

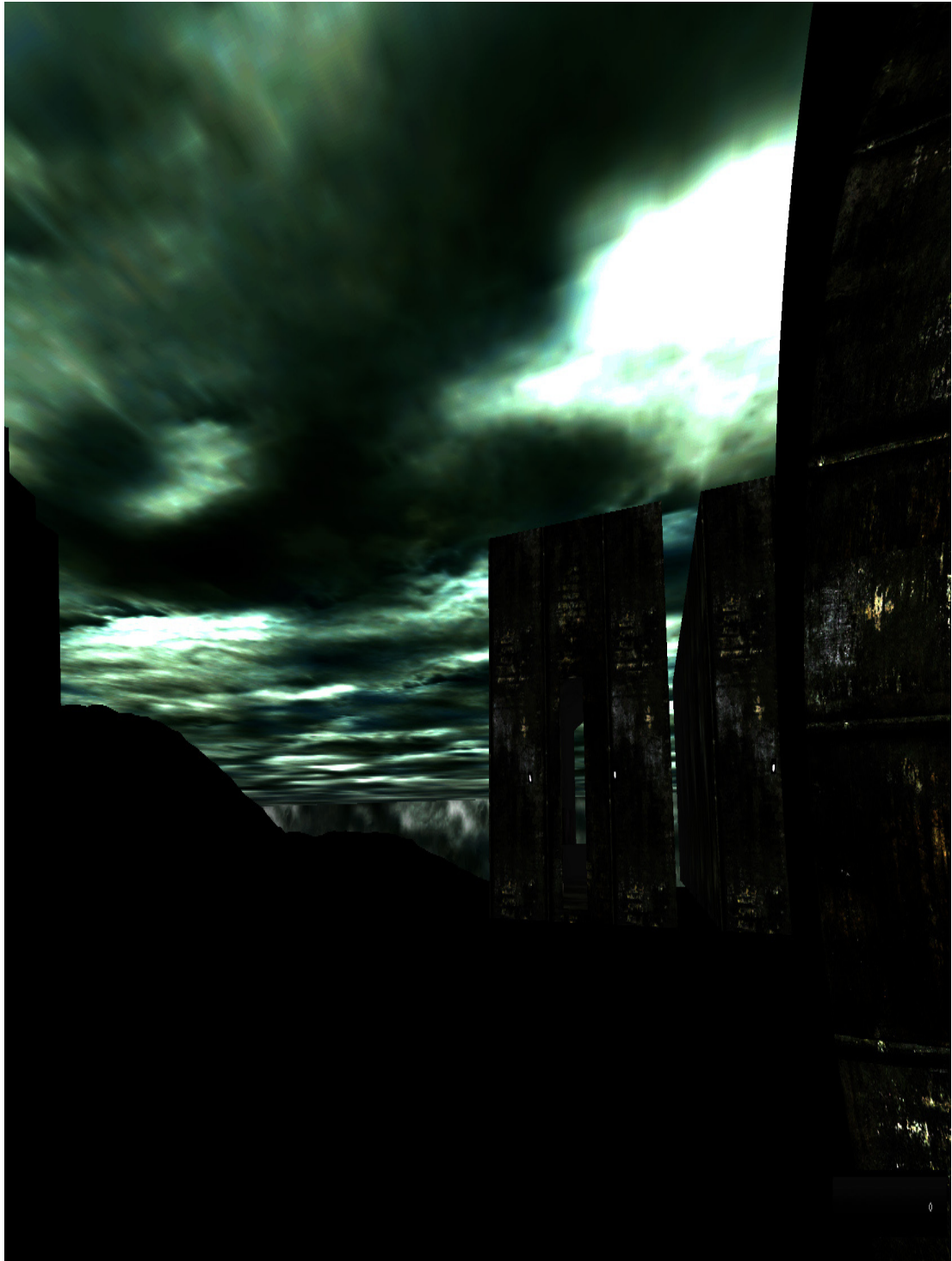
architecture + horror

analogical explorations in architectural design

phd by project      september 2008      sean pickersgill  
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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone and has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program

Sean Pickersgill

4th September 2008



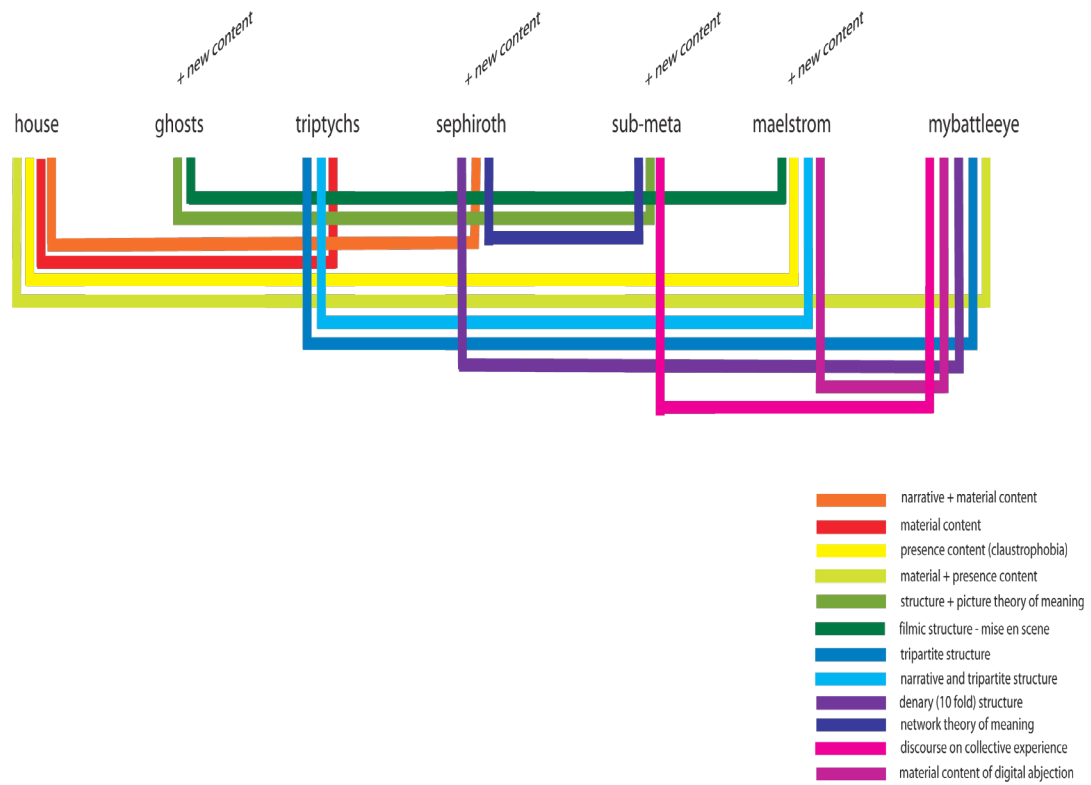
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thank you.



Above:      Summary Diagram of the intertextuality of  
 Thema over the Seven Projects

# I n t r o d u c t i o n - S u m m a r y o f M e t h o d

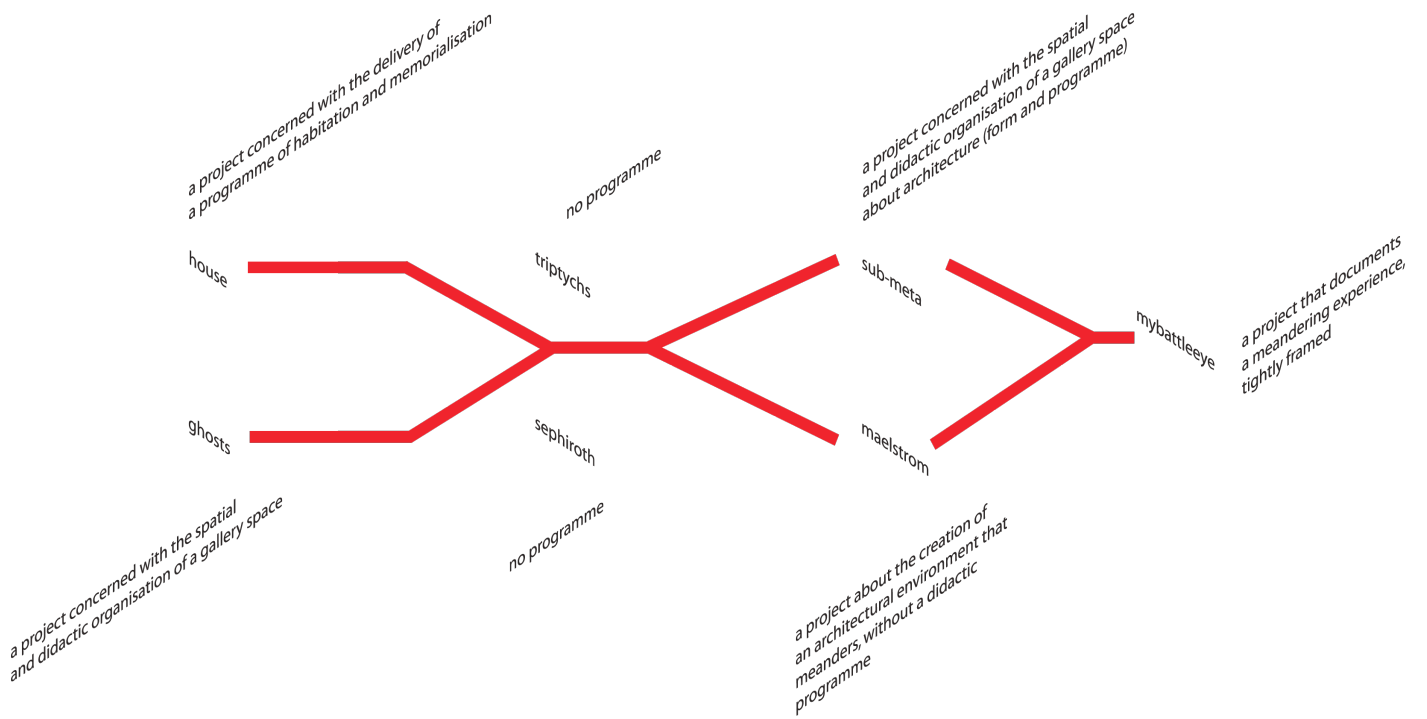
## The Work

This thesis proposes to test a limit of architecture. It asks the question whether there is a limit beyond which the synthesis of effects that comes from looking at architectural forms of expression are unknowable or unrecognisable as architecture when examined outside of conventional architectural practice. The argument will address the manner in which those forms of expression that may be thought to be 'architectural' in a metaphorical or analagous sense, actually have a considerable amount to contribute to a theory of meaning within architectural representation. Ultimately the thesis will show that many of the opportunities for reading architectural qualities in photographic, filmic and textual sources can be syncretically realised within the media of digital environments.

This introduction will describe, analyse and consider a body of work produced under the auspices of a practice-based research doctorate. The work ranges from installation pieces within established gallery spaces to synthetic forms and spaces that exist within more unconventional digital world-forms. The seven projects use the format of the installation, either in actual installation pieces or components thereof, to investigate the relationship of architecture to philosophical questions of aesthetic affect, the purposiveness of architecture and the manner in which the visual organisation of architecture is implicitly diagrammatic.

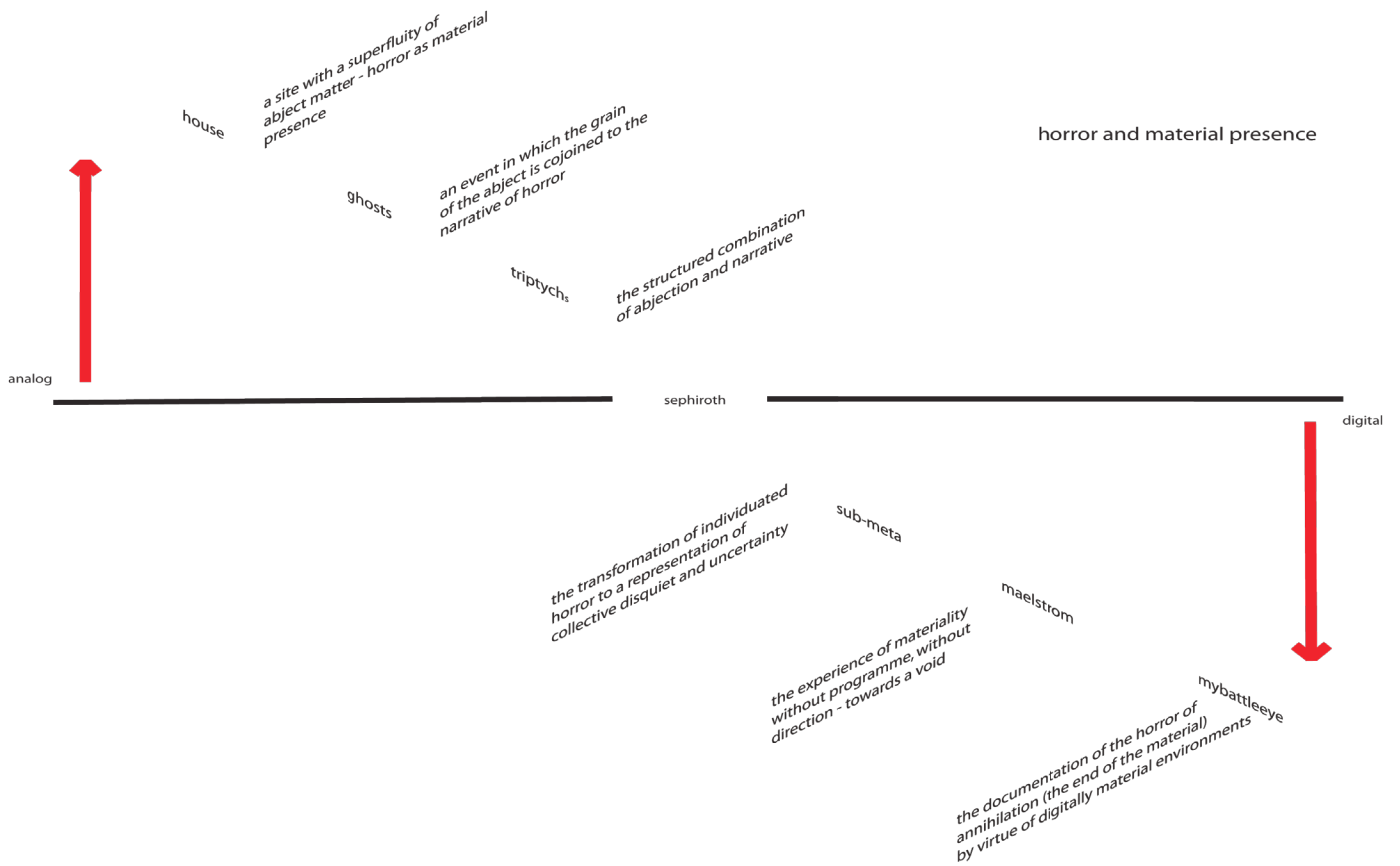
Whilst none of the projects are conventionally architectural in the manner of, for example, the tectonics of construction or issues of buildability or any other utilitarian outcome, they *are* directed at questions about how a critical audience might consider the idea that the presence of 'architectural' expression in modes outside of everyday encounters could pose questions regarding the thematic richness of the discipline. In addition the accompanying textual analysis will describe both the emergent qualities of projects as finite qualia, and also the questions that might be asked in to situate this knowledge in a greater discourse of architectural theory.

Together, the projects and the thematic analysis of the thesis, form a contribution to our knowledge of how architecture can be read and understood through a variety of expressive media; how architecture can be read in the didactic circumstances of an installation; and how this constitutes a legitimate form of exploration of the 'architectural'.



thinking about programme...

Left: Summary Diagram of the role of Programme in the Seven Projects



Right: Summary diagram of the presence of Horror in the Seven Projects

## The Projects

Chronologically, the Projects are:

- 2004 Forensic - House  
Ghosts of the Civic Dead – The Reclaimed, Redeemed Return of the House
- 2005 Triptychs – Frame, Parergon, Punctum  
Sephiroth – Structure for Structure’s Sake
- 2006 Sub-meta – The Coincidence of the Digital Real in the Imaginary  
Maelstrom – Digital Stories
- 2007 My Battle Eye – Formed and Formless

One of the consequences of this mode of working is that the material for discussion, the seven projects, has attempted to find the limits of its expression, the point at which the material is no longer recognisable as being involved in architectural discourse. A key relationship explored in this fashion is through the conceptual limit that may be identified with a state of ‘horror’ or the ‘horrific’. This will be discussed below in terms of the relationship between horror and evil, and between the idea of the excessive and the purposeless, but it is important to state at the outset that the idea of ‘horror’ at no stage simply means the visceral organic fright experienced in threatening or fictional settings. I take horror to be a state in which the limitlessness of privation, or lack, can be seen to exist. It is a moment of intelligible intellectual horror, a moment when we recognise that there is no metaphysical assurance that there is a stable ground of agreement on what is the ‘good’ of architecture. It is, as we shall see, an abyss.

Principally this is seen as a philosophical state, by which I mean a condition that involves recognition and attendance on the experience of ‘affect’ understood in its Deleuzian sense and which I will define more fully in the body of the thesis. Principally what should be kept in mind when examining the projects to follow is that a definition of horror can only be made once the full range of its iterations are outlined in each project. The thesis builds incrementally in its definitions of the relationship between affect and representation, commencing from a quite conventional understanding of horror to finally encompass a deeply critical and self-reflexive sense of its presence in theoretical discourse. Nevertheless, there is certainly some circumstantial use of material from the genres of horror film and fiction, but it is

balanced by a recognition that these entertainment media succeed precisely because they activate fundamental ontic uncertainties regarding the perpetuation and safety of 'the human' in unfamiliar circumstances.

The projects themselves range from photographic work of an architectural 'site', installation pieces of recognisable items (dress, cup and saucer, steel plates) within a gallery environment and text (*House (Forensic)*) to digital prints of synthetic environments, film stills and film pieces themselves (*MyBattleEye*). Between this are a number of presentation formats: triptychs, text pieces and an architectural design, all of which have evolved as a consequence of a continuous interrogation of the idea of the 'real' in architecture and of the proposition that it is possible to attempt to find the limits of the 'real'. The work determines a method for identifying alternate methods for describing the affectual qualities of architecture. It commences from a project with modest aspirations, a small renovation, but with the potential to be theorized as part of a larger project concerning the relationship between architecture, mass media and the narrational opportunities of filmic and ludic/digital space. By attending to the media through which architecture is both affectually described and experienced, the projects and the academic analyses both respond to these processes, identify their imminent qualities and explore the implications of this knowledge.

As the three diagrams above show, the seven projects share a network of thematic relations that cannot be sustained when they are considered in isolation. Whilst it is necessary to discuss each project in chronological order for the purposes of making developmental sense of the work, their principal merit is as part of a structured argument in seven different modalities. By creating this relationship, the project and thesis work combine to articulate how the turn to digital space in the final projects, *Maelstrom* and *MyBattleEye*, are indicative of a larger move within architectural theory towards an understanding of immersive digital space. And more importantly they demonstrate a fundamental and unique proposition regarding the ontological qualities of that space.

The first diagram, *Intertextuality of Thema*, provides a short-hand description of the major thematic strands that are carried over the seven projects. As can be seen, there is a complex process of causation and fertilisation that chronologically occurs from one project to the next. Whilst the final project, *MyBattleEye*, is certainly a summation of a series of themes, it is not merely the result of the previous works. They stand alone as complete explorations in

themselves.

The second diagram, *thinking about programme*, shows the manner in which the works attempt to satisfy the idea that architecture must 'do' something, that it has its basis in utility. Whilst all of the projects have a role in exploring or demonstrating some aspects of the thesis questions, not all of them perform in the same fashion. This diagram is a reminder that it is possible to work within a general conceptual field of architecture without always making spatialised environments that require negotiation.

The third diagram, *horror and material presence*, summarizes the manner in which the definition of horror is transformed according to the successive projects. The change in this state is a result of continual theoretical consideration and the testing of these states in the material forms of the projects.

The works themselves are sequential and build towards clear propositions regarding the development of an architectural practice that has evolved from an investigation of the marginalia of what usually constitutes the influences and determinants of an architectural process. It will be shown that, beginning with a process of recording the qualities of a small and inconsequential architectural project, the development of that material into a format that evokes and provokes other readings will set in train subsequent projects that seek to further investigate the manner in which architecture has isomorphic similarities with many of the architectonic metaphors of critical philosophical theory. In fact it is only by commencing with the small and inconsequential that the potentially distracting aspects of, arguably, more prestigious works can be avoided.

In assessing the work presented within the thesis it is important to understand that the burden's of proof for determining aesthetic judgements in architectural installations are not the same as one would bring to bear on architecture itself in a conventional functioning environment. A more appropriate lens for reviewing the claims of the thesis is to ask whether each stage of the process appropriately re-focuses its terms of reference to uncover something new regarding architecture. The principal quality of this thesis overall and of the project work it describes, explains and reflects upon, is its contribution to an understanding how architecture is a fundamental component of ontologically liminal experiences. It is through crafting and critical analysis that this quality is recognised in the projects.



## Real and Unreal

At the outset it is important in this introduction to establish some understanding of the relationship between issues of the 'real' and the 'unreal' in issues of representation of architecture. Certainly, at the simplest level it is an uncontested fact that there are material differences between the means of representing architecture and the material reality of the built environment that surrounds us. In this respect we could leave the distinction to be one of empirical matter, and in many instances this will suffice, but as we look more closely at the phenomenal *qualia* of the representations of architecture, the issues becomes more complex. When discussing the project work these two terms will describe the range of ontological vividness intended for the viewer or user.

To deal with this complexity, I would like to make some clarifications at the outset in order to limit the breadth of the discussion and allow a stricter focus on the specific and latent qualities of the creative material to be discussed later. I shall take the 'real' to initially refer to those aspects of everyday existence that are incontestable in their appearance. The 'unreal' is not, as might be assumed, the converse of the real, but rather an experience of the real that hypostatizes its emblematic qualities within a semantic exchange, a real that is fully formed within the representational apparatus that define, or code, its appearance. At its most fundamental level this is the recognition that the material of the projects when they turn towards digital expression does not simply describe an indexical moment that is haptically or optically recognisable. As will be further developed, the manipulation of this condition will continue within the projects, through the use of fictional or counterfactual states to describe 'other' worlds that have recognisable dialogical conditions.

## Analogous Practice – Some Questions of Representation in Architecture

The projects have evolved as a consequence of a reiterative process of considering the simple issue of 'how should one act?' if you are thinking as an architect. In the projects that follow, some simple rules are pursued that focus the question of being architectural at all times. In the first instance, the question is always, 'What am I looking at?' and what is the manner in which this looking is taking place? Secondly, by looking, in what way is this process circumscribed by the media through which it takes place? Thirdly, how do the organisational strategies that define a programme self-organise themselves and does it have any necessary relationship to the location of its appearance? Fourthly, how is the material content of this research returned to us (the random and the epigenetic), and in what manner does it transform into an operable

content that will have formal and programmatic consequences in a material project? Fifthly, having looked at this content, are there other modes through which the idea of the material and formal may be expressed? More particularly, is there a direction, after the preparation for architectural design, which is best enunciated in other media and other discursive contexts?

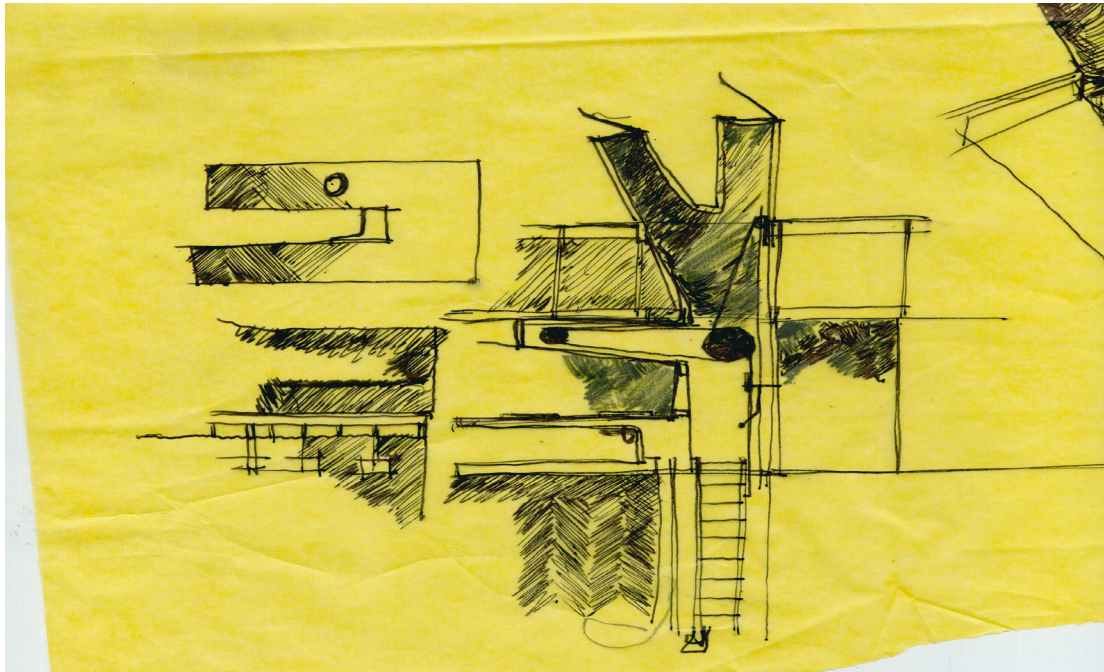
An unproblematic or at least familiar example of this might be the following: An architect is asked to build on a green field site (what does she look at, how does she do research?); she sketches the place of the design, possibly its topography, noting distinct emergent features; she notes the typological and normative aspects of the programme inasmuch as it sits within a heuristic field in which terms like room, door, entry, ground, etc., are unproblematic; the crucial shift of transubstantiation takes place in which a subsequent sketch simultaneously describes the site conditions and the building as coeval, or at least in which the problematic aspects of the site are rendered unseen in comparison with the calligraphic force of the sketch as *parti*; and finally, having made the sketch, in what ways do these marks appear to be necessarily directed towards making architecture? Is it possible that they may change direction and become simple patterns, characters, film sets, book illustrations, etc.?

Indeed there are any number of strategies that may be employed that involve the relationship between the empirical practice of making buildings, then discerning the lapidary number of modes through which the 'real' may be spoken of in a critical and illuminating fashion. The strong material reality of architectural practice has determined that the idea of 'architecture' is always engaged with the material reality of its presence. For a building to be considered the product of critical thought, the argument goes, that thought must always be grounded in a practice that is either directed towards a self-consciousness of the practicality of design and/or the coeval idea that the intimacy of your relationship between an environment and your physical self is the most phenomenologically rich.<sup>3</sup> There are many clear arguments for restricting the discussion of the 'architectural' to this material as it draws a significant boundary between the material practice of crafting buildings and built environments and the subsequent adoption of that material into other representational modes. These other modes have their own discursive contexts and histories within which arguments can be made, and may not have any immediate relevance to the practicalities of making buildings. Yet in this circumstance it may be argued that the location of the boundary remains evasive, and hence problematic, for all forms of representation might seem to simultaneously show (or display) and interpret their subject matter. Within this boundary, it is worthwhile discussing some aspects of representational

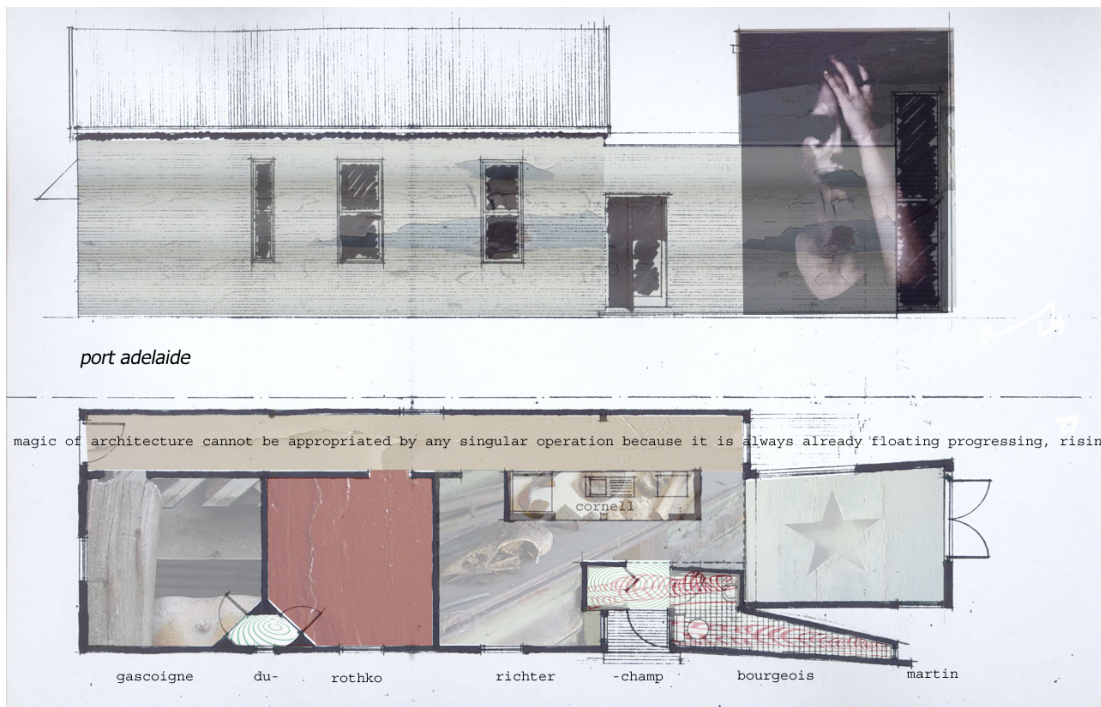
practice, commencing with drawing.

It is possible to efficiently rehearse the key positions regarding representation in architecture, as the critical literature devoted to methods of orthographic documentation is large. In many respects, the study of architectural drawings, their role as transcriptions of intended material consequences has been a *sensus communis* of architectural criticism since the Renaissance. Indeed, by tracking the moment when architectural drawing attempts to represent conditions outside of the 'real' in the eighteenth century, for example in the work of Fischer von Erlach, Piranesi, Boullée, Ledoux and Lequeu, it assumes a role as a didactic medium.<sup>4</sup> Given the impossible, or unrealizable, nature of the work, the effect of the material is limited to the discursive qualities of the image. That this material alternates between orthographic depiction of plans, elevations, etc. and the use of perspective methods to show a scenographic 'place' is significant.

As Manfredo Tafuri, the Italian architectural theorist has noted, discussing Piranesi's *Carceri* drawings and the *Campo Marzio* project in *Architecture and Utopia*, the idiosyncratic manipulation of perspective to suit the scene revealed an attempt to simultaneously document an architectural fantasy and to impart a sense of the dislocation of historical narratives.<sup>5</sup> Tafuri, argues that the interest of the Russian film-director Sergei Eisenstein in Piranesi, in particular the relationship between the fragmentation of perspectival renderings and their clear enunciation of an 'ecstatic transfiguration' of the image-function, constituted a defining moment of the avant-garde.<sup>6</sup> Whilst *Architecture and Utopia* itself is devoted to the vicissitudes of the idea of the European avant-garde as an historical project, an additional dividend of Tafuri's work is the clear and manifest opportunity for reading architecture through media other than conventional orthographic and perspectival means. Tafuri's method of proceeding through the 'historical project' is likened, by himself and in agreement with his commentators, to that of a jigsaw puzzle – a ludic experience in which the matter of history has multiple configurations. In this manner, architecture is simultaneously an indexical representation of the parallel social forces that present it and an autonomous practice with a technical lexicon of 'design' questions internal to the processual history of design.<sup>7</sup> Eisenstein, in Tafuri's estimation is clearly interested in the manner in which a theory of film montage must adopt the semantic aspirations of Piranesi to speak outside of an image's simple representative function. Architectural representation, then, is not simply a matter of pictorial simulation, but of speaking 'outside' of its representative function.



Above: Conceptual Sketches for Port Adelaide House, 2004



Above: Conceptual Elevation and Plan for Port Adelaide House, 2004

In some respects the work to be described in the thesis has also evolved as a consequence of a particular mode of analysis adopted, convincingly, by Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Louis Pelletier in *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge*.<sup>8</sup> The book sets out to retrieve, *avant la lettre*, the profound credibility of the architectural drawing as a defining aspect of the experience of architecture - an experience the authors feel is being compromised by contemporary (for 1995) means of digital reproduction. Whilst my intention is not to investigate drawings as such, it is the process of inscription and encryption involved in the drawing process that is of interest.

For Pérez-Gómez and Pelletier, the means of depiction developed in orthogonal and perspectival space displays a convincing historical continuity inasmuch as it has served as a form of representation between the practice of 'making the architectural' and the many ideas on the divinity of the eye, and of the practice of looking, that treatises on optics and vision have invoked since Euclid. Clearly, they argue, the mode and the structure by which we choose to transcribe and make real ideas on architecture has to borrow from this tradition. What is only treated lightly in their book is the issue of digital forms of (re)production. The book, devoted to the importance of perspectival space in architecture, has a mere three digital illustrations and two film stills (Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice* and Greenway's *Prospero's Books*). The three digital architectural images are of algorithmic forms using FormZ in the 'Prelude' and an illustration in the 'Coda' section of an example of work done by Marcus Novak as a form of algorithmic experiment in form generation<sup>9</sup>. For Pérez-Gómez and Pelletier, these other uses of perspectival space – manipulation of the horizon by Tarkovsky and the post-production layering of the visual surface through the use of transparent layers and streaming text in Greenway, need to be addressed because they are part of a continual interest, within the architectural avant-garde since the twenties, in the spatio-temporal qualities of film. Greenway is merely a recent instance of this fascination. As they say, 'the new synthetic narratives confound the linear structure of filmic time and invite us to accept, through the undeniable evidence of our personal experience, the *aporias* of time that seem irreconcilable to reason.'<sup>10</sup> The use of digital means of representation does not enjoy as sympathetic an analysis as it is, in the opinion of the authors, merely reproducing three dimensional spaces in a mechanical fashion no different to that of analogue processes. This thesis will show otherwise.

If we were to leave Pérez-Gómez & Pelletier's book here it would serve no purpose in the context of the work to be discussed. Clearly it does not spend much time addressing material

that does not interest them greatly. But, situated between two other texts, *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science*, by Pérez-Gómez and *Polyphilo, Or the Dark Forest Revisited*, by Pérez-Gómez and Pelletier, the work on perspective is important<sup>11</sup>. Their disinclination to engage with a new medium of representation is not from a lack of enthusiasm into other modes of speaking about architecture, merely an inability to fully develop the latent opportunities of the digital. For if we touch on the content of *Polyphilo*, its attempt to describe relations between architecture and an 'erotic narrative' as coincident interests, then it clearly involves ideas about architecture beyond the scrutiny on forms of visual documentation. Mirroring Leone Battista Alberti's *Hypnerotomachia Polyphilo*, Pérez-Gómez and Pelletier, bring forward the sense of lubricious revelry contained in the original, its detailing of grand festive processions and architectural masques, into the contemporary world of the airport – itself a kind of location outside of state and time. The imagery of airlight, from the *sfumato* of the machined surfaces to the monstrosity of the spaces covered all contributes to the contemporary reading.

It is the example of *Polyphilo* that needs to be held in mind when considering the developments of the digital, not those of conventional modes of depiction. This is especially the case as the argument of the thesis proceeds towards an exploration of the affective qualities of digital space in general and digital architecture in particular – though it has to be said that ultimately the aesthetic ground for discussing both digital space and form are cut from the same philosophical cloth. For if we are to think opportunistically about the process of design, it is credible that the means *by which* design may appear architectural is an enhanced road to the moment when it is becoming something other than conventionally architectural.

The sketch, as described above, is a somewhat more ambiguous process for it is a monstrosity before it is recognised as 'almost accurate'. Pérez-Gómez and Pelletier, in the coda, return to address the fact of the explosion of spatial material and modes of expression that rely on the ambiguity of depth of the visual field. In many respects, this study seeks to redress the limitations of their position and present some further thoughts on the complex series of syntactic transactions that space making and its depiction have with architecture. A consequence of the initial project work was the creation of a large and heterogenous body of visual material, and whilst a certain amount of this material was created by the practice of sketching, it was the authority of the photographic 'eye' that came to dominate and with that the need for the material to be organised in a fashion that did justice to its connotative qualities.

### The Limits of Organisation – The Structured Archive

There is a tradition of organising aspects of architectural knowledge according to summary tables of parallel interests. *SMLXL* accompanied the discussion of the work of OMA with a margin of definitions that incorporated a list of seemingly random entries that ranged from the anecdotal to the propositional.<sup>12</sup> In fact the entire tenor of the work is impossible to describe as there is deliberately no organisational and recognisable schema for the contents. As with Borges' definitions of the types of animals in the kingdom, the dispersed text exists as a series of commentaries that may be read in conjunction with the principal text, or may be seen as independent and without relevance to the architectural projects it accompanies on the page. As the introduction affirms, "Architecture is by definition a *chaotic adventure*."<sup>13</sup> and whatever the nature of OMA's architecture, the book as a text itself seems to equally participate in the idea of chaotic correspondences.

Yet it is also clear that the adoption of a single structure of alphabetising the entries implies that a number of critical processes are in place. It is clear that the encyclopaedic text is not to be considered of the same order as the main text in terms of critical relevance, that it may switch voice from the conversational to the authoritative to the poetic, and that it is fragmentary and does not need the support of conventional academic referencing. Just exactly what the function of the work is is unclear, it is certainly not alluded to explicitly in the text.

But in fact the encyclopaedic text may be understood if we consider the idiosyncratic version of the tradition of 'natural wonders' that has its genesis in the seventeenth century *wunderkammer* of German collectors. This form of organisation of items of a 'remarkable' nature collects together a number of strands of investigation that recognised in things an ability to have significant rhetorical power.<sup>14</sup> Medieval mirabilia, as part of the large Scholastic tradition that took the empirical substance of the Earth to be complex rebus of Divine will, enjoyed a special place in the content of study because of their particular strength in being 'wondrous'. The preservation and commentary on the items of the *wunderkammer* has been preserved as a mode of organisation of disparate objects, a 'topography of wonder' as Daston and Park have described it.<sup>15</sup> As they say: '*The medieval collection was not a museum but a thesaurus.*'<sup>16</sup>

A key aspect of this organisation is its status as a kind of ur-history, the collation of disparate elements that collectively betray isomorphic aspects of their creation, the aspiration towards a transfigured material state that redeems the present. In the magical materialism of the pre-



scientific alchemist, language and things are, by definition, miraculous; they are the matter through which the miraculous in life might be experienced as an epiphany of the possibility of the transformation of the unreal to the real.

#### The Limits of Organisation – The Un-Structured Archive

There is a precedent for this type of commentary. Michel Leiris' *Glossaire:j'y serre mese gloses* and the '*Dictionnaire Critique*' published in Georges Bataille's journal, *Documents*, are critical examples of the surrealistically random dictionary.<sup>17</sup> A key text in this respect is Denis Hollier's study of Bataille, *Against Architecture*, which also mentions the role of Leiris. In discussing the lexical practices of Bataille and the Paris Surrealists, Hollier is quite deliberate in establishing that the de-naturing practice of composing pseudo-dictionaries was an important part of the surrealist contest with the perceived rationality and transparency of language. Hollier explains that the purpose of the dictionaries created by the surrealists was to contest the relationship between language and its accepted use in symbolic exchange. To speak of an idea, in this instance, was to avail oneself of an hierarchical tree of meanings and associations, an isomorphic structure, designed to confirm the ossified dominance of everyday use. Bataille's attempt, within the '*Dictionnaire Critique*', to usurp the function of words and their accepted place within everyday grammar led him to principally value a lexical practice that was unhinged from conventional metaphysics. In an uncanny echo of the demystifying practices of the later Wittgenstein, Bataille speaks of language as a tool for a job. As Hollier says:

Bataille uses the term *besogne* (job, work with a notion of drudgery) in the article '*L'informe*', where he clarifies the project governing the dictionary. The job: lexical units wrested from the symbolic code, joined to extralinguistic practices, charged with libidinal intensity referring not to a process of representation or communication, but to a productivity in which the word is not defined by what it means (its 'sense') but by what it does, by the effects it induces (its 'job').<sup>18</sup>

By comparison where Ludwig Wittgenstein would assume that language itself is neutral in its manipulations, Bataille clearly sees that the ownership of meanings of terms is guarded by literary, judicial and governmental intelligentsias towards whom the Surrealists were immutably hostile. More explicitly, Bataille describes practices of transgression, hostile to the form of meaning in words, upon which the '*Dictionnaire Critique*' is based. Hollier summarizes it:

Bataille gives some explanation of what the '*Dictionnaire critique*' of the *Documents* was supposed to be, the nature of the project, in one of the fourteen articles he participated in writing – the article '*L'informe*' (Formless), which here is given the job generally granted to the article "Dictionary" itself. In the *Document's* dictionary, this self-reflection does not take place at the place assigned to it by the lexicographical code: this is the first transgression of the discourse where it is produced. The second transgression is the valorization of formlessness – something every dictionary aims at repressing. The meaning (that a dictionary fixes) is identified with the concept, with the idea: *eidos* = form. Because this repudiation occurs in the article '*L'informe*' (Formless), the dictionary, rather than being closed back on itself, opens up to expansive expenditure of sense, to infinite completion.<sup>19</sup>

Wittgenstein's meaning-as-use has become meaning-as-abuse, a language that relentlessly returns to the most visceral and physical of states, which Bataille famously associates with spittle.<sup>20</sup>

So we could argue that the dictionary of associations contained within *SMLXL* might be said to have come from just this sort of practice. Whether the influence or inspiration is present is unclear but, as a dictionary, it is uncannily similar to Bataille's. In the context of a book that presents a summary and rationale of a well-regarded architectural practice a number of functions can be suggested. The dictionary may be a specific allusion to Bataille and seek to memorialize a thinker who was explicitly 'against' architecture; it may be an attempt to practice (do the job) of speaking as an 'other' voice (perhaps an internal voice, perhaps a conscience?); it may be explicitly attuned to the work it frames to provide further analysis, albeit of a transgressive kind; it may be the manifestation of a horror vacui, a need to add complexity to work that the architect guiltily feels is without qualities. The work, like the text may be a combination of mirabilia and the formless.

As the thesis will show, this concatenation of mirabilia and the formless will become a working method for 'sketching' the architecture of the projects. As they evolve their terms of reference to incorporate increasingly diverse and spectacularly sublime material, the organisational grip displayed in a dictionary of the sort described above will become increasingly important. For there has been a constant process of structuring and de-structuring the material to reveal latent affects of its content.

Rosalind Krauss and Yves-Alain Bois' in *Formless, A User's Guide* attempted to vivify the idea of 'l'informe' as a method for re-categorizing subject matter, in this case avant-garde art practice from the early 1920's to the late 1990's. The book is, in effect, a catalogue for the material they have collected for an exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou in 1996, yet it is a fully formed study of the variety of de-territorialized and de-institutionalized art practices that have evolved in response to the acquisitive and stultifying attention of the art market. Bois and Krauss tie the abjectness of *l'informe* to the idea of the dictionary, thus making a kind of melancholic archive. Implicitly, in creating the archive they are allowing it the minimum amount of organisational complexity for the abjectness of the content to remain untouched. As a curatorial practice this is of some importance to the thesis project itself as it provides a model for structuring that which is too appalling or horrific to be constrained by some organisational and explanatory schema. I think this is a very interesting practice and it has a clear relationship to the initial project work of the thesis that investigated a death, and sought ways to represent it in archival and constructive projects, and which also recognized in the mediums of photography, film and digital space the opportunity to see these concerns as coeval. As the thesis will go on to show, these ideas have a clear relationship to the affect of horror, abjection and formlessness in the work of Julia Kristeva, Jacques Derrida and the project work of the thesis itself.

#### The Limits of Organisation – *Privatio Boni*

One of the enduring couplets within which Western culture organizes cultural value is in the intertwining of concepts of good and evil. It is an instantly recognizably leitmotif of most narratives concerning the triumph of acceptable cultural values over the presence of discord, disharmony and the jeopardy posed by the 'otherness' of unfamiliar experiences. From the everyday political rhetoric of group identity that defines a 'them' and an 'us', to mythical contests involving the triumph of Christian values over the chaos of non-western cultures, the concept of evil is employed to demonstrate, chauvinistically, the manifest correctness of one position over its competitors.

Evil is also, of course, a fundamental issue within philosophical ethics, again in the secularized Western tradition. Any philosophy of action that attempts to give sense to the experience of communal culture must address the presence of evil actions and events if they wish to place the concept of goodness on any sort of a firm footing. To determine the definite existence of 'goodness' and the worth of pursuing 'good' ends, standard questions in moral philosophy, it has to be shown that there is a condition out of which goodness emerges and to which it

should not return. The idea of a state of grace that is attained through attention to positive values or the return to a similar condition through the experience of redemption is a constant element in narratives with a definite ethical schema. Kant's Concept of Duty is an elaboration of the Christian homily to mutual respect that, whilst not providing a spiritual benefit, clearly rehearses the idea that constant 'goodness' in the face of temptation, envy, etc. is a sound and necessary basis for happiness.

It is unusual, but perhaps worthwhile, to speak of architecture in this respect. Examining any discourse on evil the principle location for the quest for goodness in an ethically responsible person's life is in their actions and beliefs. Evil is never assumed to reside fully formed in an individual. It is instead recognized by an analysis of the relative goodness of a condition. The question whether the evil that is to be avoided exists as a matter of interpretation or whether, a more difficult proposition to sustain, there are conditions, properties, substances, relationships that are *actually* and *demonstrably* evil shows the difficulty in allying the two. At a certain level it seems ludicrous to suggest that some material properties are inherently evil or that evil has a definite location, this particularly in a culture that has consistently examined the ethically inert nature of the natural world and found no demons lurking in the chemical structure of substances. Further, to even secure agreement that a particular condition is evil seems to be hopelessly relative and subject to the vagaries of opinion. To say that television is evil or, more seriously, that Auschwitz is evil, does not require us to exorcise television sets or to obliterate the site of the concentration camp. Indeed this is a very difficult question. The role of sites such as Auschwitz continues to be passionately debated, begging the question whether the bricks, mortar and steel of Auschwitz isomorphically describe evil or whether they are the indifferent remains of human perfidy.<sup>21</sup> An escape from this conundrum is voiced by Augustine who describes evil not as an empirical element of the world but as *privatio boni*, the absence of the good. Evil is, hence, a lack of goodness with all the resonant meanings that a 'lack' can conjure. When applied to the individual it is a deficiency of character, when applied to the material world it is the manner in which the world presents itself, or otherwise, to us as evidence of God's goodness or in its (in)ability to foster the personal attainment of goodness. Already this suggests for architecture a clear communicative role, given the representational and symbolic content of the medium. Augustine's model has proven extremely durable and provides the basic structure for promoting the Aristotelian *eudaemonia* or 'good life' based on the cultivation of positive values.

But this is to assume that it is necessary to prove, *inter alia*, that a satisfactory discussion of evil must commence from an incorruptible proof of its tangibility; or that its presence is traceable, in a reverse proof of the omnipotence of God's existence, back to the actions or intentions of some singular entity. Whether there is empirical evidence of evil's existence is moot when one considers the effect of evil as a performative experience. It is more fruitful to consider at the outset, and this essay will assume this as a method, the idea that if evil is to be understood in any form one must look to where it is invoked. Irrespective of whether one is attempting to determine the utility, or otherwise, of good actions/judgments the currency of evil as a descriptor, an invocation of horror and its absorption into the symbolic order of language, takes precedence over the minutiae of how that evil is empirically determined. In the same manner it is possible to talk of the existence of 'art' as a category of human experience, even though the concept has open valences and indeed assumes this indeterminacy as a pre-condition of its existence, so too evil is perpetually present and woven through everyday experience without ever being definitively known.

The discussion, within the thesis chapters, concerning the parergon in *The Truth in Painting*, will sequentially, speak of the relationship between the archive and the recovery of material, which then haunts the process of reading; the omission of material, its sublation as a representative practice, and which will be further examined in the content on Lacan below, and also in the project chapters; and the idea of the frame that places material in view for discussion. The three discussions respectively address issues of haunting, omission and framing. This will be drawn upon to establish a clear and operable sense of how horror manifests itself in the projects and how it is a suppressed discourse in architecture and its representations. Clearly also there will be an exploration of the term 'horror', distinguishing particular aspects of its lexical modes and its reliance on a narrational space. Essentially, as the text below addresses, I wish to establish a connection between the idea of horror and its attachment to a material 'presence' – that we are scared that the horrific will materially manifest itself. I will distinguish between the idea of horror as a state and the idea of evil as an ethical agency that brings to attention the experience of horror.

#### Towards Horror -The Substance of Evil

Augustine, from whom most discussion of the theodicy of evil commences, distinguishes between forms of evil centred on the problem of the world's demonstrable imperfection in terms of beauty and fitness of purpose and evil emergent from the (in)actions of humanity. Through

this he refuted vehemently the suggestion that evil was physically present in the substances of the world as it ascribes to God a will to do harm to humanity. Hence the emphasis upon the idea of *privatio boni*, that nullifies the concept of evil by placing it in a developmental schema for the attainment of goodness. However there was, current in Augustine's day, a form of Christian teaching that proposed a Dualist cosmology proposing equally powerful, but diametrically opposed, forces of Good and Evil. Manicheanism had the attraction of actually addressing the persistent presence of evil in the world and ascribing a cause to its presence.

In this respect it is interesting to consider a quote from Plotinus on evil, from which this discussion will commence:

Given that the Good is not only the existent thing, it is inevitable that, by the outgoing from it or, if the phrase be preferred, the continuous down-going or away-going from it, there should be produced a Last, something after which nothing more can be produced: this will be Evil. As necessarily as there is Something after the First, so necessarily there is a Last: this last is matter, the thing which has no residue of good in it, here is the necessity of Evil.<sup>22</sup>

The logic, and indeed the epistemological references, Plotinus' utilizes may not attract much support today in an intellectual environment suffused with a self-conscious desire to understand the intimacies of sense and reference. Yet the ineffable trajectory that sees, at the end of all determinations of what must exist a last condition, a transcendental malevolence whose finality is located in matter, is very familiar to modern readers. It refers to the abhorrence of the material world and of flesh, matter unformed or undetermined by an idea. Even in recognizing the relativism or difference of experience, Plotinus asserts the actions of some transcendental signified by virtue of which the most execrable of actions, events or entities may still be dignified. And significantly this is located in matter. Though it may be impossible to determine exactly what type of matter this portion may be in its final instance, even assuming it is a singularity, that it is present in the teleology of Western ethics is important. So the distinction between an evil that is merely underdeveloped goodness, in some form, and an evil that needs to be denied through ascetic refusal contest the issue of whether it is real. For, in denying certain phenomenological experiences (hedonistic pleasure), or overemphasising others (the importance of prayer) we are reminded of the fundamental physical presence of evil. Geoffrey Galt Harpham has noted the ascetic elements in Western culture, those

that translate the prohibitions deemed necessary for the pious life, into the suspicion that any material excess constitutes a movement towards perdition. Harpham clearly argues that asceticism is a consistent element in any ethical culture that seeks to impose disciplinary strictures on its members.<sup>23</sup> The ascetic heroically transcends the vicissitudes of the materiality of existence to achieve an un-bodied state, an image we will see in the discussions of the transition to the representational media of photography, film and synthetic spaces.

As recorded by the early Church fathers and in agreement with earlier Greek discussion concerning the role of the senses in determining the 'hedonism' of experience, the path to the good life is fraught with the question of how the pleasure of the 'good' needs must be divorced from the ephemeral pleasures of bodily experience.<sup>24</sup>

#### Towards Horror - Asceticism and evil

This asceticism surfaces most clearly in those demonstrations where the will to demonstrate piety is located on the body, a body formed of matter. The body may be represented most simply by discussions of the actual physiognomy and how that is tempered, but it is also suggested that the 'body', as a metaphorical concept, is defined also by those expressive practices that form part of our transcendental landscape. To transform our environment by recording movements, gestures, etc. of the body translates the physicality of our existence into a symbolic exchange of event and interpretation. Art is the most immediate candidate for this definition, but we can include architecture as well. In fact architecture is an interesting candidate for discussion as it displays the presence of a will to form as an individual vision through a medium that incorporates a range of public, cooperative and constructive acts – the building industry. That the culture of architecture is also self-consciously aware of this relationship further complexifies any analysis.

By examining the idea of evil outside of issues of theodicy and referring it to the condition of modernity in architecture a number of symptomatic conditions occur. Evil is effectively ejected from rational debate concerning the architectural project within the field of architectural theory, yet reappears as a dominant, but marginal subject in the presentation of modern architecture to the popular consciousness. Finally it is retrieved as a quasi-religious act, in neo-modernism in which the ascetic path is presented as the enlightened mode of action. But evil is only deferred, not eradicated from the symbolic order.

I think Lacan's model of 'desire and the picture' illustrates this deferment<sup>25</sup>. In a complex interweaving of the relationship between psycho-analysis and phenomenology he refers to the intertwining of desirous components of vision and the material evidence of the world. Lacan's model has a mirrored and superimposed ray structure that illustrates the anamorphic qualities of representation<sup>26</sup>. Ultimately this model provides us with a way of organizing thoughts regarding the indeterminacy of experience without slipping into a covert idealism of subject and object relations. So too the experience of evil occupies a similar level of indeterminacy. Whilst it is generally spoken of in terms of simple, dialectical oppositions the evidence of 'Evil's' material presence actually turns out to have a far more ambiguous status in keeping with Lacan's investigations into the metonymic functions of language. Further, the discussion centered on the status of the 'abject' conditions of existence, the 'reality' that lies behind the symbolic order of the world in images and language, forms a key relationship between the theodicy of evil and the traumatic conditions explored (or denied) in contemporary visual art practice<sup>27</sup>. This in turn, I argue, impinges on the theoretical world of architecture which shares cosmetic similarities with art practice, and hence with the relationship between ethics and aesthetics in philosophical study. And in particular the aspiration for an aesthetic practice that seeks out the nature of authenticity in expression and effect.

#### Towards Horror – The Look of Abstraction

The manner in which the transformations of 'style' engendered by the abstractions of modernism share in the relationship between abstraction and authenticity is important not least because of the aspiration of modernity to give form to the complex subjectivity engendered by modern experience. Even given the unrelenting reflexivity of this experience – 'all that is solid melts into air' – says Marx (and Berman)<sup>28</sup>, early twentieth century modernism in architecture retained the commitment to isomorphically represent the enduring authentic experience of this brave, new western world. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe famously, though figures such as Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer are equally notable, took this responsibility seriously<sup>29</sup>. 'Fulfill the law to gain freedom', one of Mies' famous aphorisms, illustrates the conjoined aspirations to submit design practice to both the 'law' of construction-industry economics whilst attaining, and this element must be further commented upon, the 'freedom' attributable to the presence of architecture. What this freedom actually constitutes is never entirely clear. It is not a solely political emancipation, nor one associated just with greater programmatic utility and flexibility, it is something far more philosophically pungent. It implies that both the architect and the subject (client) may, in different ways, enjoy a level of reflexive subjectivity that will confront all manner



of institutional subjective identities inscribed upon the modern subject. Mies' paradoxical formula is that the greater the degree of structure the more evident and infinite is the space of engagement<sup>30</sup>. So, in the deliberate and *Klar* world-view of Mies, there is an evident attempt to present the spectacle of art, or of inhabitation, as an instance unfettered by compromising contextual elements that may betray an historical consciousness and inhibit the reflexivity of the moment<sup>31</sup>. The figure in space, be it the statue by Kolbe in the Barcelona Pavilion, or Mrs Edith Farnsworth in her house exist in a scintillating and unrelenting present<sup>32</sup>.

I would suggest that this representation, as expressed in the collages, is a clear engagement with what Lacan terms the Symbolic Order, the 'stain in the spectacle of the world' with a Gaze which is prior to and distinct from an individual, subjectival perspective. What Mies terms 'freedom' is the exploration of two types of return, the return of the repressed signifier or symptom, and the return of the traumatic Real. In the images that show spaces of artistic contemplation, the gallery images, the example consistently displays an artwork framed for special attention. This is the insistent return of the fact of art, a kind of Kantian affirmation of the transcendent aspirations for aesthetic speculation. These images are one of many precursors to the de-institutionalization of art that confront the formalist bias of Greenberg et al. in the post-war period and they can easily be interpreted as an extension of the 'white cube' ethos of gallery space<sup>33</sup>. It is unclear whether Mies is for or against the formalist position for his, and his students', collages will often reflect an ambivalent regard for both the tradition of figural sculpture, with all *its* associations, and the abstract, scaleless work of Klee and others, presented as evidence of the phenomenologically intimate environment that art attempts. They are like modest preliminaries for Rauschenberg's *Combines* without the presentation of the trauma of the real that Rauschenberg clearly presents, the detritus of personal history presented as the melancholic evidence of an irredeemable past.

In summary the seven chapters to follow will discuss seven projects that sequentially seek to show that the complex relationship between architecture and horror becomes present through the consideration of its philosophical conditions. We recognise this sense of an organisational, or architectonic, void in all forms of installation work by articulating the affectual content of its appearance. The architecture of the installation, that which must be reviewed for its connotative effects is essentially defined by its sense of *privatio boni*, its lack. As we shall see, for this to be present and sensible, it is possible and necessary to use media that implicitly define and support this relationship. It is the work of the following chapters to show what this is.



- 19 Hollier, *Against Architecture*, p.29
- 20 Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations*, Prentice Hall, Cambridge, 1973; Bataille, Georges, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927 -1939*, ed. and trans. by Alan Stoeckel, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1985.
- 21 See especially, Dwork, Debórah and van Pelt, Robert Jan, *Auschwitz, 1270 to the Present*, Norton, New York and London, 1996. The Epilogue of this book describes the political difficulties in 'commemorating' the sites of Auschwitz and Birkenau.
- 22 Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (London, Faber and Faber), i.8,3 reproduced in Hick, John, *Evil and the God of Love*, Harper and Row San Francisco, 1977. p.41
- 23 Galt Harpham, Geoffrey, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1987.
- 24 Plato *Protagoras*, Hedonism of Socrates refs, See especially, Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986. pp110-113
- 25 Lacan, Jacques, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, Peregrine Books, London, 1987. See especially the chapters covered in the section 'Of the Gaze As, Objet Petit a'.
- 26 Lacan, p.91
- 27 See especially, Kristeva, Julia, *Powers of Horror*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1982 and Foster, Hal, *The Return of the Real*, MIT Press, Cambridge Mass., 1999.
- 28 Berman, Marshall, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air, The Experience of Modernity*, Viking, New York, 1988.
- 29 See especially, Neumeyer, Fritz, *The Artless Word, Mies van der Rohe on the Building Art*, Cambridge, Mass. MIT Press, 1991. Hays, K.Michael, *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject: architecture of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1992.
- 30 This is displayed in the collage images Mies used in his teaching and architectural practice. The figure/object situated in the infinite grid of the floor space, denoting a kind of temporal and spatial *Dasein*, is the punctiform that anchors the grid and completes its aspiration for infinite extension.
- 31 And in a grotesque inversion of the emancipative programme of abstract modernity the brutal efficiency of places such as Auschwitz should also be mentioned. Their abstraction of the subject, from *Kapo* to *Muselmann* unrelentingly shows the descent of the individual into a state of complete, abject dysfunctional physicality. See Giorgio Agemben, *Remnants of Auschwitz, The Witness and the Archive*, Zone Books, New York, 1999. And of course Primo Levi, *If This is a Man*, Abacus, London, 1987.
- 32 An excellent analysis of this scopic regime, and the haptic/optic relationship established is presented in Paulette Singeley's 'Living in a Glass Prism' reprinted in *Transitions*, XXX
33. Brian Doherty's collection of essays *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, University of California Press, Berkeley Los Angeles, London, 1999, is noteworthy in this respect

## Chapter One - House (Forensic)

### Introduction

The body of work discussed in this thesis had its origins in a set of ordinary circumstances. At the outset it concerned the task of looking at the architectural merits of an old house in the Adelaide suburb of Port Adelaide and proposing a modest renovation and addition. While that task did not proceed as originally planned, it set in motion a series of projects which collectively have involved the development of an extremely dense and involved mode of thinking and working. This work, the design and development of a series of exhibition and installation pieces and the recognition of their critical discursive parameters, is the subject of the thesis overall. And though there has been a number of shifts in approach to the subject matter of the thesis work as it evolved, there remains a persistent presence of the original investigations in all of the subsequent work.

In 2004 a woman who had ownership of a small house in Port Adelaide, South Australia, had undertaken to have an archaeological dig be conducted at the rear of the property. This was done by graduate and undergraduate students of archaeology from Flinders University, South Australia, as a demonstration of the potential for historical research present in a small, working-class, nineteenth-century cottage in a port town. The dig that was conducted, unearthed a large amount of domestic material, mostly discarded and unwanted household waste, that was accumulated and displayed in the house. As part of a larger programme for popularising the archaeology and anthropology of the recent past, the progress of the 'dig' was advertised for inspection to the general public. A colleague of mine at the University of South Australia, Dr Linda Marie Walker<sup>1</sup>, visited the site and was interested in the overall impression of the modest house and its past.

In conversation with myself, Dr Walker and I discussed a number of interesting issues about the house. Principally, despite the fact that the house had only modest architectural qualities, the excavation of the small materials of domesticity that dated from a century before seemed to make the site as a whole interesting. Dr Walker, who had extensive and recognised experience in the creation of art installation works, suggested that the site represented a unique opportunity for a form of intervention and exhibition that utilised the format of an exhibition to transform that which was mundane and everyday, into material that warranted sensitive and imaginative inspection.

On speaking with the owner, Dr Walker and I undertook to photographically document the

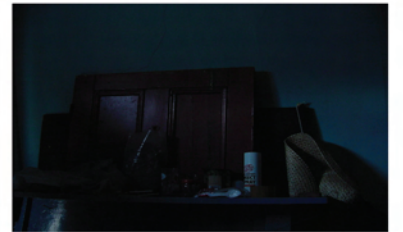
house and propose a form of renovation to the structure that would enable it to be developed for her use as a home, yet would still attempt, in some fashion, to preserve the timbral qualities that seemed present in the archaeological material.

The proposition to the client involved the photographing and presentation of a series of ideas about the house that, through careful selection of images, would attempt to preserve individual qualities of its current state, whilst making the house liveable and comfortable. There were restrictions dictated by the budget and the time available which made the project no different from many small domestic renovations of vernacular houses in the region.<sup>2</sup>

In undertaking the photographic documentation and analysis of the house, the resultant material suggested a number of readings of the images that seemed to be at odds with the modest nature of the project. Approximately 150 images of the site were made, paying careful attention to record instances of material change, material degradation, structural issues, views, and context. In addition, and inevitably, the process of documentation also resulted in a large number of views that chose to focus on material that appeared attractive through the viewfinder since it suggested patterns and objects that reflected an interest in the idea that photographic practice shared a relationship to painterly ideas of composition, texture, and narrative.<sup>3</sup>

Essentially the images could be ordered according to a series of criteria: (1) Images of materials in various states of organic decay or degradation; (2) Images of junctions between materials, showing architectural elements in their settings (door/window frames); (3) Images of irruptions to materials where there was evidence of violence (holes, tears, frayed edges); (4) images of spaces that were deliberately documentary; (5) images of spaces that utilised light gradients and were deliberately 'photographic'; (6) images of objects and collections of objects as *objets trouvés*; (7) images of human presence.

Once these images were organised and inspected off site, there was the immediate suggestion that the project of renovating the building might involve the adoption and enframing of the timbral aspects of the material. The process of 'enframing' them amounted to the recognition that a number of the images appeared to be reminiscent of work by artists that were famous for their visual style. The work of Agnes Martin, Rosalie Gascoigne, Mark Rothko, for example were recognised in some images. Principally this was a process of recognising that the subject





Left: The House at Port Adelaide

Right: The House (Forensic) Installation, 2004

matter had a textural attractiveness which photography had managed to capture and that this appeal existed independently of their use as a documentary material. At this stage, no serious discussion had ensued between Dr Walker and myself regarding the progress of the project, or the possible final resolution of the project as a whole.

Subsequent to this visit, Dr Walker and I returned to the site for another photographic session in which I undertook to increase the amount of visual material (digital photographs) available for consideration. This visit was undertaken with the specific intention of creating a body of work that would serve as illustrations for speculative narratives or fictions about the location.

Concurrently, the client had undertaken historical research on the property and discovered that it had, a hundred years previously, been the site of a suicide. In summary, a woman who was residing on the property had, without any indication of distress, taken herself to the outside privy (toilet) and committed suicide by severing her throat with a kitchen knife. Anecdotal evidence, principally gleaned from the coronial inquiry that was conducted, indicated that she was suffering from some form of mental illness and had, it seemed, given some small signs of mental instability prior to the incident.<sup>4</sup>

It is at this point that the *House (Forensic)* project that constitutes the originary condition of this thesis came into being. Taken together, the photographic material, the opportunity for architectural intervention, the proposition that the building was both domicile and (temporary) exhibition space, and the evidence of a violent event, encouraged a more reflective and considered approach to the process of determining what criteria could most fully influence the design of the house and the nature of the exhibition. Further, it was became apparent to myself, in discussions with Dr Walker, that there was an obligation for the architectural design associated with the project, my responsibility, to respond to this material. My immediate task was to consider how to work with this material.

Ultimately the documentary material was gathered together as part of the material for an exhibition piece *Forensic*, exhibited in a group show at the Liverpool St Gallery, University of South Australia in 2004.<sup>5</sup> The work consisted of 8 panels of steel plate that had acquired a book-matched patination on their surface, a combination of material precision and degradation. Displayed on the floor they recalled the a-subjective work of Carl Andre inasmuch as the steel panels used a similar tactic to de-emphasise the relationship between sculpture and base, and



a consideration of the issue of monumentality in sculpture in general. In addition to this, and in a departure from the aestheticism of the surface that the panels betrayed, were 10 sheets of text documenting the coronial inquiry into Mary Wynnes' death, a teacup and saucer and a woman's nightgown. It was form of recreation of the key incident of the house as it was understood to be, when Mrs Wynnes gave her baby to a visiting girl to care for, went to the kitchen, sharpened a knife, went to the privy and slashed her own throat, then was found by a male neighbour who would bring her a cup of tea in the morning.

This was the first point at which there was a need to translate the task of incorporating material from the house into a didactic format, telling the story of an extraordinary incident, but which also functioned as a metonym for future architectural work on the house. The Forensic project clearly established the need to actively use questions on materiality, the incidence of structure and an appetite for narrational complexity, all dimensions that would be pursued in future projects.

#### Renovation

Returning to the Port Adelaide House and the possibility of engaging with it architecturally, a number of issues emerged. The term renovation, which might be conventionally applied to the process, was not going to proceed in a manner that erased all signs of the previous occupations, including both the presence of temporal decay in the house's structural and material properties and the presence of an historical event (the suicide) that might be acknowledged in some fashion. At this point, the practical issues of completing the project and undertaking a developed architectural design and documentation process halted due to factors external to the project. Yet the body of material that had come together as part of the initial consultative process, revealed an opportunity for abstract thought on the nature of historical memory for a building and its site, the potential for reading images independent of their subject, and questions concerning the making of a constructed space that was both gallery and house.

Further, the material also revealed an opportunity for making propositions about the project that were not confined to abstract, text-based discussion. The abundance of visual material suggested it might be incorporated into a design practice that commenced with the typological entity of the house and developed from there according to the manipulation of the material. Whilst the original project had, as its summation, the practical need to achieve a physical

An inquest was held by the city coroner yesterday, at the Port Adelaide Hotel, on the body of Mary Wynes, wife of Charles Wynes, fireman of the steamer Franklin, who was found dead with her throat cut, at her residence Quebec-street, the previous day. J.C. Addison was chosen foreman of the jury.

Charles Wynes, husband of deceased, said she was 31 years of age and left two children, one two years and the other nine months old. Last saw deceased alive on Wednesday, the 12<sup>th</sup> in her usual state of health, except complaining of pains in the back. Left her that morning about 9.30, to go on the steamer. Made no complaint of any trouble on her mind. Could not account for deceased committing such an act as cutting her throat. Believed from the way she was found that she did do so. Deceased had not given way to intemperance lately, so far as witness knew. Thought she got on pretty well with her neighbours. She was of a lively disposition. Seemed fond of her children. Had no reason to believe she had any disposition to **gaiety** in witness's absence. Got on well in domestic life with deceased, there was nothing to disturb witness's domestic happiness. Deceased was provided with necessary comforts in the absence of witness. Was generally absent half the week, through the year. Deceased sometimes took in washing at her own choice. Witness arrived in the Franklin on Sunday about mid-day, and heard of the occurrence from his brother-in-law, Joseph Martin. Went and saw deceased's body. Could not give any reason for deceased cutting her throat. She was not in debt that he knew of. Generally gave her £5 a month, when on monthly wages. Gave her £5 in March. There were no lodgers staying in the house. Never heard her threaten or allude to taking her own life. Deceased had not been of **intemperate** habits.

By Sergeant Doyle. **Identified** the knife produced as the one in **the house**, it was in the knife **box**.

Rose Davis a little girl going on for eleven said she went to school and attended the Church of England. Had gone to the Church of England Sunday School for a few weeks. Had **never heard of God** or the Bible. (The oath was not administered). Her father's name was George Davis. Her father and mother were both alive. Her father was a fisherman. Knew Mrs. Wynes, slept in the same house with her, in the next room. Recollected Mrs. Wynes and witness going to bed on Saturday night. Deceased came into witness's room about 10 o'clock and put witness to bed, and then went into her own room. Witness went to sleep and nothing woke her in the night. In the morning Mrs. Wynes awakened witness, told her to get up and take the baby, it was crying. Dressed and took the baby. Was going into the pantry but Mrs. Wynes told her to stop in the bedroom. Stopped there. Then **heard Mrs. Wynes sharpening the knife**. Heard her going out of the front door. Mr. Martin took Mrs. Wynes in a cup of tea. Went to privy and told her. Deceased said "All right I'll be in directly." It was hardly daylight when Mrs. Wynes woke witness. When deceased did not come witness told her

mother, who dressed, and went to the privy and pushed the door open. Saw deceased lying on the floor and blood about her.

By Sergeant Doyle. Brought deceased drink sometimes. Brought none on Friday or Saturday. On Thursday brought her a pint of beer.

By Sergeant Doyle - Deceased and her husband always appeared to live comfortably together. Deceased **had a few words** with her own relations in the yard, but was on good terms with her other neighbours. Did not know the cause of deceased's quarrel with her relations. There had been a quarrel between deceased and Mrs. Martin and they had not spoken for some time till the other day.

By a Juror. Mr. Martin used to bring deceased a **cup of tea** from Thursday morning.

Dr. Toll said he was called about 8 o'clock on Sunday morning 16<sup>th</sup>, by a man named Martin to see a Mrs. Wynes who had cut her throat. Went immediately. Found the body of a woman in the privy on the floor. She was lying on the floor with her head towards the seat, in one corner. Her legs were partly flexed and laying towards the opposite corner towards the door. The body was still warm, but life was quite extinct. Rigor mortis had not set in, so concluded she had not been dead more than an hour. There was a large quantity of clotted blood about her head and shoulders, which was also warm. A large carving **knife** produced was lying on the floor on her side near the hip. Ordered removal of body to dead house. Had since examined the body. It is that of a well nourished woman of over thirty years of age. Found no mark of violence about the body, except the wound in throat. The whole body was very blanched(?) showing great loss of blood. Had there been any struggling there would be some marks of cuts and bruises. Found on the throat a large, irregularly cut gaping wound 4 1/2 inches long, extending completely across the throat. From the appearances of the wound considered it had been made from left to right, showing that it had been done by the right hand. It was much deeper on the left side than on the right. Considered there had been more than one attempt to cut the throat. Did not consider one cut from the knife would have produced the injuries. On examining the deeper part of the wound found the left jugular vein had been severed, the trachea cut completely through, and there was also a wound in the oesophagus. Did not consider it suspicious to find the knife on the left side. It was purely accidental on which side the knife might fall. The cause of death was haemorrhage from a wound in the throat in which the left jugular vein was severed. Thought deceased had been to witness once or twice but could not remember.

Catherine Davis, married woman, living in Port Adelaide had known deceased for the last eight years. Went to live next door to her in Quebec street in one of Macdonald's cottages

at the end of last August. Deceased behaved well for the first two or three months after witness went there, but the last two or three months she had taken to drink heavily, up to the time of her death. Last saw deceased alive at 10 o'clock on Saturday night. She was perfectly sober. She used to drink when her husband was at home; had often seen her with too much then. Deceased went to bed about 10.30 on Saturday night, witness going to bed about the same time. Heard no noise except deceased coughing, she had a very nasty cough. Witness's little girl came in to witness's room on Sunday morning, saying deceased had been in privy since daylight. Said perhaps she had gone to sleep. Dressed and went to the closet. The door was a little open. It was about X.XX. The door was a little open. Called deceased, and getting no answer pushed the door open and saw the floor covered in blood. Went to Mr. Martin (brother-in-law of deceased) who lived in the yard about a dozen yards away. Martin had been in the habit of taking deceased a cup of tea since last Monday morning. Mrs. Wynes told witness so. Supposed Martin took the tea in because his wife was in confinement. On finding deceased Martin went for the doctor. Saw deceased on the floor on opening the door. Made no examination but went straight to Mr. Martin. On Friday morning last deceased came into witness and said she would drown herself, and asked if her eyes were glaring out of her head, if they were not they felt as if they were, and she was feeling as if she were going out of her mind. Asked her reason for thinking so. She said she was afraid to face her husband, Charlie. Asked why she was frightened, deceased said he was a true husband to her, but she was not a true wife to him, she had deceived him. Mrs Curtis was present at the time of this conversation. Asked why she was doing that. She said she had got his money and had not paid her way. Deceased was **not a gay woman** she said if she did not get away from her husband Mrs. Kitchen would tell about her. Did not know what she feared Mrs. Kitchen telling. Deceased told witness that Mrs. Kitchen had written saying that she would tell of her. Did not know of any man being concerned in the matter.

Joseph Martin, laborer, of Quebec street, had known deceased over three years, and had seen her tipsy on three or four occasions. Lived next door to her. Had sent tea in to deceased of a morning, but never took it into her bedroom. Had taken a glass of beer with Mrs. Wynes, but not since Christmas. Last saw deceased alive on Saturday, when she was all right. At five minutes to 8 on Sunday Mrs Davis came and asked witness to go out and see what was in the closet. Asked what it was. Did not go immediately. **She said Mary had cut her throat in the closet, but not to tell his wife.** Went out directly Mrs. Davis told him that. Denied ever taking tea into deceased's bedroom. Deceased was lying on her left side. Saw no knife, Told Mrs. Davis to shut the door and he would go for the police. Met Dr. Toll. Had never heard deceased and any man in the yard have any words. Knew of no man having visited her. Never heard deceased use threats respecting her life. Did not know what trouble was on the mind of the deceased. Heard no noise on Saturday

night. Saw deceased on Friday morning, and she was not the worse for drink.

Elisabeth Kitchen, married woman, living at Alberton, had known deceased five years. When witness knew her she was not particularly fond of drink, but had not seen her lately. Had not spoken to her for twelve weeks. She appeared to be a hard-working woman. **Knew nothing against deceased's character** to acquaint her husband with, and if she did, would scorn the idea of such a thing. Sent a letter to the deceased last Wednesday asking her for a few things she had belonging to the witness. Told her she might keep the things. Deceased had thrown up to witness some service she had done her, and witness wrote she could not visit her after what she said. Only heard of Mrs. Wyne's death on Sunday afternoon. (Witness produced copy of letter which was written in a very kindly spirit.)

Jessie Curtis, married woman, lived in the yard adjoining Mrs. Wyne's. Had not seen deceased for ten days till Friday. Did not know whether deceased drank. Was present at a conversation between deceased and Mrs. Davis on Friday afternoon at Mrs. Wyne's house. Before Mrs Davis came in witness said "How bad you look." Deceased said, "I feel awful bad in my head this last (xx) night back." Witness said, "why don't you go to the doctor." Deceased said she had been to Doctor Toll and he would not give her medicine. Mrs Davis had come in then and deceased burst out crying, and said, "I've deceived Charlie." Asked in which way. She said she had made away with his money, and that he would be sorry for it; asked her in what way, and she said "Oh never mind." Deceased seemed queer in her head. Last saw deceased alive on Saturday afternoon at 5.30, in witness's house. She was sober but looked very queer. **Her eyes were staring out of her head.** Mrs Davis left just before witness.

The coroner summed up and the jury returned a verdict. "that deceased committed suicide by cutting her throat while of unsound mind".

transformation of the house (the architectural design) and the staging of a series of events in celebration and investigation of this process (the exhibition), the new work could exist as a form of meta-commentary on the manner by which architectural design in general, and that of my own creative practice in particular as it developed, might be articulated.

The ultimate aim of this thesis, of which this project is part of the initial explorations, is to present a case for recognising that the material that contributes towards the making of architectural theory may evolve from the consideration of the parallel disciplines of photography, film, installation practice and, ultimately digital media. Whilst the selection of subject material is narrow in its focus, and modest in its initial choice of subject matter, the implication of the thesis work is that the consideration of the philosophical richness in the most unassuming of material (images of an old house at the outset) will allow it to expand into a complex and rewarding commentary that can direct future design practice.

The opportunity existed for a renovation, literally a remaking-as-new, of the material that had been garnered. Homophonically it was also an opportunity for 'novitiation', the entering into a state of learning in which the novice exists in a probationary status. The argument was forwarded to colleagues, and in academic contexts, that this material presented an opportunity for considering an alternate mode of exploring the precession of factors that influence design practice within architecture. It was contrasted with an image of conventional practice that encouraged the architectural design process to be seen, at its simplest, as the identification of the disparate forces that might be considered in proposing an architectural solution for a building brief.

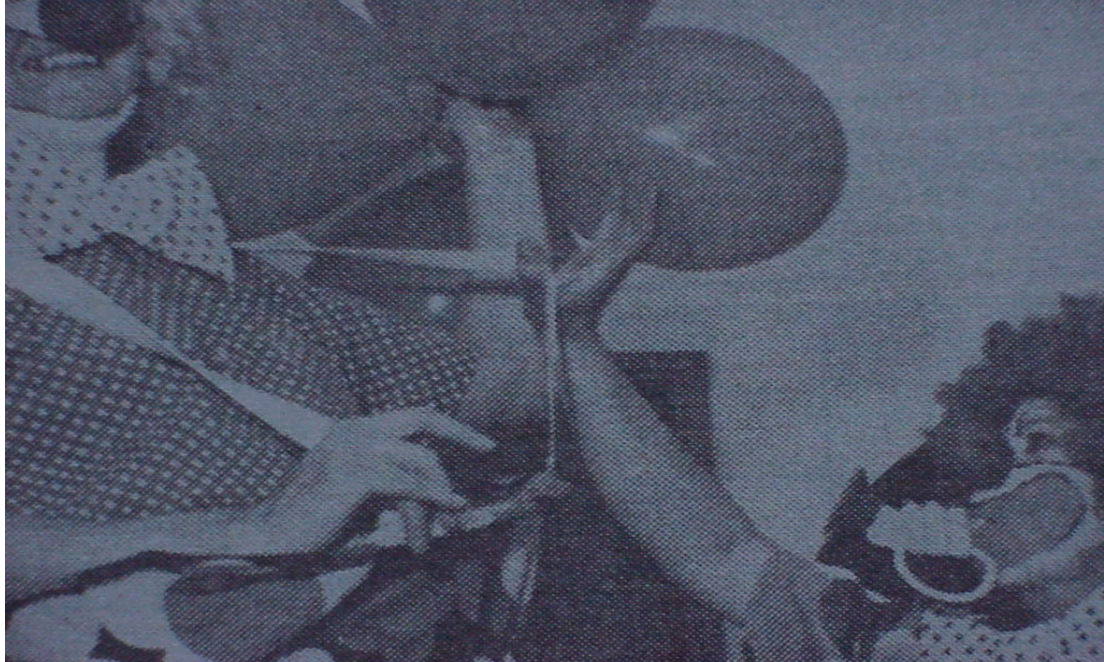
And in incorporating the event of the suicide, there was an opportunity to view this process as an encounter with the limits of architectural representation. Such an extreme event as a suicide, or possibly murder as anecdotal evidence later suggested, created a situation in which a clear problem existed as to how to embed this event in the design process. Clearly there was a danger of trivialising the issue, or of suggesting a series of symbolic acts whose value would only serve to avoid the potential depth with which it might be treated. For this reason the question arose as to what exactly were the parallel conditions that might be considered in conjunction with architectural practice.

A tension thus existed between the practical need to make propositions for the project that

required formal deliberation and resolution and the incidental, but important information about mortality and violence that was contained in its history. The basic grammar of architecture, the material of construction, needed to be used to express *some* response to the material qualities of the Port Adelaide House as it was encountered. Yet the nature of the material itself needed some critical thought to determine the various qualia of the project. In short, it needed a frame, or a parergon as we will discuss later, that described the philosophical nature of the encounter with the material. Further, the issue of an appropriate material intervention that carried the implicit responsibility to act as an en-frame-ment of the house and of the events destined to take place (exhibitions, a philosophy of 'showing'), needed to be known.

When considering the familiar process of renovating a building through a modern addition, there are many precedents within architectural practice. At the most famous end of this spectrum would be projects such as Foster's renovation of the Reichstag in Berlin, with all of the political and ethical issues associated with the renovation of a symbol of German statehood, or Carlo Scarpa's Castelvecchio in Verona, in which the medieval fabric of the castle becomes the ground and frame upon which, and within which, the gallery facilities are crafted. Whilst these projects are exemplary for their positive addition to thinking about the process 'of renovation', there were clear limitations in terms of budget and public identity to the modest house in Port Adelaide. Whilst it is clear that there is no necessary relationship between money and opportunity, or any suggestion that a more public and politically charged project is any less critical in its approach, the advantage of the Port Adelaide project was the very *lack* of expectations that it carried.

At another part of the spectrum of interventions and renovations is the modern tradition of spatial and formal manipulation that is part of general question of where and in what form the art 'world' is located? This is a basic question of contemporary art-practice, the location and qualities of the gallery as a frame of reference. Examples of this type of question have occupied work since Courbet's refusal to be admitted to the Salon des Beaux Arts in the nineteenth century, which is echoed in a series of questions that begin with Marcel Duchamp's 'Urinal' for the Armory Show and take in the work of the Dada and Surrealist artists as well as latterly, Rauschenberg's New York *Store of 1964*, Warhol's Factory in the late 1960's, Walter de la Maria's *Landshow* at the Galerie Heine Friedrich in Munich in 1968, Marcel Broodthaer's *Musée d'Art Moderne, department des Aigles (Department of Eagles)* of 1972, Gordon Matta Clark's *Splitting* of 1974 and Rachel Whiteread's *House* of 1993. Chronologically these projects



Above: Port Adelaide House, 13th August 2004



Above: Port Adelaide House, 13th August 2004

show an increasing interest in the scope and location of the gallery experience; that shifts in the aesthetic terms of reference that changes to gallery practice entails, and further questions regarding the economics of taste – what is it to create a work that physically and conceptually places itself in a liminal relationship between the real world of everyday experiences and the coded interpretive space of the gallery?

Within architectural practice, given the general requirements for a design to perform conventional functions of shelter, security and comfort the opportunities for a renovation that could satisfy this criteria (security, etc.) and also act as a response to its material richness were limited. The cost of preserving the house in a manner that kept its textural qualities to the degree desired and responded to its theoretical richness yet was suitable as a home, seemed to point in opposite directions. But only so if the architectural design process pursues a strategy that assumes that all forms of physical degradation are evidence of its failure as an intrinsically *constructive* system.

Within conceptual art and installation practice, these constraints are generally not recognised or valued. Often, as with Matta-Clark's work, the point of the intervention is precisely to disturb and rupture the orientation towards a renovative building practice.<sup>6</sup> Matta-Clark's *Splitting* project, the simple formal gesture of dividing a house in half – despite the technical difficulties in achieving this, a paradoxically constructive organisational practice – revelled in the idea of an 'anarchitecture', the compound term for anarchy and architecture coined by Matta-Clark and his contemporaries.

*Splitting* opened the fabric of the building, exposing the system of construction, services and decoration that had contributed to the creation of the original 'home'. In some respects it is also a gesture against the phenomenological interests of Bachelard, or at a distance Semper or Ruskin, who considered the unity and impermeability of the interior to be ontologically complete.

Matta-Clark's gesture, if adopted as an architectural practice, encourages the adoption of acts of violence on a building fabric as a deliberate dissimulation of the idea that architecture, as a practice, is implicitly constructive.<sup>7</sup> It also exposed the unprotected edges and the interior to weathering, marking the site of the cut as the exact point at which the mnemonic reveries of Bachelard leak out into the indifferent New Jersey suburb of its location. In creating the



split Matta-Clark rendered any future occupation of the house impossible or, at the very least, perverse. And indeed, many of the conceptual works listed above, not least Walter de la Maria's *Landform*, adopt 'negation of occupation' as a fundamental operative condition.

In this respect Rachel Whiteread's *House* Project, and the earlier *Ghost* project as well, deny any contact with the spatial or constructional material of the original house (or room). Whiteread is celebrated for the manner in which she took the ironic formalist projects of Bruce Naumann, his *Space Beneath my Steel Chair in Düsseldorf* of 1965 for example, and developed it into a practice that challenges our sense of the density of space. Within the *House* project, once the process of filling the dwelling with concrete and stripping its form to reveal the interior cast is made, the desire to engage with the work is a process of continual, highly mediated frustrations.

The *House* project conveys a powerful sense that, should it be considered as a possible architectural practice, it is directed towards the demise of the building and of any sense of its architectural qualities. In a direction that is diametrically opposed to the issues of ongoing utility with which professional architectural practice contends, the sepulchral character of *House* is a clear indication that there is no happy end to architecture other than its being smothered, or at least buried (alive) under concrete. For *House*, any sense that it can be 'inhabited' as an installation is vitiated by the density of the material. Perversely, the traces of wallpaper and other materials that remained stuck to the concrete only serve to reinforce its impenetrable density.

Similarly, her *Ghost* sculpture of 1990 specifically and deliberately invokes a sense of frustrated inhabitation. As with *House*, but at a smaller, interior scale (literally, it is of an interior and was also shown within a gallery interior), the dense monochromatic block shows the negative space of a Victorian parlour. Further, the title, *Ghost*, gives us a sense that the process of creation of the piece was simultaneously an act of historical renovation and re-creation, but one that brings forward only the trace (the ghosting) of former occupation. As Alison Ferris notes in her comparative study of 'spirit' photography and Whiteread's *Ghost*, the sculpture performs a similar function to photography, particularly our reception of those images that depict persons who are now dead.<sup>8</sup> They are both, by virtue of technique and subject matter, like death masks in which the subjective and indexical traces of presence are given form. Like the cast of Duchamp's tongue, there is an extremely serious and disturbing consideration of

the finiteness of life, and of speech, in these projects.

The nature of the mortality addressed in these projects, amongst many other conditions of materiality, the ethics of the gesture and the disutility of the work, allows them to be clear precedents for the questions regarding the architecture component of the design process for Port Adelaide and beyond. The questions are similar. And Matta Clark's and Whiteread's work is reactive to the environment they are in and dependent on the discovery of locations whose decrepitude has already been established, similarly to Port Adelaide. The question becomes, what is the typology of this creative state in which there are clear opportunities to create 'art' if it is so defined, but where architecture is required or desired? Is there a difference between the pre-conditions for the two, art or architecture?

Ostwald and Moore attempt such a translation in *Disjecta Membra*, their study and portfolio of works of architecture premised upon serial killing.<sup>9</sup> Commencing from the premise that architecture's relationship to the human body is pivotal, or at least significant in describing the vast array of metonymic relations between acts of violence towards a body (human, or animal, or at least sentient and sapient) and the descriptive lexicon of terms and phrases employed by those architects and architectural theorists who are engaged in discussions of the body and architecture. They make an argument for the conflation of the act of making architectural form or, in its stead, proposing forms of diagrammatic notation in a similar fashion to Tschumi's *Manhattan Transcripts*, which focus upon the similarities between the use of the term 'body', or corpus, to describe both the human physiognomy and the material of built construction.

To this end, the practices of representation employed by architects to demonstrate the making or em-body-ing of buildings also take on a physiological modality according to Ostwald and Moore. For reasons that are not made clear in the text their critical attention, is turned to those projects, predominantly by Coop Himmelblau and Bernard Tschumi, whose form of making involves a post hoc 'tearing', 'cutting', 'slicing' or 'evisceration' on an established entity - actions performed on body (a design) that occur after, in a supplementary or prosthetic fashion, to the originary act of making the design. The distinction between this process of working and that of Whiteread for example is that she chose to call her projects *House* and *Ghost*, passive descriptive terms, rather than something like, respectively, *Engorgement* (of concrete) or *Corpse* (dead room).<sup>10</sup>

The dystopic direction of Ostwald and Moore's analysis relies upon a general meta-principle that the association of architecture with the body has, since the appearance of images of the Vitruvian man, and in the publication of the erotic architectural tale of epiphany *Hypnerotomachia Polyphilo*, been compromised by the pathological adoption of geometry and metricisation in architectural practice and its place within general economies of production.<sup>11</sup> Building upon these positions, Ostwald and Moore ask a number of key questions that serve their developed interest in the parallels between serial killing, the most developed and industrialised mode of pathological murder, and architecture, by implication similarly industrialised and pathological:

Firstly, what motivates architects to remove the body from its historic position of centrality? Secondly, are such motives reflections of cultural shifts occurring within society at that time, or are they aberrations? Thirdly, what is the state of the victim's body? Finally, what forms of ritual violence are inscribed upon that body?<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, by tracing a relationship between the 'body and architecture, they recognise three strategic processes, or delineating strategies, that describe the field their own creative responses use. These are (i) an architectural practice that works by erasing the figure of the body; (ii) one that redefines the body as a geometric entity, and exploits the metricisation of that process; and, (iii) a reinscribing of the body into architecture. For the purposes of their project, this results in the creation of a number of images in response to the film *Reservoir Dogs* which are shown in the book. In comparison, the process of reading material relevant to the architectural project for the house does not employ a similar reliance on geometry at the outset. While there will be further and more detailed discussion of this in the subsequent chapters it suffices to say that the material is primarily considered for its 'affective' content, in the sense Deleuze and Massumi use it.

On a parallel path, but with family resemblances to the Port Adelaide project, Diller and Scofidio's work *Case No.00-17163* (1992), is a clear precedent for collecting the material evidence of an extreme event, in this instance a murder in New York apartment, and presenting it as a diagrammatic and spatialised practice.<sup>13</sup> The work appeared as a collage of photographs, statistics, forensic and ballistic reports that cumulatively create an impression that there is a victim and a culprit that may be identified. As an extended diagrammatic practice, the suggestion that the material, if scrutinised carefully might reveal a 'truth' or at least tangible and actionable information, draws it towards the clear architectural practice of image making. At one level the

work is concentrating on the spatiality of crime, following the suggestion by Bernard Tschumi that 'To really appreciate Architecture, you may even need to commit a murder', in which he recognises the opportunity to analyse extreme events as products of their settings, while at the same time incorporating the literary qualities of the crime or detective novel in which the uncovering of truth is a function of the work of examining the world (the evidence) and reading its directions (towards the culprit).<sup>14</sup> Diller and Scofidio's implicit proposition is that it is possible to compare the accumulation of images in a forensic crime scene with the creation of images for an architectural project. Both actions are directing the viewer towards a solution that has an effect in the real world – the identity of a killer, the identity of a building.

#### The Question of the Photograph

Before moving on to the next developments of the overall thesis project it is important to set out the issue of photography as a mode of recording the indexical properties of subject matter, as well as defining a process of framing, or definition of what is inside or outside of the work (*hors d'oeuvre*), the *parergon* as Derrida discusses it and we will see in chapter 3. Two key texts will position this discussion, Walter Benjamin's essay *Small History of Photography* (1931) and Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* (1980).<sup>15</sup>

Benjamin's 1931 essay, which was to be later subsumed into his famous essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', contains the first consideration of the role of photography in compromising the 'aura' of specificity and historico-material richness of a work of art. The discussion of this text is well known, and the description of the 'loss of aura' a commonplace observation on the emergence of ubiquitous forms photographic techniques. It is worthwhile, however, to rehearse again the distinction between Benjamin's suggestion that image making is part of an 'optical unconscious' in which the utopian and redemptive aspects of social imaginings are betrayed (or revealed) in a historical fashion and the suggestion developed by Barthes and others, that there are qualities to the photograph that invoke an ontological state, his 'Third Meaning'.

Roland Barthes' extended reflection on the nature of the photographic image in *Camera Lucida* counts as one the first considered discussions of the manner by which the documentary function of photographs are discussed in relation to associated real or imagined memories.<sup>16</sup> The encounter with an image of his deceased mother caused Barthes to think through a series of personal responses to images which he documents in the text. While this method may

be, and has been, criticised for displaying excessive egoism, the suggestion that images display initially their objective content (the first meaning), then their symbolic content as part of a signifiatory schema (the second meaning) and finally, almost auratically, some other condition, unimagined and independent of the cause and effect relationship of the first two.

Barthes' had already established this process of analysis, or introspection, in 'The Third Meaning', when he devoted time to the consideration of film stills and their irruptive content.<sup>17</sup> Film stills, he argued, do not simply present a continuum of the narrative; they halt it and allow the temporally extended consideration of the 'state of affairs of the image. As Rosalind Krauss, in an important essay on transformative theories and practices in photography suggested, discussing Barthes,:

What the photographic still can deliver ... is something that strikes Barthes as counternarrative, which is to say a seemingly aimless set of details that throws the forward drive of the diegesis into reverse as it were, scattering the coherence of the narrative into a disseminatory set of permutations.

This counternarrative, with its resistance to the filmic illusion of real time, is where Barthes locates the specifically filmic. A function of the still, the counternarrative is not, however, merely opposed to movement. Rather, it is to be sensed in the context of the 'digetic horizon' of the rest of the story against which the still photograph unfolds its contents, but in negative relation to which the still is able to generate what Barthes will call 'an inarticulable third meaning', or also an 'obtuse' meaning. If painting or photography are deprived of this diageitic horizon, the still internalizes it not by being a 'specimen extracted from the substance of the film' but rather because the still is the fragment of the second text that itself must be read vertically. This reading, open to the signifier's permutational play, institutes what Barthes calls 'that *false* order which permits the turning of the pure series, the aleatory combination ... and the attainment of a structuration *which slips away from the inside*'. And it is this permutational play that he wishes to theorize.<sup>18</sup>

For the purpose of the work in the subsequent chapters, this is a fundamental condition. That still images have a place in an ontological economy that, developing from Benjamin, may betray future, or other, states-of affairs is one of the presumptions of the work that follows. In



Above: Port Adelaide House, 13th August 2004



Above: Port Adelaide House, 13th August 2004

both his discussion of the image in the early 'Short History of Photography' and ultimately in the 'Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' essays, he describes the evolution and demise of the 'aura' of indexical uniqueness that photographs have, but points also to the manner in which we can see that this 'demise', if recognised, may ultimately have a redemptive historico-materialist role.

Photographs are the starting point of analysis for the thesis project overall. Whilst subsequent discussion will show that increasing levels of philosophical complexity can be recognised when one changes to a consideration of analogue film stills, analogue film extracts, texts, installations, digital environments, and ultimately digital films, as this thesis will do, the initial entry is via the simple image. Whilst Benjamin may describe the historic moment when the indexical uniqueness of images diminished, it also opened up the opportunity for a practice of combinative readings, as the subsequent chapters will show.

In summary, considering the material available for the Port Adelaide House a number of themes had emerged: (1) the presence of tactile materials of the house - the theme of phenomenological vividness; (2) the fact that the house, taken metaphorically as a sentient entity, had been injured or even died – the theme of architectural mortality; (3) the accumulation of objects within the house that, as the subject matter of archaeology, provided evidence of occupation - metaphorically the theme of other, ghostly 'presences'; and, (4) the evidence of an extreme event that is linked to the house – the theme of human mortality.

As much as there were motivations to develop the responses to the original House project in the manner of conceptual and installation art described above, the role of image-making, manipulated in the semantic typology of the triptych and the denary structure of the sephiroth, as a form of diagrammatic notation and organisation of the 'Third Meaning'. Taken in concert with the specific desire to incorporate the extreme event of the suicide, and with the discourse on the idea of 'haunted' houses in architectural theory, the next project attempted to give form to these states.



1 Dr Linda Marie Walker currently conducts teaching and research at the Louis Laybourne Smith School of  
 Architecture and Design, University of South Australia. She has had close associations with the  
 Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia in Adelaide and has her own work represented in state and  
 national collections. I owe an originary and enduring debt of gratitude to her for her introduction to the  
 original work contained in the thesis, though none of its failures or conclusions can be attributed to her.

2 The proposal to the client suggested that the renovations be conducted only in areas that immediately  
 required attention to make sure that adequate cooking and cleaning facilities were present, as well as  
 a small room to the rear of the house which was to become the principal living space for the client, who  
 lived largely on her own. The timber frame structure of the existing dwelling was to be preserved  
 as much as possible and a small structure was to be added at the rear. Predominantly the budget  
 and inclination of the client tended towards a modest practical solution. The only real distinguishing  
 aspect of the proposal to the client was the proposition that, prior to occupation, the house be used as a  
 temporary gallery space for selected artists to display works that had evolved from an introduction to the  
 house and its material qualities. Dr Walker was on familiar terms with a number of leading contemporary  
 South Australian artists, Hossein and Angela Valamanesh, John Barbour, Aldo Iacobelli, and the argument  
 was made that it would be a positive and fruitful environment for a group show curated by Dr Walker and  
 myself.

3 See for example: Berger, John, *Another Way of Telling*, Vintage, London, 1995  
 4 The Coroner's Investigation was published in the Port Adelaide News, Tuesday April 1898.  
 5 *Installations*, Curator, Linda Marie Walker, Liverpool St Gallery, Adelaide, 2004.  
 6 On Matta-Clark and the relationship of his work to architecture see: Crow, Thomas; Diserens, Corinne; ;  
 Kravagna Christian; Russi Kirshner, Judith, Gordon Matta Clark, Phaidon, New York and London, 2003.  
 7 Interestingly Diller and Scofidio's installation, *Split Drawing*, attempts just such a constructive elaboration  
 of Matta-Clark. Whilst the installation bears the clear mark of a split line that defines and divides a  
 choreographed arrangement of furniture, floor and wall places it is unquestionably used in a 'constructive'.  
 fashion.

8 Ferris, Alison 'Disembodied Spirits: Spirit Photography and Rachel Whiteread's Ghost', *Art Journal*, Vol.  
 62, No.3, pp.45-55.  
 9 Ostwald, Michael and Moore, R. John, *Dissecta Membra, Architecture and the loss of the Body*, Archadia  
 Press, Sydney, 1998  
 10 It can be said also that there is little mention in Ostwald and Moore's text on positive modes of  
 considering discussion of architecture being linguistic aligned with the body using, for example,  
 metaphors of nurturing or comforting. The reason for the emphasis by Ostwald and Moore is that  
 considerable anecdotal evidence of public interest in pathological violent crime in film and television can,  
 quite credibly be made.

11 See especially Liane Lefevre, Leone Battista Alberti's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphilo*, xx; Alberto Pérez-  
 Gomez, *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science*, op.cit  
 12 Ostwald and Moore, op.cit, p.45  
 13 Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio *Case No. 17163*, published in *Zone 6: Incorporations*, Jonathan  
 Crary and Sanford Kwinter (eds.), Zone Books, Montreal, 1992.  
 14 Bernard Tschumi, 'Advertisements: Advertisements for Architecture', in *Architecture and Disjunction*, MIT  
 Press, Cambridge, mass., 1994.  
 15 Walter Benjamin, 'A Short History of Photography', in *Illuminations*, Vintage, 1996.  
 16 Barthes, Roland, *Camera Lucida*, Trans. by Richard Howard, Vintage, 2000.  
 17 Barthes, Roland, 'The Third Meaning', in *Image, Music, Text*, Trans. by Stephen Heath, Hill and Wang,  
 New York, 1977.  
 18 Rosalind Krauss, 'Reinventing the Medium', *Critical Enquiry*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 'Angelus Novus':  
*Perspectives on Walter Benjamin*, Winter 1999, pp 297-298.

## Chapter 2 - Ghosts of the Civic Dead

### Ghosts of the Civic Dead

*The Ghosts of the Civic Dead* project and installation grew from the practical need to move from the abundance of material that was the accumulative project of *House (Forensic)* to a more concentrated project requiring recognition of the most immediately attractive content of *House (Forensic)* - material attractive for its potential to be carried forward to subsequent projects. The next exhibition project, an installation created as part of the *On the Premises, Spatial Ideas and Interior Projects* exhibition at Goya Gallery in South Melbourne was part of a group exhibition giving an overview of creative, practice-based research.<sup>1</sup> The installation occupied an isolated room in which two text pieces and a video installation were arranged. As one entered the space, the wall immediately facing the viewer had the video projected onto it. To the left, in light chalk was the fictional text whilst the Wittgenstein quote was on the right-hand wall, also in light chalk. Besides the quotation from Wittgenstein was an ordinary ladder, propped against the wall.

*The Ghosts of the Civic Dead* project contained a triadic relationship between a short descriptive text of a claustrophobic and palpably malevolent house (anonymous fiction), a fragment of a philosophical text, (Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*) with the accompaniment of an ordinary ladder leant against the wall, and a video loop of the dénouement of the film *The Blair Witch Project*. The confluence of three different modes of describing an impossible state was the substance of the exhibition. The pieces formed a triptych, a formal arrangement that grew to dominate later developments of the thesis work. In the context of this installation it referred to the use of the arrangement in European religious paintings of the medieval period, and the subsequent employment of it by the modern artists, Max Beckmann and Francis Bacon. The particular use of the triptych, as discussed by Gilles Deleuze in his monograph on Bacon, *Logics of Sensation*, came to be a dominant factor in later developments of the thesis work as a whole and is more fully covered in Chapter 3.

Collectively the works that constitute this thesis grew from the study of the genre of horror and its representations in media and in texts, and the proposition that a form of structure, explored in the text of Wittgenstein, could speak of the idea of structured and structuralist relationships between agents and events within that media. As discussed in the introduction, the representation of horror itself is particularly difficult within architectural means, if one is insisting on a direct semantic relationship. More productively, the topic may be approached by

considering the idea that 'evil', the abhorrence of its presence, and the revulsion felt when the material reality of evil actions are made present, is indeed the demonstration of a lack. And whilst this may be commonly recognised as the lack of human sentiment or conscience in everyday affairs, I have taken it also to mean that this lack, 'evil' and the horror of its consequences, can also occur within the determination of a theory of making. To make something without the assurances that its function satisfies or coheres with a meta- discourse of universal utility, or pleasure, is to make something whose purposelessness is at best trivial, but also potentially without any redeeming features. I will discuss this more fully in the subsequent chapters on the *Triptych* and *Sephiroth* projects in relation to Immanuel Kant's 'Analytic of the Sublime' in *The Critique of Judgement*, and especially Jacques Derrida's analysis of this in 'The Truth in Painting', but for now it is worth considering the qualities of the three-part exhibition piece, *Ghosts of the Civic Dead*.

I shall discuss each of the three installation pieces independently, outlining the questions that led to their inclusion and then finally present the syncretic opportunities that their combined engagement created.

The untitled fictional text, hand drawn on the gallery wall was the following:

'To look at the house it seemed unused. Weeds had grown and died, and grown again, in the corners of concrete, brick, tile wherever possible. Looking up and into the grimy windows only shadowy forms were apparent, nothing that resembled anything. Near the front door, a large vine had overgrown the entry, partly obscuring the thickly painted entry doors. Walking towards the door, you saw the effect of time on its structure. It had swelled and warped in the weather until it was possible, with effort to place your face flush with the coffer and peer into the hall. When you did this, you realised with some disgust, that the building was warm. It carried a physical warmth that was sweating from the inside. To blow one's breath through the gap into the hall disturbed clouds of flies feeding off the walls. To remain there for any length of time brought forward a sweet fleshly stench. In the dim light three doors could be seen. One led up to a small stair that burrowed upwards towards a hot, dark attic. One led towards the rear of the house where the kitchen had been and the last, dark and open, led down to an unspeakable place.'



Ghosts of the Civic dead - Stills from the Blair Witch Video



Ghosts of the Civic dead - Stills from the Blair Witch Video

In its installed form it was written on the opposite wall from the quotes from the *Tractatus*, simply providing a parallel commentary on the visual events of the film loop in the centre. There were a number of obvious correspondences: fictional text vs philosophical text; propositions vs possibility; a house-like structure vs a house as mise-en-scene; the fast pace of the film vs the considered pace of the fiction; the description of a cellar vs the dénouement in the cellar; the large physical scale of the text pieces vs the relatively small screen size of the film-loop; the picture-theory of the facts of the world vs the mental picture conjured up by the text.

The fragment of the story describes a house not dissimilar to the Port Adelaide House, but within its own set of associations. Spatially the house is closed to the outside, though the narrator is attempting to enter it. Only by effort can the interior be glimpsed, a hallway from which three doors lead, directionally upwards, backwards and downwards. The descriptive qualities of the text focus upon the its sensate richness –heat, stench, dust, teeming insects - and the suggestion that there is something known about the house, but unspoken.

Read concurrently with the video image, which showed two characters rushing through the floors of a derelict house, the effect was to read the text as a moment in the experiences of the actors, perhaps prior to their entry. In this sense the left-hand side piece reproduced the triadic temporal relationship that is typical of the triptych, and benefited from the instinctive motion of reading from left to right. As a piece of fiction, it existed on the same imaginative plane as the video loop. The suspension of disbelief that allowed the textural and filmic material to have its effect is made equivalent when the viewer reads the text and watches the loop.

The fictional text deliberately introduced a reflective experience about the subject matter, the house, which retained a similar pre-occupation with an unseen and threatening environment. It introduced a first-person perspective that implied that the reader may have been in harm's way if they persisted in their clandestine investigation of the house. Again, the proposition that the work as a whole is about forms of engagement is important.

Further, as the fictional piece differed markedly from the extract from Wittgenstein, there was no clear process of assimilating the three texts together. In essence their relationship employed diegetic, non-diegetic and heterodiegetic relations to impart the complexity of the questions that the juxtaposition of the three pieces posed.

### Diegetic and Non-Diegetic and Heterodiegetic Forms

Diegetic relationships, those that either reinforce or subvert the vivid reality of a scene, are a key component of the narrational process in film theory. As we have seen with Roland Barthe's comments on the 'Third Meaning' within a film still, the impetus for a film narrative to marshal all its elements towards the propulsion of its trajectory means that all aspects of sight (cinematography and editing) and sound (music and sound editing) are ideally reinforcing each other. A diegetic element reinforces the actions of an on-screen character or scene, voices, incidental noise appropriate to the action, music emanating from sound sources viewed on screen are all examples of diegetic elements. By contrast, non-diegetic elements have no clear source in the on-screen action. Suspenseful music, counter-intuitive cut shots and non-linear narrative elements act non-diegetically. By contrast again, heterodiegetic elements, for example the voice of a narrator who is entirely absent from the events depicted, extends the dissociative qualities of non-diegetic elements, but also imparts a sense of metaphysical agency to events – the voice appears god-like. In terms of the installation, this mode of experience can also be recognised when the 'voice' of Wittgenstein is read in conjunction with the fictional and visual media.

Considering the fictional and video elements, there is a form of diegetic reinforcement of the actions inasmuch as there is an encounter with a 'house' in both fictional text and video loop. On further examination, the temporal displacement of the action, a reflective text in which the description occurs from outside the house versus a flurry of activity filmed within it, create an interpretive dynamic. Simultaneously, the text also acts as a non-diegetic form that comments on the film, it is a type of reflective introduction, or map, of a location that may or may not be the one in the video loop. Carolyn Springer, in her study of Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, describes the shifting responsibilities of interpretation that that particular novel employs as its *raison d'être*.<sup>2</sup> She says:

It is the extra-diegetic architecture of the book that presents the most immediate challenge to the careful reader. Accustomed to the convention of a numerically ordered frame, he brings to the text a series of informed assumptions which prove to be of little help in understanding the scheme. Here, as in any other book, the Table of Contents (of *Invisible Cities*) functions as a map or spatial model to enable the reader to synthesize and survey the overall structure of the work, thus compensating for the inherent dispersion of the narrative. ... But the frame seems governed by no external

logic or necessity; it is entirely without precedent; it is both intricate and gratuitous.<sup>3</sup>

Calvino's debt to the contrived structural relationships of the OuLiPo group, of which he was a sometime member is well documented.<sup>4</sup> And it is this form of structuring and cross-referencing of material that has informed the selection and organisation of the exhibition content in general and the fictional text in particular. But where Springer finds, or suggests, frustrations in the inexact 'extra-diagetic architecture' present in *Invisible Cities* – it is these very structural aporias that impart a form of structuring, or purposiveness without purpose in the Ghosts of the Civil Dead project. We shall examine further the idea of triptychs and the denary architecture of the sephiroth, in chapters 3 and 4, but it is sufficient to say that the three components of the installation do not bear a relationship of resemblance to each other. They may be, and were intended to be, thematically conjoined, but only specifically so much that they could propose isomorphic similarities between their various states-of-affairs.

The fictional text provided an entry to the 'map or spatial model' of the encounter with a haunted House. It described a hiatus in a narrative prior to entry (or escape) from the House, but not the house of the Blair Witch Project which is encountered by the film protagonists in quite a different fashion. Thus the relationship between text and illustration is non-diagetically, or extra-diagetically, formed.

#### Blair Witch Project

The second component of the installation was a film loop of the final moments of the 1999 film *The Blair Witch Project*. The film itself has many interesting features that distinguish it as a noteworthy cinematic gesture, however I will be concentrating on the more explicitly architectural and structural opportunities it offers in the context of the projects I have devised.

The final moments of the film take place within an abandoned house within a forest. The locations are specific to certain areas of the United States, but in effect they are intended to be iconic and mythic environments that follow the disturbed logic of the genre of ghost stories. The forest is a natural labyrinth, populated with a series of episodic locations that provide asymptotic evidence of a malevolent presence that is endangering the three protagonists. As a work in the genre of the ghost story, it utilises a number of iconic relations to convey the necessary sense of claustrophobia and dread that produces the desired effect in the audience.



The short passage shows the moment when, within the logic of the dramaturgy, the two remaining characters go in a crazed and panic-stricken search for the lost member, whose cries can be heard from indistinct parts of the forest at night. The previous shots had focussed upon an extremely claustrophobic moment when the main female character and confessed to her terror to the camera which, in a further moment of self-referentiality, she was holding. Her confession was to herself. Following the disturbing cries, the two characters rush headlong through thickets towards an abandoned house in the middle of the forest in which they have become hopelessly lost. They are led towards the most explicitly architectural element to date, presumably the 'house' of the malevolent entity. Entering the house marks the final moment of transgression, one that started when they entered the forest days earlier. The film short shows them rush through the three floors first up to the top floor then, down to the cellar. As both characters are carrying, somewhat oddly in the circumstances, their cameras, the film-makers intersperse the footage from both to document the recklessness with which they scramble through the building. Finally, in the cellar, there is a short scuffle and the first person perspective of one of the cameras goes dead. The vision switches to the second camera, which follows the first down to the cellar. For a fleeting moment we see the first figure standing motionless in the corner of the cellar, facing the wall in what seems to be a comatose state, then the second camera is also involved in a scuffle and it also goes dead. The film ends.

There is the clear presumption that the entity, the Blair Witch, has trapped the two characters in the cellar in preparation for some horrific *coup de grace*.

In the installation, the loop returns to moment when they enter the house and the events, of the final minutes of the film are continuously re-enacted.

The video loop shows the figures caught in an endless cycle of entry, transgression and annihilation. The house, as a functioning and utilitarian structure whose conventional use, domesticity, has long disappeared, is now used by the malevolent entity as the tool for trapping and murdering the transgressors. In this instance, as part of the genre conventions of horror film, these transgressions always result in visceral punishment. In the context of the original film, the final moments are unexpected and shocking. In the context of the installation, the desperation of the two characters and the inevitability of their destruction becomes equally disturbing every time it is acted out. The impotence of the viewer to prevent the event and the difficulty in reconciling the fictional and philosophical texts with the vividness of the video loop,

produced (or was intended to produce) a dissociated sense of *angst*.

The film itself incorporates a number of devices within the plot that are directly architectural. They are not unique to the film and a part of the genre of film that it is recognisably working within. These are: (1) spatial dislocation; (2) temporal dislocation; (3) repetition ad absurdum; (4) self-referentiality of the mode of presentation (first-person indexicality of the camera); (5) contradictory directions towards safety/jeopardy; (6) material and circumstantial evidence of a supra-logical entity; (7) absence of a means of conducting a moral or ethical exchange with the entity for clemency (ethical solution); (8) absence of effective means of communicating with this entity for equality (political solution); (9) absence of effective means of combating this entity for superiority (military/industrial solution); (10) the expectation of annihilation. I will expand on these characteristics below, as a means of showing the range of expressive effects that can be construed as being formal or spatial, and that may be thought of as architectural.

#### Spatial Dislocation

The characters spend a number of days wandering through a forest lost and unable to orient themselves. The implied cause of this confusion is not only their inexperience in woodcraft, but also the supranatural effects of an environment that is foreign to them and is, in some sense folding itself into a shape, somewhat like a Klein bottle, in which all forward progress returns to the start. At the very least this sense of spatial dislocation is a standardised form of plot exegesis in film. Most picaresque novels commence from this premise inasmuch as there is a sense of indeterminacy and exploration in the evolving aspects of the plot.

#### Temporal Dislocation

The characters are cut off from any ritualised behaviour that constitutes everyday life. Whilst days follow normal diurnal cycles, the harassment by the malevolent entity at night prevents them from any respite. As a commonplace of the genre, the emergence of dark forces at night evokes a commonplace fear of an unspecified threat.

#### Repetition

The repetition of the spatial and temporal dislocation increases the level of claustrophobia for the characters. Whilst they have a finite amount of food to sustain them, and the presence of the entity is becoming increasingly insistent, the helplessness with which they are following a seemingly pre-determined path is shown by their continual (eternal) return to locations that

they had previously passed.

#### Self-Referentiality

The use of two hand held cameras by the protagonists ensures an insistent awareness of the first-person vision of the characters. Each character is always being watched if they are on film, a source of some friction in the film itself as thresholds of privacy and voyeurism are questioned as the situation becomes increasingly fraught. For the purposes of the short extract in the installation, the two camera views constitute a doubling of the effect of terror. It is as if the characters are able to watch themselves become enmeshed in a situation that will destroy them. In concert with the issue of temporal disturbance, the delayed effect of seeing the person whose footage you have been watching, then be watched themselves introduces some important levels of apprehensive contact between the characters and their fate.

This relationship, in the context of the installation is meant to contrast with the introspection of Wittgenstein and his text. In the *Tractatus* extract we read the product, as honestly as he can conceive it, of the wondering of the sense of the world. The film extract, by contrast, documents the movement through similar 'levels', but towards destruction. In essence the proposition of the installation is that there is a form of inverse philosophy in the film work that is not generally recognised. It is transitive in the same fashion that Wittgenstein's metaphor suggests, but its goal is a different kind of disappearance.

#### Material evidence of a Supra-logical Entity

A key aspect of the narrational force of a horror film is the material reality of the threat. The camera is a documentary witness to the possibility that events are not merely being relayed in a disinterested fashion, but are mises-en-scene that imitate real life. A commonplace engagement with the narrative and a condition for the suspension of disbelief is the comfort with which the logical apparatus of the environment behave in a sensible and recognisable fashion. Put simply, a camera looks at something and its context, its vision, like the inquisitive eye seeks clarity for events by showing them before us as if we were a silent and invisible witness. In short, film argues for a materialist proof of idealist philosophy as it has the capability of showing, for example, the tree falling in the forest or looking through the eyes of the children in the cave.

In the Blair Witch extract we are shown the material reality of the destructive entity. It is the

'proof' of its existence, of its empirical effect and that it has a specific spatio-temporal location. There is a kind of inverse proof of the ontology of divine existence in the film, and in the genre. Danger is infinitely present, infinitely malevolent, and infinitely knowledgeable – and the characters are always forsaken by their exposure to an environment that locates this jeopardy. The intensity with which film surveys its objects, the intensity of the focal range, and the grain of the stock or media employed to perform this viewing all contribute to an overdetermination of materiality. The final moments of Blair Witch show the strong kinaesthetic qualities of the close-up, particularly in those final frames when the camera, dropped to the cellar floor, searches for focus and settles on the dirt and dust in its immediate cone of vision.

#### Wittgenstein

The Seven propositions of the Tractatus, plus the penultimate proposition, number 6.54, that were cited on the right-hand side gallery wall were the following:

1. The World is all that is the case.
2. What is the case (a fact) is the existence of atomic states of affairs.
3. A thought is a logical picture of a fact.
4. A thought is a proposition with sense.
5. A proposition is a truth function of elementary propositions.
6. The general form of a proposition is the general form of a truth function, which is  $[\rho^-, \xi^-, N(\xi^-)]$ .  

My propositions are elucidations in this way: he who understands me finally recognises them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.)  
He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly.
7. Whereof we cannot speak we must passover in silence.<sup>5</sup>

The final stanza of Wittgenstein's Tractatus purports to show a number of qualities, not least of which is its task to be the summary of the preceding process of philosophical thinking. The six, prolix propositions about the manner in which logic is immanent within the language of philosophy, and is already present as a structuring force for the sense of all propositions about the world strongly suggests that the 'facts' of the accompanying modes (video and fiction) need to be analysed. It is a curious fact of the transaction between the gallery environment and the viewer that there is some exchange of experience involved. This is a commonplace,

but the exact nature of that transaction forms the substance of critical commentary in all art environments. Language and the language of the critic, mediated by the art-world alludes to a variety of states of affairs that it is the duty of the reader to interpolate in the work. The work has no voice other than that of the critic. It is, as Derrida notes, a ghost that comes from the ashes of the originary relationship. Moreover, this debate is not about aspects solely concerned with contemporary art practice, it concerns the description, evocation and definition of various states of affairs we would call architectural. The voice of the architectural critic in reading this material, as I have done in the sequence of analyses of the spatial relations in the video loop and in the text piece, shows that it can form what may, in a strictly limited sense, be called 'rules' of making form and spatiality and having a reliable economy of meaning within which this can take place. And it is this that makes it architectural.

The strict terms within which this can occur is as Wittgenstein has pointed out, centred within a domain of rule-based behaviour. Within the particular horizon of expectation that asserts that we can identify, for example repetition and annihilation, in the context of the Ghosts of the Civic Dead 'world', means that homo-morphic and homological associations can be made. Put simply, we can form and describe architectural responses that contextually have meaning in relation to the installation project.

In addition, Wittgenstein's propositions suggest that there is the possibility of evaporating the presence of a metaphysical state from the work in the hope that there is a clear language environment for the exchange to take place. Not least of these is the role of the spoken word within the environment, actions that are now commonplace as a propositional context in contemporary practice.

In addition as part of the installation, there was an ordinary ladder positioned, leant up against the wall, in a direct relationship to the quotation from Wittgenstein. Regarding the curious occurrences of the ladder at the end of Wittgenstein's work we can ask: Why a ladder? Why not a bridge, or a threshold, or any other transitive models that offers the enactment of difference? Perhaps Wittgenstein felt no particular affection for the metaphor, but it exists nonetheless and it is the opportunity of criticism to place it in extended contexts. For Wittgenstein the connection is simple. The propositions constitute an orderly and sequential set of movements between the entailed thought processes, at least in the mind of Wittgenstein

If we take the opportunity to imagine more qualities to the metaphor other ideas emerge. A ladder can then be recognised in a number of other instances that employ its qualities. If a ladder is finite in size, it has a measured distance between its rungs. They are self-same and the function of a metric, unlike a cliff ascent which is a traversal of the natural, but the act of ascending the ladder is exponentially more precarious if its structure (its architecture) is being tested. The higher one goes on a ladder then it is implicit that one has removed oneself from the datum. Similarly, in descending a ladder, the climbing motion is unnatural in comparison to an ascent. It might be suggested that the kinaesthetic experience of descent, lacking the volition towards attainment that the metaphor of 'climbing' promises, could be considered sinister.

In the context of the exhibition, the 'real' ladder played an important circumstantial role in mediating between the Tracatarian quote and the other modes of expression, it also invoked a form of spatiality that transects all three modes (fiction, film, philosophy) by showing itself to be 'tool' though which each of the instances are to be engaged. A ladder is a spatial object that implies direction, stages (rungs), and the traversal of a void (between the rungs). It is the topology of a diagram, whilst also being a diagrammatic outline of a how topologies might be defined. By this is meant that it has both denotative and connotative functions. The definition of any ladder is that it has a formal shape that augments climbing, irrespective of the actual and material nature of this shape – hence any ladder is the diagram of how to traverse its specific topology. Also, once a particular ladder is studied, its *form* is that of an instrument (or tool) that shows how a topologies (in this case the form of the space or thing that the ladder can be used with) might be traversed – hence it is a diagram for showing how these topologies can be defined (as a result of the tool's parameters).

So, within the ensemble of text pieces and film, it is an iconic moment within the structuring of a space as it entails the movement from one plane to another, to elevation, to the effort of episodic transcendence. As a metaphor it is convenient for describing sequential change, invoking the human body as an agency that propels itself to another state. The ladder is an instrument of self-reflexivity that, like all tools, both mimics and extends the corporeality of the human condition. A tool can fundamentally redefine the instrumental qualities of the human condition inasmuch as it acknowledges and is sensitive to its limits. The tool makes the artisan more than their original state. It is also the condition for the existence of rules, and the ideas of Wittgenstein on rule-based behaviour.

#### Demonstrable relation within the work

The propositions of the *Tractatus*, as well as the overt expression of the ladder entail a material presence of a philosopher's object. Like the thought experiments used in philosophy, the black box, the tree in the forest, the children in the cave, the artefact of the ladder brings an immediacy to the project. This occurred in the same fashion as the chair that was a part of Robert Rauschenberg's *Pilgrim* sat in the space of the gallery between the image and the a caption. The triadic relationship between artefact, syntactic definition and representation conveyed a frisson of similitude between the three. The public is invited to consider the degree to which they all convey the same 'idea' of a chair. In addition Rauschenberg's deliberate crossing of gestures between the three disturbed the dry metricisation of simple and empty definitions. For the *Ghosts of the Civic Dead* installation, the ladder was intended to give form to a process of thinking.

In this short passage, the key issues that are present in the Wittgenstein phrase, the concentration on the ladder, is echoed in the desperate search for the missing character in *Blair Witch*. There are a number of equivalencies. They are synonymous in as much as the stairs the characters travel up and down in search of their missing companion involves a rapid introduction to the house of the unseen and unnameable entity, presumably the Blair Witch. But where the tempo with which the reader is able to consider and develop their understanding of the propositions of the *Tractatus* to allow them to finally see them as 'nonsense', i.e. that they are self-evident and in no need of stating, the tempo in *The Blair Witch Project* video loop is out of the hands of the characters (and of the audience of the installation). There is no possibility to see the ending of the video as being a positive nonsense (if nonsense, non-sense, can have a positive purpose if there is no continuity beyond the finality of death), or that its truths are self-evident picturings of the world inasmuch as the final moments of the film do not provide a sense of narrational closure and we cannot say *just what* has occurred here. Where Wittgenstein proposes a metaphor for a form of anti-metaphysical transcendence towards a state where philosophy is no longer necessary, the timbral qualities of *The Blair Witch Project* ending, and the House that effects this state, point to an equally timbral sense of annihilation and meaninglessness.

The architectonics of the ladder/stair, and the states-of-affairs of which they are synecdochal, point towards the further investigation of how the development of the typology of the haunted house, the house of the sublime horror of annihilation, is developed. As we will examine in

Chapter 3, the relationship between the sublime, the colossal, and architecture in Kant's discussion of judgement and aesthetics explains this trajectory.

#### Horror

Collectively the conditions explored in the *Ghosts of the Civic Dead* project suggested a relationship between the practice of architecture and the idea of horror. Horror, as a term, is conventionally associated with genre forms of literature and film and, on occasion is a term whose effect has been trivialised. In distinction to this, Noël Carroll, in *The Philosophy of Horror*, examines it almost exclusively in the domain of literature, examining the states of awareness present in the performance of 'horror' themed events.<sup>6</sup> More abstrusely, Leszek Kolakowski also suggest that the realisation that many of the more dominant metaphysical questions about meaning and order in the world are unknowable and as such, not just meaningless – but actually terrifying. Kolakowski suggests that there remains a secret, nihilistic suspicion in philosophy that all intellectual constructions are entertaining fictions at best.<sup>7</sup> If, however, we retain its sense in the manner in which Giorgio Agamben used it in *Remnants of Auschwitz* to describe the transformation of the camp inmate from human to 'musselman', there is an implicit connection to the understanding that 'horror' is a state of being that is different from being frightened.<sup>8</sup> Agamben illustrates the inexorable and excoriating change that occurred in the concentration camps, in which the practice of being human becomes impossible because of the extreme degrees of privation endured at the camps. Between this state and Carroll's analytic description of the emotive responses to fictional states in film, there is a persistent desire to give a name and a description to an aspect of human experience that, as with Kolakowski, seems to be present in our metaphysical lives.

Probably the most comprehensive analysis of this state is in the book by Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror An Essay on Abjection*, in which she analyses and describes the state of abjection that leads towards a sense of the horrific and repugnant view of life in the work, mainly of the French writer Celine.<sup>9</sup> The state of abjection is one that is negotiated between the persistent materiality of the world, one that is in a constant state of decay and a sense of the intransigent and apocalyptic nature of the world. She commences her study with a description of the experience, a mixture of a personal account and a personification of a state:

'There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected



beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects. A certainty protects it from the shameful – a certainty of which it is proud holds on to it. But simultaneously, just the same, that impetus, that spasm, that leap is drawn toward an elsewhere as tempting as it is condemned. Unflinchingly, like an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsion places the one haunted by it literally beside himself.<sup>10</sup>

Hence the suggestion of horror, which even Kristeva avoids, in order to name and explore abjection in its stead, is a possible state through which the matter and events of the Port Adelaide House might be approached. In its abject material condition and in the abject and disturbing nature of its history, there is the potential to redefine a practice of representing architecture in general and a house in particular.

#### Ghost Houses and Dream Houses

As a form of Kristeva's 'inescapable boomerang', *The House (Forensic)* and *Ghosts of the Civic Dead* projects became catalysts for examining the difference between a number of ideas, the central one being the relationship between the fabric of the house as it currently existed and had been documented, and the idea that the house might be considered, within a very particular and reflective metaphorical argument, as a 'ghost' or 'haunted' house. There are clear associations here with Anthony Vidler's discussion of the 'Architectural Uncanny' and, following his reading of Freud's famous text on 'The Uncanny', the issue of the '*unheimlich*' in architecture. Vidler's presentation of the idea, at the time of his writing, addressed a gap in current architectural discourse, one that had failed to give philosophical consideration to the existence of a considerable body of literature that addressed the idea of the ruin.<sup>11</sup> Whilst the sublime has been a subject of art and architectural history for a considerable period, the experience of ruinous and dystopic spaces had been uncannily absent from mainstream architectural discussion in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> Vidler's essay did much, in the 1990's, to animate a discussion of the material, but in the face of an emerging interest in the operative and practical application of digital media, there has been a general diminishment in interest in the outmoded

The accumulation of images and impressions that the original documentary process of the

House project had revealed strongly suggested a consideration of its qualities in terms of Vidler's interest in the *unheimlich* and, following this, the discussion of 'outmoded' spaces presented by Hal Foster in his text on Surrealism, *Compulsive Beauty*.<sup>13</sup> Both these works share an interest in the relationships between literature and art practice, Foster quite overtly in his study of Surrealist writers such as Andre Breton and Louis Aragon, points to their fascination with the spaces of nascent capitalist commercialism such as the flea market and the arcade. Vidler, in examining Freud's study of E.T.A. Hoffmann's story of 'The Sandman' is less specific in mentioning architectural examples, instead preferring to suggest an essential architectonic character to Freud's analyses.<sup>14</sup> In particular the essay on the 'unhomely' makes use of the relationship established by literary critics between the emergence of gothic and supernatural literature in the nineteenth century and the presence of themes of pathological behaviour by the characters. In this and subsequent essays, Vidler makes the very simple, but telling, suggestion that this literature betrays an ambiguous relationship between the reader and their architectural environment. In particular the archetype of the home (if benign) or house (if threatening) recurs as a *mise-en-scene* for dramatic action. Further, the occurrence of supernatural events in this literature suggests that there is a complicit and persistent relationship between the house and supernatural forces. This is a characteristic thematic within the genre of the 'haunted house' in which proximity to the house is necessary in order for the supernatural events to take place. Plot devices generally require that the house, or site, be recognised as carrying the stain of previous events whose malevolence persists and ultimately affects those that come into contact with it.<sup>15</sup>

### Three Absences

The horror genre itself retains its fascination because of the imperfect power relations that exist between the characters, and the material threat of horrific jeopardy for those involved in the story. It is, in effect, a rehearsal of the relations that exist outside of the imaginative space of the cinematic dramaturgy. Whilst horror is a genre that relies heavily upon its conventions to identify a series of questions that are posed of the characters, it is often the individual fortitude they display or, more importantly, the inevitability of specific forms of annihilation they will endure that become the compelling aspects of the experience.

It is the contention of the overall work, *Ghosts of the Civic Dead*, that the coincidence of depictions that the three media describe, philosophy, film and fiction, is inherently architectural. The central motif, the ladder or stair is clear. It is a metonymic relation between the means of

metaphor to describe a series of structuralist relations between aspects of a thinking practice, a kinaesthetic viewing practice, and a reading practice. It attempts to provide subtle inferences of this key armature within the work specifically, and of the greater work of the thesis overall. More particularly, as a development of the *House* work, it is a parallel depiction of the issue of a generic form of architecture. At its simplest, it shows that a typology that has been thoroughly examined by architectural practice, still has imaginative opportunities outside of the discursive field that requires that formal innovation, at a certain scale, provides a richer experience.

The Ghosts of the Civic Dead project shows that, in considering the formal and spatial properties of this combination of media, that there are operative opportunities for seeing their architectural content as crucial elements for understanding the work. It is simply impossible to fully read the individual qualities of the fictional, filmic and philosophical examples without reference to the architectonic and formal metaphors that they utilise. Further as a combination of pieces, these metaphors and representations become crucial bridges, or intertextual relations, between the different expressive modalities.

Whilst the work does not, in itself, seem to do anything other than confirm the metonymic opportunities for considering the manner in which an architectural environment directs its users, the presence of the first-person perspective is crucial. The architecture is encountered as a private experience, as an economium to thought in the *Tractatus*, as a visceral presence in the film and as imaginative 'picturing' in the fictional piece. In all we are asked to see an individuated idea of architecture that, to varying degrees, we are in control of. More importantly, the vehicle for presenting this architecture operates within different paradigms of reproduction and communication. If we agree on the general proposition that architecture communicates a sense of *something* to its users, as viewers as well as active phenomenological agents, then the practice of pre-figuration that takes place when architecture is designed in diagrammatic formats (drawings of various types), could also incorporate those states that have been described in this chapter. To look further at the opportunities for seeing both the sense of Barthe's 'Third Meaning' in the context of images that have evolved from the *House (Forensic)* and *Ghosts of the Civic Dead* projects, and to look at how the extremity of annihilation, horror, is present in ideas on the sublime alluded to by the comparisons of the *Tractatus* and *The Blair Witch Project* it is necessary to analyse the next suite of images that were prepared in response to analyses that took place subsequent to the *Ghosts of the Civic Dead* project.

- 1     *On the Premises, Spatial Ideas and Interior Projects*, Curator Suzie Attiwill, Goya Gallery, Southbank, Melbourne, September 2002.
- 2     Carolyn Springer, 'Textural Geography: The Role of the Reader in 'Invisible Cities'', *Modern Language Studies*, Vol.15, No.4, Autumn 1985, pp.289-299.
- 3     Springer, p.290
- 4     See especially, Anna Botta, 'Calvino and Oulipo: An Italian Ghost in a Combinatory Machine?', *MLN*, Vol112, No.1, Italian Issue, (Jan 1997), pp.81-89
- 5     Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Trans. by David Ogden,
- 6     Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart*, Routledge, New York, 1990.
- 7     Leszek Kolakowski, *Metaphysical Horror*, Trans.by Agnieszka Kolakowska, University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- 8     Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz, The Witness and the Archive*, Trans. By Daniel Heller-Roazen, Zone Books, New York, 1999.
- 9     Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror, An Essay on Abjection*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1982.
- 10    Kristeva, *ibid*, p.1
- 11    Anthony Vidler, 'Unhomely Homes', in *The Architectural Uncanny, Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1992.
- 12    A notable early exception to this discussion, particularly concerning mainstream architectural writing, was Reyner Banham's discussion of the Villa Savoye by le Corbusier. Banham used images of the decaying villa to suggest that modernism's deliberate exclusion of the ontological experience of time. For all le Corbusier's emphasis on the temporal aspects of the 'architectural promenade', its performance was minor in comparison with the age buildings attain.
- 13    Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*, October Books, MIT Press, Cambridge Mass. and London, 1997. Ch. 6, 'Outmoded Spaces', pp.157-191.
- 14    Indeed Vidler furthers this analysis in a later essay, 'Agoraphobia, Psychopathologies of Urban Space', in *Warped Space, Art, Architecture and Anxiety in Modern Culture*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 2001.pp.21-49. Within a general discussion of nineteenth-century ideas on agoraphobia, Vidler examines the spatial mapping of the anxieties of Hans presented by Freud, and subsequently Jacques Lacan, in his case study on the boy.
- 15    There are many examples of the genre of the haunted house, commencing with Horace Walpole's, *The Castle of Otranto* of 1764, Edgar Allen Poe's *Fall of the House of Usher*, and perhaps most famously employed in Henry James', *The Turn of the Screw*.(1898)



## Chapter 3 - Triptychs: House and Argento

### Triptychs

This work, the third of seven projects concerning this thesis, consists of 10 triptychs created from still images acquired at the House site, as well as fragments gleaned from the *Ghosts of the Civic Dead* project, and further study into the machinations of the horror genre. Whilst the work of the *Triptychs* (and that of the *Sephiroth* images) were not exhibited in public in the same manner as the two previous projects, or of the final three, the *Triptychs* and *Sephiroth* projects explore issues of thematic completeness implied by the earlier work. In some respects they are difficult to justify in terms of utility as their rigour comes from references to the previous works and the anticipation of the move into digital material that commences with the Sub-Meta and Maelstrom projects. There was no external practice-based motivation for the production of the work other than the desire to elaborate on the potential of the first two projects. What drives the production of this material is the need to further develop a practice that had begun to speak of theoretical issues that concerned the relationship between image-making and its reception. As we have seen, in the brief discussion of Italo Calvino's use of structured relations in the fragmentary narratives of *Invisible Cities*, the presence of an 'architectonic' allows expressive material to benefit from the variety of interpretation that that structure provides. Further, having established a clear relationship between the use of architectonic and structural metaphors in the analysis and description of the *Ghosts of the Civic Dead* project, there was an opportunity and a need to explore further architectonic metaphors. In addition, the nature of the relationship to texts and images, their intertextuality, might also be further recognised as contributing to the lexicon of architectural criticism.

Whilst the relationship between images and their connotative states is a staple mode of enquiry within critical art practice, the emergence of the digital image and digital image-making processes has made the interpretive relationship less clear. The work of the *Triptychs* and the *Sephiroth* images have benefited from varying degrees of digital manipulation and it is necessary to make some comments regarding this fact before discussing the works in detail. Mark Hansen, commenting on the studies of Jonathon Crary and William J. Mitchell, reminds us that the processes of looking at digital images that are mediated by other digital applications are intrinsically compromised, or at the very least altered, in their relationship to the real.<sup>1</sup>

Discussing Ridley Scott's 1982 film *Bladerunner*, he reviews the scene in which the main character makes a series of requests to his personal computer to zoom into a portion of a photograph, and then enhance the image three-dimensionally, including somehow embedding

the zoom function into the image in such a way that it can turn a corner *inside* the image, which in turn allows the machine to generate a 'picture' of a figure who was otherwise hidden. This is an exceptional machine indeed, and probably impossible, but it does indicate the fact that image-making in a digital environment is principally concerned with the manipulation of data. Contemporary 'vision machines', a term Hansen borrows from Paul Virilio, are a ubiquitous form of mediation in a culture in which all images are deterritorialized from their original referent. This marks a clear break with the description of affective content in images that Barthes outlined, and was discussed in Chapter 1. Barthes' 'third meaning' is still semantically in place as an action of vision, but any reliance on a persistent 'real' that the punctum may evoke has to be considered as part of an ulterior digital mediation. Recent work by Patricia Picinnini is a clear example of this relationship (though the complexity of the affect of Picinnini's work is quite dense), by counter example, a clear example of the punctum surviving, in part, are the images of Gerhard Richter's *Atlas* project, in which sentimental and quite personal images are altered to suit Richter's interests in the analogue fashion of overpainting.<sup>2</sup>

So while an important function of the triptych process is the determination of the structure of reading that may be explored, it must be remembered that the images of the House and, latterly, of the film stills, are essentially the product of the potential for one data set, the image, to be 'viewed' by a number of applications whose principal function is to (re)organise that data.

The simplest aspiration for this project was the idea that a tri-partite reading of still images could convey something tangible about the nature of the images, as well as the opportunity for seeing these spaces as 'picturing' states of affairs that could be construed as simultaneously architectural and filmic. Again, as a contrived mode of representation, the suite of images was intended to be both documentary and discursive. Further, when viewed as a whole, they are intended to act as a rebus, providing the opportunity for critically interpretive movement across the array. Thirty images, thematically streamed, were grouped into ten groups of three. Set out as a matrix, the images could be used to construct a number of instances of possible scenarios. The particular qualities of a three-part image group allowed for 12 permutations of readings: 1&2 + 3; 1&3 + 2; 2&3 + 1 ; 2&1 +3; 3&1 + 2; 3&2 + 1; 1&2&3; 1&3&2; 2&3&1; 2&1&3; 3&1&2; 3&2&1 a comprehensible enough array of difference.

The intention of the work was to transform the visual material of the previous projects into a series of propositions about other narratives that might be construed from the material.

The shift from documentation and quotation in the previous images is strengthened by the second order shift to the triptych mode. This is further encouraged by the array of permutations described above. The images of the house are no longer specific to the house as a documentary process, the stills from films are no longer quotations of the qualities or meanings of the film, the introduction of various manipulations of the images were no longer about the question of how text and image might be considered together.

At its most simplest, this component of the thesis-design process involved the technical issue of: How do we look at images that might be part of a design process and, as importantly; How are they read in order to be part of a design practice that utilises architectural means of expression? We have seen that there is a potential richness in the consideration of diegetic, non-diegetic and heterodiegetic relations insofar as they offer a way to incorporate material that reinforces the sense of the architectural order of the narrative (the diegetic and on-diegetic), or work to enhance the alterity of material that is nonetheless appropriately relevant to an interpretation of the work and its possible development (the heterodiegetic). The question remains as to what numeric forms might be useful in this process.

### Triptychs

The triptych as a format has its genesis in the triadic relationship of images associated with Christian theogony. The relation between the three states of divinity and various other triadic structures that are a part of western organisation of dialectical thinking has provided a structural model for the comparison of states of affairs of propositions that, at its most basic level, mimics the truth schema of basic propositions of logic:<sup>3</sup> Socrates is a man. All men are mortal. Therefore Socrates is mortal.

Isomorphically, the structure of the trinity has been used as an organisation principle for the layout of devotional relations within liturgical design. The nave is flanked by two aisles, the altar by two sides afforded relative levels of divinity. Whilst also conveniently mimicking the centralised, bipartite organisation of the human figure.

In the specific instance of triptychs of images, the predominant use of them occurs within liturgical art intended for placement within the context of a church or space of devotion. At a basic level then, there is considerable anecdotal memory of the organisation of three images as intending a centralised focus that the side panels support in some indexical fashion. The



side images can represent the extended spatiality of the central panel, implying a continuity of subject matter, or they can show temporal shifts implying that the left-right reading of the material is sequential.

While this is a useful mode for understanding the tradition of triptychs in art history, it does not have an operative value in a design process that is seeking to interpret the images and give a formal sense to their organisation that might be brought into future projects.

As a consequence of the work that had preceded it, the question emerges of how the accumulation of images, once organised as triptychs, actually contributes to questions of architectural work. Following the processes established in the *House (Forensic)* and *Ghosts of the Civic Dead* projects, there are a number of ways in which this relationship might be discussed. To do this we first need to consider the question of the frame.<sup>4</sup>

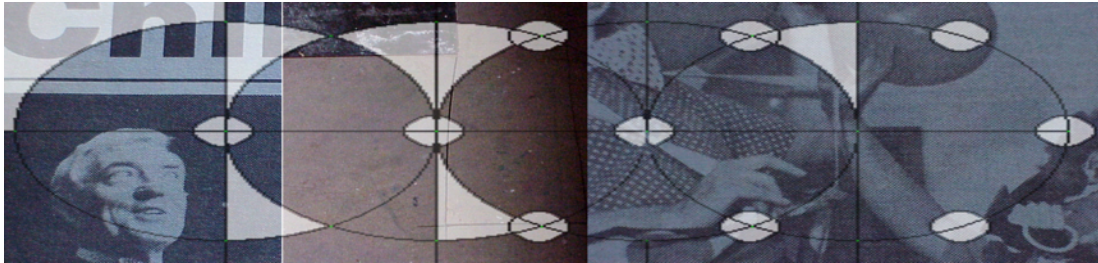
#### Parergon/Frame

The first mode by which we might consider the material of the triptychs is through the discussion of the parergon that Jacques Derrida undertakes in *The Truth in Painting*.<sup>5</sup> By discussing the Kantian aspects of aesthetic experience, specifically the portion of the *Critique of Judgement* in which he presents the Four Moments of the Beautiful, Derrida re-evaluates the functional bias present in Kant's language. Specifically he identifies a series of qualities that Kant has excluded from his discussion and, by dint of their absence, begged the question as to their possible role in aesthetic experience. This argument is of relevance in critical discourse directed at the discipline of architecture since judgments of utility (the first moment of the beautiful) and judgements of pleasure (the second moment of the beautiful) are stock observations of the use of architecture. Judgements that determine that architecture is without a beneficial utility, or that it does not create a pleasing effect are generally considered marginal and of only modest value. Whilst it is relatively easy to describe how architecture works, it is more difficult – but no less necessary to say that it has a purposiveness that is not reducible to beneficial gain. This is part of a more general point that Kant makes in reference to the Sublime. Yet it is directly applicable to the projects that comprise this thesis and, in fact, are their chief attribute. On the subject of the theoretical and the practical, Derrida says:

It is in the critique that, precisely, the critical suspension is produced, the *krinein*, the in-between, the question of knowing whether the theory



Above: Triptychs 1-5



allegory of melancholic modernity

Above: Triptychs 6-10

of judgment is theoretical or practical, and whether it is then referred to a regulatory or constitutive instance. But the system of pure philosophy *will have had* to include the critical within itself, and construct a general discourse which will get the better of the detachable and account for it. This system of pure philosophy is what Kant calls *metaphysics*. It is not yet possible. Only the critique can have a program that is possible.<sup>6</sup>

Derrida is commenting on Kant's desire to free the critique from issues of practical applicability and the need to employ *a posteriori* forms of validation to the process. Kant wishes to inductively set out a mode of critique of the aesthetic that is autonomous and internally consistent. Yet, as Derrida points out, this involves a process of detachment that creates a critique that 'is not yet possible'. In the context of any creative process that has 'not-yet' decided on the relationship between its means of communication, its semantic calculus and the material it will choose to frame for communication, the 'not-yet' state of Derrida's commentary is significant. It is worthwhile examining Derrida's comments at length as their form and content of his prose are uniquely compressed together. He goes on to comment on an explicit, though initially unremarkable metaphor that Kant uses, that of the architectonic and of the *Grundfragen* (fundamental questions) which need to be established:

In order to express the relationship between the two possibles (the now possible of the critique and the future-possible of metaphysics), Kant proposes another metaphor. He borrows it, already, from art, which has not yet been discussed, from the technique of architecture, architectonics: the pure philosopher, the metaphysician, will have to operate like a good architect, like a good *tekhmites* of edification. He will be a sort of artist. Now what does a good architect do, according to Kant? He must first of all be certain of the ground, the foundation, the fundament.<sup>7</sup>

Derrida goes on to argue that the 'common' ground that Kant is alluding to never, in fact, reveals itself, that it is a *bythos*, the bottom of an abyss. The point of this analysis is to recognise the power of the metaphor in the argument. He goes on:

We have just encountered the first 'metaphor': beginning of the preface (*Vorrede*). Now at the end of the introduction which follows (*Einleitung*),

and as if to frame the whole prolegomenon, will be the metaphor of the artificial work securing the passage over the gulf, the bridge (*Brücke*) projected over the great abyss (*grosse Kluft*). Philosophy, which in the book has to think art through – art in general and fine art – as a part of its field or of its edifice, is here *representing itself* as a part of its part: philosophy as an art of architecture.<sup>8</sup>

Derrida speaks of the project of the *Critique of Judgement* as being one of preparing a middle ground between an architectonic of pure reason and desire. He describes the process as architectonic, presuming the work of architecture to be involved in the establishment of a stable *grund* from which construction can commence. The metaphor of architecture and of building seem to be conflated with a requirement of architecture that it be a stable discourse determined by the act of prefiguring a stable and ‘sensible’ construction. There is a standard criticism here that it presumes a form of subjectivity that is antithetical to current thinking on the nature of a dispersed subject. The architectonic metaphor is directed at a stable ontological referent, the thinking being of the critiques.

Within the general economy of metaphors, the use of architecture to describe the characteristics and misrepresentations of the work of Kant’s critique conversely allows us to see the potentially differentiated modes of establishing fundamental questions through mediums that are performatively different.

#### Lacunae, Ellipsis and Estoppel

The parergon, as Derrida conceives it, is a process of finding the velocity with which the judgement of the aesthetic tends towards an embedded state in the metaphor of the architectonic. Judgement, a fluid and dissimulating ‘possible’, as Derrida describes it is asked to meditate on the aesthetic, without substituting a doctrine of ‘taste’ (judgements mediated by the expectation of agreement) for the critical process of showing that judgement and aesthetic objectivity in general are possible. Derrida, however, pursues Kant’s project and points out that this search for an aesthetic objectivity will be characterised by a ‘lack’ that has come from, in Derrida’s opinion the suppressed and unacknowledged state of ‘pleasure’. Derrida describes this approach:

What does the lack depend on? What lack is it?

And what if it were the frame. What if the lack formed the frame of the theory. Not its accident but its frame, More or less still: what if the lack were not only the lack of a theory of the frame but the place of the lack of the theory of the frame.

#### Edge(arête)/lack

The 'lacunary' character of his work, according to Kant at least, hangs on the fact that nature has muddled up, complicated, tangled up (*verwickelt*) the problems. The author's excuses are limited to the first part of the work, to the critique of aesthetic judgment. It is only in the first part that the deduction will not have the clarity and distinctness (*Deutlichkeit*) which one would, however, be entitled to expect from a knowledge through concepts. After deploring that nature has mixed up the threads, at the moment when he is finishing his critical work (*Heimit endige ich also mein ganzes kritisches Geschäft*), admitting the lacunae and projecting a bridge over the abyss of the other two critiques, Kant speaks of his age. He must gain time, not let the delay accumulate, hurry on toward the doctrine.[

(Derrida inserts an ellipsis, a blank paragraph here)

] Its about pleasure. About thinking pure pleasure, the being-pleasure of pleasure.<sup>9</sup>

This is an extraordinary, and highly mannered analysis of Kant for the reason that it reads and rethinks the gaps in Kant's project of the three critiques, his lacunae. Derrida offers a reading of the structural dynamic of the fourth moment of the beautiful which, traditionally has been considered to refer only to the idea that if sensation is possible then decisions have to be made (not *what* decisions are made, merely that sensate experience is comprehended only when the dynamic of judgment, its pace and direction is recognised). A parallel position, also from Kant, is the basic proposition that we fundamentally and inescapably apprehend the phenomenal world spatially and temporally and that, if we could remove ourselves from this purview, we could see a noumenal state (if that is what it could be called) that is without time or spatiality.

But what is most powerful about Derrida's analysis is the renewed emphasis upon the lacunary and the arbitrariness of the architectonic. The deceptively complex association of 'Edge' (edge of what?) with 'arête' (a term for a glacial ridge line, but also Ancient Greek (of the poetic, pre 5<sup>th</sup> Century Greek form) for the human characteristic of nobility/excellence) which is then divided by 'lack' (again, lack of what?) is a triadic relation of its own. It sits without explanation in the text, but taken in context, I suggest it refers to the earlier presentation of the bythos, the 'abyss', that shadows the metaphor of the 'bridge'. In essence, Derrida is suggesting that there is a form of philosophical calculus, a diagram that might be 'pictured', in which the pre-Socratic conception (perhaps borrowed here by Derrida from his reading of Martin Heidegger) of *arête* that exists prior to the appearance of demotic concepts of universality, and that is prior to a language of a similarly configured demotic metaphysics.

Also, the ellipsis between the biographical detail of Kant and the plunge towards pleasure, which then occupies a number of pages subsequent, presents a further diagrammatic estoppel, a prohibition, of the psychological association of Kant's life with his thought. The ellipsis functions as a pause within which the reader can dissociate the fragments of text and pull back from seeing the presence of Kant too clearly in the text.

There is much more that might be said about Derrida's work in this context, however I wish to draw attention to a number of key issues in this passage as they have a direct bearing on the work of the *Triptychs* and *Sephiroth* projects. They are: (1) the metaphor of the architectonic; (2) the 'lack' of the 'frame' and vice versa; (3) the calculus of the abyss; and, (4) the presence of the ellipsis that I have characterised as a form of estoppel.

#### House and Argento Triptychs

In the light of Derrida's suggestions above, the work of the *Triptychs* is an attempt to make a bridge of a different type. After the triadic relationship of the *Ghosts of the Civic Dead* project, it was recognised that the material of the original *House (Forensic)* project could be further manipulated to investigate the dynamics of the images and their relationship to issues of frames, architectonic metaphors, a 'sense of the abyss' and forms of thematic estoppals. If the work of the *Ghosts of the Civic Dead* project had benefited from the manipulation of a series of doublings of form and thematics, *döppelgangers* and family resemblances, in order to show the possible consistencies between the different media of fiction, video and philosophy,

its success was in evoking a sense that the metaphor of the spatial metaphor could sustain over-determination. For the project, the architectonic of the ladder was chosen (as opposed to the bridge, or *Grund* /foundation of Kant we have just examined) as a means of securing a spatialised discourse on the movements of the narrative in the fictional and video components of the project and of the process of clarification and recognition of the ultimate 'non-sense' of questioning in the *Tractatus*.

Also the shifts in material presence of the three media, plus the material reality of the ladder, from descriptive terms to the timbral grain of the video, to the mere words of the *Tractatus* and the non-representational moment of the ladder itself, served to dramatise the different modalities in which these questions can be asked. As Hansen has commented, the presence of different vision machines infers different relations to the real. Reviewing Derrida's comments in this regard, the perception that there are states-of-affairs, images of Derrida's perception of the abyss, that might have no practical or pleasurable function, means that using media content that has some metonymic relation to the past of a project (the images of the House) but are the product of digital manipulation and framing (that is, making them into a triptych) might be able to give form to this state.

To extend these premises, the decision was made to create a series of triptychs that followed an emerging narrative of the House project taking as a model this time, the genre films of the Italian horror director Dario Argento, specifically the film *Suspiria* (1977). There was no specific reason for Argento, the exercise might have been conducted with the work of Kubrick in *The Shining* (1980) or the Japanese director Takashi Miike in *The Audition* (1999), also films recognised for their contribution to the horror genre. Having established a process that benefited from the consideration of diagetetic and non-diagetetic considerations in the initial projects and the recognition of the 'punctum' or the Third meaning in the reading of Barthes, the *Triptychs* posed problems for how to organise the images of the original House, how to progress from the triadic structure of *Ghosts of the Civic Dead*, and how to activate and discover a diagrammatic algebra of images and intentions in the film stills acquired from *Suspiria*.

#### House Triptychs

This material, whilst initially acquired without specific intentions, suggested certain organisation strategies when viewed through the lens of subsequent installation work and the study of Derrida, Freud and Wittgenstein and, as I will discuss subsequently, Gilles Deleuze's *Logic of*



*Sensation.* The *House Triptychs* were originally organised according to conventional issues of pictorial composition, in which the primary function of the combined image was to show transitive states of physical change, organisational similarities, or simultaneous images of similar items at differing scales. These images remained well within a conventional economy of taste as they made no effort to problematise the process of looking, or to speak of the abyss or even the arête discussed above.

Reviewing the images it became apparent that an additional round of photography would be necessary in order to augment the material. The initial process of looking had examined the forensics of the building's condition. The next round of photography at the House site looked for the indexical signs of types of occupation. Within the House, an accumulation of household items – old local newspapers, junk store pictures, derelict furniture – had added another layer of material. Photographing these and reviewing the images, a number of narrational scenarios emerged with potential occupants of the House. Barthes text on the 'Third Meaning' became increasingly convincing as each of the images were arranged in the algebra of a triptych. As importantly, they contributed to an expanded understanding of the field of architectural design in this and subsequent projects. At a basic level they became the material resources for texturing effects when used in within a digital environment in the Maelstrom projects. At a more developed level, the Triptych suites showed timbral qualities of surface and light that showed them to be consistent with an aesthetic of *l'informe*, to be discussed later. Even further, the relationship between the images, the manner in which they implied narrational readings created thematic associations that later projects were able to utilise. Finally, the degree to which real and apparent depth was constructed in the images would later cohere in the creation of digital space. As a form of machine for looking, a parergonal frame, the triptych format implies spatial proximities and depths that show the sublime.

The qualities that the House triptychs evoked, for example the sense of claustrophobia and hostility in the *needle tree* image and the difficult reconciliations between the text and the images in the *cost* image, and in both the role of chiaroscuro in insisting that the process of viewing require a physical effort of looking or searching, created a clear and powerful image of the House as a site. They responded to, and encouraged, a general sense of malevolence in response to the opportunity to imagine horror as a process towards annihilation.

But principally they are examples of the idea of 'affect' as discussed by Gilles Deleuze. As



Argento triptychs, 2005



Argento triptychs, 2005

singularities, they have an internal coherence, but instead of being then absorbed into a conceptual schema that defines them as part of a symbolic order, their position within the triptych affords the images an expanded and, structurally, a counterfactual representational status. This is not mere arbitrariness and indeterminacy; it is a deliberate strategy in the context of the overall analysis of the House. Put most simply, their operative role is to document the house and its qualities without becoming fetishized (and hence marginalised) as 'mere' impressions. They are intended to 'impress' by being part of alternate fictions or foci for thinking about the House, they are like the ladder of Wittgenstein.

#### The Argento Triptychs

In concert with the *House Triptych* images, a suite of triptychs was also created from stills garnered from the 1975 Italian horror film, *Suspiria*, by the Italian director Dario Argento. These images were intended to be complementary and supplementary, a prosthesis, with the *House Triptychs* inasmuch as they provided two states of mind that assisted in reading the logic of the sensations of the images. As evidence of narrational direction, that which is the 'story' of *Suspiria*, the still-images perform as crystallizations of moments within its text. As a film narrative has key moments within which the characters are compelled to confront or reverse scenarios that are driving the dramaturgy, so the still images sought to document moments when specific key events were occurring. If these were arranged sequentially, one could reconstruct the story-line in the fashion that might be possible in a cartoon or graphic novel. When disrupted from this sequence, a variety of other scenarios emerge.

For example the first of the Argento triptychs illustrated above is out of temporal sequence when compared with the film, yet when read from left to right, the images seem to imply a journey in which the girl arrives from water, to a field and finally arrives at a house when the sun is setting. Other arrangements can reveal other scenarios, yet none will accurately describe the original state of affairs that the film, as a singularity, conveys. Because of the presence of characters that are directionally organised, there is an implicit logic of development. However, we can question the robustness of this logic as the panels are not part of a meta-fiction, as with a graphic novel. They are matters of fact, in the manner of Wittgenstein's states-of-affairs, and have a 'rhythm' consistent with Deleuze's understanding of that term as we shall see below.

These triptychs, as suggested above, act in a prosthetic fashion to the House images. Yet their role is, in some way following the suggestions of Mark Wigley's *Prosthetic Theory* article,

to be the supplementary 'reason' to the field of inchoate malevolence evoked by the *House Triptychs*.<sup>10</sup> Wigley asserted that the incorporation of architecture into the university context constituted a shift in the health in the body of knowledge that it was the institutional duty of universities to maintain. This implied that the idea of architecture acted as a prosthetic that enabled the sustenance of a damaged host, the university system, to continue. Although we can question the overall validity of that proposition, the issue of prosthetic relations encourages one to consider the relationship between the highly disciplined genre logic of the horror film (*The Blair Witch Project*, the *Argento Triptychs*) versus the open valences of the fictional state of affairs (The fictional component of *Ghosts of the Civic Dead*, the *House Triptychs*). When Wigley suggests that there is a role for architecture to maintain its institutional difference from the university, so too there is a role, it can be argued, for the microscopic attention to the 'affect' of the images to determine the opportunities of them acting prosthetically to the practice of architectural design.

#### Gilles Deleuze on Triptychs and Affect

In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Gilles Deleuze's book-length study of the work of the artist Francis Bacon, the attention is devoted, after the fashion of Deleuze to an incremental consideration of the work of the painter 'as it appears', in contrast to an art-historical analysis that takes into consideration issues of personality, life experience etc.<sup>11</sup> Deleuze's analysis is concerned with the establishment of modes of reading the sensate aspects of the world, its affects, without lapsing into a metaphysics of categories or representation, or into a sentimental phenomenology. His study is a rejection of the illustrative role of painting in favour of a sense of the rhythmic and diagrammatic role that, certainly, Bacon's images show. In his introduction, Deleuze suggests that Bacon does an analysis of:

... a violence that is involved only with colour and line: the violence of a sensation (and not of a representation), a static or potential violence, a violence of reaction and expression. For example, a scream rent from us by a foreboding of invisible forces: 'to paint the scream more than the horror...'

The violence of a hiccup, of a need to vomit, but also of a hysterical, involuntary smile... Bacon's bodies, heads, Figures are of flesh, and what fascinates him are the invisible forces that model flesh or shake it. This is not the relationship of form and matter, but of materials and forces; to make these forces visible through their effects

on flesh.<sup>12</sup>

Deleuze's particular emphasis is directed towards the manner by which Bacon avoids the problem of representation, in his choice of subject matter and states of affairs, that may be construed as horrific. Bacon, Deleuze argues concerns himself with the hysterical sense of the body, like that of Artaud, without attempting to paint whatever that sense may be if it were to be part of some symbolic schema.<sup>13</sup> He is also concerned with unravelling the manner by which Bacon's triptychs involve the consideration of the flesh of the Figures (Deleuze's capitalized term for the bodies painted by Bacon, but implying the network of forces and flesh that they are), that the hysterical sensations they show are 'matters of fact' without a necessary narrational relationship.

On the triptych form he says:

The triptych is undoubtedly the form in which the following demand is posed most precisely: there must be a relationship between the separated parts, but this relationship must be neither narrative or logical. The triptych does not imply a progression, and it does not tell a story. Thus it too, in turn has to incarnate a common fact for diverse Figures. It has to produce a 'matter of fact'. But the previous solution of coupling is of no use here, for the Figures are and remain separated in the triptych. They must remain separated and do not resonate. There are therefore two types of nonnarrative relations, two types of 'matters of fact' or common facts: the coupled Figure and the separated Figures as parts of a triptych.<sup>14</sup>

This is where the use of triptychs as an investigatory strategy becomes loosed from its metaphysical overtones in Deleuze's opinion. They convey 'matters of fact' that show the network of forces, the Rhythm as he describes it, that may be construed from the work. It is, in a manner that is as equally a-metaphysical as Derrida's analysis of the metaphor of the bridge above, structured towards a purposive state without being representational.

In this respect the combined effect of the House and Argento Triptychs is to show this state. They are able to acquire and make tangible 'affective' use of the imagery of the house and of the genre of the horror story without becoming tied to the original content in a relationship of representation. Nor, though they concern themselves with genre images of the popular

impression of horror, are they tied to being representations of those states. For this reason there is no sensible requirement for the images to be 'horrific' in some industrialised sense of needing to produce that effect. The horror that is sustained in the relationship these images sustain to the question of the void, or Derrida's abyss, in which what is not known has a continual presence.

#### The Diagram – Towards Architecture

What the Triptych projects do point towards is the further reconciliation of this process to an idea of a diagram. In order for them to be retrieved as part of a working process in architecture, they need not only to have the nature of their affect registered, but the process by which their perceptual states might be encouraged to take form. For this it is necessary to consider the idea of the diagram and how it might be achieved. It is also possible to further explore Derrida's analysis of the purposiveness of Kant's analytic of the Beautiful to make use of his understanding of the cut (*cise*) and of the colossal. As he says at the beginning of his discussions of the column:

for example the question of order. A spatial, so-called plastic, art object does not necessarily prescribe an order of reading. I can move around in front of it, start from top to bottom, sometimes walk around it. No doubt this possibility has an ideal limit. Let us say for the moment that the structure of this limit allows a greater play than in the case of temporal art objects (whether discursive or not), unless a certain fragmentation, a spatial *mise en scène*, precisely (an effective or virtual partition) allows us to begin in various places, to vary direction or speed.<sup>15</sup>

It is at this point that we need to examine the next project, Sephiroth, in which the return to language and spatiality and the opportunity for the diagram. In this instance I am taking, as with the discussion of the topology of the ladder in the previous chapter, a diagram to be a form that can indicate a set of performative relations. Ideally these relations, in a well-formed diagram, will show the *structure* of their shared qualities, and as a diagram has a performative context in which these relations may be enacted. This is the point of any architectonic metaphor, complex as it may be. The diagram of relational attributes, whether timbral, textual or spatial, must be seen in a performative context.

- 1 Hansen, Mark B., Seeing With the Body: The Digital Image in Postphotography, *Diacritics*, Vol.31, No.4, pp54-84. Hansen refers to the studies by Crary, Johnathon, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1990, and; Mitchell, William J. *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual truth in the Post-Photographic Era*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA., 1992.
- 2 Richter, Gerhard. The *Atlas* project can be viewed on-line at [www.gerhard-richter.com/art/atlas/](http://www.gerhard-richter.com/art/atlas/)
- 3 The original form of this schema was proposed by Alfred Tarski. He codified the matrix of inductive truth propositions that follow the basic format of inductive, if-then statements.
- 4 Whilst it is always necessary to examine the full extent of original sources, an excellent summary of some of Derrida's points in the portions of *Parergon* about to be analysed is provided in Mark Wigley's 'Postmortem Architecture: The Taste of Derrida', *Perspecta*, Vol.23, (1987), pp.156-172. Wigley not only comments on Derrida's comments on Kant and the analogy of the bridge, but elaborates a position that argues that there is a direct bodily metaphor in this work, as well as that of Rousseau and Freud. The 'taste' is the taste for a metaphysics that need not cause indigestion.
- 5 Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, Trans. by Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1987. Ch.1 'Parergon', pp.15-148. Despite the fact that Derrida's text on Kant is somewhat idiosyncratic in its familiar language and the contrived 'bracketing', and presumably, erasures of segments of the text, he has in fact written at length on the subject of metaphor and philosophy. Famous in this respect is the text 'White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy', Trans. by F.C.T. Moore, *New Literary History*, Vol.6, No.1, *On Metaphor*, Autumn 1974, pp. 5-74.
- 6 Derrida, *Truth in Painting*, p.39.
- 7 Ibid. p.40
- 8 Ibid, p.40-41
- 9 Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, op.cit., pp42-43.
- 10 Mark Wigley, 'Prosthetic Theory, The Disciplining of Architecture', *Assemblage*, No.15 (Aug 1991), pp.6-29.
- 11 Gilles Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, xxx
- 12 Deleuze, pxxix.
- 13 Ibid, Ch. 7, 'Hysteria', pp. 39-47
- 14 Ibid, p.58
- 15 Derrida, op.cit, p.50





## Chapter 4 - Sephiroth

### Sephiroth

The study of Derrida's parergon essay and the consideration of the triptychs remain an unfinished operation. The principal issue in giving structure and direction to an increasingly diverse body of material is the question of 'What Structure' and to 'What ends'? The work of the previous projects: *House*, *Ghosts of the Civic Dead* and *Triptychs* constitute a direction of thinking about material that has proven to be extensive by virtue of the process of fine-graining the disparate material for analysis. As I mentioned in the introduction, the tradition of making encyclopaedic arrangements of entities is usually undertaken to exploit the pleasures of their non-sensical relations. Yet there is also the supposition that, in some fashion, there may be a purview through which these entities could be seen to display a consistent and co-terminous logic of organisation. At the outset, the programme of enquiry within this thesis has set itself the problem of dealing with variations in affectual experience, which have occurred through a variety of media. At its worst, this approach can approximate a vast indeterminate field of matter without any necessary relations. But as I have shown in the first three chapters, if one remains aware of the shared metaphor of the architectonic that this material *can* display, this latency can act as a catalyst towards developed thinking. In the case of the three projects to date, they have progressively examined the relationship between the affective states of the material as they relate to architectural experience, but have not been subjected to false identities of examining them for their pleasurable or utilitarian qualities. Through the organisation of the triptychs the material begins to show spatial and diagrammatic relationships that, in the final *Maelstrom* and *MyBattleEye* projects come to fruition.

In many respects the projects have both benefited and suffered from an approach that did not proscribe a series of limits at the outset in order to reign in the kingdom of material valuable for consideration.

To give a structure to a body of visual material a number of questions needs to be asked. What are the terms under which the material appears to be visual? In what way is their visuality a product of the technical processes of their production? How do we place the material in an analytic schema that historicise its current appearance and engages in a process of analysis that allows for a developmental identity to the work? In short, how do we make it part of a process, its utility, as part of an interpretive or creative process?

The material that will be considered in this chapter is titled *Sephiroth*, indicating the organisational structure the Sephiroth images they have borrowed and the series of allusion to a process of thinking that the Sephirothic structure occupies within the greater mystical tradition of the Kabbalah, the Jewish mystical tradition of theological exegesis that, until the processes of assimilation undertaken by most of European Jewry in the nineteenth century, formed a core component of the path to knowledge through study and teaching in the theological study of the Torah and Zohar in the pre-modern world. Probably the most accessible and important study of this field was undertaken by Gershom Scholem.<sup>1</sup>

It should be said at the outset, prior to the more detailed discussion of the processes of the Sephiroth that are studied and presented here, that the work of the thesis itself is not intended to mirror or reproduce the study of the Jewish sacred texts that this structure, the Sephiroth, normally occupies. The work of the thesis is a study in the relationship between structured forms of viewing and their content, with a specific emphasis upon architecture and the metaphorical use of the architectonic structures of looking and thinking. Whilst there are a number of very significant aspects of the Sephiroth that will be presented in this chapter, it is not intended to act as an extension of the Jewish mystical tradition. As we shall see, the Sephiroth has diagrammatic strength that is useful in the context of the material being discussed, but that discussion is not intended to act as an argument for a metaphysical state confirming the subtle divinity of a Godhead.

Quite the contrary in fact, as having attended to the discussion of modes of judgement presented by Derrida in discussing Kant, and in Deleuze's discussion of sense and affect in Bacon, the perpetuation of meta-categories of symbolic experience is the last thing to be attempted.

We can however pay attention to Scholem's discussion of the process of mysticism since, as a process, it allows for an extremely rich process of association and iconographic relations similarly to that at the basis of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* project by Aby Warburg, a significant influence on the current thesis for its attempt to incorporate an iconographic reading on the abundance of historical and contemporary images that, in Warburg's estimation, displayed consistent thematic interests. In some respects, the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, like that of Gerhard Richter's mentioned previously, are iterations of the encyclopaedic impetus of the scholar of images.<sup>2</sup> As an introduction to the use of the sephiroth employed in the thesis work, it is worthwhile examining the manner in which it was used within the Jewish mystical tradition.

Scholem describes the process by which the Jewish mystic attempts to articulate the enormity of their religious experience, the process of their epiphany:

The formlessness of the original experience may even lead to a dissolution of all form, even in interpretation. It is this perspective, destructive yet not unrelated to the original impulse of the mystic, which enables us to understand the borderline case of the nihilistic mystic as an all too natural product of inner mystic upheavals even if was rejected with horror by all those about him. All other mystics try to find the way back to form, which is also the way to community; he alone, because in his experience the breakdown of all form becomes a supreme value, tries to preserve this formlessness in an undialectic spirit, instead of taking it, like other mystics, as an incentive to build up new form. <sup>3</sup>

Besides noting in passing, Scholem's use of the term horror to describe the movement away from a 'formed' experience, we can recognise in his description of the mystic's attempts at speaking of their experience, the need for it to display isomorphic qualities that can be translated into performative, denotative and connotative utterances. These utterances will of course call on the range of affectual properties that mystical speech will allow, they will point at the immanence of the sublime in the 'real' and the depth and complexity of analogical properties of everyday entities and events. In addition, the fact that there is a negotiation between the formed and the formless indicates further the appropriateness of this form of study to the direction of the thesis.

Specifically regarding the sephiroth, Scholem describes its roles as being to describe:

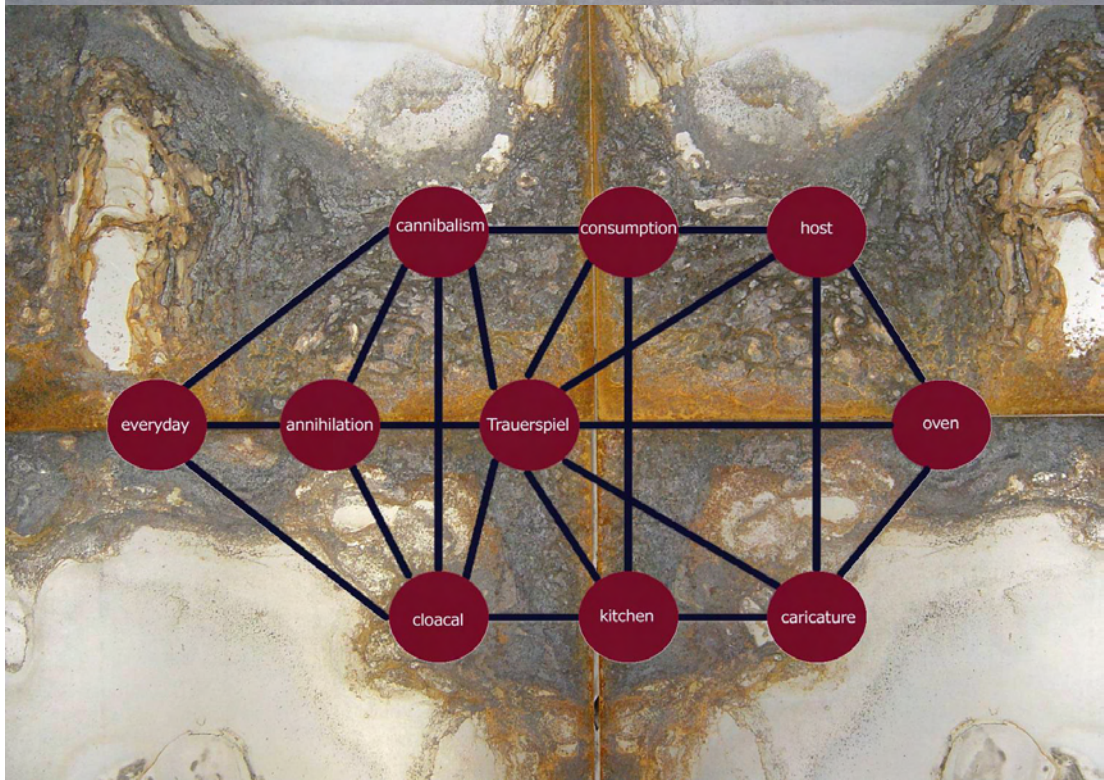
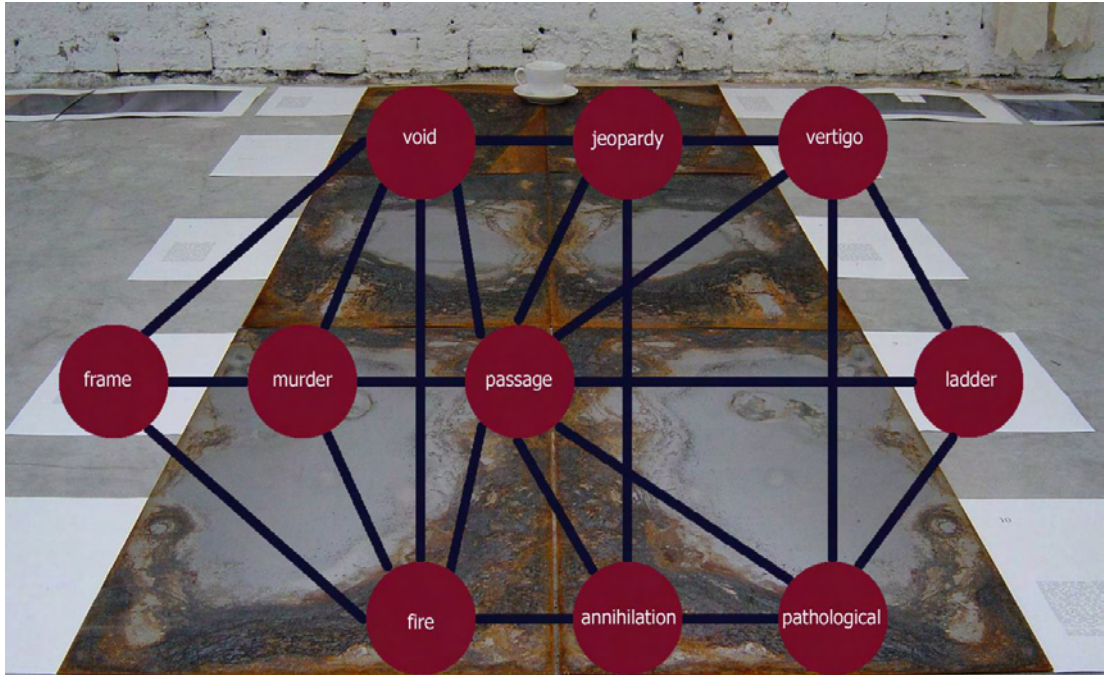
... a theogonic process in which God emerges from His hiddenness and ineffable being, to stand before us as the Creator. The stages of this process can be followed in an infinite abundance of images and symbols, each relating to a particular aspect of God. But these images in which God is manifested are nothing other than the primordial images of all being. What constitutes the special mythical structure of the Kabbalistic complex of symbols is the restriction of the infinitely many aspects under which God can be known to ten fundamental categories, or whatever we may wish to call the conception underlying the notion of the sephiroth. (Scholem's spelling)<sup>4</sup>


These ten categories describe a sequential series of states towards the recognition of the full divinity of God, describing a series of transitive states that may be recognised in the process towards this realisation.<sup>5</sup> The diagram that organises this material is equally important and, while it can be configured in a number of different iterations, the form, illustrated above, is reasonably consistent. Significantly the agreement of this form comes from a concomitant agreement on the techniques for discussing the attributes of God. So, whilst the experience of the mystic might be solipsistic in its specificity, the techniques for translation towards the community reached some degree of formal fixity.

Significantly, this process has been recognised in a stream of critical thinking that persisted within the development of modern critical theory in the early twentieth century. Walter Benjamin has been frequently referred to as drawing significantly from the Jewish mystical tradition in his study and analysis of the representations of capitalism in the Arcades Project, and also in his study of German Tragic drama.<sup>6</sup> More recently, the work of Derrida, as difficult as it is to categorise, and as pointless as that exercise might be, has also been identified with an understanding, if not an embrasure of this mode of thinking.<sup>7</sup> Hent De Vries suggests that in his analysis of the primary urge towards communication, the *volō* is a force (a volition) towards an affirmative (a yes) upon which the possibility of new speech (the utterance of potentialities) relies. He says:

The *volō* would be that without which no - new - speech is possible. Mysticism in this sense should thus no longer be explained in terms of an apologetics that seeks to bring its addressees to reorient their will and to accept certain assertions or predicates with respect to the divine being, the literal and figural meaning of the Scriptures, etc. Instead of being its mere effect, the mystic *volō* would, rather, be in the silent ground of any such discourse, its secret point of departure, the force which would make it function at all.<sup>8</sup>

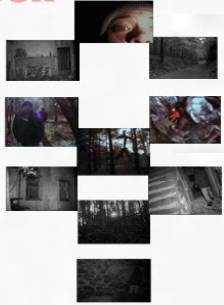
De Vries speaks of this connection to Derrida, and indeed to Benjamin, in the light of Derrida's discussion of the Tower of Babel, 'Des Tours de Babel', in which the pivotal question of an originary language practice is discussed. The implicit suggestion is that the process of acclimatisation of speech to events in mystical language is directed towards harnessing that *volō* towards the acculturation of the mystic reality to everyday language. De Vries describes this movement:






## CORRIDOR

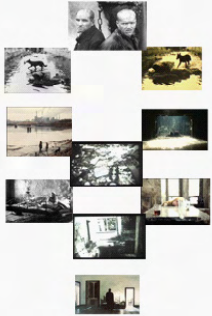
- RIFLES
- CLOCK
- EN PASSANT
- MEMENTO MORI
- EXCHANGE
- ESCHATOLOGY
- PROJECTILE
- PERSPECTIVAL
- TRAUERSPIEL
- NARRATIVE





## LADDER

- PATHOLOGICAL
- LADDER
- JEOPARDY
- MURDER
- VOID
- FRAME
- ANNIHILATION
- FIRE
- PASSAGE
- VERTIGO



Explorations of the Sephiroth, 2005

More specifically, mystic speech, instead of postulating a reality or knowledge that would precede the utterance, would resemble that performative classified by speech act theory as a *promise*. Its primary function would be an *illocutionary* one. [ ...] To be sure, the mystic *volò* is not a constative, but it precisely lacks the social or conventional contexts which are commonly considered to render the performative speech acts 'successful' or not. On the contrary, the *volò* presupposes and entails the elimination or destruction of all such circumstances and it thereby reveals the limit of all performatives.<sup>9</sup>

In the context of describing the full nature of the aesthetic experiences of the relationship between complex textual works and their qualities, how they might come to be judged, the observations of Derrida on Kant are again especially pertinent. As we have seen the recognition of a 'bythos', that ground (*grund*) that is architectonic, retains a core of unknown conditions, an abyss, principally concerned with the degree to which, for Kant, disinterestedness is maintained. For Derrida, and this is a position that is central to the *Sephiroth* project of this thesis, the apparent disinterestedness in this example is contrasted with the engagement of the unspoken, or not-yet spoken, of the mystical experience. Ultimately, it can be argued, Derrida's interest in the complexity of the aesthetic experience is similar to that of the mystic inasmuch as he is acting as the traveller who returns to the community to describe the complexity of the aesthetic world as he sees it. The abyss of meaning(lessness) that Derrida sees in the process of identifying the Analytic of the Sublime, and the horror with which this abyss is recognised, is only 'bridged' by the metaphor of the architectonic.

What is clear, though, in the study of the mystical functions of the sephiroth, is that it preserves its indeterminacy through the complexity of its relations and in the potential scale of permutations available within its operations, a position described in lapidary fashion in the chapter on 'The Colossus' in Derrida's *The Truth in Painting*.<sup>10</sup> The colossus is, within the context of Kant's Analytic of the Sublime and Derrida's discussion of it, emblematic of the scale of an unknowable magnitude. This magnitude is not simply one of empirical size, it is the scale of thinking-towards scale that eventually overwhelms his text in the final portion of 'The Colossal'. Here Derrida reverts to the *paròle* of language to impart the sense of the project's indeterminacy and, by implication, the horrific, abyss-like nature of this encounter. So the sephiroth, as a component of mystical language, a machine to traverse the 'via mystica'<sup>11</sup> from the individually



sublime to the community of epiphany is in some sense the function of text itself – in Derrida's writing and, by implication, in any writing that seeks to describe the qualities of the aesthetic of the unknown. Derrida's discussion of the final portion of Kant's analytic borrows strongly in direction, if not in machinery alone, from the parsing of analogical knowing that comprised the sephiroth. The sephiroth contains an implicit functionality between terms and states. As a machine for the normalisation of complex effects towards the idea of transcendence, it reverts to complex allegorical descriptions to translate the particular into the universal. But the fact remains that, as a determinate function its principle direction aims at clarity.

The most convincing argument for and presentation of this process is undertaken in Harold Bloom's *Kabbalah and Criticism* 11. Within the essays in the book, Bloom meditates on the use of the sephiroth as a form of inter-textuality machine. As a form of critical self-consciousness in a theory of reading, Bloom argues that the sephiroth is a very clear and evocative rhetorical device for negotiating fine-grained readings of texts, a reading directed at the supervening of previous texts to destabilize any sense that they enjoy a patriarchal authority. Bloom uses the term 'misprision' to denote a form of textual mis-reading of texts to provide alternate and positive exegeses on previous material (Bloom describes this material as 'parent', denoting a form of psychoanalytical struggle). This process, a form of Gnostic hermeticism, is a crucial aspect of Bloom's own interpretive strategy and fundamental to his use of metaphoricity in reading texts. As with Derrida, a volition towards the interpretation of alterity and its mode of appearance (*différence* in Derrida's case) is arrived at by a structured investigation of the material 'as it presents itself.'

For the purposes of the *Sephiroth* Project, it is this transactional relationship between the 10 fold levels of the sephiroth diagram that was significant. The fact that it attempts to articulate an interpretive state towards a complex resolution is, in effect, a reflection of the increasing complexity of the previous research projects of the thesis. So the string of associations that were attributed to the programmatic locations of the house in turn fostered further associations which, if pursued would produce a 'hall of mirrors' effect as the infinite regress of associations reached a meaningless level of complexity (if it hadn't been reached already).

The point of the *Sephiroth* project, hence, was not to prove the existence of some higher order sense of complexity so much as to make an intellectual space for the pursuit of complex associations. The credibility of the process of associations, the precession of ideas concerning

the original material, provided a body of thinking concerning images and text, to which I will now turn in the discussion.

### Shibboleth

The Holy scriptures are like a large house with many, many rooms, and that outside each door lies a key – but it is not the right one. To find the right key that will open the doors – that is the great and arduous task.<sup>13</sup>

I would like instead to use the term Sephiroth then to act as shibboleth, a password to a form of critical and imaginative association that the triptychs in Chapter 3 might sustain. Having created the series of triptychs based on the *House (Forensic)* material and upon the images acquired from *Suspiria*, the horror film directed by Dario Argento, the decision was made to undertake a process of naming of various states of the House project, this time inserting a functional identity to the various components of the House. In this respect, the House was now standing for an architectural process itself, creating a consonance between the *idea* of a programme, what a structure will do, or accommodate, and what critical associations might be thought to be associated with that identity.

In addition, further consideration of the House project was resulting in a denary development, that which would ultimately become the *Sephiroth* project. This project sought to thematically utilise the House plan as an architectonic constellation, as a developed hylomorphic entity that showed a purposive structure without the need for determining a first cause – the usual definition of hylomorphism, following Aristotle. The ambition of the project was that if we wish to work from Derrida's suggestion that there is an abyss at the limit of reason, then this might be approached through a superabundance of material to organise. The 'thingness' of the material, as we have seen in the previous chapters, and the distinctiveness of these entities as separate instances, encourage the making of a practice towards finding the extensive qualities, the quiddity, of the entities and of the 'bridge' of the space between them.

To support this and in order to test the viability of considering that there are other metaphorical relationships that might be conjectured into the space between architecture and philosophy, a story in ten chapters was devised.(fig.2) It is sufficient to describe the stories as fragmentary narratives that, in a form of Adamic naming, give an identity to certain areas of the House.

These 10 identities were:

- **10 Sephirothic Conditions**
  
- 1           **The Ladder**
- An item that orders the vertical limit. It is the mnemonic function of the house and the item that remembers all the other conditions of the house because it has ten rungs. The vertical plane. (10 steps, a step at a time)
  
- 2           **The Often Oven**
- You cook in it, you heat it, you eat it. You pop it in the oven, you must never go in the oven. It is an everyday horror. Night and Fog. If This is a Man. Musselmen. Shoah. (instituta benjaminata, Brothers Quay)
  
- 3           **The Corridor**
- It is the road, the path, the trunk of the tree, the spine. The road movie, the picaresque voyage, the allegory of transformation. False enlightenment. The horizontal plane. The fence boundary. Two Lane Blacktop (10 again, decimal measure)
  
- 4           **SS Kitchen Machine**
- The *machine a habiter*. The *machine a manger*. Force fed. The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover. Levi Strauss. The temple of body parts. The hunger artist. Eat. (10 again, positions and ingredients), Florence museum of surgery
  
- 5           **The Bath/ The Bed**
- The peach, Narcissus. Deliquescence. Metamorphosis. Comfort. Confit (10 again), the shades of colour (Goethe on colour), Rauschenberg,
  
- 6           **The Heavens**
- Clouds, nothing, scent, lyricism. Light on a screen. Ennui. Synaesthesia (10 again, the power of 10, 10 factorial multiplying itself). Planet of Storms. Goethe again: 10 clouds? cumulus, nimbus, stratos, cirrus,
  
- 7           **The Knife**
- The machine in the garden. The hole in the puncture, Argento, the punctum. Slasher. The act of gardening. Knife slits Water, Killing Moon. Suspiria/Tenebrae
  
- 8           **The Coin –the good penny**
- A Coin in the fountain. Pennies from Heaven. The thirteenth brumaire, pennies on the eye, the treasure chest, old currency
  
- 9           **The Cost – the bad penny**
- Threepenny architecture, the mortgaged future, Dennis Potter, Faust,
  
- 10          **Outside, Window**
- Outside, out. Gone, the human condition, magritte, the trognon, ta rum.

These ten conditions related to the sequence of images of the plan of the original House. .

This material was then taken into an illocutionary language in which the connotative qualities of key terms were located in the sephiroth structure. In keeping with the general direction of the pattern below and the 10 conditions above, each of the architectural stages, from Ladder

to Window, was explored.

1	Story-The Names The Report
2	The Event (Horror)
3	The Architectonic of Thinking Sephiroth
4,5	Parergon of Architecture – Analecta
4	TriptychsTexts
5	Argento
6	The Explicable Act, The Explicable Environment Details
7,8	Architectural Redundancies - The Function of Architecture
7	Types
8	Functions
9	An environment that points to the Real 10 maps – pointing
10	Ta Rum Together

The result of this process, illustrated in part in Figures 4 and 5 was a resonant ‘narrative’ about the qualities of the House and, potentially, of the archetypal architectural moments they described. In a movement from the particular to the general, a number each of these investigations looked at the correspondence between language and function. Terms occupied the positions of the sephiroth to enact a form of primal naming that might be associated with different aspects of the House. The associations and their arrangement are, at first glance, arbitrary and only incidentally suggestive of a practical application, should it be necessary to meet that requirement. The selection itself followed a stream of associations I made with the parameters of the project, a mystical practice if you like, in which I read the qualities of the previous three projects, *House*, *Ghosts of the Civic Dead* and *Triptychs*, as a triadic relationship itself. The terms in the sephirothic conditions are directions that, with infinite time and opportunity, I would have pursued as relevant to all aspects of the project work of this thesis. So, if the themes of the sephirothic conditions are considered as diagrammatic relations that, like any diagram may be tested for potential, then there was an abundance of opportunities for thematising a design practice.

Despite the clearly hermetic and somewhat perverse nature of this practice, in making it

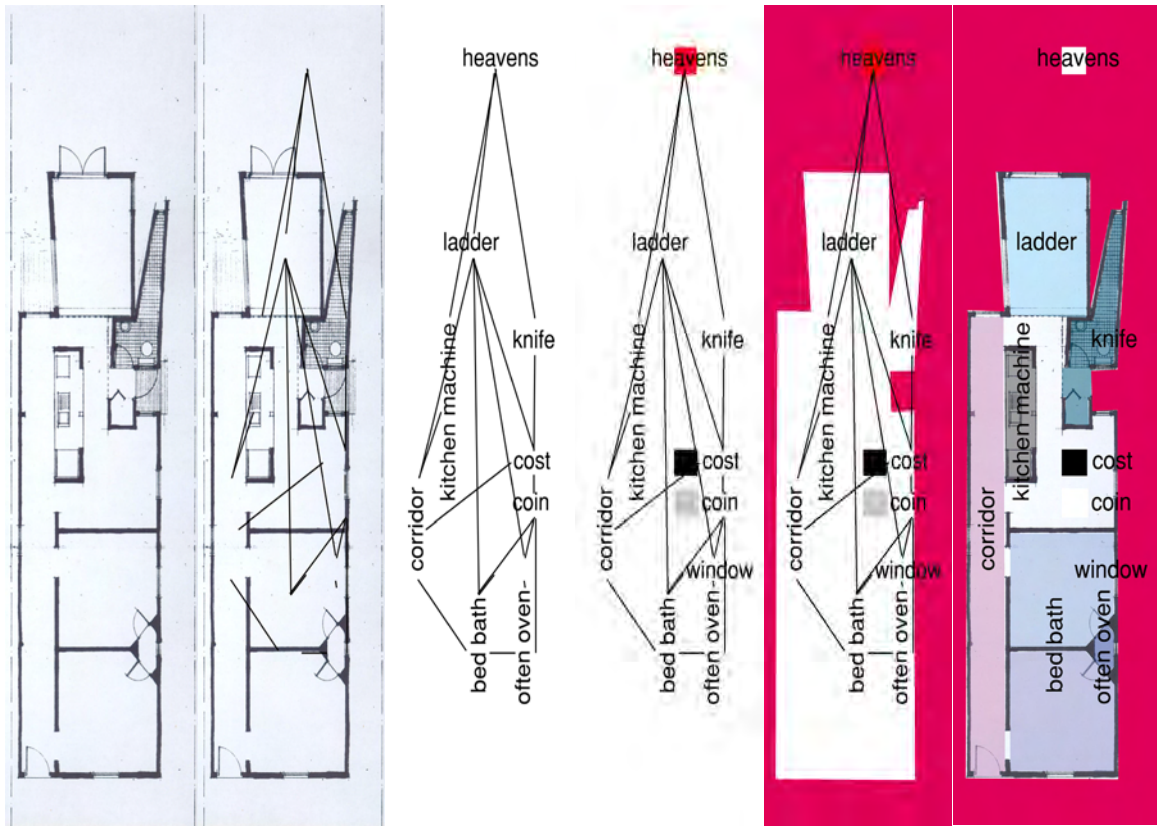
explicit two clear and reasonable conditions have come to light. The first is the relationship between language and performance, a 'bringing of form', to an act of description. The second is the reinforcement of the idea that 'states of affairs' that appear in a 'picture of the world' (in Wittgenstein's sense of 'picture' discussed in Chapter 2) have the ability to describe complex relations in a diagrammatic form without having to sacrifice the qualitative aspects of that picture.

As Deleuze points out in the discussion of the 'Figure' in Francis Bacon's painting, it is at no time a representation of some other (or of some transcendental quality) it is always particularly the coincidence of the diagram of forces, the rhythm as he terms it, that might be mined for experience and articulated in critical discussion.

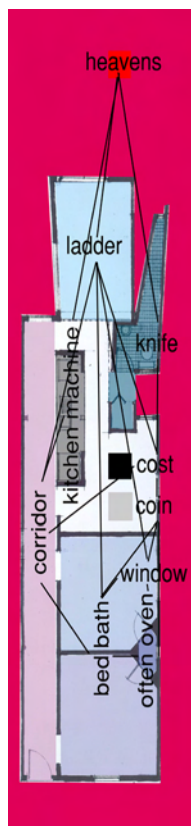
The final engagement with this material, was a return to the material of the filmic content of the horror films *Suspiria* and *Tenebrae* by Dario Argento, and that by Irvin Kershner, *The Eyes of Laura Mars*. Again, for this project, these films overall are not significant in themselves other than that they work within the genre of horror and hence its representations, and that the procurement of still images can, following Barthes, provide a punctum of affect. Yet the act of appropriating the images to this system also reveals qualities that may be latent in them if the referent terms are considered.

The sephirothic structure was then used as an interpretive filter to mediate the reading of the images and to deliberately place them in the overall schema. In addition, the still image was accompanied by yet another sephirothic structure of stills from other films. In the examples below, the *Ladder (Suspiria)* project was accompanied by stills from the film *Stalker* by Andrei Tarkovsky, and the *Corridor (Tenebrae)* image was accompanied by images from *The Blair Witch Project*. The images, as with the entire sephiroth project, were constructed to specifically show the opportunity for complex readings between language and image if a structure is recognisably present. Contrived as that structure is, it shows the richness possible in considering different strategies for creating diagrams. Not only does the sephiroth structure extend and continue the process of 'reading' an architectonic metaphor which commenced in the Triptych series, in so doing it retained the timbral qualia of the material it organised.

Further, the relationship between the sephiroth and its role in describing a mystic experience has been, in the case of Walter Benjamin, a component of the revolutionary utopianism of his



Above: Incorporating Sephirothic Attributes into the House project, 2005



Above: Final Sephirothic Plan

reading of the nineteenth century. Whilst there is no suggestion that the Arcades Project is formed by some deliberate use of a sephirothic structure, or any other overtly and objectively organised diagram, the manner in which the material of the Project is organised, its theme, are equally as idiosyncratic and unconventional. Wolin describes Benjamin's project as an 'aesthetics of redemption' inasmuch as the material he selects for forensic study takes on the task of synechdochally indicating the quest, melancholic and destined for tragedy, for utopian liberality.<sup>14</sup> Yet it has a structure, Benjamin's own, and it is directed towards a syncretic reading of the diverse material. Benjamin's Arcades project has, of course, influenced many readings of the nineteenth century and provided a model, though this was never its intention for a way to re-think the persistence of historic material into the present, without resorting to a technocratic or nostalgic world-view.<sup>15</sup>

To complete the circle in terms of a movement away from an architectural theory, one that is solely concerned with utilitarian and pleasurable aspects of architecture, the *Triptychs* and *Sephiroth* projects have occasioned, and then a return back to conventional architectural subject matter, it is worth noting Benjamin's study of *Glasarchitektur*, in which he includes the emergence of a discourse on the qualities of glass, constructional and philosophical, in the work of Paul Scheerbart and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Pierre Missac has written convincingly on this material and it is worth noting as a summary to the sephiroth project that the relationship of diversity to architecture that glass architecture shows is somewhat similar to that of the parergon (the frame) to the multiplicity of incident material that might be brought under the lens of architectural thinking.<sup>16</sup> Just as the delicate and tenuous relations of the Sephiroth and triptych forms act as the architectonic that permits the reading of the affectual and spatialised qualities of text and images, so too the glass architecture of the glass-house permitted the survival of exotic flora in the gardens of nineteenth century Europe.

Missac discusses the history of glass architecture as an attempt to find form, (*kunstwollen*), appropriate to its material properties. The development of glass architecture as, originally in glasshouses and exposition buildings, a container for the fantastic and diverse, as modern *wunderkammern*, is contrasted with the enormous variety of material of the Arcades Project. Benjamin, Missac suggests, was interested principally in the qualities of glass as a potential ruin. As a fragile and insubstantial entity it perfectly captures the delicate nature of bringing complex diversity together to 'show' its sense. The sephiroth project was such an exercise in showing a depth of complexity, an abyss-like state of language and images, and the necessity



of unconventional parergonal structures to make it sensible.

However the viability of this process needed to be tested in a more diverse situation that involved the exercise of making the complexity work as part of the design process. This occurs in the subsequent project, sub-meta, that took place in 2006 and which will be discussed in the next chapter.

- 1 Scholem, Gershom, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, Trans. By Ralph Mannheim, Schocken, New York, 1996.
- 2 The best study of this is in Ernst Gombrich's *Aby Warburg, An Intellectual Biography*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1987.
- 3 Scholem, op.cit., p.11
- 4 Scholem, op.cit., p.100
- 5 The ten conditions of the sephiroth change according to the specific use of the mystic employing its structure, but principally the stages are numbered from 1-10 and are described initially as 1. Keter (Upper Crown/Divine Plan); 2. Chokmah (Divine Reality); 3. Binah (Understanding); 4. Chevd (Mercy); 5. Gevurah - Judgement; 6.Tipheret - Symmetry; 7. Netzach - Contemplation; 8. Hod - Surrender; 9.Yesod - Foundation; 10. Malkuth/ Lower Crown
- 6 Benjamin,
- 7 Hent de Vries, 'Anti-Babel: The 'Mystical Postulate' in Benjamin, de Certeau and Derrida', *MLN*, Vol.107, No.3, German Issue, (April, 1992), pp.441-477.
- 8 De Vries, p.446.
- 9 Ibid,p.100-101
- 10 Derrida, 'The Colossus' in *The Truth in Painting*, trans. By Geoff Bennington and Ian Mcleod, University of Chicago Press, 1987. pp.119-147.
- 11 Bloom, Harold, *Kabbalah and Criticism*, Continuum, New York, 1983.
- 12 Scholem, p.102
- 13 Scholem, p.12. Scholem is here quoting an un-attributed quote discussing the process of understanding the Kabbalah.
- 14 Wolin, Richard, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetics of Redemption*, University of California Press, Berkeley, California, 1994.
- 15 The best analysis of the Arcades Project is Buck-Morris, Susan, *The Dialectics of Seeing, Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1989.
- 16 Missac, Pierre, *Walter Benjamin's Passages*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1996.

## Chapter 5 - Sub-Meta

The previous projects from House to Maelstrom had followed a trajectory in which the increasing level of theoretical abstraction had directed the research direction towards the diagrammatic moment of architecture. Reflecting on the developing argument regarding the metaphor of the architectonic, the investigations into the interrelationship between the acquisition and accumulation of material that had characterised the process to date had become a strategy that, if tracked from image to structure, could be tested on other material.

Also, the relationship between 'material' influences and their mediated appearance, the array of affectual experiences, and the presumption that this media involved a transitive diagramming of their indeterminacy meant that the projects undertaken in this thesis were developing a potential to re-frame aspects of discourse on installation and exhibition theory. The public discussion of 'architectural' practice in installation design, as it is currently constituted, tend to focus on the idiosyncratic values of individual exhibits rather than a discussion that encompasses the relationship between the diagrammatic force with which exhibition content coheres with a didactic philosophical intent. It is the intention of this thesis, having developed a consistent approach to the selection and organisation of material, to show that the architectural installation is epigenetically different from that of installations within the discourse of art practice. The particular attention that has been paid in previous chapters to the idea of the parergon, and to the employment of various topological metaphors for tracing the presence of an architectonic in the organisation of architectural material has been deliberate. As we have seen, the evolution of a project from one involving a metaphorically forensic approach to the identification of materials from a site and their evolution into a series of analogical installations that elaborated on the idea of the fragment, mortality, and structure all contributed to a burgeoning body of work whose terms of reference were specific to a discourse of the 'architectural' and for which there seems to be no logical end, other than that of everyday exhaustion.

It is a contention of this thesis overall, that the practices of accumulating material and reorganising it to show latent narrational opportunities, forms a rich vein of association between the act of visual research, its assimilation into an explanatory schema, and the recognition that future morphological and thematic solutions might be made. Moreover, the relationship between this material and the discursive lexicon of architectural thinking is clear. If nothing else, this documents the often fragile and unspoken relationship between the maker and their creative environment. An exemplary version of this relationship was Daniel Libeskind's

'Three Lessons in Architecture', exhibited at the 1985 Venice Biennale and reproduced with a critical commentary in *Countersigns*.<sup>1</sup> Libeskind takes care to define his terms of reference for the three constructions that made up the 'lessons' in terms of architectural precedents. The reading, writing and memory machines were all drawn from technologies of apprehending space, or organising knowledge that actively engaged with the proposition that it was the task of architecture to define a technology that would spatialise and organise the morphology of knowledge. There is not the space to describe them fully, but the timber machines presented their archaic and démodé functioning as a form of scholastic teaching on universals. Indeed in the text Libeskind cites Augustine and the development of the techniques of Monastic life as the progenitors of all technology. For the purposes of the thesis, it is sufficient to note the complete absence of references to conventional architectural language of building. For Libeskind, the lesson was in the comportment towards an archaic technology, all the better because it made no claims to the eschatological associations of technology and progress.

So the glass houses of Missac discussed in the previous chapter are, like the structures of Libeskind, formal syllogisms that point towards the necessity of a developed architectonic in any architectural installation.

To a degree also this argument is a rehearsal of Kant's identification of the different modes of aesthetic appreciation he discusses in the *Critique of Judgement*, The Four Moments of the Beautiful. Having dealt with the idea that things that are beautiful may be so because of their sensate pleasure or their allusion to what is perceived to be a moral good, Kant suggests that the thing that is beautiful 'in itself' is that which demonstrates purposiveness without purpose. As we saw in the earlier chapter on the *Sephiroth*, to have a purpose is to make present a sense that there is propinquity towards utility that may be recognised or exploited. It is impossible, I have argued, to see an organisation of material that directs the key descriptive terms towards the 'speaking' of its qualities and to not see its potential as a confrontation with the need for architecture to 'work' or show its sense in any limited sense. Put simply, the architectonic of the architectural installation, its purposiveness without purpose, is the only modality through which architecture can be critically examined for philosophical depth. Further, as we shall see with the move into digital space and the implicit sublimity of that medium, a new method of seeing architectural theory has emerged.

#### Micro Macro City, The Venice Biennale

This condition was tested in the fifth of the creative works that attempted to activate the structure of thinking that had culminated in the discussion of the *Sephiroth*. The autonomous and solipsistic aspects of the earlier projects needed, it was felt, to be tested in the domain of operative critical practice. The project, entitled *Sub-Meta*, for the Venice Biennale in 2006 attempted to reconcile the interests and fluid definitions of national identity, Australian architectural practice, theories of gallery and installation practice and the desire to produce a response that was considered complete and self sufficient. The competition was the result of a national advertising campaign and our team was one of five short-listed entries. We prepared an initial expression of interest that outlined the key themes of the proposal. This was selected for further development and, in March 2006, we made a presentation of the proposal to the RAI A Venice Biennale 2006 selection committee.

The developed *Sub-Meta* project, undertaken with Jennifer Harvey, constituted a proposal for curatorial direction and content for the Australian Pavilion for the 2006 Venice Architecture Biennale.<sup>2</sup> The theme of our proposal was 'sub-meta' implying a spatialised arrangement of a meta-discourse on architecture, specifically contemporary Australian architecture. The Biennale theme of the 'Micro Macro City' was intended to focus on issues of extreme growth within the urban realm, particularly that occurring within the developing world.<sup>3</sup> The consequence of this growth, the theme implied, was that the appearance of massive new urban centres, displaying different approaches to urban organisation and experience, had radically changed perceptions of how the design of the urban environment might, or should, take place in the future.

For Australia, whose urban development of the previous decade had developed consistently in scale and density without displaying the extreme growth conditions of cities such as Sao Paolo, Lagos, Shanghai, Mexico City and others, the ability to participate in the Biennale theme was limited if it was a matter of solely reporting on empirical experience.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, both in our opinion and in that of the event sponsors, the RAI A (Royal Australian Institute of Architects), the strategies employed by Australian architects to give form to the collective experience of Australian urban identity was notable.

Further, the fact that the boundary conditions of what was considered urban in Australian cities, as opposed to the idea of the sub-urban or of the non-urban (rural), was far from clear made any simple analysis of the state of the meta-city problematic. To respond to this condition,

the Harvey Pickersgill proposal identified a number of definitions that drew on the work that I had been undertaking in the field of installation practice, respectively the *Ghosts of the Civic Dead* and, in planning, the *Maelstrom* projects. In addition, the description of organisational morphologies in the *Ghosts of the Civic Dead*, *Triptychs* and *Sephiroth* projects brought issues of mediation and the technologies of appearance into the frame. This work was further directed and focussed by the following definition of meta-interests of Australian architectural practice. We proposed that this practice was defined by three dominant paradigms. These were:

1. the problem of space (inasmuch as there was/is paradoxically too much space available in the Australian designing environment);
2. the horizontal agglomeration of form in the sub-urban realm; and,
3. the concomitant push towards a physical and philosophical perimeter.

These propositions defined and gave priority to a physical and locational aspect of architectural practice (1<sup>st</sup> paradigm); gave priority to a general directional emphasis (horizontal) in this practice, and a location in which this conceptually occurs (the sub-urban situation) (2<sup>nd</sup> paradigm); and proposed that the theoretical ground upon which Australian architectural practice worked was dominated by the behavioural metaphor of being 'on the perimeter' (3<sup>rd</sup> paradigm). In these analyses we were careful to distinguish between the everyday understanding that the suburb was, generally, just a location for residential occupancies (loosely connected with median cultural aspirations), and the idea that the sub-urban locations metaphorically implied a mode of practising that did not attempt to reproduce a design sensibility that was solely the product of highly urban sensibilities.

This point requires some clarification. In Australian architecture there is often an implicit understanding that the development of suburban sprawl in major Western cities has resulted in a diminishment of the complexity and diversity of culture that is often associated, outside of Europe, with the 'European' city. Moreover, this 'European city' has been, in popular imagination the location from which the major movements of modernity evolved, and hence the location from which stems the continuity of the western cultural tradition. Herein lies the understanding of a centre-periphery relationship that Australian architecture had developed as an almost organic element of its self-conception. Usually, this relationship is referenced in terms of a relationship between urbanity and the natural world, a familiar binary of culture versus nature, and much Australian architecture has utilised this relationship as an implicit assumption of its

place in the phenomenon of international architectural discourse.

In addition, however, the suburb, as an everyday experience of the Australian populace, has an effect that is rarely fully acknowledged. There is certainly a discourse on the suburb that is rooted in the discussions of Robin Boyd in the 1960's, particularly *The Australian Ugliness* of 1963, and was extended in the 70's and 80's by a school of Melbourne architects that took their lead from the firm of Edmond and Corrigan. While the relationship between nature and culture is unavoidable in addressing current practice, the potential complexities of the urban and the spectrum of inferences this means in the Australian context formed the initial axis for the curatorial proposal. For this reason, the design proposal was composed of the conjunction of 'sub' and 'meta'. Both terms implied a spatialisation of the material, 'sub' implying something that is 'under' or 'in advance of' a state of affairs, while 'meta' implied the presence of alternate discursive contexts. Collectively they were intended to collapse the marginal and the reflexive into a similar intellectual 'space'.

The proposal consisted of a number of propositions that emerged from the paradigmatic analysis above. These were:

1. Meta-space

This category addressed and challenged the mythology of Australia as a lost place, outside of the hegemony of western civilization. Though the architecture that drew on this sensibility has been popularized in the media nationally and internationally as a medium for re-presenting a symbiotic relationship between building and nature, the proposal sought to reframe its 'natural' qualities as 'lost'.

2. Meta Suburb – Meta Culture

This category evoked the dialogue between the suburb and taste, explored as a series of parallel formalist responses to the overwhelming volume of work created outside of architectural culture. It was not specific to a particular Australian city or a school of thought, but it scrutinised the incidence of everyday taste that imprints itself onto architectural culture.

3. Meta Perimeter

This category evoked practice that evolved from issues particular to Australia's identity with the world economy and the management of this as a cultural phenomenon. The agoraphobic fear of emptiness signalled in the meta-space

category, papered over in the meta-urb is transmuted into the dense and vibrant circumstance of the city.

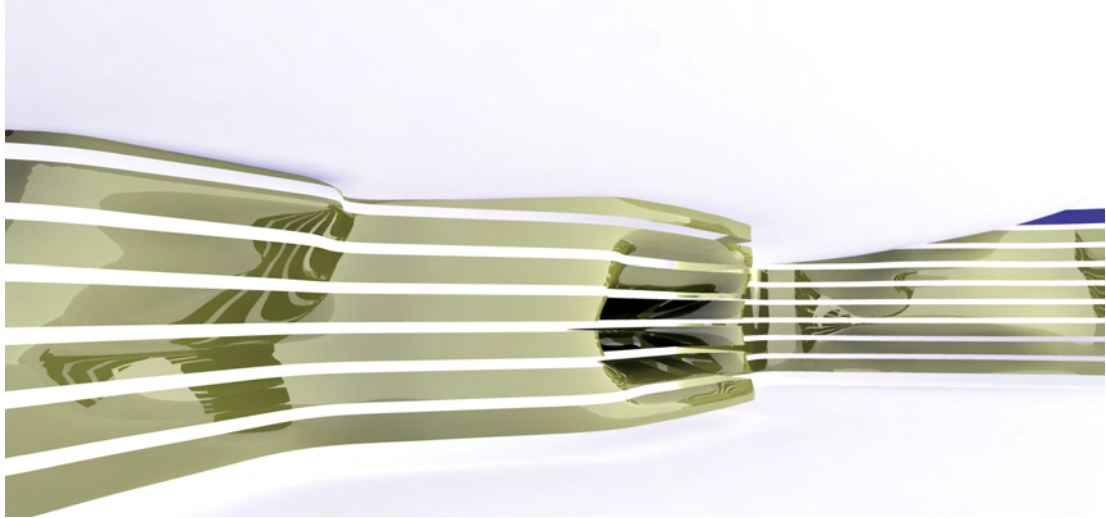
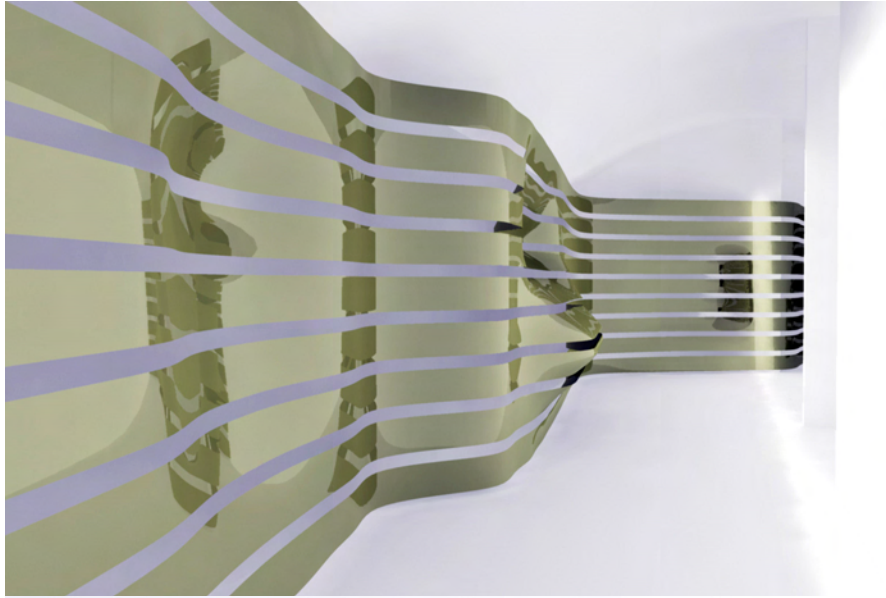
#### 4. Meta Connectivity

This category was to be sourced from commissioned material specifically addressing the exhibition themes and presenting the manner in which Australian practice is both materially exporting patterns of practice through overseas projects and finding new methods by which to make connections through digital technology.

Collectively, these categories were strategies for collecting works that were considered institutionally exemplary (they were prize-winning schemes) or divergent (they deliberately positioned themselves outside of everyday, nostalgic mythologies of 'place' in Australian discourse). As a commercial project that would be scrutinised by a range of parties in Venice and within the profession in Australia, it was also our impression that there was an inherent pressure in favour of a conservative, conciliatory view of Australian practice. In our opinion, and in keeping with the direction of the work described in the thesis, projects whose intention is to document and display are without any critical distance from the work they are presenting, despite the numerous curatorial compromises this entails. In attempting to show all works in their singularity, there is an absence of propositional richness that the installation might afford itself.

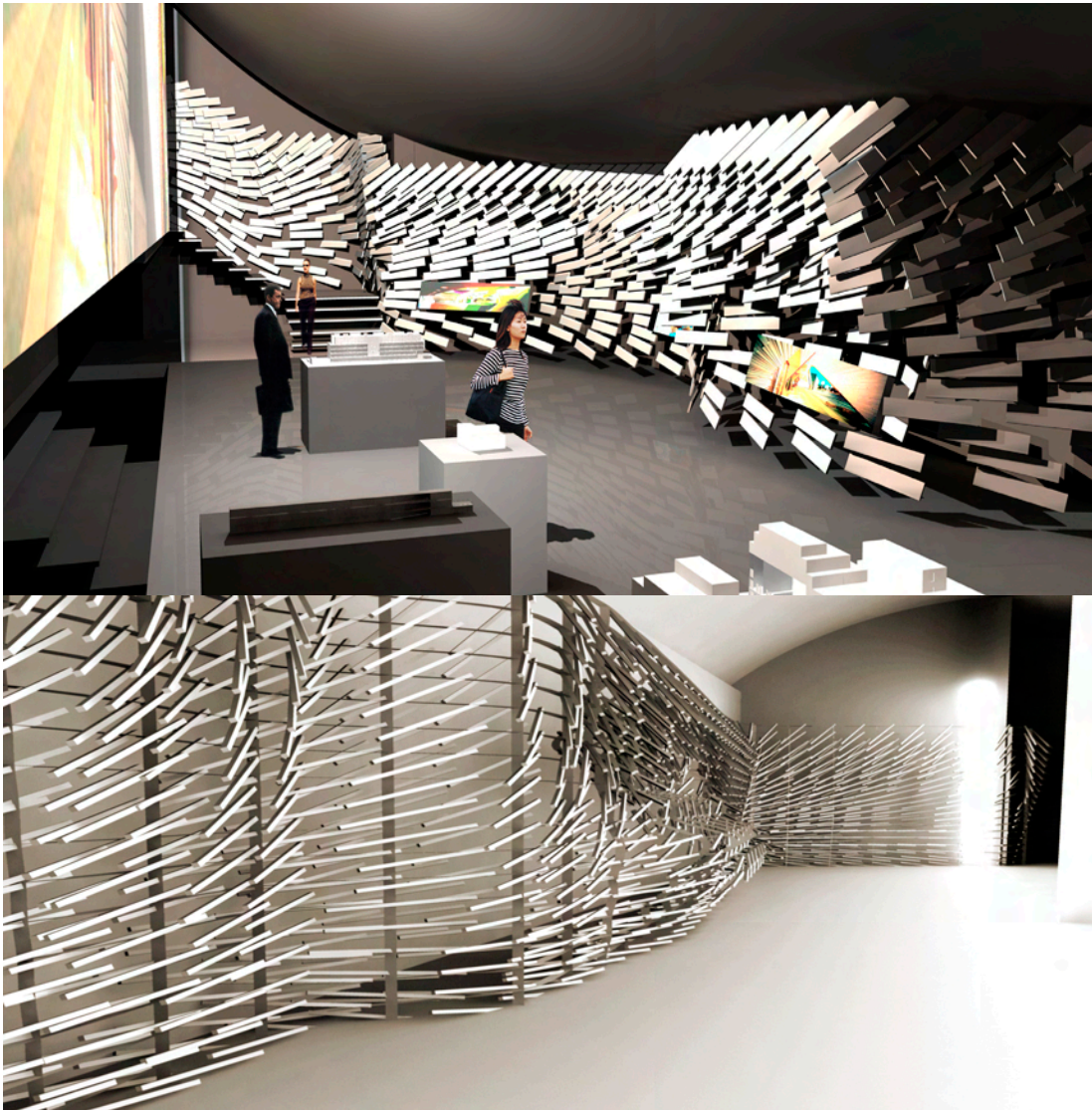
For this reason, our scheme proposed that the material itself be organised according to an installation schema that shifted the emphasis from the work to the event of the installation. The intention was for the selected architectural projects to be presented as images, as photographs of the buildings in everyday use and without the contrived lighting and compositional tactics of conventional architectural photography. In addition, there were four other components to the exhibition that would provide a clear counterpoint to the buildings.

The most important of these components was the 'long wave' structure designed to sleeve into the existing gallery space. In essence the continuous parametric (curved) surface was intended to act as the field within which the images were embedded. As a surface, there was discussion regarding the smoothness, or otherwise, of the material and its relationship to the images – as well as practical considerations of lighting and signage. Essentially the continuous surface was intended to 'swallow' the images and emphasise the continuity of context over



Above: Sub-Meta - Smooth Proposal, 2006  
110





Above: Sub-Meta - Hairy Proposal, 2006

the particularity of the image. This strategy was crucial in the overall proposal as it recognised the fundamental representational shift that always occurs in architectural exhibitions. As it is rarely possible to recreate the subject matter of the exhibition, architecture which is located somewhere else, the vehicle of the exhibition is always exceeded by the content – there is always a representational gap. The semantic imbalance of this relationship was addressed by choosing to allow only a trace of the original buildings to appear, as mnemonic icons (the postings of the buildings) that would then direct the visitor to the more vivid and physically present aspects of the exhibition.

The creation of the 'long wave' was a particularly important stage in the development of the work associated with the projects to date. Whilst it is a relatively simple formal gesture it represented a shift into digital mediation of form, following the development of the series of transformational forms that occurred in the Triptychs and Sephiroth projects. As an installation project, the Sub-Meta proposal was an appropriate propositional context for exploring the superfluity of form that occurs in the digital modelling process. Digital modelling, as many have noted, actively deterritorializes the process of representation that the medium is predominantly used for. In addition it provides for a superfluity of function as well, in the interstices and monstrosities of form and space that the process makes possible.<sup>5</sup> The ontogenetic and phylogentic aspects of the modelling applications, as a machinic process, provide an infinite variety of instances, these instantiations are pointed to by the presence of the menu 'tools' that can enact a seamless transition from one iteration to another. For this reason, it was appropriate to take this modality of representation and direct it towards the parergonal requirements of the installation. The 'long wave' was an excess of form and, as such an excess of locational opportunities for apprehending the singular indexical moments of the exhibition work. Monumental in scale it was a pre-presentation of the vortex of the Maelstrom that we will discuss in Chapter 6 in that it carried the embedded images in its form like a philosophical centrifuge.

Playing on the popular notion that we felt was typical of European mythologies of Australia, the reality of the built environment in Australia was only glimpsed asymptotically through the lens of other media, photography, archaeological artefacts (the models), video narratives and immersive digital environments.

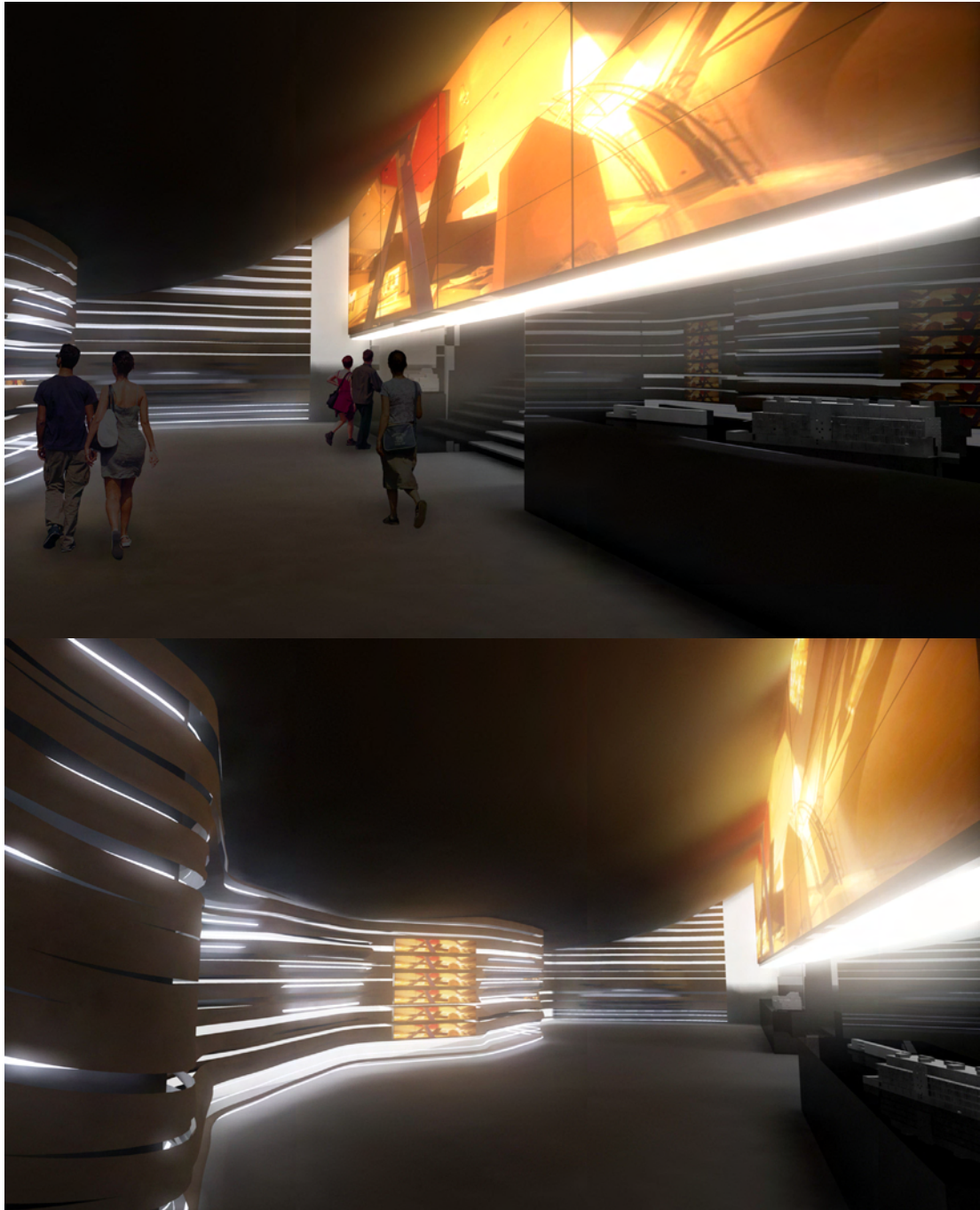
The second component of the installation (Artefacts – connected to the idea of meta-suburb) strategy was the inclusion of material fragments, portions of models used as part of the

creative process of architectural design. Whilst this may have comprised models with a degree of craftsmanship and completion, there were also plans to acquire crude, interim models or prototypes of details. The intention of this strategy was to show that the path to a final form was itself shadowed by a degree of formlessness inasmuch as working models are often as much in a state of disrepair as they are finished. Also, the use of models as final representations, miniaturizations of the actual building they represented, set up, in our opinion, an interestingly contrived relationship between the 'real' presence of the model artefacts and the 'reality' of the absent building which was located in Australia.<sup>6</sup>

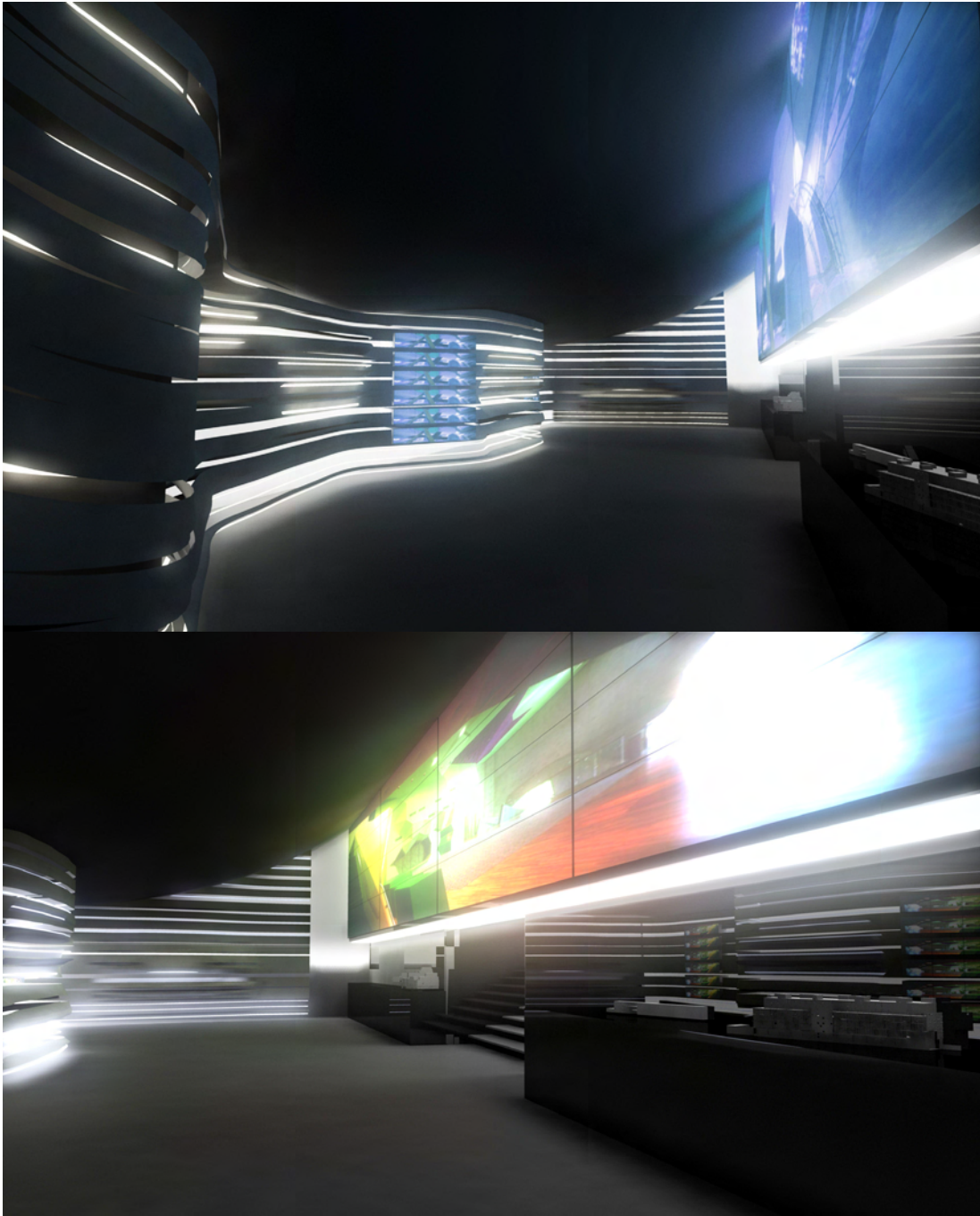
The third aspect of the installation (More Songs about Buildings) was intended to be a series of digital video projections of short films made in the context of the selected built works. The intention of this project was to animate the experience of the buildings and their spaces as *mises-en-scène* of narratives. The direction to the filmmakers who were to be responsible for creating these short, 5 minute pieces was limited to a direction that the building was not to be considered a fetishized object. Ideally the building would appear as the frame, essentially the parergon discussed previously, for the narrative of the video piece. As a parergon, the building's appearance would only ever be incidental to the spatialized narratives implied by the shot selection, frame content and editing strategy of the filmmaker. It would, however, *because* of these conditions rather than in spite of them, be rich in 'affectual' opportunities.

The final component of the installation content (Virtual Venice) was intended to act as an immersive recreation of imagined digital environments that were accessed through the use of pc terminals both in the pavilion and on-line. These environments made use of computer game software that allow for a first-person view of the environments and which also were able to have soundscapes, dynamic lighting and responsive physical effects as part of these conditions. This media became, in terms of the future of the project and of the thesis work discussed here, of increasing importance. The scripting opportunities of the digital environment enabled the creation of spaces whose phenomenological vividness benefited from the manner in which users could walk freely around the environment.

In summary, the installation proposal sought to redefine the categories of what constituted architectural practice by de-emphasising the conventional binary definitions of nature/culture, public/private, inside/outside, etc. The iconic identity of the architectural examples chosen, their status as discrete exemplars, was de-emphasised in favour of a curatorial emphasis



Above: Sub-Meta, Final Internal Renders, 2006



Above: Sub-Meta, Alternate Internal Renders, 2006

upon the fact that buildings occupy a more nuanced place in Australian society. The modes of representation employed in the proposal self-consciously subsumed the images (the most familiar access to viewing conventional architectural content) to a point where they were formless instances of the constructed interior. Taken with the use of fragments of the physical modelling process and the presence of mediations of the buildings through video narratives and digital models, the curatorial proposal sought to constructively mediate the mythologies of Australian urban and sub-urban life.

#### Thematic Strands

In the context of the continuity of work discussed in the thesis, the most important aspects of the *Sub-Meta* proposal were the transformations of media that followed the investigations in the previous four projects. The first of these strands was the status of the image as a semantic entity and the degree to which, as we saw with Barthes' 'Third Meaning', it superseded the second-order meaning of the material. By using unfamiliar images of architectural work, their iconic status was only a part of the overall interpretive opportunities. As they were intended to be seen as an almost organic portion of the 'Long Wave' component, the images were intended to flow into each other as an unframed continuous presence.

Secondly, the *sub-meta* proposal also drew on a number of the organisational strategies broached in the *Ghosts of the Civic Dead* project, notably the use of combinative media to reinforce a network of meanings. The overdetermination of references in the earlier installation was adopted again to demonstrate alternate interpretive 'realities' of each of the buildings. As with the architectonic of the ladder, that appears in the *Ghosts of the Civic Dead* project, the multiple instances of, for example John Wardles' Karna Building at the University of South Australia (one of the nominated projects for display), would all act as synecdochal representations of the building, each conveying a different sense of its complex spatial and functional qualities.

The use of video loops of the buildings was intended to provide another mode of seeing their 'reality', exploiting the non-diagetic and heterodiagetic aspects of the general exhibition environment. For a building to be present as a still image, a material fragment, a video loop and as a virtual space allowed for a number of semantic transections of the subject matter - the original building. To state clearly a position outlined at the beginning of this chapter, what is implicit in this process is that the 'architecture' of a building exists most powerfully in its visual

and textual representations. It was an implicit argument of the curatorial proposal that the event of the installation was an architectural 'structure' itself, in the full philosophical meaning of that term and that the qualia of the argument regarding what Australian architecture might be lay not in simple references to absent ordinary conditions, but in the complex signifiatory interrelationships of the overall exhibition content.

Thirdly, as a way of reinforcing the status of the images displayed and providing them with an interpretive schema the *Triptychs* and *Sephiroth* projects together provide a conceptual schema for engaging with the *Sub-Meta* material in a manner that evolves from being merely illustrative, to making observations generally about the relationship of architectural practice to Australian society. Without labouring the idea that there were implicit and *necessary* readings of the curatorial proposal overall, it is fair to say that the oblique means of 'showing' the subject matter were intended to make a more general point about the marginal status of architecture and architectural discourse in the lives of everyday Australians.

The intention of the *Triptych* and *Sephiroth* projects was to show that there is a mode of working that encouraged the description of states, transitive modalities that could be drawn, and drawn towards a diagram, from text-based and visual synonyms. The structure of the triptych and the sepiroth are merely two instances of a syllogistic process that may be mapped or diagrammed as a series of visual and textual propositions. So collectively, the use of differing media was intended to create an exhibition environment in which there were opportunities for seeing the project as being partly archival and partly event/installation based. Because of the persistent fact that the actual subject content was absent, the proposal sought to describe the pre-conditions for which a critical response (the identification and diagramming of the original *Sub-Meta* curatorial directions) could be made.

#### The Real and the Imagined

While it is the argument of this thesis that the accumulation of visual and textual material that adhere to a project can be organised to create an essentially reactive response, it is also the case that this material, if organised in a sufficiently critical fashion, might offer alternate understandings of the material. And this was certainly the intention of the *Sub-Meta* proposal overall. However, in using the medium of the immersive digital environment other questions have to be asked, and answered, that are relative to the medium's functioning.

The processes of working outlined above principally took the material as it is found and devised modes of representation and processes for presentation that preserved a philosophical richness for the project. However the use of immersive digital environments allowed for a more conjectural state of experience, principally as a consequence of the qualities of that medium. These environments, as we shall see more fully in the next chapter, exist within a unique space of interpretation that requires a descriptive language that blurs the boundaries between transitive and intransitive states. In a number of senses, the employment of immersive digital environments activates the alterity of form discussed in the 'long wave' component. In this case, however, the superfluity is not one of potential material engagement, but of a fully digital ontology.

Had the proposal gone ahead to commissioning, the original proposal sought to create a number of 3D immersive environments of the selected buildings. In early 2006 I had already done some work in constructing digital models of architectural environments within this medium. In the context of the overall curatorial philosophy, the directions for the creation of the other environments would have diminished the role of mimetic fidelity to the original buildings chosen for exhibition, in favour of a more evocative scripted environment. This stems from the recognition that the mode of engagement with a digital space, the 'telepresence' of its mode of appearance, to borrow Virilio's term, is different from that of the still image, the video image or the artefact.<sup>7</sup>

In many respects the 3D environment contains far more diagrammatic functions than its apparent 'reality' seems to convey. The application that we were intending to use, and which came to be applied in the *Maelstrom* and *MyBattleEye* projects was based on a first-person computer game application that enables the 'player' to freely roam across an environment to the degree to which the physics of that environment permit.<sup>8</sup> In these environments, while it is possible to make the passage through an environment as neutral as possible, considerable immersive enhancement is created through the creation of dynamic lighting and texture effects, soundscapes and dynamic physics. In this sense, I would argue that the process of using this form of environment is significantly different from that of traditional modes of architectural representation and even from the use of still and video images. I will argue in the next chapter that it is essentially a diagrammatic process which, interestingly, draws on conventions of architectonic representation, theories of the mimetic and mediated functions of digital images, and on the peripheral qualities of the *mise-en-scène* in film theory.



1 Libeskind, Daniel, *Countersign*, Rizzoli, New York, 1992.

2 As with the cooperative work with Greg More in *Maelstrom*, I have been careful to only claim  
responsibility for that work that I undertook. Any shortcomings in the work as presented should be  
attributed to myself. Following short-listing, a developed proposal including costings and logistics was  
undertaken and (un)fortunately our proposal did not proceed to realisation. The committee chose to  
pursue a smaller, and less complex, proposition by a competing team.

3 Full documentation of the winning entry and the process of selection is available  
at <http://www.architecture.com.au/i-cms?page=1.19.7705.7706> .

4 Our proposal drew on studies conducted under the auspices of peak bodies in Urban Geography  
in Australia. Data on the nature and form of urban growth in Australia can be found in papers sponsored  
by the Australian Institute of Urban Studies (AIUS) and the Urban Development Institute of Australia  
(UDIA).

5 See especially Benjamin, Andrew, *Architectural Philosophy*, Athlone Press, London, 2000.

6 A more fully developed and documented form of this relationship has occurred in the homo-faber series  
of works connected to SIAL at RMIT and the University of Newcastle. See <http://www.homo-faber.net>

7 Virilio, Paul, *Polar Inertia*, Sage Publications, London, 2000.

8 The application used in this proposal, and in subsequent work, is UnrealEd the editing and modelling  
application associated with the First-Person Shooter Game, Unreal Tournament 2004. Previously, as  
part of research projects within UniSA, we had devised a means for removing the HUD (heads-up display)  
and the weapons associated with the game. This allowed us to use the dynamic rendering environment  
that gives the impression of visual and physical immersion in the digital environment. I have discussed  
this process in other contexts. See Pickersgill, Sean *Unreal Studio*, CAADFutures, etc and Pickersgill, S.  
and More, G. 'Inside Solaris: The Presence of Game Design in Architectural Design', *Technologies and  
Techniques*, AASA Conference, 2007.'

## Chapter 6 - Maelstrom

*Never shall I forget the sensations of awe, horror, and admiration with which I gazed about me. The boat appeared to be hanging, as if by magic, midway down, upon the interior surface of a funnel vast in circumference, prodigious in depth, and whose perfectly smooth sides might have been mistaken for ebony, but for the bewildering rapidity with which they spun around, and for the gleaming and ghastly radiance they shot forth, as the rays of the full moon, from that circular rift amid the clouds which I have already described, streamed in a flood of golden glory along the black walls, and far away down into the inmost recesses of the abyss.*

(Edgar Allen Poe, *A Descent Into the Maelstrom*)

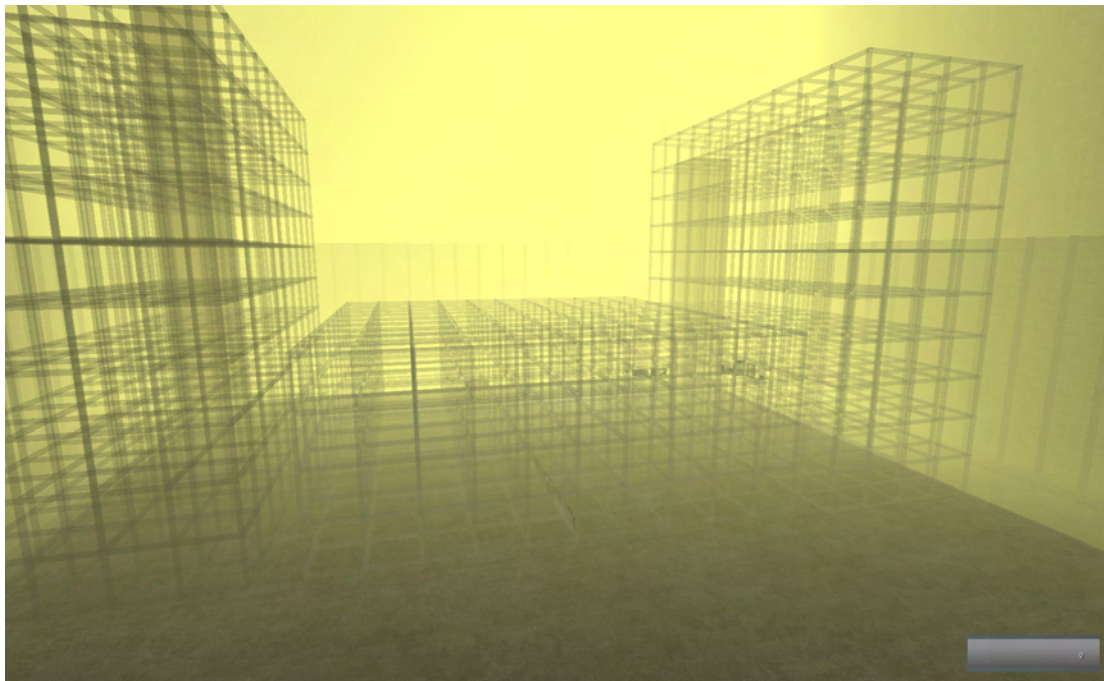
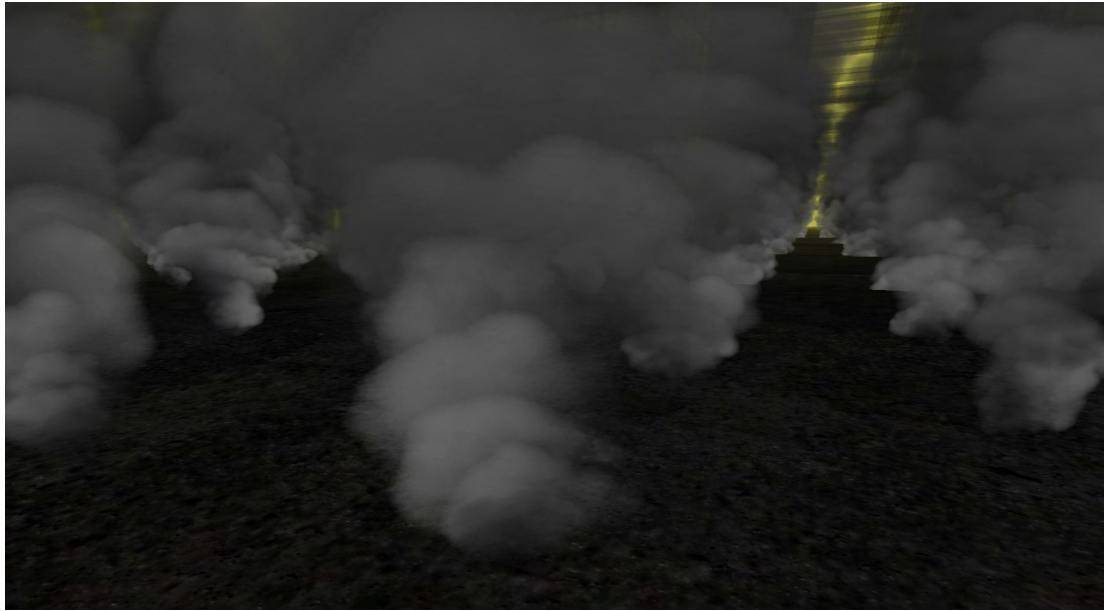
The projects outlined in the previous chapters have consistently attempted to find a relationship between a network of ideas (or propositions) and suitable forms through which these propositions become apparent and visible. It has been a key aspiration of the body of work in this thesis to describe the interconnectivity between the substance of creative material and the manner through which its importance may be enunciated. The *Sub-Meta* proposal required the incorporation of a disparate collection of material that was intended to not only represent the buildings chosen for selection, but also modes of presentation that directed the viewer to the most evocative and challenging aspects of the work and its intellectual context.

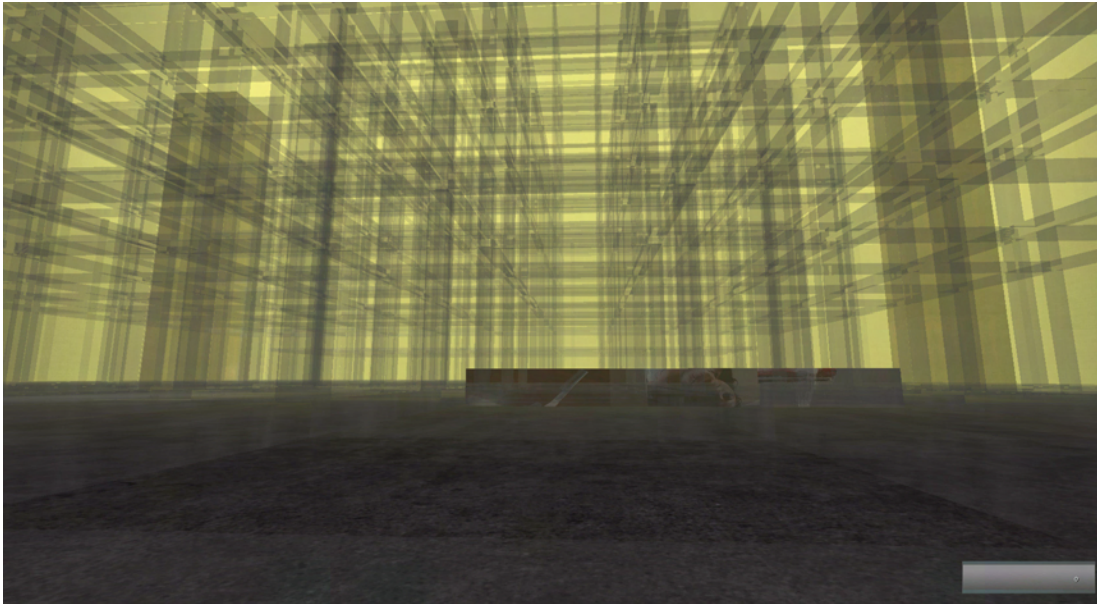
In all of the projects to date, the relationship between the raw material of the exhibition and its place in an affective and didactic schema has principally concerned the use of images, text, and some found/placed objects. In the *Sub-Meta* proposal, the context of the Australian pavilion in Venice was further inflected by the proposed development of the 'long wave' as a formal and spatial continuum in the interior. This architectural work, taken as a consistent development of the previous projects, implied that the project work of the thesis was developing towards just this situation - the understanding that the highly structured readings of images and text might be further enhanced by the creation of specific architectural forms, ones that were consistent with the theoretical architectonics used in the previous work. As argued at the beginning of the previous chapter, it is in fact only through the development of installation practices that show the aspects of the 'architectural' that are not tied to its performative utility or nostalgia for sensate pleasure, that one can fully recognise a reflexive discourse on architecture and its limits.

What also distinguished the *Sub-Meta* proposal was the development of a new mode of exploration, the immersive digital environment. Within this medium and that of the pavilion interior itself, the employment of digital modelling applications to design and construct the 'long wave' element meant that the implicit alterity of that process, as will be discussed further below, allowed it to cohere with the sublime and 'horrific' aspects of what is irretrievably unknown in architecture. Since the aspiration for this medium was to be equally responsive to the philosophical considerations of the sublime and, by implication, the difficulties in describing that state - the horror of a *causus vacuii*, the next project was designed to further explore the relationship between modes of affectivity and the compulsion to see them as complete and possible worlds in which this sublime 'horror' existed - but as an intellectual construct rather than an indexical effect of a fiction.

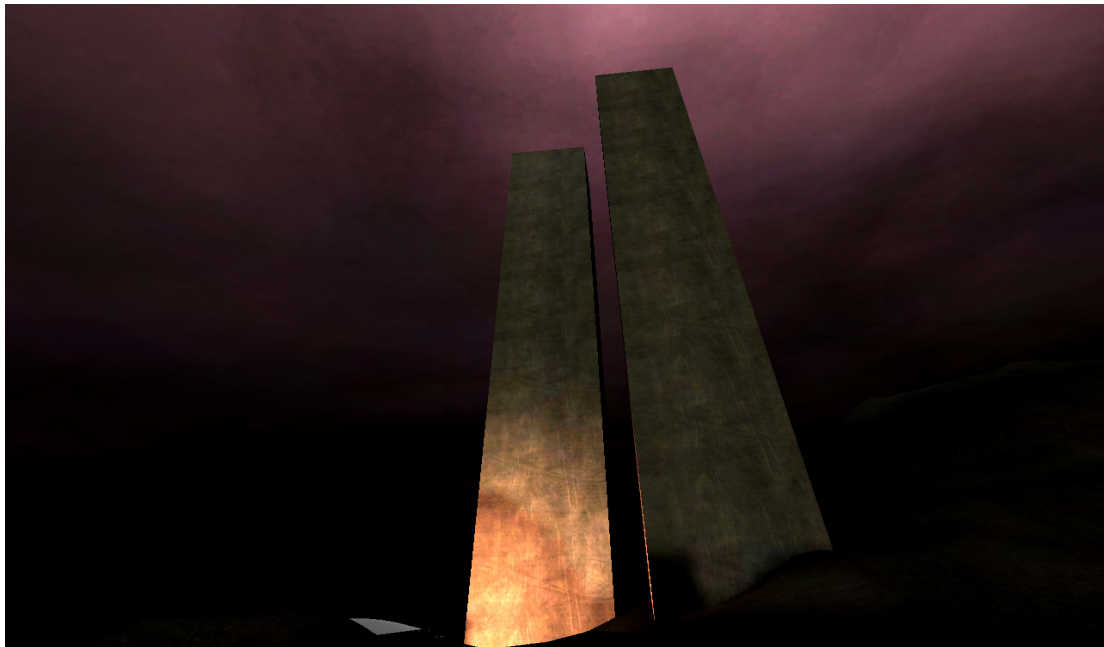
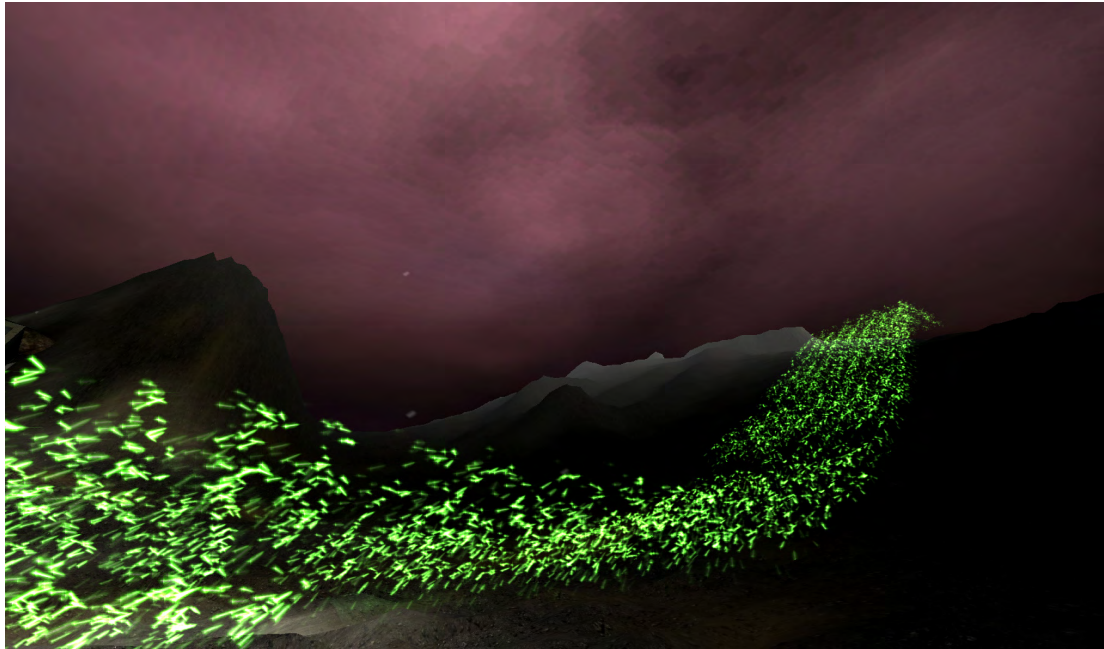
This chapter concerns the exhibition and curatorial work done for the 2006 exhibition *Maelstrom: Gazes Into the Digital Abyss*.<sup>1</sup> The exhibition was co-curated with Greg More of RMIT and exhibited work done by myself, Greg More and John Power, also of RMIT. The shared interest of the three exhibitors/artists was in the creative use of game engines, the software employed to make computer games work within an apparent three-dimensional space, as a design environment. Having some experience in both the use of these spaces as locations for constructing environments to be explored, and having also incorporated the environments into our respective teaching programmes, the exhibition sought to give form to a mode of practice that sequentially worked from the digital to the analogue. By this, it should be understood that the exhibition artefacts were the consequence of the digital environments and not preparatory work for their creation. As a completion of the cycle of affective qualities that commenced with the tea-cup in the *House (Forensic)* exhibition in chapter 1 and the ladder in the *Ghosts of the Civic Dead* installation in Chapter 2, the images, paintings and model were ironic references to the nostalgia for presence that haunts digital installations.

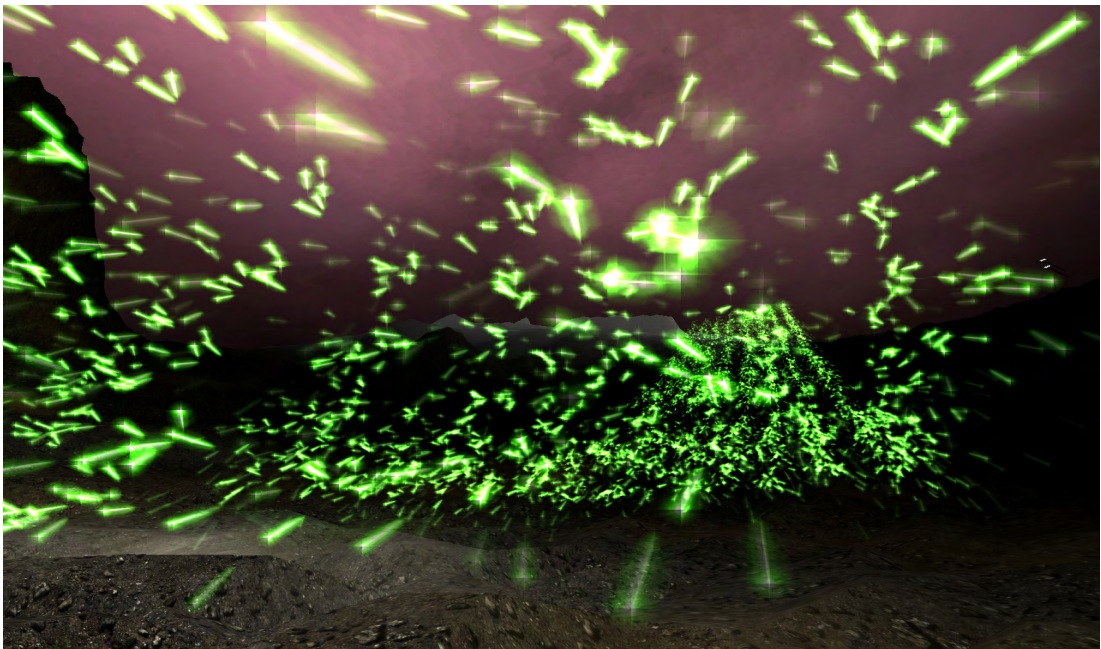
The exhibition itself involved the simultaneous screening of 4 game environments made by the exhibitors, three by Pickersgill (although only two were exhibited at any one time), one each by More and Power. These environments had been constructed to explore the qualities of the digital media as a vehicle not just for an alternate or contemporary form of representation, but as a distinct aesthetic environment in itself. These environments could be interacted with by accessing controls in the gallery space, the user was then able to 'walk' through the



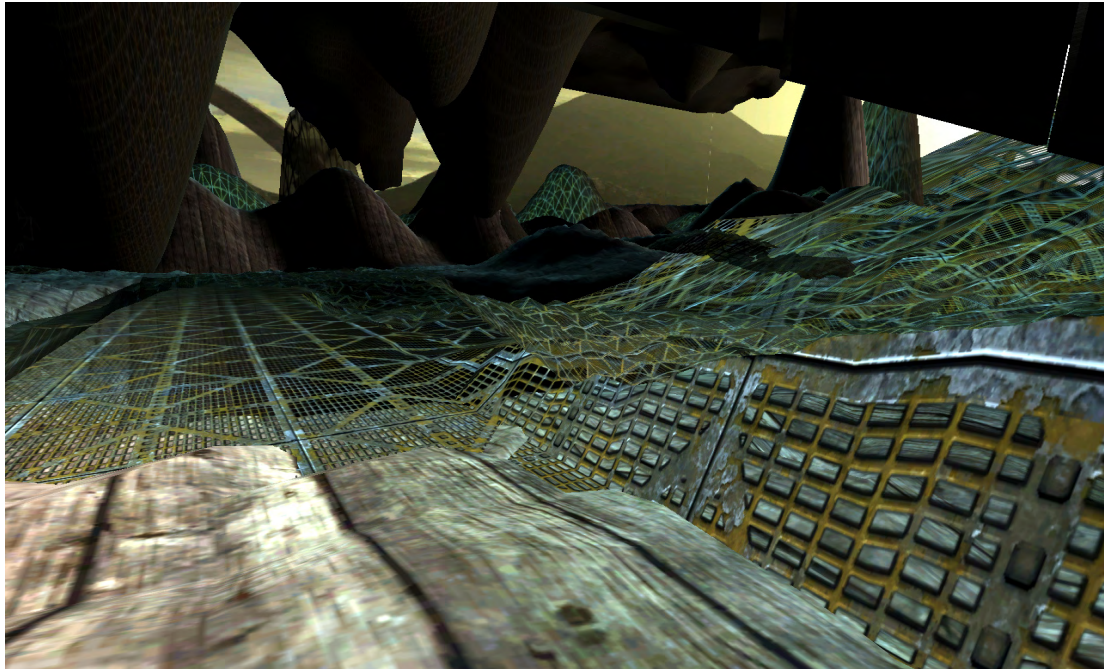


Maelstrom: Tenebrae Environment, 2006

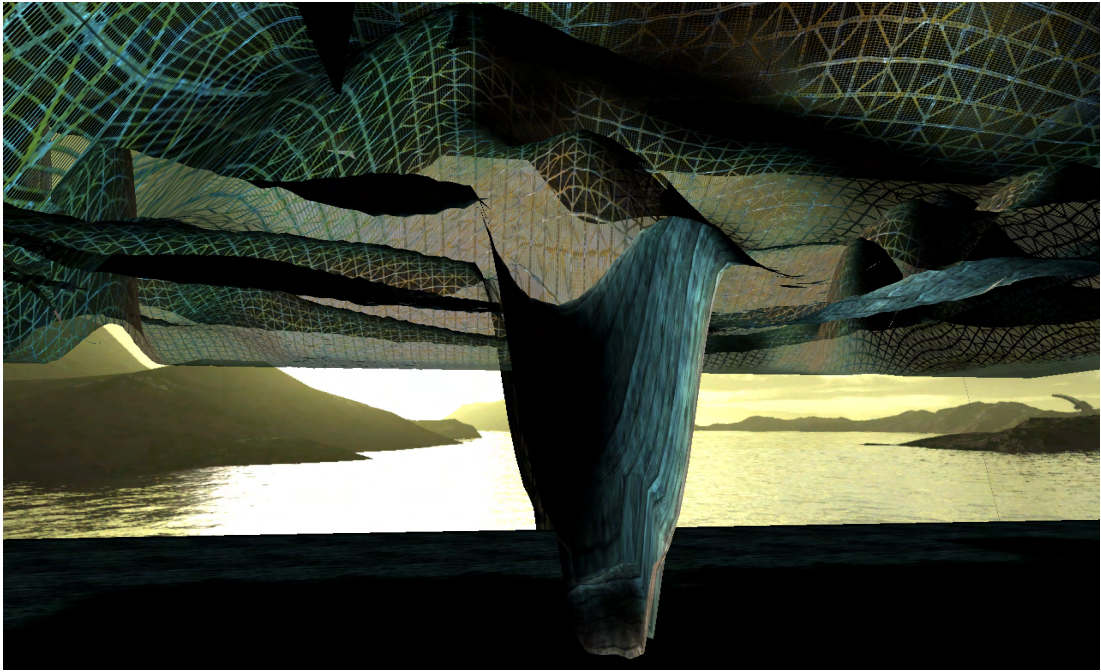




Maelstrom, Two Towers Environment, 2006







Maelstrom: Terror-ain Environment, 2006

environments and view them from a first-person point of view. Visitors were able to enter into the spaces, explore the breadth of the environments, triggering effects, interacting with sound and text-rich landscapes. In addition to the immersive game environments, there were exhibited, on a facing wall a series of images. These were a series of small paintings by Power, three digital prints and a model by More, and three panoramic prints of digital environments by Pickersgill.

The text from which all three exhibitors were working was an extract from Edgar Allen Poe's short story, *A Descent into the Maelstrom*, describing a moment when the centripetal forces of the monumental whirlpool were holding the narrator, what remained of his boat and all manner of flotsam and jetsam in a stasis of apparently arrested motion.<sup>2</sup> The text was chosen because it described a physical effect in which apparent motionlessness and the threat of annihilation had come together. At this moment, the narrator looks down into the whirling void and sees the possibility of destruction within the nothingness of the maelstrom interior.

The implications of the Poe text for the work concerned the proposition that an apparently static position may well only be so courtesy of the temporary combination of forces, and that the physics of destruction are always present. An implicit association was made between the construction of an environment and its qualities for evoking the sublime abyss discussed in Chapter 3 of the thesis. For the purposes of the exhibition I created three environments, *Two Towers*, *Terrorain*, and *Tenebrae*. Each of the spatial locations described a vast, constructed landscape, organic in the case of *Two Towers* and *Terrorain*, architectonic for *Tenebrae*, that the user could explore according to their interest. Whilst interaction with the environments was optional, as was the case for the environments created by all three exhibitors, once a visitor chose to engage with the space, there was a clear momentum towards the process of exploration. In part, for some visitors, this was a consequence of their familiarity with the highly directional exploration and reward system that most computer games utilise, but for the others there was also the genuine desire to see something that was new and which seemed to entail a sense of jeopardy.

To fully appreciate the motivations for the shift to the use of digital environments to explore analogical relationships between architecture and horror, it is necessary to say something more specific about the nature of digital game spaces themselves. The complexity of affective material they contain, their momentum towards mimetic fidelity of the 'real', the relationship

between vision, cognition and aesthetic understanding they utilise, and the manner in which they are able to exploit suspension of disbelief consistent with fictional possible worlds are all key aspects of this medium. McKenzie Wark has some complex, but astute, observations to make in this regard in *Gamer Theory*, similarly Jesper Juul has recently, but with less success, attempted to articulate the ontological nature of digital immersivity.<sup>3</sup>

While these qualities were recognised as relevant and desirable within the *sub-meta* project, they had their fullest evocation in the *Maelstrom* exhibition and project. To fully understand the role of these aspects it is worthwhile considering some of the questions that occur when possible worlds, such as these were, are examined in some detail.

#### Film Worlds and Game Worlds

If we compare the 'worlds' shown in filmic space with those of digital game space, a space that is able to be increasingly vivid in its display of all of the atmospheric and intangible effects of an environment, as well as showing the physical form of a place or construction, what particularly distinguishes the two media is the affectivity of the 'eye' that is directed and enacted, via the grammar of shot selection and editing in film, but usually only via the parergon of the frustum<sup>4</sup> in the case of game environments.<sup>5</sup>

To take an example of the affectivity of the film world, Andrei Tarkovsky's 1971 film *Solaris* is an exquisitely evocative meditation on the relationship between technology, memory and loss – not only through its presentation of the characters, narrative and themes of Stanislaw Lem's novel, but also through the specific qualities of film as a medium of perception.<sup>6</sup> Tarkovsky's *oeuvre* itself, particularly *Nostalgia* and *Stalker*, are tours-de-force in this respect. Yet there is always a melancholic distance between the viewer and the medium, perhaps impossible to traverse in any medium, but especially recognized in Tarkovsky's work. Tarkovsky himself recognised this distinction. This in fact is a key issue, as Lubomir Doležel has outlined in his study of literature and possible worlds, in the understanding of the force of fictional constructs within the representative arts, including literature.<sup>7</sup> The need to explain how it is possible and necessary to construct possible worlds that have both representative similarities with the real world and with hylomorphic qualities (i.e. a purposive and necessary form) in and of themselves is an opportunity that film always deals with in looking at the world of the *mise-en-scene*, and which the making of digital environments cannot avoid. In film there are distinctions between diagetic content - sounds, effects, music, points-of-view, that seem to follow intuitive

aspects of the narrative, and non-diegetic elements – sounds, framing, music, events that draw attention to an origin external to the narrational space of the characters. As we have seen, the same incorporation of consonant and dissonant elements was a factor in the *Ghosts of the Civic Dead* project.

Pursuing the idea of speculative formal exploration (what might be termed the architecture of the spaces) in the possible worlds of film and game space, the way they differ most markedly is the fact that the means of construction in game space is exactly that used by contemporary architecture as its principal diagrammatic tool. Digital means of representation have been completely absorbed into the design and ideation process of architecture, as both a mimetic tool for giving increasingly 'life-like' representations of possible projects and as an exploratory drawing and modelling tool. Yet the nature of the 3D modelling environment, the infinite scale of its viewing window and the apparent immateriality of the entities it creates mark it as a completely novel medium.

#### Mimetic Functions in Architectural Representation

In the quest for an increasingly vivid experience of the presence of architecture, digital means of representation have achieved significant successes. It is a matter of record that processes made available by the computational strengths of parametric modeling software and the use of dynamic animation has produced new models of the 'possible' in architecture. This mode of thinking remains enmeshed in the idea that modes of representation have the ultimate aim of being realized in a material form. Interestingly, there remains the opportunity to consider modes of digital realization as being sufficiently material within their mode of delivery – digital media. A more radical, but still robust, proposition might be that a mode of architecture that is principally delivered within the attenuated sensibilities of the digital might nevertheless be ontologically full in its apprehension. It is tempting to think of the material of digital exploration as an imago of some ultimate realisation in the real world, but that is to ignore the philosophical complexity of the digital and the fact that, courtesy of the territorializing processes of digital environments, the digital architectural model can exist *sui generis* in this location.

If we stay within the digital there are a number of modes by which its architectural product can be experienced. Within the limitations of the code of the applications, then the experience is limited to either a rendered view or an animation. These remain simulations of conventional modes of representation. The quality of the surfaces, the issue of the degree of simulation of the

Real or its inherent abstraction, rehearse a conventional contest between mimetic practices. Whilst this can traverse work from the seamlessly natural of commercial digital artists to the self-consciously contrived of, for example Stephen Perrella's *Hypersurfaces*, the argument is familiar.<sup>8</sup> Whilst the subject matter of the representations may well be different, an empirical model opposed to an algorithmic process, the critical context is coeval.

A parallel issue is the nature of the experience itself. Whether we consider the haptic content of augmented-reality (AR) and virtual-reality (VR) technology, pursued through the development of head-set, controller and other technology, or the optic issue of digital embodiment through forms of telepresence, the embodiment of the digital experience is considerably varied.<sup>9</sup> For some, the nature of this question is pivotal as the search for seamless connectivity, whether by 'touching' the digital in some fashion or developing acute emotional sensitivity to the avatar, is paramount. Even the relationship between avatars, the philosophical question of sentience and sapience in digital actors, is crucial. In all of these instances the appetite for a 'full' kinaesthetic experience is intended to support a transition between normal bodily experience, a kind of empirical datum, and the incorporation of data sets that impart a spatialized experience.

Instead, it is important to concentrate on the relationship between the representation of architecture, the expectations of vividness that may emerge from this process and the opportunity to see unique thematic experiences in digital environments that may emerge and contest our understanding of the 'real', experiences that may be investigated and discussed independent of the debate concerning the digital body.

### Game Engines

Game engines, as a form of code that traverses modeling, texturing, lighting and an animated scenographic view, rely on the workflow pipeline of 3D modelling applications such as 3DStudio Max, Maya, etc., but then place the content within first-person immersive environments. There are a number of questions that emerge from this process: How does this application differ, in architecture, from others in terms of its representative or mimetic role; how does it cater for issues of ontological vividness in comparison with AR and VR applications; and how may the use of game-engine software be of use for the creation of architecture as end location, a site, in itself?

In the material prepared for the *Maelstrom* exhibition, using the technology of first-person engines, the exhibitors have explored the idea of what constitutes the presence of the self within the digital. Computer games consistently achieve levels of vividness that describe a position without precedent. And it was the intention of the Maelstrom project, and in the work created by me, to explore the degree to which this vividness could be conjoined to a sense of what might be termed a 'real' and ontologically rich encounter. In commercial games these spaces are influenced by narratological issues internal to specific tasks that are a part of a game, but in exploratory architectural work they are able to simultaneously act as a representation of a possible real and as a developed *mise-en-scene* of potential actions. They are both suffused with an aesthetic particular to the mechanics of the engine, how it delivers the idea of the 'real', and the potential to act within this space. It is this last condition; the relentless need to consider the environments as persistent and transitive, which indicates the genuinely novel potential for digital environments. Put simply, if one could inhabit Piranesi's *Carceri* or Tarkovsky's *Solaris*, how would one act? These alternatives are qualitatively different, and mark a shift between architectural representation as an obsessive development of the architectural process of form-making, versus the spatialization of experience within the montage logic of film.

#### Architecture and Representation

There is nothing new in the idea that architectural design is driven by the means by which it is represented. A constant of architectural thinking is the manner in which the liminal aspects of architectural design, those aspects that seem to evade clear description, are governed by the search for the dissonant and unfamiliar. A governing presence in the evaluation of the oeuvre of practitioners is often the degree to which they pursued, or described a design agenda that is circumstantially different from the accepted sphere of influences: Peter Eisenman's belligerent attempt to adopt structural linguistics into domesticity, Frank Gehry's adoption of digital technologies as a mode of practice, Ashton Raggatt McDougall's adoption of a critical design practice that can simultaneously cherish and chide everyday culture and still find opportunities for revelation, are selected examples. In these instances there persists the accepted practice that the mode of pre-presenting architecture through representations is a valuable mode by which to test the relationship between the design and its reality. For these three examples, the ultimate destination of the design explorations is into a reality that is materially present, the haptic and optic real world. However, in some circumstances, for example ARM's transformation of Phillip Johnson's Glass House, the material is never intended for any other reality than the

discursive context of representational images in critical discussion. The modelling of digital architecture that is taken to immersive environments, by comparison, is fully 'at home' in this media.

Curiously, the critical apparatus of architectural criticism willingly considers aspects of unbuilt work in equal measure to that of built work. On empirical grounds this seems deficient, as there is clearly more material for investigation in a built work than is available in the product of representation. However, the counter argument is of course that it is precisely *through the means of representation* that the most focused and semantically rich aspects of a work are presented. It's a challenging argument - that built work is only of marginal interest because of the confusing superfluity of its presence. Moreover, the extension of this argument seems to imply that meaning is only in use, not in intention - as if Le Corbusier's pilgrimage church at Ronchamp should always be considered in light of the cumulative vividness of pilgrims' experiences. In essence it is the same argument for a practice of thinking about the specificity of architecture that is being made again.

For this reason, part of the argument of this thesis, is that immersive digital environments are as full a mode of architectural ideation as any of the conventional means of ostensive speculative architectural projects. As we have seen, the plethora of complex affective and architectonic associations available in the purposeless installation environment described in the Ghosts of the Civic Dead and Sub-Meta projects, as well as the recognition that the implicit alterity of digital form-making indicates that the exploration of that which is fully sublime, and by implication descriptive of the horror of the void of namelessness, is that of the digital.

In a period in which the manner of representation is clearly evolving, the questions naturally resurface. Notwithstanding the structural similarities between the current means of representation and the history of the architectural image as a synechdocal effect of an overall design process, digital design involves the manipulation of a series of mimetic tools, themselves designed to reproduce the 'real' as immaculately as possible – within certain parameters dictated by the physicality of the frustrum. Hence the significant subculture of practice dedicated to the reproduction of seamless or photo-real images. In architectural design, of course, the manner in which the play of the simulacra occurs is intimately linked with the manner in which the contract of authenticity is established between the design and its procession towards the actual. That is, contemporary architectural design uses forms of

representation, usually digitally mediated in some fashion, that are directed towards making an authentic representation of a possible future condition – what the building will probably look like if built.

However, as Mark Hansen has pointed out, not only are the products of digital media that come from 3D modelling, especially when complex forms of lighting, texturing and shading are employed, themselves fundamentally different from conventional forms of photography, they are a completely different form of vision. They are images of data sets, and as such they fundamentally deterritorialize the process of reference to that which the image may relate to in the 'real' world.<sup>10</sup> It was the fundamental aspiration of the digital environments in *Maelstrom* that they show the nature of this deterritorialization. As much as the environments employed a spatiality that had the appearance of an imperfect representation of the real, the fact remained that the process of journeying through them was fundamentally a processional negotiation of data sets. What is significant is that the stain of 'reality' remains.

Negotiating the three digital environments of my *Maelstrom* projects entailed a process of searching or exploring. Whilst there was no specific goal attainable in the environment, the vividness of the material, the chiaroscuro lighting effects and the movement of dynamic lighting entities (sprites) encouraged the sense that occupation took place. There were recognisable architectural forms that displayed some semblance of industrialised and organised production, further impressing on the user/player that the effort of their engagement was consistent with their presence, yet the environments revealed no sense of their indexical historic moment or of their place in some economy of utility. They were not *for* anything other than their monumentality and the sense that they were solely present for the user, *at that time*. As such they were the enactment of Derrida's abyss, sublime and without purpose.

#### Adamic Breeding – Things and Names

If we review again the uses of modelling software in architectural design we see also the emergence of a language of description and evaluation. The use of digital modelling software within design involves a series of choices that supersedes the software's mimetic function. By applying complex geometrical transformations to simple formal primitives, increasingly exotic formal entities can be created. Taken as a simple practice, this transformation of form can be considered as a mutation of topography in which the idea of topography invokes a seamlessness of surface that destroys the notion of scale.<sup>11</sup> Form, thence, is an infinite



enfolding of matter to create a series of opportunistic spatialities, surfaces and abundances of program. The caesura between form and program is complete. Further, the re-naming of these instances (a practice most notably undertaken by Greg Lynn) as blobs, blebs, strands, etc invoked a new literacy in homophonic aspects of the voice of the digital.<sup>12</sup> In both instances there is the Adamic encounter between the work and the idea of the typological – through a search for alternate modes of description, the monstrosities of the digital are positioned in some periodic table of formal motifs. Cache resisted this temptation and became forgotten as an innovator principally because of his resistance to incorporating the work of *Objectile* into a catalogue of formal characters. The novelty of the language is itself a complete strand of study, as it involves not only the determining of new nouns, but also adjectival and verbal practices that are incorporated into the design process.

Similarly, the borrowing of descriptions from biological organisms that have modes of self-organization for complex systems has been fused with an expanded definition of where the parameters of the architectural lie. It has become a meta-tecture, incorporating a dynamic isomorphic model that investigates where the act of design lies. In many instances this is replicating the radical empiricism of Deleuze inasmuch as the material presence of complex entities are without, or in need of, any necessary metaphysical referent.<sup>13</sup> Again, though, the means by which this process is visualized is via the dynamic animation processes available within 3D modelling software. Animation itself, as Lynn, has recognized, is a process of tweening<sup>14</sup> that interpolates form between two or more static formal conditions, replicating in some instances the manner in which the eye will discretely adjust between the repetitions of images produced at 24 or more frames per second.<sup>15</sup>

The differential is more though than just the convenience of allowing the animate to emerge from the dictates of the composed static. The differential preserves the opportunity for the new to emerge as an opportunity of form creation itself, as a model of how specific instances of the real make their presence in the world.<sup>16</sup> Of course the application is premised on this process. In this instance the formal progeny that emerges once an epigenetic system, a system that displays differing formal iterations as a consequence of the differing gene expression, is set in motion is made present by its means of representation. There is yet to be an alternative means by which epigenetically reiterative systems are made apprehensible and as such the claims that they represent an instance of a dynamic complex system are compromised. Whilst complex systems, of course, can be representatively 'shown' – the expanded analogy that

they are inherently architectural needs more explanation.<sup>17</sup>

In part this is pointed out by Manuel de Landa in his essay on Deleuze and the use of the genetic algorithm in architecture in which he points to the limitations in the use of algorithmic processes in architecture.<sup>18</sup> Implicitly, the transaction of 'explaining' the work, usually by referring to incommensurate data sets or the use of polynomial modifiers to visualize the morphological differences, tend to be descriptive of the process rather than explaining the manner in which 'this' form is appropriate. Indeed, in conversation with the author in 1998, Bernard Cache referred to the selection as *Kunstwollen*, a will-to-select by some arbitrary sense of fitness. De Landa likens the process to that of a dog or horse breeder making choices about their animals. In particular, the need to re-theorize the phenomenologically intimate is untouched, though Deleuze is clear on the need for the singularities of phenomenal experience to be treated as distinct entities, without them being subject to essentialist definitions.<sup>19</sup>

So in architectural design, whether in practice or in its emulations within the graduate student design studio, the work of producing complex formal models requires the recoding of key terms within the language of architecture to imply a continuity of the project of the avant-garde.<sup>20</sup>

This discussion within architectural practice regarding the techniques for identifying procedures for generating novel form, and the way in which it is being acculturated into architectural discourse, is a clear reference in the *Terrorain* environment created for *Maelstrom*. It utilised the same transformations of form and dynamic transformation as those described by Lynn in *Animate Form*

#### Hylomorphism - Unreal and The Real

If we concentrate on the nature of the gamespace it is worth considering the manner in which the software necessary for creating a persistent environment is constructed. Game environment engines take polygonal models for both static and active elements of the map/level and apply the appropriate texture and lighting data to them in real time. The engine is able to optimise this process by only performing the texturing computations for those aspects of the model that are within the player's field of view. In addition, audio actors, environmental effects, and skyboxes (artificial skys that are dynamic and infinitely distant) all may be manipulated to increase the 'reality' of the experience.

Reality, in fact, is a key and contested aspect of the persistent digital environment. It is a matter of some debate within the game community as to the virtues of increased impressions of reality within games. Debate usually centres on a contest between narratological and ludological interests – are we there to experience something with textual depth or just to participate in some rule-based behaviour?<sup>21</sup> Debate usually follows the line that increased reality in representation is used to augment or cloud play (depending on which side of the debate one is on). I would suggest that a number of deeper philosophical questions are being enacted.<sup>22</sup>

Whilst the creators of this software have probably little interest in the philosophical issues of what is a rapidly changing commercial environment, it is clear that the new types of digital space and digital forms display the ambiguous ability to be, following Hansen, the image of a 'data set' (the environment) apprehended by a parallel data set (the organisational point of view), yet still appear to have the sensate opportunities of the real.

Brian Massumi has very clear and convincing understanding of this relation. In describing the nature of affect, it's 'emergence' as a quantum of relationality he says:

Emergence, once again, is a two sided coin: one side in the virtual (the autonomy of relation), the other in the actual (functional limitation). What is being termed affect ... is precisely this two-sidedness, the simultaneous participation of the virtual in the actual and the actual in the virtual, as one arises from and returns to the other. Affect is this two-sidedness *as seen from the side of the actual thing*, as couched in its perceptions and cognitions. Affect is *the virtual as point of view*, provided the visual metaphor is used guardedly.<sup>23</sup> (Massumi's italics)

What is interesting is, as digital environments grow to incorporate more complex forms of coded experiences, the degree to which it is possible to 'know' an environment will be increasingly fraught – perhaps productively so – by newly acquired techniques of seeing the 'real' in digital space, 'virtual synaesthetic perspectives' as Massumi terms it.<sup>24</sup> Many of the issues that have emerged as questions for the mind/body dualism of pre-modern philosophies of logic and language are being enacted as we speak by the coding teams of Source and Epic Games. The challenge for architectural theory is to situate itself within this development, something outside the scope of this thesis.

### Exiting the Maelstrom

These suggestions allow us to draw a series of developmental conclusions from the work outlined in this and the preceding chapters - from the identification of the affect of the punctum in the image of a site (the house) to the recognition that the process articulating the particular qualities of the digital environment is form of mediated affect that occurs through the activities of the 'vision machines' that the software provides.

I suggest that this medium can develop in three directions: (i) towards an increasingly texturalised and reflexive practice that explores the qualia of the digital (un)real; (ii) towards an increasingly hyper-real attempt to emulate the immensely complex, and resource intensive, aspects of the real world; (iii) it may fetishize a nostalgia for low-fi models of itself as a means of recuperating control of the medium for independent agents with limited means. In essence the latter two conditions involve the issue of labour and the ownership of the resources necessary to create these conditions.

Considering them in reverse order: The third mode of practice, low-fi, is about the creation of digital environments sufficiently abstract to be performable and exportable to a broad community. Paradoxically, this practice is in some ways the most 'humanist' of the three (if that terms retains any currency) as it assumes that the key interaction between the individual and the game environment lies in the ludic aspects, the 'play' of the individual as an emotive agent. The second mode, the hyper-real environment, currently being pursued by the large game design and hardware manufacturing corporations is attempting to emulate a play experience that can deliver increasingly sophisticated morphological, textural, and physics-based effects. Without consciously recognizing it, and it is outside the scope of this discussion to do it justice, they are emulating the map/territory problem in philosophy – a problem that argues that no representation can be fully real despite the infinite regress of its form of specificity and abstraction, and hence radical solipsism seems to be our endemic state.

The first opportunity, reflexive qualia, will investigate the manner in which the component elements of digital reality are scripted and reflexively recognize the experience of the digital. For architecture this may well incorporate not only an expanded knowledge of such issues as the map/territory dilemma mentioned above, or the question of whether there is possible empathy with the sentient and sapient characteristic of other avatars - the p-zombie problem<sup>25</sup>, but also the materiality of the digital environment and its role in being the *mise-en-scene* of

types of experience as yet unnamed.

Which returns us to the question of Tarkovsky and *Solaris*. If a task of architecture is to remember, remember the people that made it, remember the world that considered it new and vital, remember the promise of clarity and perspicacity in its processes, remember the vividness with which it mythologized itself and became the place in which imagination could occur, then the digital real has a task to fulfill. Digital environments, gamespaces, have the capability to offer an experience of the real that has both the frisson of mimetic fidelity – they look and sound real, whilst also permitting a vast array of counterintuitive events that may question the unfolding of experience. In a manner similar to the structural opportunities of film, both diageitic elements and non-diageitic elements can occur. Beyond the debate of the interrelationship between form and effect, and the sub-text of where the autonomous effects of design practice take place, the experientially full opportunity of the Unreal world is one place for future architecture. If we were to consider how one might build, code and explore the space station in *Solaris*, with its unnerving ability to make manifest the physical substance of our memories, what might we think of simulacra then?

This final question, though difficult to answer in any clear and autonomous fashion was the aspiration of the final project, *MyBattleEye*.

1 *Maelstrom: Gazes Into the Digital Abyss*, Greg More, Sean Pickersgill, John Power, SASA Gallery,  
University of South Australia, July 2006. Curated by Greg More and Sean Pickersgill.

2 Poe, Edgar Allen, 'A Descent into the Maelstrom', in *Complete Stories and Poems of Edgar Allen Poe*,  
Doubleday, London and New York, 1984.

3 Wark, Mckenzie, *Gamer Theory*, Harvard University Press, Boston, Mass., 2007.; Juul, Jesper, *Half-Real*,  
MIT Press, 2005

4 A frustum is the term for the region of modelled space that appears on-screen at any one moment within  
an immersive environment.

5 Portions of the following argument have previously been published in a conference paper co-authored  
with Greg More. As with the Sub-Meta proposal of the previous chapter, any opinions and omissions  
in the text that follows reflect only my own views. See: Pickersgill, Sean & More, Gregory, 'Inside Solaris:  
Game Technology in the Design Studio', Proceedings of the AASA 2007 Conference, *Technologies and  
Techniques*, University of Technology ePress, Sydney, 2007.

6 Tarkovsky, Andrey, *Sculpting in Time, Reflections on the Cinema*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1986.

7 Doležel, Lubomír, 'Mimesis and Possible Worlds', *Poetics Today*, Vol.9, No.3, Aspects of Literary Theory,  
1988, pp.475-496, More comprehensive discussion is present in: Doležel, Lubomír, *Heterocosmica:  
Fiction and Possible Worlds*, John Hopkins, 2000.

8 Perella, Stephen (ed.), *Hypersurface Architecture* (Architectural Design Profile), John Wiley, 1998.

9 Virilio, paul, telepresence reference

10 Hansen, Mark, Seeing with the Body: The Digital Image in Postphotography, *Diacritics*, Vol.31, No.4,  
pp.57

11 See especially, Cache, Bernard, *Earthmoves, The Furnishing of Territories*, MIT, 1995

12 Lynn, Greg, *Animate Form, ...*

13 Deleuze, Gilles, *Logic of Sense*, Columbia University Press, 1990.

14 Tweening is the implication of animate movement that occurs when sequential still images are played  
back at a rapid rate. It is the basis of movement in cell-frame animation.

15 Lynn, op.cit. p.

16 Deleuze, Gilles, *Difference and Repetition*, Motilal Banarsidass, Paris, 2005.

17 Fear, Bob (ed.), *Architecture + Animation* (Architectural Design), Academy Press, 2001.

18 De Landa, Manuel, 'Deleuze and the Use of the Genetic Algorithm in Architecture', in Rahim, Ali (ed.),  
*Contemporary Techniques in Architecture*, Wiley, New York, 2002.

19 Deleuze, *Logic*, op.cit

20 Spuybroek, Lars, *Machining Architecture*, Thames and Hudson, 2005.

21 The literature on the philosophical experience of game-space is yet to fully be developed, and many works  
of current commentary refer back to Harraway, Donna, Hamlet on the Holodeck, A more recent analysis of  
game experience, though with its limitations is Juul, Jesper, *Half-Real*, MIT Press, 2005

22 There are considerable similarities between the organisational relations in game space and the  
discussions of vision and perception in, particularly, the work of Berkeley. His esse ist percipi, essence is  
perception, seems particularly apposite yet tangential to the discussion.

23 Massumi, Brian, 'The Autonomy of Affect', *Culture Critique*, No.31, The Politics of Systems and  
Environments, Part II (Autumn, 1995), p.96.

24 Massumi, *ibid*.

25 A p-zombie is the philosophical term for an entity that displays sentience and sapience, but we know to  
not be alive. The philosophical questions that surround such an entity generally concern questions of  
ethics and cognition, but they also have a relevance for game theory and political philosophy since their  
status as full citizens of digital environments is uncertain.



## Chapter 7 - Conclusion - MyBattleEye

death knell (glas) and galactic of the *kolossos*. In the interval between the mathematical sublime and the dynamic sublime, a tree had been projected into the Milky Way. There was the bridge over the abyss which threatens to swallow everything, on the edge of which the analytic of the sublime is broached. Now this whirlpool which tears up the tree and throws it, immensely, into the milky dissemen (*la dissemen*). The question is still, as we know now, the cipher writing (*Chiffreschrift*) on the surface of nature.<sup>1</sup>

Thus Jacques Derrida concludes the study of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, and in so doing his journey through a consideration of the 'immense', the 'cise' and the 'architectonic'. The subtlety with which he returns to the analogous train of thinking allows him to consider Kant's emphases, his reliance on forms of avoidance and equivocation, and the attention to the sublime. It describes, at the end of his essay, a form of mystical speech that makes free use of the metaphor of the Milky Way, the whirlpool and the tree. If it was not intended to recall the speech of sephirothic analogies it is difficult to see to what else it might be compared. It reminds us that in the pursuit of the exactitude of the sublime, there is always a chiffre, a cipher for which we need the key. Whilst the work of Derrida has many distinct and palpable differences from Harold Bloom's critical project, the richness of Bloom's sense of the misprision of textual interpretation is clear here. It has been the aim of this thesis to provide an example of an enlightened form of this misprision in reading the qualities of a variety of media when brought into contact with the metaphorical condition of the architectural. The conclusion reached is that the development of immersive digital environments provides a distinct opportunity for exploring it as a site of genuine ontic affects.

The previous chapters have mapped out a development in acquiring, organising, thinking about and presenting the relationship of architecture to the idea of horror. As we have seen, by examining the projects, there has been a continuous, though complex, development of the content from the insistent materiality of the *House* project to the immaterial materiality of the immersive environments of *Maelstrom*. What began as a meditation on the parallels between the emergences of *l'informe* in a small domestic project became, by virtue of the process of extensive thinking and the attention to the punctum of the image, a catalogue of developmental



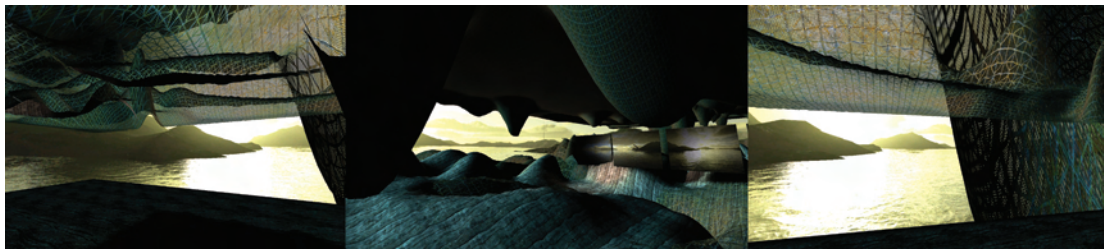
associations that moved via transformations in content and/or form to other morphologies.

Consistent in this process was a pursuit of the robustness of the metaphor of the architectonic. At each stage, the question was asked, in what ways does this project show the sense of the architectural? And in what way is this architectonic demonstrative of a technique of thinking, a diagram for relations of material, of processes and of homological directions.

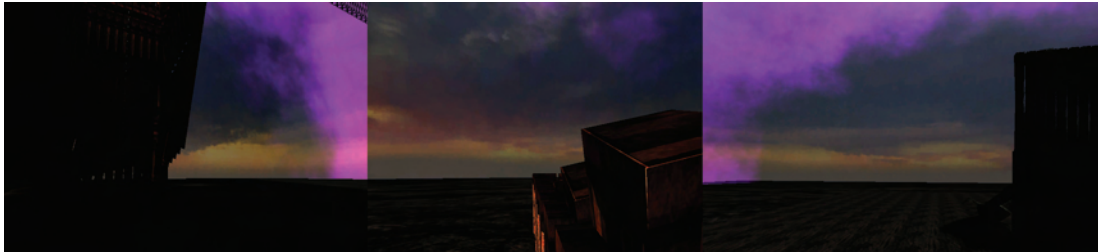
The first project, *House*, explored the role of the photographic image in providing alternate affectual qualities to the original house in Port Adelaide, it also recognised the importance of parallel textual content, the suicide of the woman, in providing intertextual complexity to any historico-critical understanding of the House and its future as a creative project. The second project *Ghosts of the Civic Dead* took the iconic status of the haunted house and re-presented it as a textual, filmic and philosophical entity. The third and fourth projects, *Triptychs* and *Sephiroth*, grew from the first two and further investigated the affect of the image and its incorporation into more complex architectonic presentational and intertextual schemas. At this point it was determined that, through a discussion of Jacques Derrida's reading of Immanuel Kant's 'Analytic of the Sublime', that the essential formlessness of the sublime, its characterisation as an abyss, cohered with the rhetorical discussion of states of horror and abjection in literature and art practice.

Moreover, the point was established that the organisational metaphor for recognising this state was architectural. The subsequent project, *Sub-Meta*, served as a test for the diagrammatic potential of this state. The gallery installation design and the recognition that a shift to digital means of representation fundamentally closed semantic gaps between the process of form-making in digital architecture and its referential status to the real world. In short, it was argued that there was no necessity for exploratory design in immersive space if it was to be only a pre-condition of its eventual appearance in the real. Quite the opposite. The *Maelstrom* project confirmed that a rich ontological sense of immersivity and, as importantly philosophical sublimity could be affectively encountered in this medium.

The final project, *MyBattleEye*, was a homonym for My Bataille, but it also incorporated the sense that the technique of vision was derived from a vision determined by conflict. The battle, in this instance is not between the viewer and the material so much as an acknowledgement that the governing motivation for the investigating the philosophical potential of immersive



MyBattleEye - Triptychs 1-5, 2007



MyBattleEye - Triptychs 6-10, 2007

digital software came from the challenge of creating a philosophical *l'informe* within a media that is complete formed and must be so for it to be recognised as present.

The connection to Bataille was intended to mark the completion of the process that began with the *House* project in that the narrative of a woman in jeopardy reappears in the exhibition panels. The exhibition in which *MyBattleEye* was installed was intended to showcase work that was for the participants, if no-one else, *Strangely Familiar*.<sup>2</sup> The work as submitted to that exhibition by me remained familiar with the process of investigation it had followed since 2004. The work itself consisted of 10 large triptychs that drew material from filmic and digital environments. In addition, there was an 11 minute short digital film, which had been made from portions of the films *Tenebrae* and *The Eyes of Laura Mars* as well as portions recorded from the exploration of a number of digital environments. Whilst the presence of characters in the film extracts established a narrative that framed, but did not show, continual violence, the digital environments traversed a landscape that was in turns sublime and claustrophobic. Non-diegetic music and a spoken word piece provided a fragmentary accompaniment to the images.

When the triptychs are viewed in conjunction with the short film, their collective sensibility is directed towards the establishment of a sense of a narrative. In a similar fashion to Chris Marker's fragmentary *La Jettée*, the images are intended to imply some sense of narratological continuity. However this is not the principal intention. More important for the purposes of the thesis is the proposition that the synthetic environments are equally present as affectually vivid locations, despite their fundamentally de-territorialized relationship to anything in the 'real' world. And it is here that the main achievement of the thesis is located. By paying attention to an array of marginal and incidental material in the first project (*House*), we have seen the development of a form of practice that is obsessively concerned with the fine-grained experience of the affectual to the point where it's existence is coeval with the idea of machinic vision.

Rather than demarcating a new deterritorialized regime of perception—a "generalized condition of visuality"—what the phenomenon of machinic vision foregrounds is the urgent need, at this moment in our ongoing technogenesis, for a differentiation of properly human perceptual capacities from the functional processing of information in hybrid machine-human assemblages, of vision proper from mere sight. Only such a differentiation can do justice to the affective

dimension constitutive of human perception and to the active role affectivity plays in carrying out the shift from a mode of perception dominated by vision to one rooted in those embodied capacities-proprioception and tactility-from which vision might be said to emerge.

The employment of completely mediated material for this project confirmed the strength of the development of the projects to date. The contextual relationship between the images of the triptychs, their internal logic, as well as the sense of an evolving continuity between the 10 images as displayed, a para-logic between the images, was further referenced in the continuous loop playing on the monitor before them. The combination of these elements were now, as compared with the immediate and incomplete nature of a number of the previous projects, finished in a fashion that made the issue of horror even more pressing.

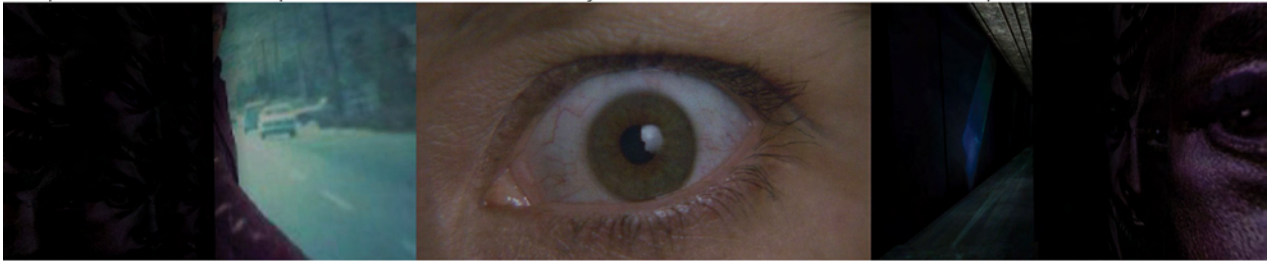
Precisely because it was an installation and with no other function than to mediate the syntagmatic structure of the content, the project was about the potential of architecture to show and frame the emergence of a demonstration of horror.

Horror was now to be found not in the mysterious and arbitrary events of the everyday, but in a highly stylised and constructed environment, the *mise-en-scene* of the short film piece. The means for placing it in this location was, like the ellipsis of Derrida, the employment of architecture. In the installation, the organising discipline was the structure of textuality between the image, video and sound components, its architectonic, which found its completeness within the space of the frustum.

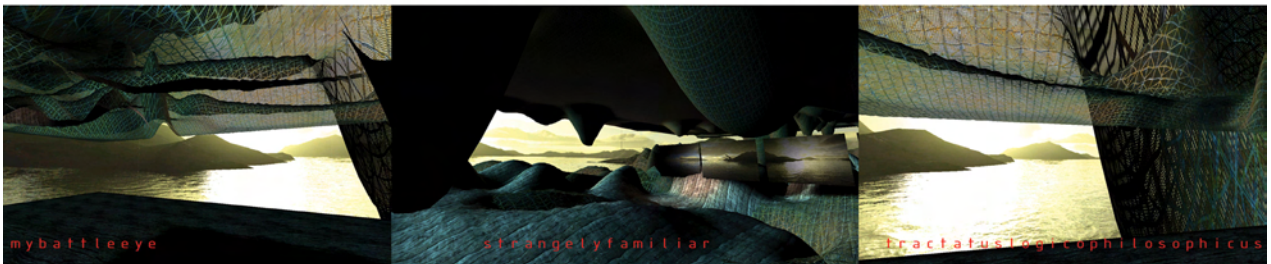
- 1 Derrida, Jacques, *The Truth in Painting*, Trans. By Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1987., p. 146.
- 2 *Strangely Familiar (Working Title)*, Curated by Gini Lee, SASA Gallery, University of South Australia, July, 2007.



2.1 We picture facts to ourselves. 2.11 a picture represents a situation in logical space, the existence and non-existence of states of affairs. 2.12 A picture is a model of reality. 2.13 In a picture objects have the elements of the picture corresponding to them. 2.131 In a picture the elements of the picture are the representatives of the objects. 2.14 What constitutes a picture is that its



elements are related to one another in an indeterminate way. 2.141 A picture is a fact. 2.15 The fact that the elements of a picture are related to one another in an indeterminate way represents that things are related to one another in the same way. Let us call this connexion of its elements the structure of the picture, and let us call the possibility of this structure the pictorial form of the picture.



mybattleeeye

strangelyfamiliar

tractatuslogico-philosophicus

## architecture and horror :

analogical explorations in architectural design

sean pickersgill  
phd by project and thesis

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