A Room In The Room:
A Private Spectacle

by

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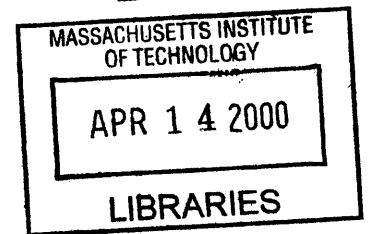Master of Science in Visual Studies

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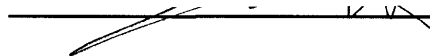Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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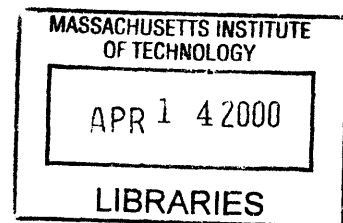Chairman, Departmental Committee on Graduate Students

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2

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ABSTRACT

"A Room in the Room" is a temporary site-specific installation in which I constructed a room inside of my private room, located at 352 Marlborough Street in Boston. The inner room, accessible by the second door of my room, forms an enclosure made out of transparent glass walls. Visitors enter the inner room to share my visual and sound experiences, but not physically to cross the transparent walls. With my performance living between two walls and avoiding any communication with visitors, I expose my private spectacle to the visitors, giving them the sense of strangeness that I am used to in a public space. Reconstructing and revealing the inside space of our spatial, social, psychological boundaries result in an individual and collective narrative. Thus the transparent boundary as a metaphor of physically constructed psycho-social boundaries, examines my strangeness in a room and realizes the invisible walls in our social landscape.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction

This document presents a temporary site-specific installation, "A Room in the Room", tracing an exploratory lived experience within an enclosure, spatially designated between walls. It also examines "transparent boundaries" as a critical circumstance of our social and psychological alienation. Through this thesis I first attempted to describe the spatial, social, psychological boundaries that I have confronted as a non-immigrant. Second, I examined a relationship between the new spatial construction in my private room and the lived performances with visitors to define the extensions of this particular project, detailed in the Chapter III.

In writing I try not only to describe the installation, but also to integrate this document with the installation. So, there is a cross-stratum format in this thesis that allows the reading to cross from the inside to the outside of writing. The installation "A Room In The Room" is explained by the installation itself. However the nature of the installation was developed through the lived experience to realize the circumstances. Therefore this thesis is used to bring together the backgrounds ideas and the lived experiences into the installation. Both the experimental installation and the extensional writing generate further developments over an extended period and articulate its representations, in writing.

Space, in contemporary discourse as in lived experience, has taken on an almost palpable existence. Its contours, boundaries, and geographies are called upon to stand in for all the contested realms of identity, from the national to the ethnic; its hollows and voids are occupied by bodies that replicate internally the external conditions of political and social struggles. Techniques of spatial occupation, of territorial mapping, of invasion and surveillance are seen as the instruments that define enclosures, the range of social and individual control.

By situating a critical living condition within a room, I examine an enclosure, called *"room"*- the primary unit of measurement and reference determining the nature of our relationship to the immediate architectural environment. As a spatial enclosure, a room consists of its own property and purpose for its occupants. In particular, a private

room becomes not only the mythical point of origin, but also a utopian projection, demanding the preservation of individual privacy. Thus, the act of spatial construction for residing, a private setting is an instrument for occupants to define their spatial and psychological boundaries.

To symbolize the separation between my own spatial boundaries, I first questioned the above definitions and examined the relationship between the room (space) and myself (subjectivity). Based on my experience, my room provided me an isolated-setting rather than a refuge. In this contrast, I began another spatial construction in my private room to set up a new situation in reference to the social and psychological boundaries that I have confronted. As a metaphor of my boundaries, I divided my room into two enclosures. The inner room, accessible by the second door to my room, forms an enclosure made out of transparent glass walls, which follows the contours of my room's interior surfaces.

By superimposing a second architectural enclosure into the first enclosure of the room, I have created a partitioned zone in which I live between the walls of the room and the walls of the glass container. By detouring the territory of my private space, restraining my behaviors in the divided room, and displaying my private spectacle to the public through transparent glass wall, I could situate a new lived circumstance within the space that merges my spatial, social, and psychological boundaries into my unique strangeness across individual and cultural experiences.

This temporary installation opened to the public on December 14, 1999 and continues until April 14, 2000. With the installation and the performance, this exploratory project includes both a reconfiguration of my private space and a new circumstance of transparent boundary. Through my experience in this compartment, I attempted to raise an open debate: the antithetical relations between the concept of *"enclosure"* and *"boundary"* (spatial), *"private"* and *"public"* (social), *"strangeness"* and *"uncannyness"* (psychological).

By mapping the above concepts through the lived experience, I found a fundamental transgressive element between one to the other. While my private life is being exposed to the visitors who occupied the inner room, a moment of *"gaze"* between visitors and myself through the glass wall empowers the social enactment. That is to say, the inner room with visitors is observed from the space in which I reside, and at the same time the visitors view my domestic life, exposed as a representative object of gaze.

In this intensified situation, I intended to avoid any communication with the visitors. From my observation, most visitors first measure how they naturally project their relationships in the new environment through perceptible events. Then they assign broadly their social displacements within the double-structured interior space. Without an opportunity to communicate, the visitors gradually accept the fact that they are *"spectators"*, being displayed. This performance reveals the nature of the visitors' hidden strangeness through their *"Scopophobia"* (fear of being looked at) and *"Scopophilia"* (pleasure of looking at). Thus, this project in a private room formulates my critical approach to our invisible boundaries, through revealing the dark sides of *"self"* and triggering the moment that provides the visitors the fear of being of my situation. This becomes a result of this experimental project, something more useful than public art that used to be social issues decorating open public spaces.

In Chapter II, I describe the motivation of this particular project as one meant to identify my alienating circumstances, and I also introduce the background of this exploration to recognize the change of spatial perceptions. In the past there were tendencies of reclaiming private space in artistic practice. I especially recall Marcel Duchamp, Dan Graham, Rachel Whiteread, whose related works refer to the conceptual approach towards our private space in the public realm. In the process, I introduce a series of my installations that I have been engaged in related to my room, located at 352 Marlborough Street from 1997 to 1999.

In Chapter III, "A Room in the Room" is analyzed with a macroscopic vision. To define the nature of the private space, I introduce the material elements that form a room and its immediate relationships with the subject. I then transform *"the room"* into *"a room"*, which has metamorphosed into two enclosures. In this new spatial construction, I introduce a result of my living experience along the boundary through my psychological and spatial relations to the transparent wall with and without visitors. I also compare the experimental results with the expectations that only existed in my mind. After living in my metaphor of physically constructed psycho-social boundaries, I raise explicitly the issue of our invisible boundaries, which are implicit in our everyday social and psychological interaction in society.

II. Backgrounds

1. Space in Turn

While I had a permanent residence in Seoul, I traveled to many foreign cities and countries as a stranger, nothing but a visitor. Those experiences have provided a chance to see other sights, cultures, and people in terms of gaining a sense of international diversity. After having a non-immigrant status in Boston since the summer of 1997, however, I have been confronted by a different circumstance: neither an immigrant who needs to communicate to the new territory, nor a tourist who always sees the outside spectacles.

The idea of space is an aspect of human consciousness and is a basic aesthetic dimension for experiencing and understanding "subjectivity". Space has been employed by all intellectual and experimental reversals involving in both the construction and deconstruction, as well as the inevitable ambiguities between the two architectonics. Perhaps space has always been deconstructed to generate a massive work of reconstruction, an endless campaign for its discourse.

Concerning the reinterpretation of space, Michael Foucault states that "The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space... The anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than time."[1] Given this idea, we have seen the nature and scope of spatial navigation. In the meanwhile Visual Arts have driven many changes in society to facilitate and to encourage a breath of social discourses by shifting the major stream of the navigation into the hidden dimensions of our society.

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[1] Foucault, Michel, Of Other Space, trans. J.Miskwiec, Diacritcs, Spring 1986

Turning a space into a work of art is explicitly related to the interaction between space and subject because space is conceived as being transformed into lived experience by a social subject, and is governed by determinants that may be practical in character. Timothy Druckery states in citing Wittgenstein's proposition, "The subject does not belong to the world, it is a border of the world."[2] He also referred Freud's note, "The effects of interfacing with interpretation have already generated a reconfigured subject whose border is porous and shoe autonomy is enframed not by but within interfaces."[3] In this regard, we could take into account the relations between the subject and the space while the interface between the space and the subject is being set by its boundaries.

Regarding the above realizations, the boundaries have greatly influenced the artist's new perception of space, which has evolved to reinterpret the physical environments with the social, cultural, and psychological circumstances. Artists configure the spatial transformation by changing the mode of perception or by converting the spatial properties by controlling ambient sounds and lights. With artists' use of those transformations, the viewers can effectively experience the transformations through their multi-sensory and multi-leveled interpretations. Artists also reconstruct the space structurally by dividing and reversing it, or by filling it with works in several media. Therefore, establishing and utilizing the ideas of transformed space engender discreteness of spatial identities and are incorporated by the social subjects related to its psycho-spatial circumstances.

In this trend, recent art, which suggests the transformation of space together with critical affirmative action on everyday life and institutions, needs to be studied as a leading aesthetic discourse. Not only a concretely embodied reality in itself, art can play a powerful role in changing other realities by changing our perception, our

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[2] Druckery, Timothy (ed.), Electronic Culture: Technology and Visual Culture, New York: Aperture Foundation, Inc.1996, p.20

[3] Brahm, Gabriel (ed.), Prosthetic Territories: Politics and Hyper-technologies, Oxford: Westview Press , 1992, p.135

attitudes, and our consequent actions to raise the hidden dimensions of reality that are implicit in society. Naturally my artistic work that I used to intervene in social spectacles has shifted to an autobiographical production. It is focusing especially on exploring the relationship between my alienated life and my private space in which I live. My private room provides a refuge and at the same time escalates me into estrangement while I have failed to engage in a new social environment. At the failure of the harmonization between past and present circumstance, my psychological alienation and physical isolation in the temporary residential situation produce my tangled memory and painful strangeness.

2. A Strangeness

My initial impression upon my arrival in this new environment was a feeling of positive expectation, which included a new fresh start with open opportunities. After spending several months in this new territory, I encountered a lack of communication skills, which became more apparent through my transition from the status of visitor to that of resident. Second, I experienced a lack of social engagement resulting from cultural differences, in particular the emphasis on individuality in this culture was new to me. A third difficulty on transition arose from being in majority to being in the minority, no rights to afford privileges in society, economically and politically. These might be a typical example of the first phase of the most immigrants' psycho-cultural alienation, which includes culture shock, speechlessness, and estrangement.

The autobiographical nature of the souvenir is that of a narrative, an individual story that is usually the result of a changing pattern of memories and identifications as well as of a reservoir, an unique experience that has been collected within a space. "Countering and conversing with the images available in the powerful realm of mass media as well as drawing from the resources of life events and cultural identity, the autobiography lays out the reflection of private identifications and projected desires."[4]

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[4] Brahm, Gabriel (ed.), Prosthetic Territories: Politics and Hypertechnologies, Oxford: Westview Press, 1992, pp.142-143

In this regard, the process of plotting one's unique experience takes place both by marking our physical and temporal maps with space and by creating narratives that organize these disseminated pieces. The notion of an autobiography, like Michel Foucault's concept of *"heterotopia"*, marks the *"counter sites"* that construct the sites of the social struggle and real contestation of the space in which we live. Thus, this could serve as the focus of individual narratives with spatial reinterpretation due to the analogy of the spatial politic (compartmentalization) and those of relationships (contexturalization).

The strangeness in both space and people functions as a particular or collective narrative that has been crossed from one to another, or whose experiences are on the boundary. Mostly speechlessness, miscommunication, solitude, and silence are the factors of the strangeness that we can easily find. Maybe this kind of alienation attributes its unique elements to the production of the infantile anxiety from which the majority of human beings have never quite become free. On the other hand, this particular strangeness is a factor of alienation that human being have encountered in the relationship between the subjectivity and the lived experience. It represents the *"self"* as the core of a kernel with circles around it. The circles are the experience of the self, none of which touch it but all of which enclose it and hide it from the outside. Another aspect of the self is the spiral whose structure, contours, and direction themselves result. However there is nothing in the spiral to allow any viable distinction between the self and its experience.

In particular my circumstance, neither an immigrant who needs to communicate to the new territory nor a temporary visitor who always sees the outside spectacles provides a unique strangeness. Whether the strangers have failed to participate in the local community or they don't desperately need to expose themselves to gain their rights, there is another aspect of examining this particular strangeness (*passive and self-restrained*). From the failure, or desperate action to engage in new environment, the stranger exclusively set the domestic setting while the private space stands for the

power of refuge. Their representations of painful memories and ambiguous identities are clearly exhibited in their physical domestic sites where the gathering of artifacts becomes a reconstruction of individual memory and is also designed specifically to measure individual identity. For a temporary residence, it is more obvious that the space consists of nomadic objects and anonymous artifacts. It also reinterprets a room, less about architectural enclosure than about entanglement of inside and outside.

"...the design and implementation of a new psycho-cultural artifice ... will help the strangers to open up and come forward and, on the other hand, will encourage the non-stranger and other strangers to bring themselves closer to the stranger's experience and presence. This will inspire the new discourse in which the strangeness can be shared across all social boundaries."[5] According to this proposition, it seems there is a way that the foreigners can equally share painful experiences with the local community and establish themselves as a part of the local, rather than the outsiders. Perhaps it is also necessary to formulate a communicative space that can be shared by a group of strangers or non-strangers. In designing such clinical and critical devices and posing them between people, the foreigners may create a vehicle that could also establish a playful distance from the painful experience.

Despite my living in this new environment for the last two years, the strangeness is still constantly striking me though the room and reminding me of the painful memory from the past. The previously described transitional experiences led me to reflect on the past to my life in Korea. From that point, my psychological barriers were strengthened as a result of my failure to connect my past and present circumstances. As a defense mechanism during this period, my life in social interactions gradually transformed to a domestic setting. At this time, my room served as a refuge but also increased my isolation. In fact, I was attempting to escape the strangeness I felt in public, but unexpectedly I found escalating isolation, which created a sense of *"uncannyness"* in my private room. With the realization that my private space did not provide an entirely secure setting, I then tried to overcome this solitude

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[5] Wodiczko, Krzysztof, Critical Vehicles, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999, p. 12

by attempting more active social interaction. Nevertheless, I could not break down the social boundary that I encountered.

As a result of my strangeness, the terror and fear of mental isolation is increased and the relation between the room and myself is changing in failure to establish a psycho-social relationship in this new circumstance. The heart of my anxiety provoked by such alien presence gives a motivation to realize the social and psychological boundaries that I had confronted in this new territory and situate a spatial construction in my private room. Bt reconstructing my private spectacles with visitors, I established a metaphor of my painful narrative through the transparent glass walls. This new spatial setting projected the identification of a group of social aliens who have struggled in their new territories and created a playful distance from the painful experience to other strangers or non-strangers to share the circumstances.

3. Related Works

Turning a room or interior space into a work of art is related to culture as a whole. In spatial politics between public and private realm, both aesthetics and ethics have fused into the form of arts that have never agreed with the practical and social compartmentalization.

In 1937, during Andre Breton's lecture "L' Humournoir", Marcel Jean was invited to demonstrate on a blackboard the mechanism of Duchamp's door at 11 Rue Larrey. Duchamp's door was originally constructed in the summer of 1993 (Fig. 1), "When one opens the door to enter the bedroom, it sequentially closes the entrance to the bathroom, and when one opens the door to enter the bathroom, it closes the entrance to the studio."[6] Duchamp was compelled to find a way of providing privacy. The space has intentionally kept the physical boundaries in a spatial juxtaposition. Ironically the bedroom space between the bathroom and the studio always shares its spatial properties with other rooms.
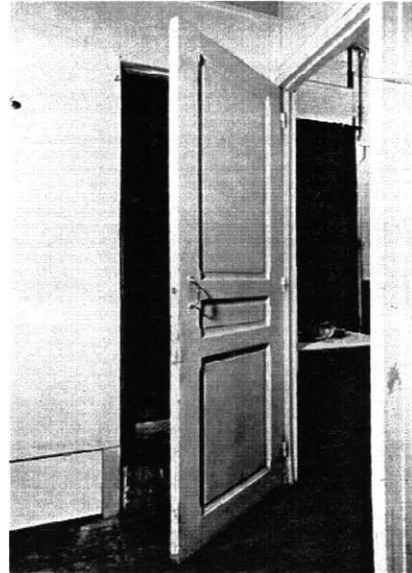
Figure 1. Marcel Duchamp, Door, 1933

Dan Graham's series of pavilion sculpture, such as "Public Space / Two Audience, 1967", "Pavilion / Sculpture for Argonne, 1978", and "Two-Way Mirror Cylinder Inside Cube, 1989" required a large, socially self-aware public audience. These are rooted the tradition of structural pavilion in public space. It also implies, term by Graham, "placed on display by my environment"[7]. For example, Mies van Der Rohe's Barcelona Pavillion or Lissitzky's two exhibition rooms initiated this kind pavilion structure in the public realm. Mostly Graham's pieces are both optical devices and architectural modifications of use. In "Alternation to a Suburban House, 1978" he

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[6] Hulten, Ponuts (eds.). "Marcel Duchamp Work and Life", Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993, Ephemerides on and about Marcel Duchamp and Rose Selavy, 9-10-October

also exposed two interiors to the public by replacing the walls with transparent glasses that implies a typical desirable house as a sign in suburban.

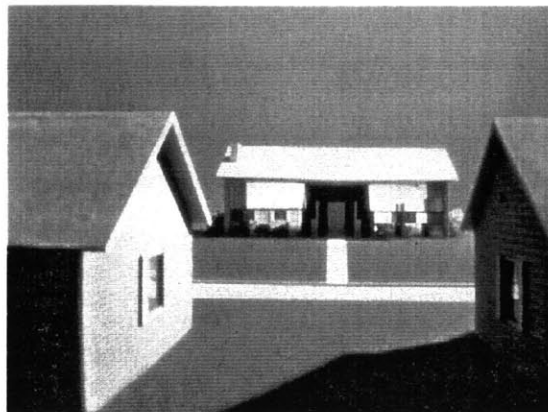Figure 2. Dan Graham, Two-Way Mirror Cylinder Inside Cube, 1989

Figure 3. Dan Graham, Alternation to a Suburban House, Model, 1978

Rachel Whiteread's a sculpture, called "Ghost, 1991" (Fig.4), considers relations of spatial ontology. Casting and reversing the inside space of a chamber result in a mysterious mono-block as a physical object. It contains the trace of the original chamber on the surface of casting materials. This projection of indoor space to be shown in tangible form implies the actual space containing a colonized domestic enclosure. Another of Whiteread's public work, "House, 1995" (Fig. 5), has the
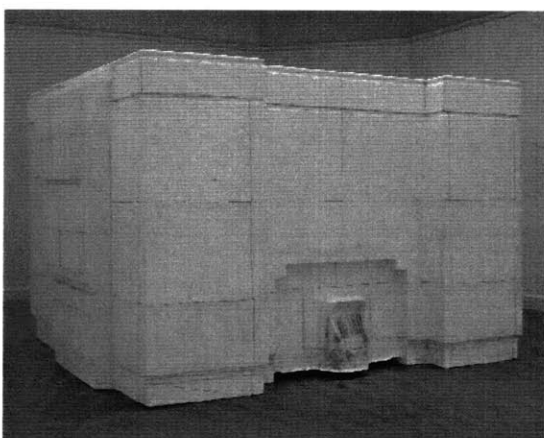
Figure 4. Rachel Whiteread, Goast, 1991
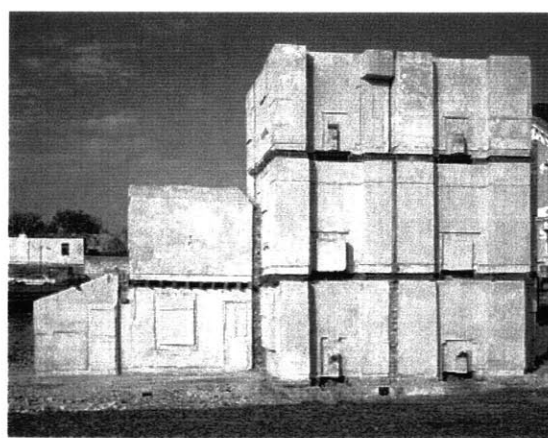
Figure 5. Rachel Whiteread, House 1995

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[7] Graham, Dan, Two-Way Mirror Power: Selected Writings by Dan Graham on His Art, Cambridge: MIT Press, edited by Alexander Alberro, 1992, p. 155.

potential to be a continuous work of art. It took five years to build, and its transition to public phenomenon was very dramatic from construction to deconstruction. She cast the inside of the entire house and exposed the previously dark. As a lost object, "House" causes the questioning our private space as an enclosure, which contains memory.

- A Process: 1997 –1999
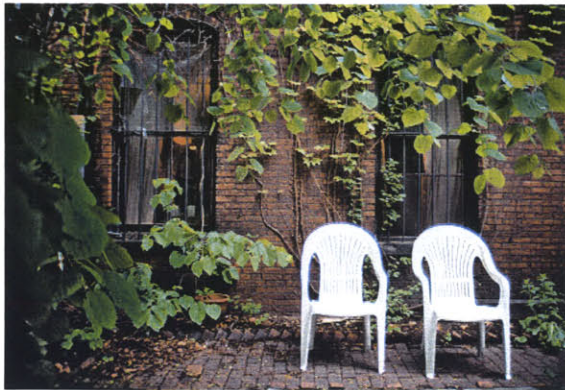
From the Fall of 1997 to the Winter of 1999, I was engaged in a process of production to redefine the relationship between inside and outside of my private room. Various media were used for several artistic interventions. Below I describe the previous installations that I have made. These artworks illustrate the process of investigation of the private space. Through analyzing the character of my previous works, I could consolidate the displacements of space and dislocations of their hypothetical and psycho-spatial relations between inside and outside of the room.

While I have been engaged in a process of artistic exploration about intermediate spaces (reinterpretation of antithetical relations). One of its themes, I have especially focused on "dwelling" for last two years. It was natural to examine one of the fundamental space for the whole since I ave been engaged in a new environment as a non-immigrant With this approach I focused on its trajectory and the extensions that are significantly elaborated in "A Room In The Room"

1) Prot-jection (1997). In this two-channel video and film projection, the installation juxtaposed two different projections from front and rear, causing the images to appear on a screen at the same time. In this optical juxtaposition, the viewer's shadows on top of the front projection (public view of the room) emerge on the rear projection (private video images in the room). It is caused by interference of one image with another. As a result, the outside view of private space intensifies that of a projection that implicates contentious spatial politics.
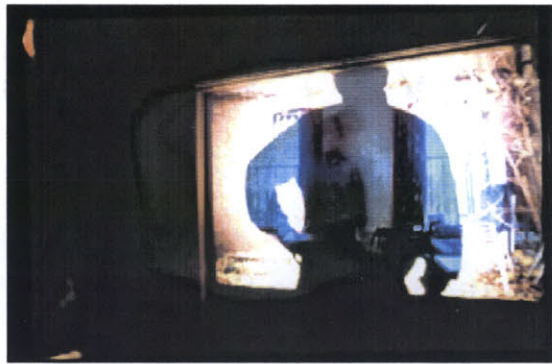
2) Inside-Outside (1998) This theatrical setting related to the "prot-jection" enhanced the life size scale of the images. Two reversed double video + film projections faced each other. In this spatial setting, the occupants in front of the screen experienced the space ironically. Their shadows were projected onto both the interior and the exterior image simultaneously. As an optical device, this particular installation produced a complex spatial engagement between the inside and the outside of my room. From that series of video installations, I realized that the spatial discipline is the work created a

new relationship between subjectivity and objectivity. Therefore I focused more on behavioral engagement within a space, and on the relation between a subject and its surrounding environment.

3) Trespassing (1998) In this two-channel video installation, the images were projected on two facing walls. I installed two video camcorders hanging from my house's entrance door fixtures, both inside and outside. By shifting the axis of the door, each camera captured the real-time sequence of opening and closing the spaces. The two projected video images were synchronized by images, sounds. Thus, viewers located in between the video projections experienced the process of merging spatial enclosure and disclosure. Viewers who occupied between two video projections perhaps felt that they existed in between the inside and the outside.
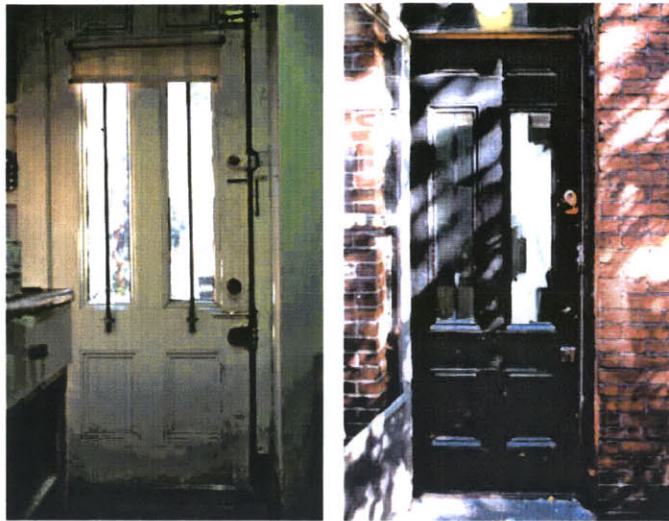
4) The Room and Beyond (1999) This temporary site-specific interactive installation was presented in room 354 of the Metropolitan Moving and Storage Warehouse, located in 134 Massachusetts Avenue in Cambridge. By replacing a replica of my personal belongings in boxes, the warehouse contains several moving boxes, which represent the same scale and location as the furniture in my room. When the occupants touch, hit, or strike any box in the storage, a host computer sequentially projects the video images related to the content of the box. Sounds caused by the action of occupants are captured by microphone sensors, which are embedded in each box. In

real time, microphone sensors transmit the input data to the host computer, which loads corresponding video clips for display by streaming video projection. The work addresses our private space as a transitory storage where the strange architectural landscape fuses into a social discourse. By presenting the transitory private space, I situate my inquiry: the reclaiming of our private space by actuating a postured state of tangible memory and experience related to the objects surrounding our lives.

III. The Project

"A Room in the Room" is an idea in which I construct a private spectacle by exposing my life between walls. This temporary site-specific installation is presented in the room located in 352 Marlborough Street in Boston, from December 14, 1999 to March 14, 2000. The inner room, accessible by the second door to my room, forms an enclosure out of transparent glass wall, which follows the contours of my room's interior surfaces.

By superimposing a second architectural enclosure into the original enclosure of the room, I have created a partitioned zone in which I live between the inside of the outer space and the outside of the inner space. Visitors enter the inner room (the second enclosure) to share my visual and sound experiences, but can not cross the transparent glass walls. Without any communication with the visitors, I reveal their hidden alienation in the private space that I used to confront in the public space. In this contrast, the transparent boundary as a metaphor of physically constructed psycho-social boundaries, exposes a private spectacle in a room through realizing our invisible walls in social landscape.
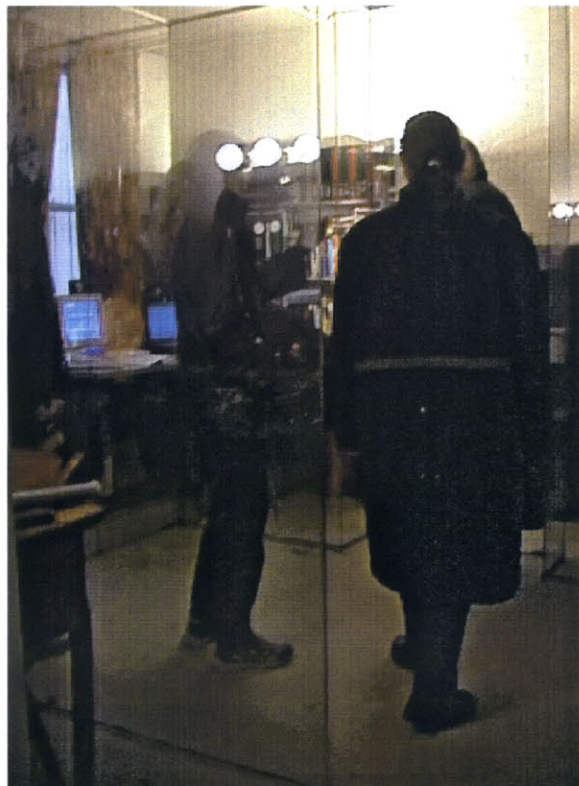
An installation view from outside of the room.

1. At 352 Marlborough Street

My private room (16 x 15 square feet) is located in the basement of a residential house, 352 Marlborough Street in Boston, leased from 1ˢᵗ of September 1997 to 30ᵗʰ of August 2000. The building was originally built in 1882, with a brick and brownstone façade which is the typical style at the Back Bay residences in Boston. It has two windows towards the back yard. There are also two doors to enter the room from the kitchen, but only one is used. The ceiling is nine feet tall and the gas and water pipeline is installed across the ceiling. It is noisy because the next room is used for hot water and to heat the building.

As a basement room, it has a typical scent and remains from the past, piling memory and trace on the interior surface. Because the room has been rented to several temporary residents, there has been no chance to renovate the interior. Like a typical residential room, it contains furniture and my private belongings that I collected as nomadic objects.

Anthony Vilder states that "As a concept, space was adumbrated as a product of, and experienced through, bodily movement and psychological and optical projection. Space is an interior, enveloping, enclosing, ritually sanctioned and structured by the body's motion through it."[8] In this regard, the space is a container whose contents continuously change: it is composed of the basic elements with a certain position and orientation. It always causes a structure because of the nature of its spatial enclosure.

Various types of spatial enclosures are called rooms. The word *"room"* is a generic term for a space that is perceived to be closed. Generally rooms take on a pervasive significance in our lives by their shapes, sizes, lights, colors (in)-adequacies, their furnishings (or lack of them). These are the material elements for the relationships of spatial enclosures. A room also consists of its own property and its purpose for occupants. It is decorated by accumulated objects, which represent their identity. Many elements are used to form a room: high opaque walls to create privacy, encircling colonnades to produce openness, glass walls to connect a space inside to a space

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[8] Vilder, Anthony, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essay in the Modern Unhomely*, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1994, p.

outside, adjustable partitions to create a temporary semiprivate space, nooks and alcoves to serve as corners where we take refuge, and low ridges symbolically separating one space from another. To most people the concept of a room implies walls, doors, and windows as well as recalling memories and traces. Typically, a room is considered an isolated setting, a separate container within four walls.

1. Rooms inside walls that join inside and outside offer two kinds of boundaries: physical (being inside for protection and well-being) and ritual (delimiting a place that is charged with meaning and held scared, a world turning into itself).

2. Rooms have opening in the walls for passage into and out of their enclosure.

3. Rooms are habitable container (interrelating parts of an activity or activities), comfortable (sustaining), and durable (creating a sense of permanence) [9]

As a habitable private container, a room is a dwelling place directly associated with the occupant. 'Where do you live?' figures amongst the key questions which momentarily arrest the narratives of identity. "How we answer determining our place within a grid of coordinates which plot subjectivity. The common experience of the homeless and the migrant as a social alien is to be made to feel out of place."[10] In this sense, a private room determines the nature of our relationship to the immediate environment and to culture as a whole. It also represents the subject within a private locus in the space and within a materialized privacy that can be seen from a synthetic array of physical signs in a spatial representation of identity. No less integral to the subject, such physical extensions of the personal belongings take the form of autobiographical objects. The material world is called upon to present a physical map of memory, history, and belief. Thus, the object in a room becomes a prosthetic device: an addition, a trace, and a replacement for the intangible aspects of desire, identification, and social relations.

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[9] Benzel,F. Katherine, The Room in Context, New York: MacGraw-Hill, 1997, pp.13~14
[10] Bachelard, Gaston, The Politics of Space, trans. by Maria Jolass, Boston: Beacon Press, 1969, p.4

"There are rooms remembered for how we viewed ourselves at a certain moment, rooms haunted by other people, etched for us by particular actions or a volley of words, rooms that form drafts of a submerged narrative.."[11] In this regard, the physical container as a room is relatively related to the objects a part of the room as components. Ideas of a room then draw us to the dimension of quantitative engagement through the relations and interaction between the room and its components such as objects, furniture, ambient sounds and lights, etc. This habitable and live environment, therefore, offers an embedded memory to occupants. The objects in a room represent the imaginary body, a body that is both incomplete (because always changing) and over abundant (because it signifies all possible desires). It is only because of our own bodily existence, and our relation to the materiality of this body, that we are able to become emotionally invested in external objects that represent an important aspect of identity.

2. A Room Divided

To divide the room (Drawing 1), the walls are made out of transparent glasses (1/4inch thickness, 8 feet high). The glass walls form a partitioned zone without a roof on top; there is an open space between the inner and outer room along the ceiling. Without supporting structure such as columns and foundations, the walls stand by themselves, glued together at the gaps between each glass plate.
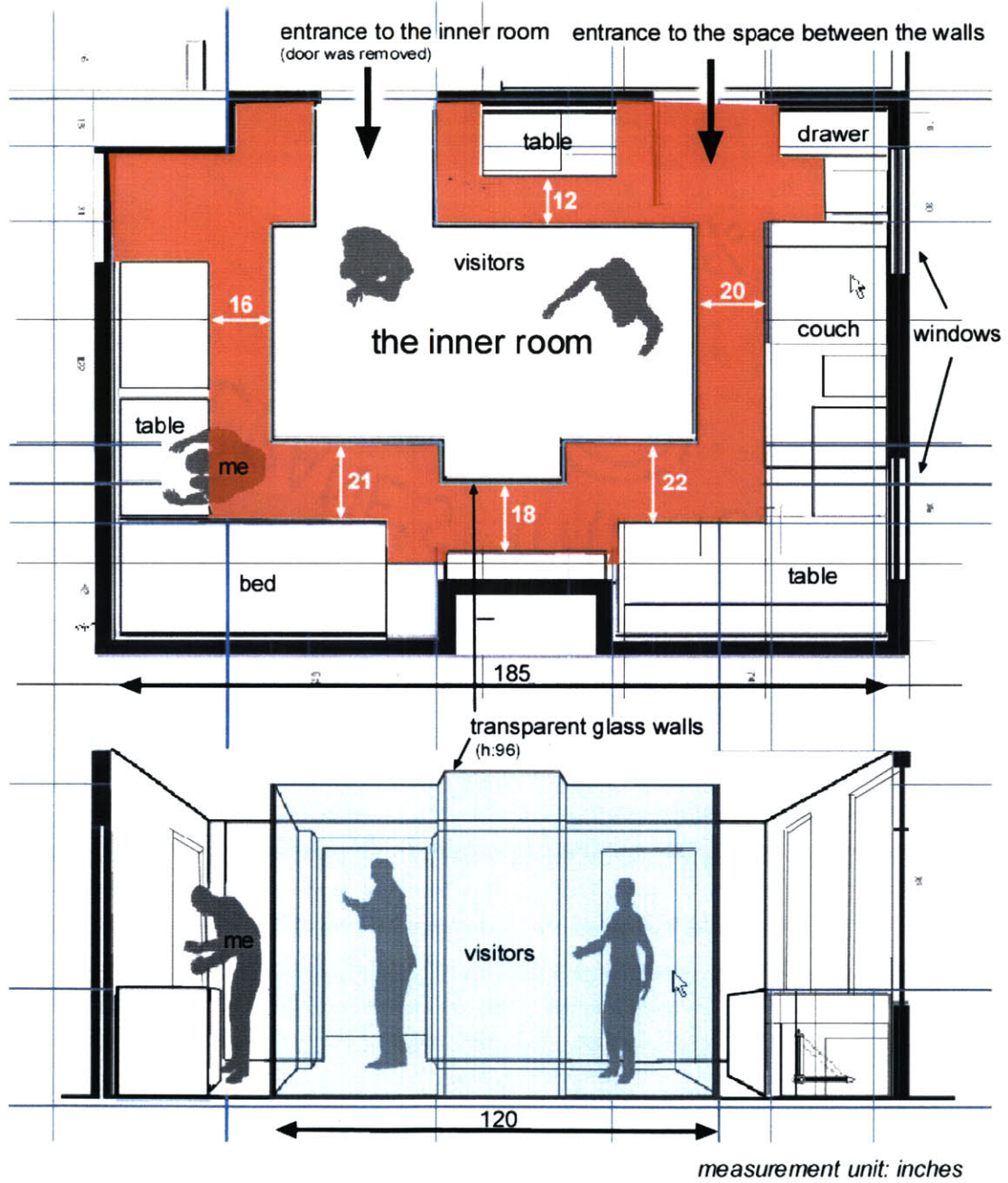
Literally walls indicate a border between spaces. Instead of the concrete opaque walls, however, I construct the walls out of transparent glass so that the visitors who occupy the inside of my room share the spatial experience at a distance. Since I have been living in this divided room, I have been restrained my behavior to a certain space in-between. With a minimum path, I can only dwell in the space between my interior surfaces and the glass room (about two feet wide). A detour in the space restricts my behavioral movement within narrow spaces and prevents my dynamic motion.

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[11] Shone, Richard, "Cast in Time", House, Rachel Whiteread, London: Paidon Press, edited by James Lingwood, Founded by the arts council of England, 1995, pp. 55-56

-Top View

entrance to the inner room
(door was removed)

entrance to the space between the walls

table

drawer

12

visitors

16

20

the inner room

couch

windows

table

me

21

22

18

bed

table

185

transparent glass walls
(h:96)

me

visitors

120

measurement unit: inches

-Side View

Drawing 1. "A Room in the Room"

One of the powerful tools of spatial perception is politics: an unknown space can be better identified by comparing and contrasting its various properties with those of better understood space. Most walls are solid and continuous, implying boundaries and enclosure. When our view is stopped, the " *idea of wall*" is present. Walls, both interior and exterior, can connect to other walls and form the angles of a room and enclosing spaces. The character of the wall changes when we move from outer to inner space. From outside, we perceive a wall as a small mass within an expansive open air setting: from inside of the room, we view a wall as a large mass within a confined space. A wall is beautiful, not only because of its physical form, but because of the impressions it may evoke. It speaks of comfort and refinement; at the same time it speaks of power and brutality. It is forbidding, or it is hospitable. The modern transformation of the house produces a space defined by walls of moving images. This is the space of publicity, in other words, the media. To be "inside" this space one only sees, to be "outside" is to be sees, and to be in the image, whether in the press, photograph, a magazine, a movie, on television, at your window.

A careful linking of wall elements from space to space provides perceptual changes in physical and visual sensations that can enliven passage through the spaces and heighten our awareness by making us listen, look up, slow down, reposition our bodies, or even stop for closer scrutiny. Walls become instruments of a successive design strategy that may connect a design idea or limit and obscure it. There is something seductive, as well as reassuring about rooms. Perhaps it is the mystery and intrigue hinted at by the wall. Perhaps it is nostalgia created by the building's obvious connection to the past. Perhaps it is the cryptic graffiti in a few nooks and crannies of the vast room.

Based on my alienated experiences, I interrogated the relations between my room and my life. To question what the results, as I mentioned previously, from my unique experience at the specific place, and where I am among social, spatial, psychological boundaries, I conducted a spatial construction that situates a particular

boundary inside of my private room. In this new construction, I adapted my life between walls as a metaphor of the transparent psycho-social boundaries.

To divide the room, I built a transparent boundary between the inner room and my room. The inner room consists of transparent glass walls that are usually used for interior and exterior construction materials, enabling a shared visual and sound experience within the room. Thus, the divided room was constructed with exterior materials, unlike white opaque wall. On other words, the inner room ceases to be isolated; instead, it falls into general classes about which sweeping statements of room can be made. "To the question of whether a space is a representation of space or a representational space, the answer must be neither – and both theatrical space certainly imply a representation of space (that of classical drama, say – or the Elizabethan, or Italian). The representational space, mediated yet directly experienced as such though the dramatic action itself."[12] While the divided room shares my visual and sound experience with visitors, the transparent boundary captures the room as a theatrical stage in both the inner room and the outside of the inner room.
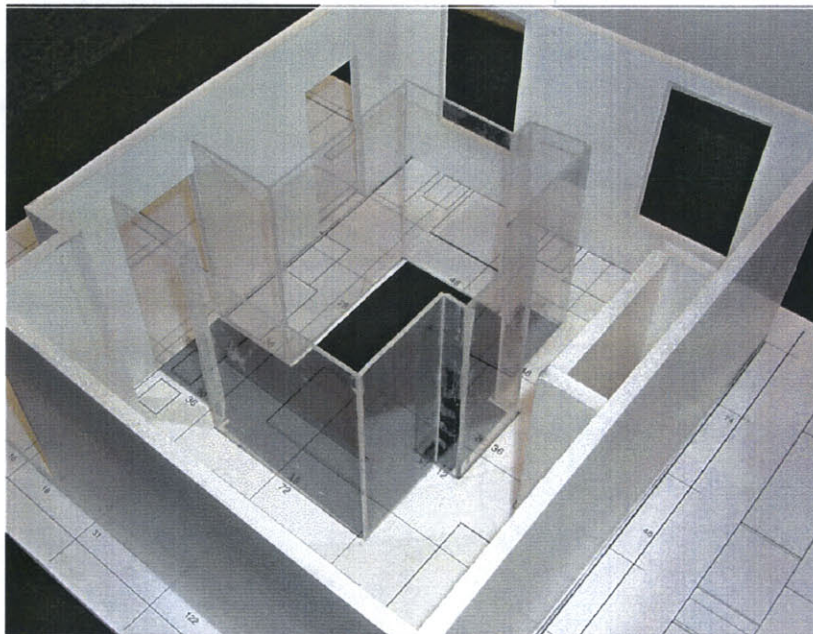
A model of the divided room

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[12] Lefebvre, Henri "The production of space", Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991, p.188

3. A Private Spectacle

Since I opened the installation, "A Room in the Room", to the public, I have confronted two spectacles over the past month. One is without visitors, living in a restrained space, and the other us encountering visitors in this divided room. The observational results of these two spectacles in a domestic setting, caused by this new spatial construction of transparent glass walls, address our hidden alienation from a situation, which is nothing strange in a public setting.

The first realization was the difficulty of living in a confined space, which made me constantly aware of the boundaries. Although visually the boundaries were not intrusive, physically the boundaries were apparent, as they always blocked my behavior. Physical movements and behaviors were restrained for the basic tasks; such as sleeping on a bed, changing clothes, and sitting on the floor were limited and discretized. My movements were inefficient because the space dictated that I detour continuously the border of the room. Furthermore, since the new boundaries were imposed on my space, I had to "*re-learn*" my patterns of spatial navigation. Another aspect of the transparent walls was the unusual reflections, compared to the common visual experience in a room. In regard to the above new circumstances, I observed my reactions, which attempted to break down the walls, based on the difficulty of behaviors and the feeling that I wasn't living in a room.

The divided room provides an especially favored site for uncanny disturbances: its apparent domesticity, its residue of history, nostalgia and that of homesickness, its role as the last and most intimate shelter of private comfort sharpened by contrast the terror of invasion by alien spirits. "From Martin Heidegger to Gaston Bachelard wistfully mediated on the (lost) nature of "dwelling," through nostalgic readings of the poets of the first, romantic uncanny."[13] For Heidegger, the *unheimlich* (unsettleness, unhomeliness,), a question of the fundamental condition of anxiety in the world – the way in which the world was experienced in nature. In this nomadic anxiety, people

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[13] Vilder, Anthony, The Architectural Uncanny: Essay in the Modern Unhomely, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1994, p.7

evolves from the breaking the boundaries as a taking a part in the incomprehensible compartments, *"uncanny"*. He was willing to admit: literally " beyond ken" – from canny, meaning possessing knowledge or skill – *unhomly*. On the surface an innocuous inquiry into the psychological dimensions of the literary uncanny, there seems a tradition of inquiry of house, home, room in the context of womb. "For Freud, *unhomeliness* was more than a simple sense of not belonging; it was the fundamental propensity of the familiar to turn on its owners, suddenly to become *defamiliarized, derealized*, as if in a dream.

During the performance of social interaction in this room, as the second spectacle, the physical interactions between the visitors and myself were prevented by the walls, but the observation was possible. First of all, the visitors tried to communicate with me through eye contact, or gestures, and even knocked on the glass walls. In my intended performance, which denies any communication, the visitors immediately shift to a position as spectators. While I continue my own activities as usual, the visitors tried to observe more details of my belongings and my behaviors. Most visitors left after spending less than fifteen minutes of gazing the situation when they found themselves no longer as simply *spectators*, but also as objects on display.

This is the key moment, which revealed their hidden strangeness in the private space through a feeling of uncanny when their *Scopophobia* (fear of being looked at) and *Scopophilia* (pleasure of looking) are realized by themselves. This is also a trigger of which the visitors to have a fear of being in my circumstances living along the border physically and psychologically. While the situation provide the visitors the uncannyness that I used to experienced in public space, the visitors started to communicate with each other to figure out the situation. It seems to me that people were embarrassed to be in this space without any communication aspect, which project their uncannyness. This intricate relationship sets up a particular situation for the dynamics of the identification of "others" and triggering them being in my situation.

In details, the sensation of *"uncanniness"* is a difficult feeling to define precisely. Neither absolute terror nor mild anxiety, the uncanny seemed sense easier to describe in terms of what it is not than in any essential sense of its own. Thus it might readily be distinguished from horror and all strong feelings of fear. By Freud's preposition, the uncanny would be sinister, disturbing, suspect, strange; it would be characterized better as "dread" than terror, deriving its force from its very inexplicable, its sense of lurking, unease, rather than from any clearly defined course of fear – an uncomfortable sense of haunting rather than a present apparition. "A Room In The Room" arrests the antithetical relationships in our social landscape, between inside and outside, boundary and enclosure, uncannyness and strangeness.

After all, "A Room in the Room", itself could be an excuse — an opportunity to examine a critical public issue of alienation, by introducing conditions of the strangeness and by defining our hidden social and psychological boundaries. The projects applies to the prerogative of those who experience the boundaries, or a bit more clearly to those who have endeavored to question and reclaim the lines of strangeness along individual and collective boundaries. Thus, this artistic project elaborates as a metaphor of physically constructed psycho-social boundaries to realize the invisible boundaries in our society. With this project I narrated my own life as suspended along the boundaries. Hence, the installation and the performance are not simply breaking the boundaries, but experiencing the boundaries and realizing it. This articulation could be a clinical instrument for triggering the issues of our alienation, which belong to the boundaries. Moreover, it raises explicitly the issue of our transparent boundaries, which ARE implicit in our everyday social and psychological interaction in society. "A Room in the Room" can be made elsewhere, in difference place, at a different time, but it should be designed for my another strangeness that I have not yet confronted.

4. Visual Documents

The choice of representation of this installation was as important as the choice of the installation itself. The below diagram (Drawing 2) describes each camera position, which captures the images from the room. There are two groups of the images, one is my views from the outside of the inner room and the other is a third view taking from the outside of my room, capturing the visitors within my performance.
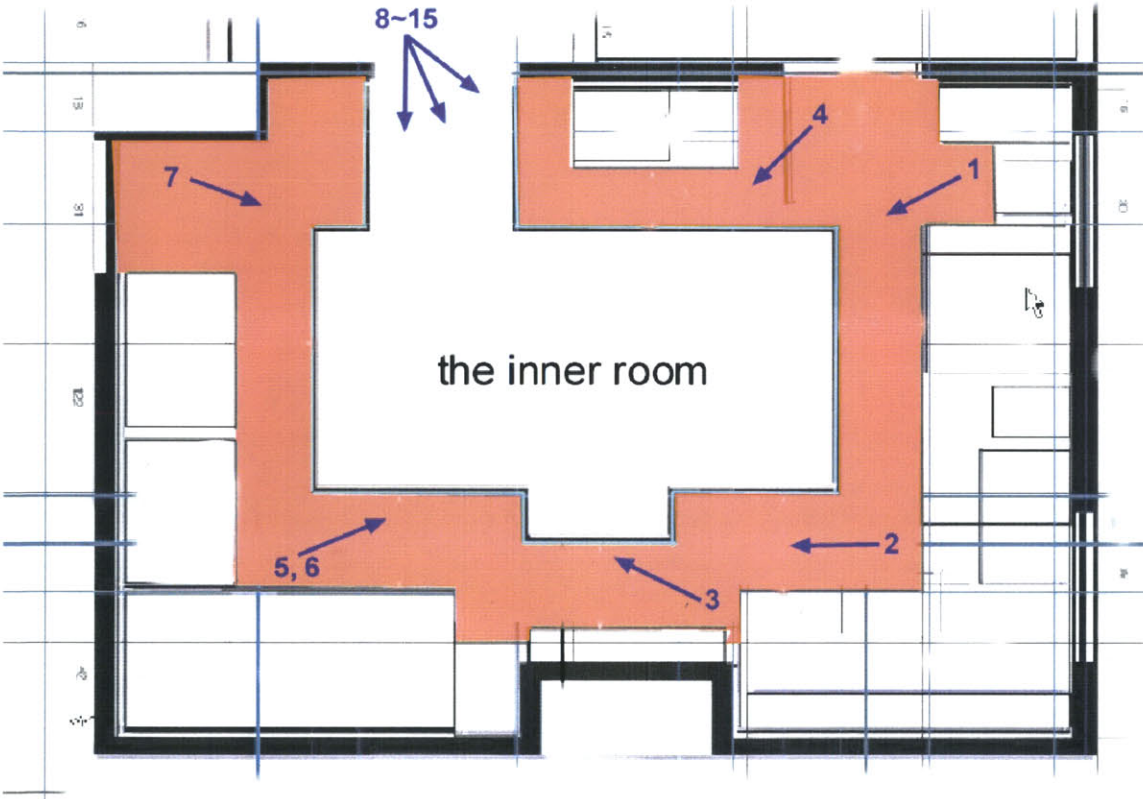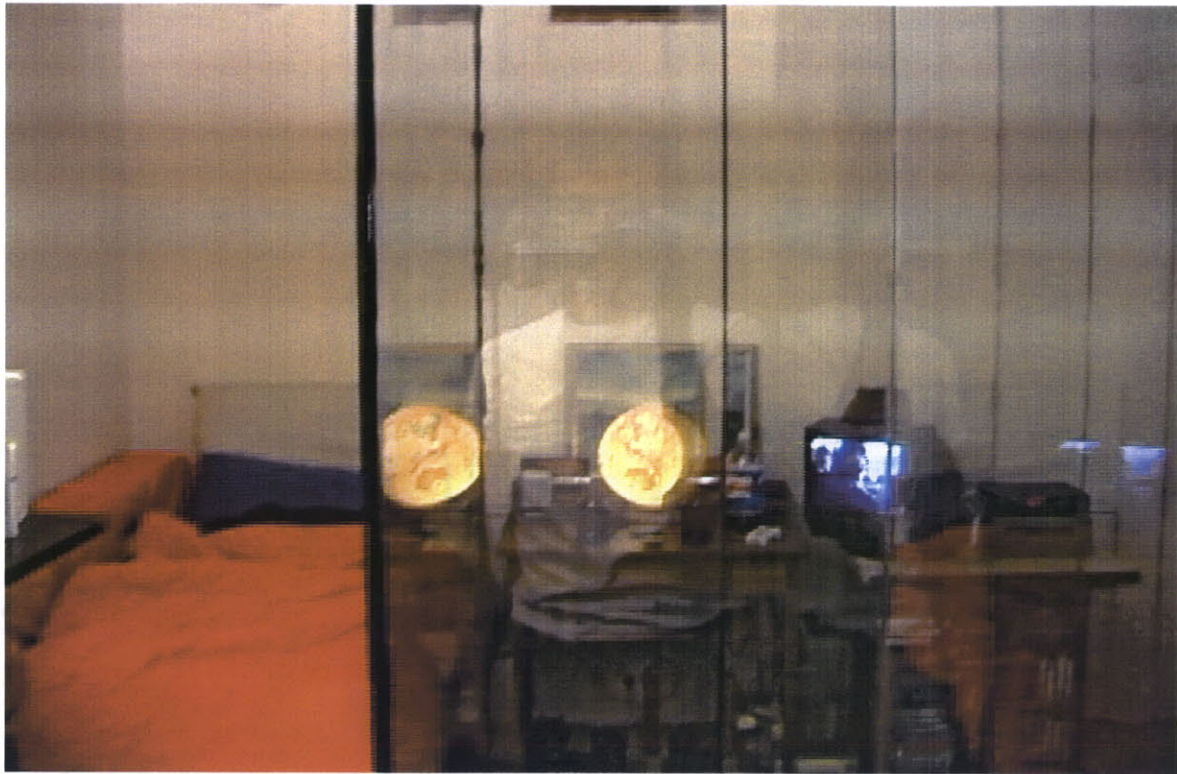

Drawing 2. The locations of camera in the divided room

01

04

02

05

06

07

08

09

10

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12

13

14
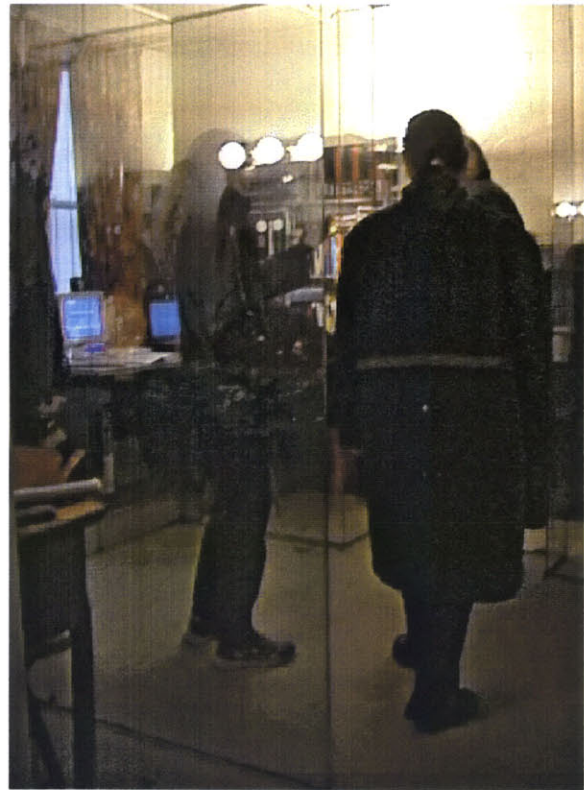
15

The floor view

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