from natural forces.”²¹ In this way he was an early forerunner to the notion of passive house design. His proposal for a hermetically sealed envelope would have impacted, not only on the interior thermal conditions, but also on the body’s experience of the environment outside. This was not to totally cut off the outside world, but rather filter and direct it, through various technologies. One clear example is Kiesler’s *Colour Clock* in the *Endless House* – where the light coming through different coloured windows at

¹⁶L. McGuire, “Space House,” in *Booklet 11 Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation* (2012), 17.

¹⁷F. Kiesler, “On Correalism and Biotechnique,” in *Rethinking Technology: A Reader in Architectural Theory* (ed.) W. W. Braham, J. A. Hale, A. Jonathan and J. S. Sadar (New York: Routledge, 1939), 72-74.

¹⁸CBS Camera 3, “Fredrick Kielser. The Endless House,” 1960, 233.

¹⁹McGuire, “Space House,” 2012, 19.

²⁰CBS Camera 3, “Fredrick Kielser. The Endless House,” 236.

²¹Kiesler, “On Correalism and Biotechnique,” 1939, 76.

different times of day makes us more aware of the “continuity of time and of his own integration with natural forces.”²² Other projects within the exhibition that utilize technology to highlight relationships to nature are Diller and Scofidio’s *Slow House* and Paul Rudolf’s *Residence for Herbert Green*.

In opposition, some of the other works in the exhibition focus on a heightened relationship with nature not through a filter, but rather creating an all-encompassing experience of nature which overpowers the act of dwelling. It overwhelms the interior with the outside world, which can have the effect of amplifying nature and shrinking the sense of self and architecture. This is most evident in Mies van der Rohe’s *Farnsworth House*, where Meis said;

"We should strive to bring nature, houses and people together into a higher unity. When one looks at nature through the glass walls of the Farnsworth House it takes on a deeper significance than when one stands outside. More of nature is thus expressed - it becomes part of a greater whole."²³

These ideas are also evident in Kazuyo Sejima’s *Villa in the Forest*, and Mehrdad Yazdani’s *Oxnard House*. A sense of the dwelling being overcome by outside forces is more abrupt in Gordon Matta Clarke’s *Splitting* and Sigalit Landau’s *Day Done*. In Raimund Abraham’s *Universal House Project*, which is literally underwater, the occupant would also have haptic issues of compression, oxygen supply and darkness to contend with.

Some of the works also create a new corporeal experience of architecture through a unique approach to materiality. Seen specifically in the varied material forms such as metal, brick, limestone and plywood in Ghery’s *Winton House* and Yazdani’s *Oxnard House*, where each part of the building is a new space for occupying a unique material form. The use of rusting steel in Unger’s *T-House* and Gehry’s *Familiar House*, explicitly portrays the passing of time and the fragility (as opposed to the permanency of architecture). Other works include a shiny metallic material finish such as, Hans Hollein’s *Beach House*, Rodney Graham’s *Vahtek*, Andrea Zittel’s *A-Z Escape Vehicle Interior World Model* and Rudolf’s *Residence for Herbert Green*. These dwellings raise questions about the domestic and how it might feel to occupy a home with the materiality of an automobile, aeroplane or toaster.

In contrast, to these architects, Kiesler seems indifferent to the actual material of the *Endless House* when he says “the concept is the thing – not the execution [...] the architect as a craftsman can build with any material to express the ritual of life within a dwelling [...] The architect-technician will not think in terms of materials as such. He will evoke from any one of them strength, closeness and depth, an abundant scale of textures.”²⁴ So, while Kiesler himself may not have

²²Kiesler, “Pseudo-Functionalism in Modern Architecture,” in *Friedrich Kiesler: endless house/ Friedrich Kiesler-Zentrum, Wien* (Museum for Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern-Ruit, Deutschland), 1949, 50.

²³van der Rohe, *MoMA Highlights* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 217 .

²⁴Kiesler, “Endless House: A Man Built Cosmos,” in *Endless Kiesler* (ed.) F. Bollinger and K. Medicus (Switzerland: The Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, Birkhauser, 1962), 247.

been prescriptive of what material the *Endless House* should be made from, he still demands a corporeal response to whichever material was used.

Aside from these more typical ways of manipulating architectural form or material to affect corporeal experience, other works in the exhibition are more direct in their desire for haptic impact, such as Michael Graves' *Hanselmann House* and use of architecture to frame various understandings of the body.²⁵ These ideas are even more prevalent in the works where 'architecture' is an extension of, or apparatus to the body, such as universal access in Rem Koolhaas' *Lemoine House*, more theatrically in Ward Shelley and Alex Schweder *Counterweight Roommate*, Vito Acconci's *Instant House #2*, and Lucy Orta's body-suit house called *Untitled from the series Art in the News*. These works, not only heighten and highlight haptic relationships with dwelling, but also challenge our habituated expectations of what our corporeal relationship with architecture should be.

Habitual Dwelling

One of the main reasons that Kiesler pursued the idea of the *Endless House* was to break beyond the confines of modern architecture and the notion of form follows function.²⁶ Kiesler says, to design without trying to advance the way that we habitually relate to architecture does "violence to the freedom and self-realization of the basic functions of living man."²⁷ Kiesler's paper *On Correalism and Biotechnique* outlines the idea of "Man being born in evolution of "hereditary trends" which are not "transmuted" into our children, but rather inherited via customs, habits through training and education – he calls this "social hereditary."²⁸ Architecture and other technologies are part of this social transmittance and are generated from a long line of older ideologies or objects.²⁹ This evolution of the building system is outlined in Kiesler's diagram.³⁰ Therefore, the domestic environment can be seen as one system, where we become accustomed to certain types of spaces with specific uses and relationships to one another in terms of hierarchy, placement, adjacencies which evolve and change over time.

In reference to architecture as an evolving system, Kiesler acknowledged the power of collective memory, seen through his ideas linked to surrealist theories of the image.³¹ Here, functional architecture does not exist; there are only fragments of memory and subconscious. While, Kiesler's *Endless House* specifically worked against everything we may remember a home to be, his earlier design for the *Nucleus House* more closely resembled a typical modern

²⁵M. Graves, *Michael Graves: Buildings and Projects 1966-1981* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), 12.

²⁶Kiesler, "On Correalism and Biotechnique," 1939, 74-75; Kiesler, "Pseudo Functionalism in Modern Architecture," 1949, 29-34.

²⁷Ibid, 30.

²⁸Kiesler, "On Correalism and Biotechnique," 1939, 67.

²⁹Ibid, 68.

³⁰Ibid, 69.

³¹Ibid, 66.

architecture. In developing this design, Kiesler was acutely aware of the impact of the demands of the popular market, with its predilections for “Colonial, Spanish, and English styles of architecture,”³² because of the strong associations to ideas of home and dwelling that these have. Some of the works in the exhibition strongly reference notions of a typical home, made up of elements such as a square box, pitched roof, windows and doors and the memories (and politics of memory) these trigger. This is specifically seen in the works by Haus-Rucker-Co, Vija Celmins, Martha Rosler, Sigmar Polke, Rodney Graham, Louise Bourgeois and Laurie Simmons.

Our memory of what domestic architecture is, does not only apply to the way it looks, but also the way that it is constructed. So much so, those systems of mass-construction and prefabrication may be perceived to challenge aspects of stability and uniqueness of a ‘home.’ Kiesler appears in two camps on this argument, on one hand he says that industrialized and pre-manufacture of modernism, needs to be counteracted with more flexible and adaptable architecture.³³ This is possibly because at the time, the technology for the mass manufacture of a structure such as *Endless House* was not available.³⁴ While on the other hand, prior to the *Endless House* Kiesler developed the *Space House Project* for *Modernage Furniture Company* in 1933,³⁵ and the *Nucleus House Project* for *Sears Roebuck and Company*,³⁶ which were all about being mass produced through a kit of parts. Later, Kiesler goes on to say that the advantage of the homogenous construction of the *Endless House* method is 25-30% cheaper than other houses because of less sub-contractors – which one can only imagine can occur because of a certain amount of industrialised building.³⁷ Other projects in the exhibition that explore mass production and raise questions of typical construction are George Maciunas’ *Self-Supporting 1,900 Sq. Ft. House, model for Prefabricated Building System*, Paul Rudolf’s *Residence for Herbert Green* and Michael Rakowitz’s *Parasite Homeless Shelter*.

Another way Kiesler encouraged re-thinking normative relationships with the domestic was through spatial fluidity: where the functions of living are melded together. Kiesler thought, just as spaces flow in together – so do parts of our self.³⁸ This can be thought of as a way of opening up or closing off parts of the building, and parts of the self. Kiesler says this type of architecture operates if you want to be alone or with people – it will liberate your personality, or protect your psyche.³⁹ These ideas of spatial fluidity are also seen on other works in the exhibition as David Jacob’s *Simulated Dwelling for a Family of Five*, Mario Merz’s *Untitled*, Mies VanderRohe’s *Farnsworth House*, and Kazuyo Sejima’s *Villa in the Forest*.⁴⁰ These works question how the self-re-orientates within a displacement of

³²McGuire, “Space House,” 2012, 19.

³³CBS Camera 3, “Fredrick Kielser. The Endless House,” 1962, 240.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵McGuire, “Space House,” 2012, 19.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷CBS Camera 3, “Fredrick Kielser. The Endless House,” 242.

³⁸Ibid, 232-234; Kiesler, “Endless House: A Man Built Cosmos,” 1962, 245.

the ordinary. This approach is also specifically carried out in works that re-organise public/private – living zones, such as in *Charles Gwathemy Residence*; John Hedjuk's *Bernstein House* which has interior elements on outside and explores ideas of phenomenal transparency; and Simon Unger's *T house*, which foregrounds the library over the typical domestic spaces.

Taking this approach further, other works in the exhibition specifically re-assemble parts of the domestic environment and present them in new ways. These either slightly skew components of the domestic to make them feel uncanny, or completely deconstruct notions of home. This is specifically seen in the work of: Bruce Nauman's *Crossed Stadiums, House Divided* and Kevin Appel's *Houses and Timbers*. As well as the post-modernist works of Robert Venturi's *Vanna House*, Charles Gwathemy's *Gwathemy Residence* and of course Graves' *Hanselmann House*.

Higher Dwelling

Continuing the theme of elevating the ordinary to a higher status, some works in the exhibition aim to reach beyond haptic or habituated understandings of the self toward an elevated experience of architecture, and self in relation to it. It could be said that Kiesler's ideas of *Magic Architecture* are a pre-cursor to this, where despite connotations of the name, Kiesler's "magic" refers to the "expression of the creativity of man" and how this has evolved over time. Kiesler gives examples of how humans build like ants and apes, utilising the building materials of all animals that evolve and change over time to build different types of architecture. It is the way that we do this he calls magic.⁴¹

In relation to the *Endless House*, Kiesler says that he wants to encourage "the interrelation of a body to its environment: spiritual, physical, social and mechanical."⁴² Kiesler says that it is the role of architecture to "support a heightened state of being, not simply to suffice. It is to exuberate, to inspire, to link, to help correlate awareness with the now with the time ever present." He goes onto say that an "Architecture of the house dedicated to life does not exist yet. The Endless house is a first attempt at it; it brings the sky down and the earth up."⁴³

One of the ways that a heightened experience of dwelling is aimed for is by referring to influences on our ways of dwelling that are less visible, tangible or comprehensible. The prime example of this can again be traced back to Kiesler's notions of *Correalism* and *Biotechnique*. Kiesler's idea is that everything in the natural and technological environments is made up of invisible forces that are connected and influencing one another, this is what he calls *correalism*.⁴⁴ Kiesler

⁴¹Kiesler, "Magic Architecture," in *Friedrich Kiesler: endless house / Friedrich Kiesler-Zentrum, Wien* (Museum for Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern-Ruit), 1949, 17-28.

⁴²Kiesler, *Inside the endless house: art, people, and architecture: a journal*, 1966, 127.

⁴³Kiesler, "Hazard and the Endless House," in *Friedrich Kiesler: endless house / Friedrich Kiesler-Zentrum, Wien* (Museum for Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main Germany: Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern-Ruit), 1959, 63.

⁴⁴Kiesler, "On Correalism and Biotechnique," 1939, 68-70.

says that humans are “a nucleus of forces”⁴⁵ and also every object that meets a need is a living organism.⁴⁶ That is, every object such as floors, chairs, beds, walls and roofs possess “nuclear multiple forces.”⁴⁷ Kiesler says we exist within a complex network of interrelationships, which he calls a “constant exchange of anabolic and catabolic forces within themselves, and in their coordination with human beings, and through human beings with themselves again, they constitute high potential energy centers.”⁴⁸ Kiesler calls designing with consideration of these forces (rather than merely designing objects) *biotechnique*.⁴⁹

Another way that architectural works in the exhibition aim to explore heightened experiences of dwelling is through mathematics. This platonic way of looking at the ‘simplicity’ or ‘purity’ of form is thought to unlock a ‘secret’ code to a higher form of architecture and a way of existing within it. This is seen within Kiesler’s use of the mathematical symbol for infinity.⁵⁰ Other houses within the exhibition that also utilize a continuous geometric form are Eisenman’s *Max Reinhardt Haus* and Preston Scott Cohen’s *Torque House*, where as Simon Unger’s *T-House* utilises a simplicity of form and Mario Merz in *Untitled* utilises the Fibonacci series for its development. Further, many of the modernist houses in the exhibition are composed of a series of “pure” primary geometric forms such as *Gwathmey Residence* and Graves *Hanselmann House*. The prime example of this is of course, Meis van der Rohe’s “pure art of structure and space”⁵¹ of the *Farnsworth House* which embodies some of Mies’ views that architecture “can reach up through all degrees of value to the highest sphere of spiritual existence into the realm of pure art.”⁵²

Many of the works in the exhibition are less prescriptive in how they actually aim for a higher experience of architecture and are made through a combination of geometries, aesthetics and intent, such as Emilio Ambasz’s *House of Spiritual Retreat* which “reformulates the vernacular Andalusian courtyard house into a surrealistic reverie, a mythic, phantasmagorical dwelling,”⁵³ UN-studios *Moebius House* which is symbolic of Ben Van Berckel’s rethinking of “questions of the universe, of consciousness, of the emergence of life [...]”⁵⁴ and Hedjuk’s *Bernstein House* which embodies his attempts to exude an “aura” for the mind to enter, exploring various aspects of psychology, mythology and spirituality.⁵⁵

Out of all the works which facilitate an elevated experience of a self in relation to dwelling Raimund Abraham’s *House without Rooms* is most notable. This is because it allows the many tendrils of the exhibition and aspects of this

⁴⁵Ibid, 76.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid,77.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid, 75.

⁵⁰CBS Camera 3, “Fredrick Kielser. The Endless House,” 1962, 233.

⁵¹Farnsworth House website description.

⁵²M. van der Rohe, *Quote from his inaugural lecture as director of the department of Architecture at the Armour Institute of Technology, soon to be renamed the Illinois Institute of Technology* (1938).

⁵³T. di Carlo, *In-Depth: The House of Spiritual Retreat by Emilio Ambasz* (2005).

⁵⁴G. de Ferrari, “Interview with Ben van Berckel by Gabriella de Ferrari,” in *BOMB 80* (2002).

⁵⁵D. Goodwin, *Spotlight: John Hejduk. On Arch Daily* (2016).

paper to be drawn together. While this work by Abraham is said to sit in a liminal world – between the earth and the sky; imagination and memory, it is also an example which explores dwelling as ritual to be examined and the various psychological conditions of our self in relation to an ‘archetypal house’.⁵⁶ The building: a dense solid mass seems to haptically encase the occupant, where all one can do is exist, waiting for the unknown. Habitually, the way this building functions as a home is unclear, making it hard to imagine dwelling in it. With these thoughts, a new experience of self, in and through the house are cultivated, elevating beyond expectations that one should feel any certain way, or do any certain thing in this home. It may even be said that one can imagine a new state of dwelling never felt before. An ultimately indescribable state of experiencing dwelling. A dwelling of the unknown and unknowable.

Conclusions

The way in which each of the architectural works in the exhibition, reinforce or challenge various re-occurring themes of dwelling has been outlined here. This has been explored through the notion of multiple overlapping experiences of the home, involving the haptic, habitual and higher selves. We could speculate that all of the above works are designed to heighten the experience of the limits of the physical body and the way it functions within the home only in order to escape it. Rather than designing for dwelling, these works are designed to examine the act of dwelling, to see ourselves from the outside and remove the normative shackles that bind us to architecture and the earth. This is best summarised by a final quote from Kiesler, who says “nothing can be taken for granted, either of the house itself, the floor, walls, ceiling, the coming of people or of light, the air with its warmth or coolness. Every device must remain an event and constitute the inspiration for a specific ritual.”⁵⁷

All of the above works are examples of how speculative and experimental buildings can reframe the way we think about architecture, and our relationship to it. They allow an in-depth examination of what is considered ordinary dwelling - by presenting the antithesis of it. While the type of domestic environments in this exhibition may seem removed from ‘real architecture’, it may in fact bring us closer to understanding of what architecture of the everyday is. Facilitating a greater understanding of home and ourselves in relation to it is of kernel significance to the discipline of architecture today. It may sound utopian to see this rethinking of dwelling as contributory to the evolution of habitation, but it can be considered essential to push the boundaries of practice. This is for a greater understanding of how different devices: such as form, material, circulation, construction and function can lead to rich, varied and unexpected experiences of

⁵⁶Publication excerpt from Terence Riley, ed., *The Changing of the Avant-Garde: Visionary Architectural Drawings from the Howard Gilman Collection* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2002), 116.

⁵⁷Kiesler, “Endless House: A Man Built Cosmos,” 1962, 246.

architecture and self. These works that sit between art and architecture may help us answer, what is the potential of dwelling beyond that which we know now?

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