

Zeitschrift: Werk, Bauen + Wohnen
Herausgeber: Bund Schweizer Architekten
Band: 88 (2001)
Heft: 3: Tiefe Oberflächen = Surfaces profondes = Deep surfaces

Werbung

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

Download PDF: 18.03.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

as critics from Alois Riegl to Colin Rowe have pointed out, of modernism itself. Thus many modernists have employed figure/ground reversals to demonstrate the very palpability of space – the Italian architect Luigi Moretti even constructed plaster models in the 1950s to illustrate what he saw as the history of different spatial types in architecture. These models were cast as if they were as the solids of what in reality were spatial voids; the spaces of compositions such as Hadrian's Villa were illustrated as sequences of solids, as if space had suddenly been revealed as dense and impenetrable.¹ Architectural schools from the late 1930s on have employed similar methods to teach "space" – the art of the impalpable – by means of palpable models. By this method, it was thought, all historical architecture might be reduced to the essential characteristics of space, and pernicious "styles" of historicism might be dissolved in the flux of abstraction.

In these terms, Whiteread's House simply takes its place in this tradition, recognizable to architects, if not to artists or the general public, as a didactic illustration of nineteenth-century domestic "space." To an architect, whether trained in modernism or its "Brutalist" offshoots, her work takes on the aspect of a full-scale model, a three-dimensional exercise in spatial dynamics and statics. A not accidental side-effect of this exercise is the transformation of the nineteenth-century realist house into an

abstract composition; Whiteread has effectively built a model of a house that resembles a number of paradigmatic modern houses, from Wright and Loos, from Rudolf Schindler to Paul Rudolph. Here, if one were to read her inside as outside, the concrete shell simply registers what might be an exercise in three-dimensional composition based on the procedure of cutting away or excavating a solid block for the contingencies of site or use. Le Corbusier, in his paradigmatic illustration of "Five Compositions" in 1925, had already codified such a method of composition side by side with four other "types" of architectural design, including the open-plan and the prismatic solid. In this sense Whiteread's House is modernist to the core, and would arouse the ire of the entire post-modern and traditionalist movement in Britain and elsewhere, dedicated to the notion that "abstraction" equals "eyesore".

The façade, an uncanny place?

But it also seems true that this project touched another nerve entirely, one not disassociated from those we have mentioned, but more generally shared outside the architectural and artistic community, and deeply embedded in the "domestic" character of the intervention. Whiteread touched, and according to some commentators, mutilated, the house, by necessity the archetypal space of homeliness. Article after article referred to the silencing of the past life

of the house, the traces of former patterns of life now rendered dead but preserved, as it were, in concrete if not in aspic.

Added to this apparent extinction of the traces of life was what many writers saw as the disturbing qualities of the "blank" windows in the House; this might again be traced back to romantic tropes of blocked vision, the evil eye, and the uncanny effect of mirrors that cease to reflect the self; E.T.A. Hoffmann and Victor Hugo, in particular, delighted in stories of boarded-up houses whose secrets might only be imagined. The abandoned hulk of Whiteread's House holds much in common with that empty house on Guernsey, so compelling for Hugo's fantasies of secret history in *Les travailleurs de la mer*.

Psychoanalysis, however, especially since the publication of Freud's celebrated article on *Das Unheimliche* (The Uncanny) in 1919, has complicated such romantic reactions, by linking the uncanny to the more complex and hidden forces of sexual drives, death wishes and Oedipal fantasies. Taking off from the difficult formulation hazarded by Schelling in the 1830s that the uncanny was "something that ought to have remained secret and hidden but which has come to light," Freud linked this sensation to experiences of a primal type – such as the primal scene witnessed by Little Hans – that had been suppressed only to show themselves unexpectedly in other moments and guises. Joined to

1989
Fall der Berliner Mauer

1994
Nelson Mandela zum Präsidenten von Südafrika gewählt

1997
Dolly - das erste geklonte Schaf

2003
Wird der Weltraumtourismus zur Realität?

2010
Sind die Forscher dann vielleicht im stande, Zellen für bestimmte Zwecke zu züchten?


1990

2000

2010

Vola bleibt Vola

Vola bleibt Vola

 www.vola.ch

VOLA AG · Mülistr.18 · CH-8320 Fehraltorf · Tel: 01 / 955 18 18 · Fax: 01 / 955 18 19 · e-mail: info@vola.ch

