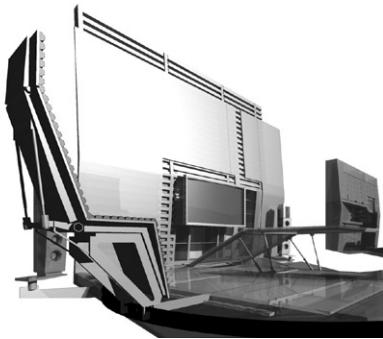


Situational Domesticity

plexus r+d



The idea that men are created free and equal is both true and misleading; men are created different; they lose their social freedom and their individual autonomy in seeking to become like each other.¹

—David Riesman

The contemporary private home is a complex and fascinating site for exploring the increasingly ambiguous separatrix between the public and private realms, between the social collective and the individual family as well as between members of a distinct family. This essay represents the initiation of a research project that focuses on the typical private home as a barometer of social and cultural values in contemporary life. It simultaneously recognizes the theoretical importance of the dwelling to civilization and the degree to which this significance has been undermined in the development of our current housing stock. Given the complexity and breadth of this research, this paper is not intended to propose conclusions to our investigation. Rather, we are interested in framing a series of preliminary questions and subsequently initiating a process that involves both research and design investigation. The process is intended to be both fluid and reflexive, allowing for additional questions and issues to influence the trajectory of the investigation. What follows is a record of our point of departure and the first leg of what will be a long and circuitous passage.

In *The Un-Private House*, Terrence Riley explores the historical development of the private house and its basis in notions of privacy itself.² Riley suggests that systems such as the party wall and the suburban lot are devices that serve to separate family members from other families and the public realm of the street, “enshrining family life to the exclusion of all other activities.”³ Riley goes on to suggest that the traditional private house embodies a paradox defined by the expression of notions of individual freedom and at the same time a commitment to shared societal values. The individual/consensus paradox serves as the epicenter of this investigation. Of particular interest is the contradiction inherent in the overwhelming desire to dwell apart as individuals, and the uncontested acceptance of the fact that the vast majority of private homes conform to a very strict and restrictive set of formal and stylistic standards. It is also curious that these omnipresent standards seem to be based more on “traditional” aesthetics and institutional planning principles than they are based on recognition of the dramatic transformations of the manner in which we live and work that have occurred over the last half century.

As *The Un-Private House* suggests, contemporary social and cultural issues continue to be explored in exclusive residential projects commissioned by privileged clients, as they have been throughout history. This investiga-

tion is concerned with the fact that architecture seems to have failed as a medium for exploring the state of the “average” private home. This territory has largely been vacated by architects and relegated to developers and builders that are more interested in economic return than they are concerned with the conceptual and formal evolution of the private home. Consequently, the vast majority of houses built today in America seem to be weighed down by the baggage of outdated planning and aesthetic standards, failing to engage substantial issues that are fundamentally relevant to the way we live today. The consequence of this condition is the perpetuation of ignorant domestic space.

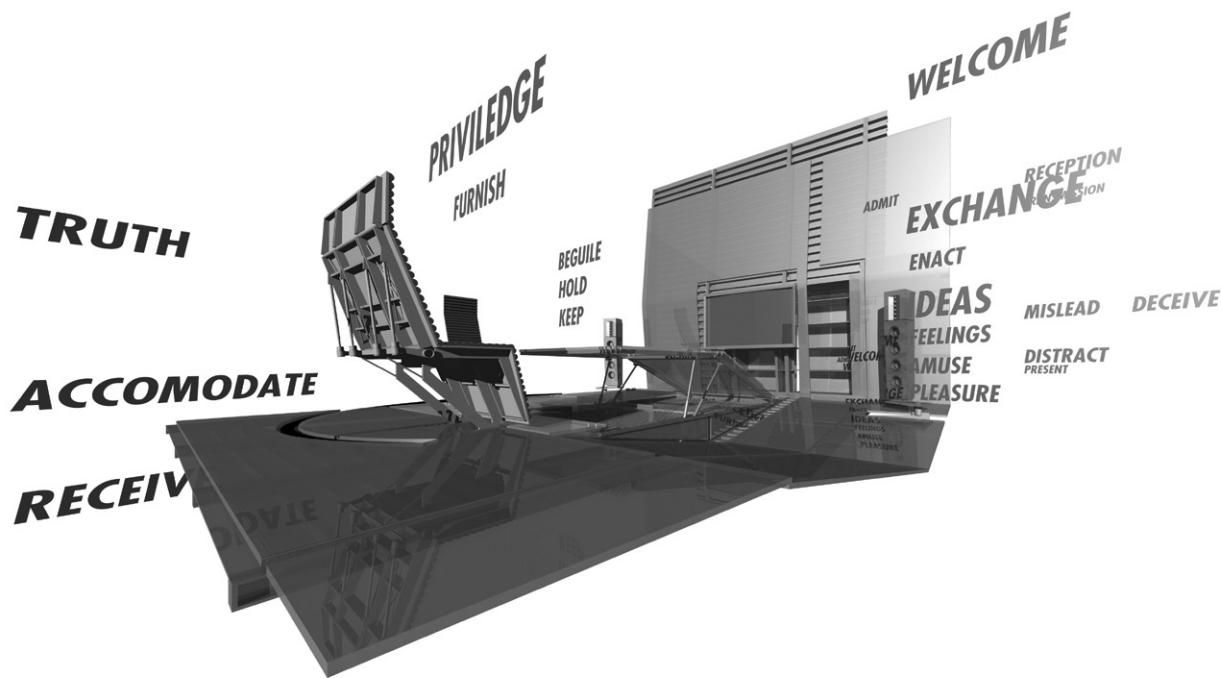
In order to avoid an elitist focus, and to engage issues relevant to popular culture, this investigation incorporates analysis of three recent films that deal with the condition of contemporary domestic space. This strategy is intended to yield a critical understanding of contemporary housing and at the same time produce a set of ideas and interventions that are applicable to the enormous field of market rate housing.

Domesticity...Lost in Space

It is clear that the social, cultural, economic and political forces that have shaped the evolution of the private house have transformed greatly during the second half of the twentieth century. In spite of this transformation, most private homes

A Semantic Digression

Entertainment - 1. The act of receiving as host, or of **amusing**, **admitting**, or **cherishing**; hospitable **reception**; also, reception or treatment, in general. 2. That which entertains, or with which one is entertained; as: (a) Hospitality; hospitable provision for the wants of a guest; especially, **provision for the table**; a hospitable repast; a feast; a formal or elegant meal. (b) That which engages the attention agreeably, amuses or **diverts**, whether in private, as by **conversation**, etc., or in public, by **performances** of some kind; amusement. **Amuse** - To **occupy** in an agreeable, pleasing, or entertaining fashion. To cause to laugh or smile by giving **pleasure**: *I was not amused by his jokes. Archaic.* To **delude** or **deceive**. Pleasure - The state or feeling of being pleased or gratified. A source of enjoyment or delight: *The graceful skaters were a pleasure to watch.* **Amusement, diversion**, or worldly enjoyment: “Pleasure... is a safer guide than either right or duty” (Samuel Butler). Sensual gratification or **indulgence**. One’s preference or wish: *What is your pleasure?* Delude - To lead from truth or into error; to mislead the mind or judgment of; to **beguile**; to impose on; to dupe; to make a fool of. **Admit** - To permit to **enter**: *A crack in the wall admitted some light.* To provide the right or a

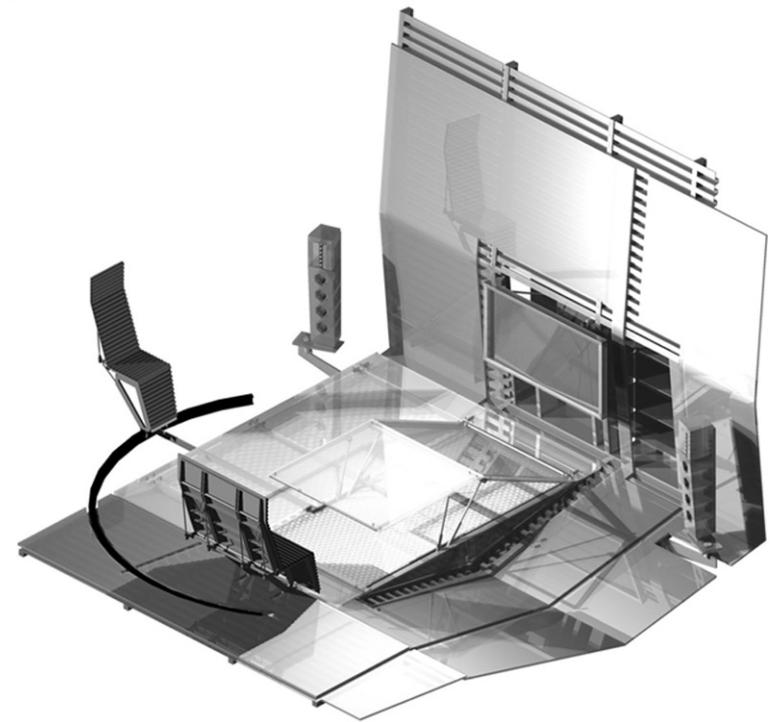


means of entrance to: *A ticket that admits the whole group.* To permit to exercise the rights, functions, or **privileges** of: *was admitted to the bar association.* To have room for; **accommodate.** To afford opportunity for; permit: *We must admit no delay in the proceedings.* To grant to be real, valid, or **true**; acknowledge: *admit the truth.* See Synonyms at **acknowledge.** To grant as true or valid, as for the sake of argument; concede. **Cherish** - To treat with affection and tenderness; **hold dear:** *cherish one's family; fine rugs that are cherished by their owners.* To **keep** fondly in mind; entertain: *cherish a memory.* See Synonyms at **appreciate.** **Reception** - The act or process of receiving or of being received. **Football.** The act or an instance of catching a forward pass. A **welcome,** greeting, or acceptance: *a friendly reception.* A social function, especially one intended to provide a welcome or greeting: *a wedding reception.* Mental approval or acceptance: *the reception of a new theory.* **Electronics.** Conversion of **transmitted** radio waves or electric signals into perceptible forms, such as sound or light, by means of antennas and electronic equipment. The condition or quality of the waves or signals so received. **Provide** - To **furnish;** supply: *provide food and shelter for a family.* To make available; afford: *a room that provides ample sunlight through French windows.* To set down as a stipulation: *an agreement that provides deadlines for completion of the work.* **Archaic.** To make ready ahead of time; prepare. **Divert** - To turn aside from a course or direction: *Traffic was diverted around the scene of the accident.* To

built in America today are based on the same set of organizational rules and aesthetic standards that have existed for centuries. Aside from subtle changes such as additions and deletions to the standard domestic program and transformations of the size of spaces, the typical house is based on an antiquated and institutionalized model. The prototypical organization of this model includes a series of public shared spaces that occupy the main level, and a series of private sleeping spaces that are located on upper levels. In the case of a single level residence, the public and private spaces are buffered laterally rather than vertically. In each case, privacy is paramount with respect to both the interior and exterior spaces. In fact, the same concern for privacy expressed by the separation of dwelling units on individual lots can be seen within the realm of the compartmentalized interior, which is comprised of segmented and relatively detached spaces where individual members of families seek seclusion from other relatives, eroding the

bonds that characterize the “nuclear family.” The compartmentalization of space and its occupants defines a specific psychological context that has a significant impact on the social relations between family members.

The film *American Beauty*⁴ deals with this psychological territory of the prototypical suburban home. Behind the apparent normalcy of the suburban façade dwells a series of bizarre, deviant and perhaps even pathological emotions and behaviors. The film reveals how the repression of these pathologies, which accompanies the struggle to maintain the appearance of “normalcy,” results in the intermittent and explosive discharge of deviant behavior into the streets and front pages of contemporary life. The mother figure (Carolyn Burnham), played by Annette Benning, expresses this repression through an obsession with the tidiness of the interior spaces and especially the front yard. The yard is a critical device as it is an outward expression of the family’s values and their alignment with the ubiquitous



standards that define the order and character of the prototypical private home. In this case, the obsession with conformity, the pressure to “keep up with the Joneses,” has supplanted Carolyn’s concern for her relationships with both her husband and child. The erosion of the relationships between family members renders each person as an isolated and desensitized automaton, simply going through the prescribed motions of life. The trajectories of each individual intermittently intersect one

distract: *My attention was diverted by an argument between motorists.* To entertain by distracting the attention from worrisome thoughts or cares; amuse. See Synonyms at **amuse** **Converse** - Reversed, as in position, order, or action; **contrary** **Logic.** A proposition obtained by conversion. To engage in a spoken **exchange** of thoughts, **ideas,** or **feelings;** talk. See Synonyms at **speak.** **Archaic.** To be familiar; associate. **Perform** - To begin and carry through to completion; do: *The surgeon performed the operation.* To take **action** in accordance with the requirements of; fulfill: *perform one's contractual obligations.* To enact (a feat or role) before an audience. To give a public presentation of; **present:** *My theater group performed a three-act play.* The entertainment room supports the reception of and interaction with guest, both literal and virtual. The entertainment module simultaneously supports literal interaction between people and the virtual interaction provided by the electronic systems that comprise the “media room.” **Supply** - To **make available** for use; provide. To furnish or **equip** with: *supplied sheets for*

every bed. To **fill** sufficiently; **satisfy**: supply a need. To make up for (a deficiency, for example); **compensate** for. To serve temporarily as a **substitute** in (a church, for example). **Make** - To cause to exist or happen; bring about; create: *made problems for us*; *making a commotion*. To bring into existence by **shaping**, modifying, or putting together material; **construct**: *make a dress*; *made a stone wall*. To form by assembling individuals or constituents: *make a quorum*. To **change** from one form or function to another: *make clay into bricks*. To cause to be or become: *made her position clear*; *a decision that made him happy*. To cause to assume a specified **function** or role: *made her treasurer*; *made Austin his home*. To cause to act in a specified manner: *Heat makes gases expand*. To compel: *made him quit*. To form in the mind: *make an estimate*. To compose: *make verses*. To **prepare**; fix: *make dinner*. To get ready or set in order for use: *made the bed*. To gather and light the materials for (a fire). To engage in: *make war*. To **carry out**; perform: *make a phone call*; *make an incision*. To achieve, produce, or attain: *made peace between the two sides*; *not making sense*; *didn't make the quota*. To institute or establish; enact: *make laws*. To draw up and execute in a suitable form: *make a will*. To **arrange** or agree to: *make a date*. To arrive at; reach: *made Seattle in two hours*. To reach in time: *just made the plane*. To attain the rank or position of: *made lieutenant*. To acquire a place in or on: *made the baseball team*; *made the newspapers*. To gain or earn, as by working: *make money*. To behave so as to acquire: *make friends*. To score or achieve, as in a sport: *made a field goal*. To assure the success of: *Favorable reviews can make a play*. To favor the development of: *Practice makes a winning team*. To be suited for: *Oak makes strong furniture*. To develop into: *will make a fine doctor*. To draw a conclusion as to the significance or nature of: *don't know what to make of the decision*. To calculate as being; estimate: *I make the height 20 feet*. To consider as being: *wasn't the problem some people made it*. To constitute: *Ten members make a quorum*. To add up to: *Two and two make four*. To amount to: *makes no difference*. To cover (a distance): *made 200 miles before sunset*. To constitute the essence or nature of: *Clothes make the man*. To cause to be especially enjoyable or rewarding: *You made my day*. To appear to begin (an action): *She made to leave*. **Slang**. To persuade to have sexual intercourse. **Available** - **Present** and **ready** for use; at hand; accessible: *kept a fire extinguisher available at all times*. Capable of being gotten; obtainable: *a bedspread available in three colors*. Qualified and willing to be of service or assistance: *a list of available candidates*; *was not available for comment*. **Chemistry**. Capable of being used in a chemical reaction: *available electrons*. **Botany**. Present, as in soil, and capable of being used by plants as a nutrient: *available water*; *available minerals*. **Archaic**. Capable of bringing about a beneficial result or effect. **Law**. Valid. Used especially of a plea. **Equip** - To supply with necessities such as **tools** or **provisions**. To furnish with the qualities necessary for performance: *an education that will equip you to handle such problems*. See Synonyms at **furnish**. To **dress up**. **Fill** - To put into (a container, for example) as much as can be held: *fill a glass with milk*. To supply or provide to the fullest extent: *filled the mall with new stores*. To build up the level of (low-lying land) with material such as earth or gravel. To stop or plug up (an opening, for example). To repair a cavity of (a tooth). To **add** a foreign substance to (cloth or wood, for example). To **satisfy**, as with food and drink. To **satisfy** or meet; fulfill: *fill the requirements*. See Synonyms at **satisfy**. To complete (something) by insertion or addition: *fill in the blanks*. To supply with material, such as writing, an inscription, or an illustration: *filled the blank spaces on the page with notes*. To supply as required: *fill a prescription*; *fill an order*. To place a person in: *fill a job vacancy*. To possess and discharge the duties of; hold: *fill a post*. To occupy the whole of; pervade: *Music filled the room*. To spread throughout: *Fear filled the city*. To engage or occupy completely; make full: *filled the child's mind with strange ideas*; *a story that filled our hearts with joy*. To cover the surface of (an inexpensive metal) with a layer of precious metal, such as gold. **Nautical**. To cause (a sail) to swell. To adjust (a yard) so that wind will cause a sail to swell. **Satisfy** - To gratify the need, desire, or expectation of. To **fulfill** (a need or desire). To free from doubt or question; assure. To get rid of (a doubt or question); dispel. To discharge (a debt or obligation, for example) in full. To discharge an obligation to (a creditor). To **conform** to the requirements of (a standard

another, reinforcing the myth of the family while simultaneously providing moments of tension and angst derived from the dysfunctional nature of their relationships. The master bedroom is represented as one of these places of angst, where Carolyn and Kevin Spacey's character (Lester Burnham) share an intimate space in a physical sense, but are lost, and clearly worlds apart in a psychological sense. The fact that these individuals are completely detached emotionally, and at the same time, share the intimate space of the bed is a poignant irony.

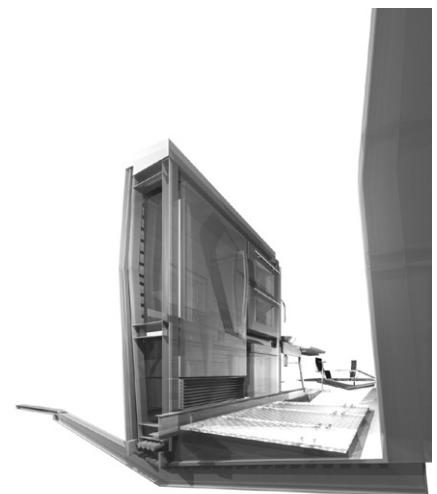
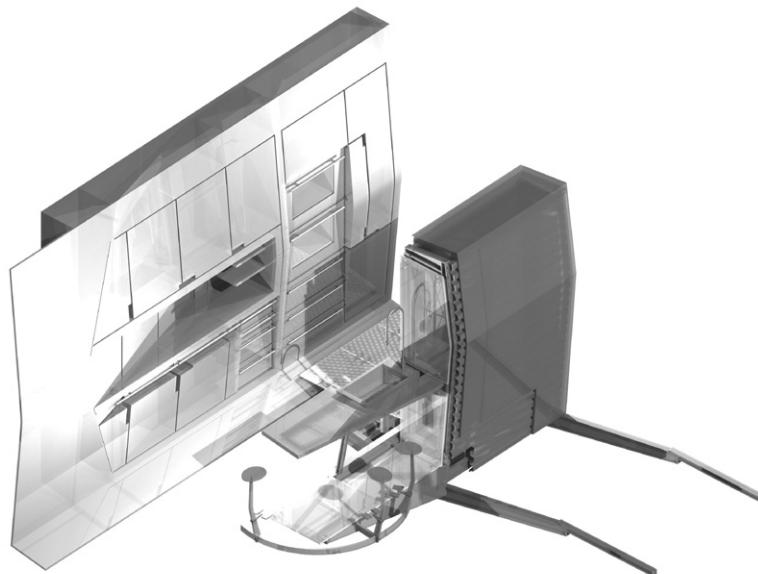
In a similar scene, the family is seated at the dining room table, outwardly fulfilling the stereotype of the dining room as a place where the family comes together to discuss the day's events and share in each other's lives. This stereotype quickly dissolves as Lester announces his mid-life crisis to the family, introducing an element of instability, a rupture in the fabric of stereotypical suburban life. In this scene it is clear that an enormous gulf exists between the prescribed manner in which the family has been programmed to occupy domestic space and the actual manner in which the family lives. This divide between the stereotype and reality is further represented in a scene in which Lester

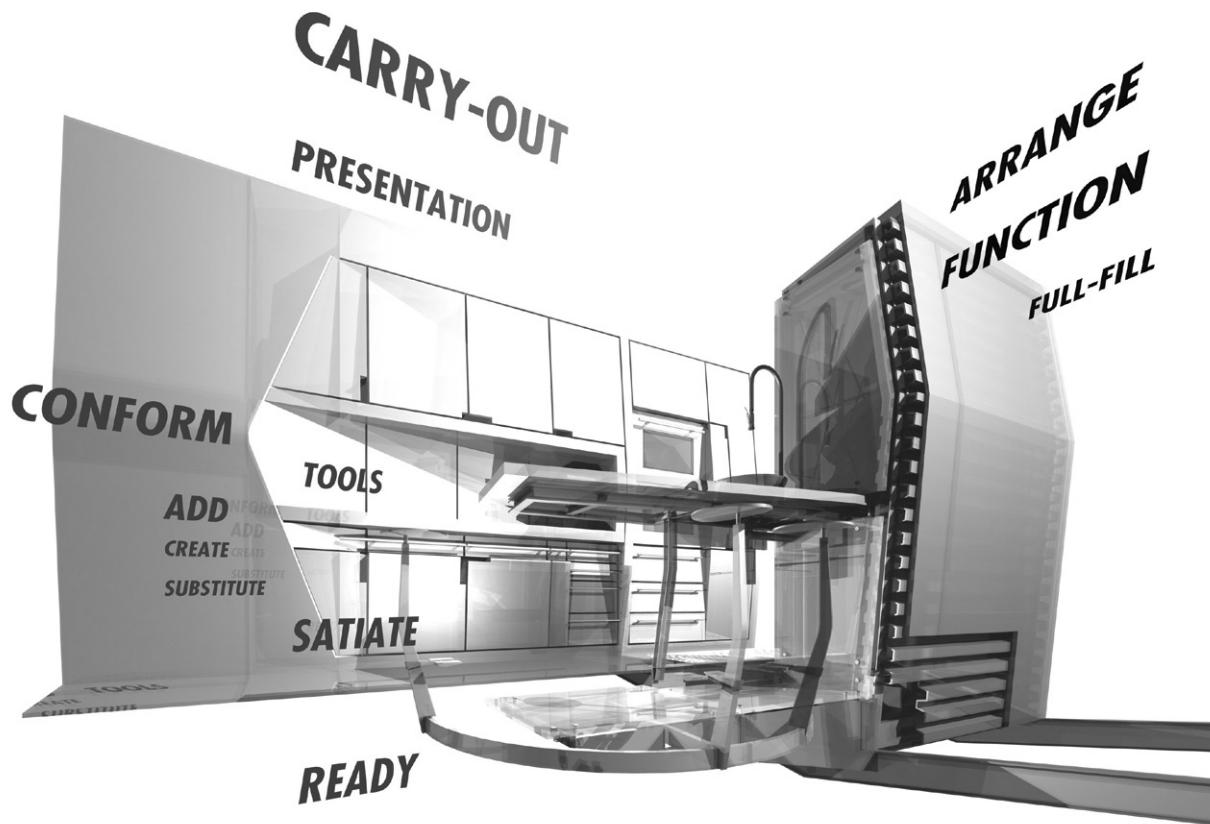
and Carolyn momentarily rediscover their true feelings for one another in the living room. This connection is abruptly severed as a result of Carolyn's concern over an open beverage that threatens to spoil the pristine but hollow character of the living room. Again, the living room is clearly represented as a place where spontaneous life is supplanted by a programmed existence that renders the home ineffective as a space that nurtures real and positive social relations. Carolyn's preconception of proper etiquette in the living room is linked directly to the dominant and ubiquitous expectations of the physical nature of the home as well as expectations that define how people function in and experience domestic space. In the case of *American Beauty*, these institutional expectations of behavior and occupation have supplanted natural and fluid experiences.

Ultimately Lester is relegated to the garage in order to live out his new and independent existence, rejecting the institutional standards that have controlled his life up to that point. It is no coincidence that the attached garage is one of the newest spaces to be added to the domestic program, and consequently one of the least entrenched and most flexible of spaces. *American Beauty* portrays

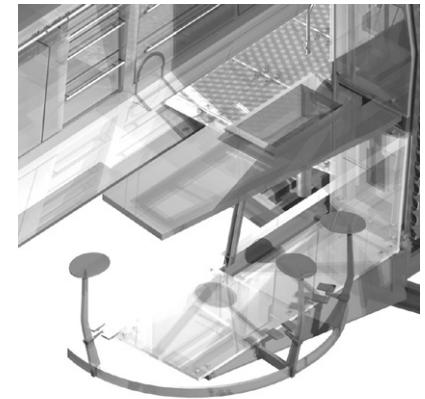
the notion that the interior realm of the typical private home, entrenched in institutional standards, fosters behavioral patterns that sacrifice natural and spontaneous life in favor of a programmed and stereotypical existence that can only lead to disassociation, unhappiness, turmoil and the erosion of the semi-public realm in which families interact. *American Beauty* leaves little doubt that domestic space needs to be reconsidered as a system that promotes fluid and open interaction between people, fostering a series of dynamic events that allow people to express values and feelings that are particular, not generic and stereotypical.

Working from the interior of the typical private home outward into the exterior realm of the street, it is clear that the feeling of isolation and disassociation is also evident in the articulation of the public realm, or the community as a physical environment. Literal interaction in the public realm has been displaced as the home is increasingly seen as a place where the family retreats from the community into the private domestic realm. Concurrent with this physical retreat into the home, relatively new systems of interface made possible by the personal computer and high speed communications networks





or rule); be sufficient to (an end). To make reparation for; redress. *Mathematics*. To make the left and right sides of an equation equal after substituting equivalent quantities for the unknown variables in the equation. **Compensate** - To offset; counterbalance. To make satisfactory payment or reparation to; recompense or reimburse: *Management compensated us for the time we worked*. To stabilize the purchasing power of (a monetary unit) by changing the gold content in order to counterbalance price variations. To make equal return to; to remunerate; to recompense; to give an equivalent to; to requite suitably; as, to compensate a laborer for his work, or a merchant for his losses. To be equivalent in value or effect to; to counterbalance; to make up for; to make amends for. The length of the night and the dews thereof do compensate the heat of the day. --Bacon. The pleasures of life do not compensate the miseries. --Prior. **Substitute** - One that takes the place of another; a replacement: "Fantasies are more than substitutes for unpleasant reality" (Barbara Grizzuti Harrison). *Grammar*. A word



provide opportunities for new forms of "public" interaction that is ambiguous and highly mediated. Even the equivocal space of the automobile is complicity in rendering public space increasingly ambiguous, as the car functions as a private device operating within public infrastructure. These instruments comprise networks that allow people to interact as detached individuals within a larger mediated "community." The new notion of community is no longer subject to the restraints of physical proximity as technology allows for dynamic arrangements based in the fluid and virtually unlimited organizations of people made possible by technology. Given the significant impact technology has had on our lives one would expect to find clear transformations of the private home that come as a direct result of technological forces. Thus, it is highly problematic that technological systems of organization

are almost completely invisible in the typical private home. Aside from the omnipresent satellite dish and cable/telephone utilities, the home has largely resisted the incorporation of media based technology into the constitutional organization and language of the architecture. Consequently, any sense of a new definition of public space is marginalized in the typical private home, further reinforcing a sense of withdrawal and disassociation from the public realm.

Yet, in spite of the overwhelming sense of disassociation, and in spite of the fact that the private home seems to have disengaged from the articulation of the public realm in a physical and spatial sense, and even though the private home resists the expression of new organizational systems made possible by technology and media, there still seems to be a strong ordering system that suggests a sense of

continuity and represents a common interest shared by the vast majority of families in housing communities. To see this ordering principal expressed in formal terms, one needs only to peruse the Sunday real estate section of any newspaper across America. Image after image, page after page, it becomes clear that new housing stock is clearly influenced by a strong set of standards that produce highly repetitive and consistent buildings. These formal standards, along with the programmed and stereotypical manner in which most people inhabit homes, seem to constitute a form of social organization that has replaced the notion of physical community and public space as the organizer of life in suburbia. Given this hypothesis, it is critical to develop an understanding of why families are content with the knowledge that they are living in virtually the same home that each of their neighbors live in, and acting out virtually the same life

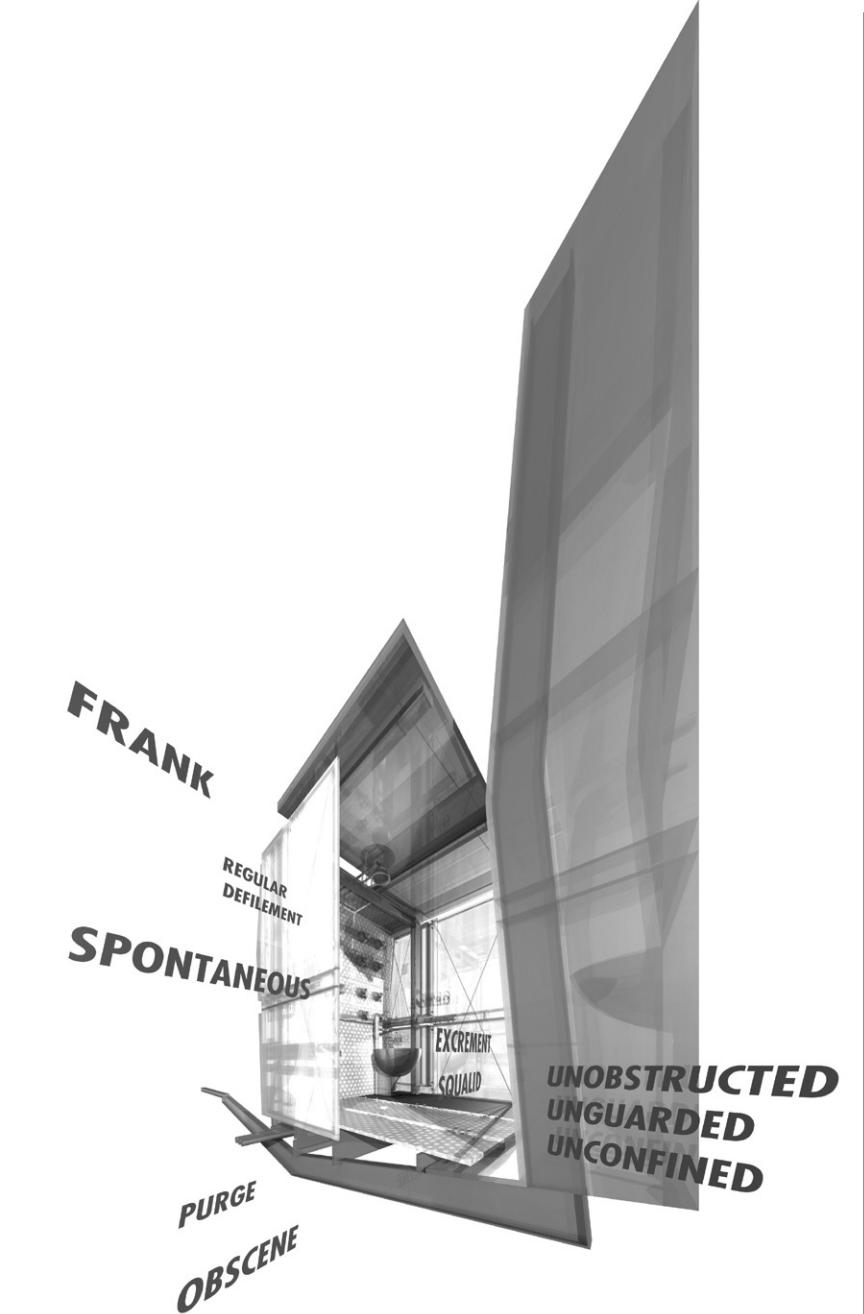
or construction used in place of another word, phrase, or clause. One who, or that which, is substituted or put in the place of another; one who acts for another; that which stands in lieu of something else; specifically (Mil.), a person who enlists for military service in the place of a conscript or drafted man. **Cleanse** - To free from dirt, defilement, or guilt; purge or clean. **Free** - Not imprisoned or enslaved; being at liberty. Not controlled by obligation or the will of another: *felt free to go*. Having political independence: "America... is the freest and wealthiest nation in the world" (Rudolph W. Giuliani). Governed by consent and possessing or granting civil liberties: *a free citizenry*. Not subject to arbitrary interference by a government: *a free press*. Not affected or restricted by a given condition or circumstance: *a healthy animal, free of disease; free from need*. Not subject to a given condition, exempt: *income that is free of all taxes*. Not subject to external restraint: "Comment is free but facts are sacred" (Charles Prestwich Scott). Not literal or exact: *a free translation*. Costing nothing; gratuitous: *a free meal*. Publicly supported: *free education*. Not occupied or used: *a free locker*. Not taken up by scheduled activities: *free time between classes*. Unobstructed; clear: *a free lane*. Unguarded in expression or manner; open; frank. Taking undue liberties; forward or overfamiliar. Liberal or lavish: *tourists who are free with their money*. Given, made, or done of one's own accord; voluntary or spontaneous: *a free act of the will; free choices*. *Chemistry & Physics*. Unconstrained; unconfined: *free expansion*. Not fixed in position; capable of relatively unrestricted motion: *a free electron*. Not chemically bound in a molecule: *free oxygen*. Involving no collisions or interactions: *a free path*. Empty: *a free space*. Unoccupied: *a free energy level*. *Nautical*. Favorable: *a free wind*. Not bound, fastened, or attached: *the free end of a chain*. *Linguistics*. Being a form, especially a morpheme, that can stand as an independent word, such as *boat* or *bring*. Being a vowel in an open syllable, as the o in *go*. **Dirt** - Earth or soil. A filthy or soiling substance, such as

mud or dust. Excrement. A squalid or filthy condition. One that is mean, contemptible, or vile. Obscene language or subject matter. Malicious or scandalous gossip. Information that embarrasses or accuses. Unethical behavior or practice; corruption. Material, such as gravel or slag, from which metal is extracted in mining. **Defilement** - A narrow gorge or pass that restricts lateral movement, as of troops. A march in a line. To make filthy or dirty; pollute: *defile a river with sewage*. To debase the pureness or excellence of; corrupt: *a country landscape that was defiled by urban sprawl*. To profane or sully (a reputation, for example). To make unclean or unfit for ceremonial use; desecrate: *defile a temple*. To violate the chastity of. **Guilt** - The fact of being responsible for the commission of an offense. See Synonyms at **blame**. **Law**. Culpability for a crime or lesser breach of regulations that carries a legal penalty. Remorseful awareness of having done something wrong. Self-reproach for supposed inadequacy or wrongdoing. Guilty conduct; sin. **Purge** - To free from impurities; purify. To remove (impurities and other elements) by or as if by cleansing. To rid of sin, guilt, or defilement. **Law**. To clear (a person) of a charge or an imputation. Often used with respect to contempt of court. To rid (a nation or political party, for example) of people considered undesirable. To get rid of (people considered undesirable). See Synonyms at **eliminate**. **Medicine**. To cause evacuation of (the bowels). To induce evacuation of the bowels in (an individual). **Clean** - Free from dirt, stain, or impurities; unsoiled. Free from foreign matter or pollution; unadulterated: *clean air*; *clean drinking water*. Not infected: *a clean wound*. Producing relatively little pollution: *a clean fuel*; *a cleaner, more efficient engine*. Producing relatively little radioactive fallout or contamination: *a clean nuclear bomb*. Having no imperfections or blemishes; regular or even: *a clean edge*; *a smooth, clean joint*. Not ornate or intricate; spare: "the clean lines and exquisite proportions of early modernism" (Judith Thurman). Sharply defined; clear-cut: *a clean outline against the sky*. Free from clumsiness; deft; adroit: *a clean throw*. Devoid of restrictions or encumbrances: *a clean bill of health*. Thorough; complete: *a clean getaway*. Having few alterations or corrections; legible: *clean manuscript*. Blank: *a clean page*. Morally pure; virtuous: *led a clean life*. Having no marks of discredit or offense: *a clean voting record*. Fit for all readers, listeners, or audiences; not ribald or obscene: *a clean joke*. Honest or fair: *a clean fighter*; *a clean competition*. **Slang**. Not carrying concealed weapons or drugs. Innocent of a suspected crime. **Informal**. Free from narcotics addiction. Showing no evidence of using banned or performance-enhancing substances: *proven to be clean before the race*. **Rest** - Cessation of work, **exertion**, or activity. **Peace**, **ease**, or **refreshment** resulting from sleep or the cessation of an activity. Sleep or quiet **relaxation**. The **repose** of death: *eternal rest*. **Relief** or **freedom** from disquiet or disturbance. Mental or **emotional tranquility**. Termination or absence of motion. **Music**. An **interval** of silence corresponding to one of the possible time values within a measure. The mark or symbol indicating such a pause and its length. A short **pause** in a line of poetry; a caesura. A device used as a **support**: *a back rest*. **Games**. See **bridge**. **Exertion** - The act of exerting, or putting into motion or **action**; the active exercise of any power or faculty; an effort, esp. a laborious or perceptible effort; as, an exertion of strength or power; an exertion of the limbs or of the mind; it is an exertion for him to move, to-day. **Peace** - The absence of war or other hostilities. An agreement or a treaty to end hostilities. Freedom from quarrels and disagreement; harmonious relations: *roommates living in peace with each other*. Public **security** and order: *was arrested for disturbing the peace*. **Inner** contentment; serenity: *peace of mind*. **Ease** - The condition of being **comfortable** or relieved. **Freedom** from pain, worry, or agitation: *Her mind was at ease knowing that the children were safe*. Freedom from constraint or embarrassment; naturalness. Freedom from difficulty, hardship, or effort: *rose through the ranks with apparent ease*. Readiness or dexterity in performance; **facility**: *a pianist who played the sonata with ease*. Freedom from financial difficulty; affluence: *a life of luxury and ease*. A state of rest, relaxation, or leisure: *He took his ease by the pond*. **Refresh** - To **revive** with or as if with rest, food, or drink; give new **vigor** or **spirit** to. To give new freshness or **brightness** to; restore. To make **cool**, clean, or moist; freshen up. To renew by **stimulation**: *refresh one's memory*. To **fill up** again; replenish: *refresh a drink*. **Computer Science**. To renew (the image

as their counterparts? How does the desire for a detached, private home and the consequent individuality coexist with the knowledge that the majority of families dwell in a home that represents a complete alignment with the consensus?

The Standard Package...Breaching the Consensus

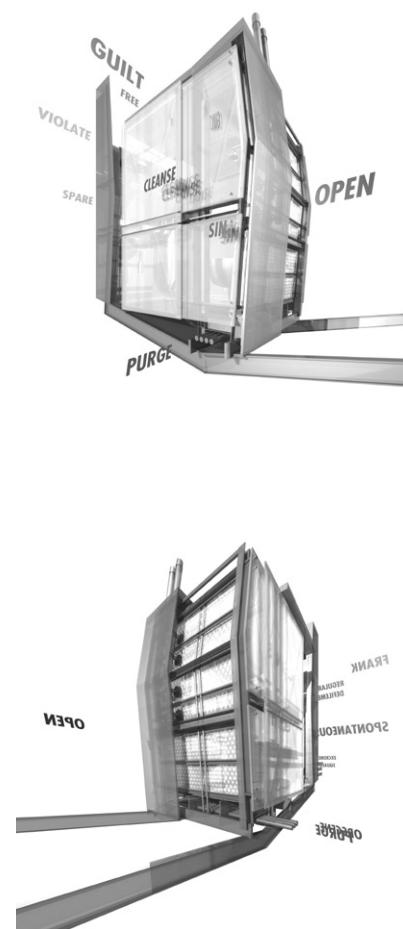
In David Fincher's *Fight Club*⁵ the home of Edward Norton's character (Jack Erzähler) is introduced by panning through the interior spaces while highlighting furniture and objects, revealing the manufacturer, dimensions and price of each item. The architecture is filtered, repressing into the background, becoming an abstract, homogenized and inert container for the consumption and collection of things. The products within the home are primarily responsible for articulating the private realm, establishing spatial character and identity just as they represent the personal identity of the owner. Consequently, the architecture has been stripped of its role as a definer of character and experience. Yet the furniture and bric-a-brac, the givers of ambiance, are largely products of consumer society, leaving the individual realm of the home to be defined by standard mass-produced objects that exist simultaneously in millions of other homes as well as on the cover of the catalog sitting on the coffee table. This scene expresses the dominant condition of contemporary domestic space, which has been simplified, stripped of intention, complexity or detail, made predictable and mute in much the same way that the standardization of the planning and aesthetics of the private home have stripped architecture of its organizational intention and specificity. The home is simply another component of our consumer culture, a mass-produced object that is fundamentally similar to an automobile, an armoire or a hamburger; the ultimate big-ticket item.



In *Fight Club*, corporate politics and consumer culture are criticized as devices that have enslaved the masses, and stripped individuals of the power of self-determination. The dominance of capitalism and consumerism over our society is significant. Consumers rely so heavily on capitalist commodities in order to represent their personal identities that it is increasingly difficult to reject the powerful restraints imposed by capitalism. In *Fight Club*,

Jack muses about "what kind of dining set defines me as an individual," suggesting the powerful affect consumer culture has on the expression of the self in contemporary life.

David Riesman wrote extensively on the development and maturation of consumer society in America during the mid-twentieth century, helping to dismantle the myth that individuals are responsible for creating their par-



on a display screen) by renewing the flow of electrons from the cathode-ray tube: *The faster a monitor refreshes images, the less it flickers.* To maintain (data in a dynamic RAM) by sending a new electric pulse to recharge the chips. **Relax** - To make lax or **loose**: *relax one's grip.* To make less severe or strict: *relax a curfew.* To reduce in intensity; slacken: *relax one's efforts.* To relieve from tension or strain: *The warm bath relaxed me.* **Repose** - The act of resting or the state of being at rest. Freedom from worry; peace of mind. **Calmness**; tranquility. **Relief** - The **easing** of a burden or distress, such as pain, anxiety, or oppression. Something that alleviates pain or distress. Public assistance. Aid in time of danger, especially rescue from siege. Release from a post or duty, as that of sentinel. One who releases another by taking over a post or duty. A pleasant or amusing change; a **diversion**. The **projection** of figures or forms from a flat background, as in sculpture, or the apparent projection of such shapes in a painting or drawing. A work of art featuring such projection. Also called **relievo**. **Geology**. The variations in elevation of an area of the earth's surface. Distinction or prominence due to contrast: "The light brought the white church... into relief from the flat ledges" (Willa Cather). **Law**. Redress awarded by a court. **Baseball**. The pitching done by a relief pitcher: *gave the team two innings of excellent relief.* A payment made by the heir of a deceased tenant to a feudal lord for the privilege of succeeding to the tenant's estate. **Freedom** - The condition of being free of restraints. Liberty of the person from slavery, detention, or oppression. Political independence. Exemption from the arbitrary exercise of authority in the performance of a specific action; civil liberty: *freedom of assembly.* Exemption from an unpleasant or onerous condition: *freedom from want.* The capacity to exercise **choice**; free will: *We have the freedom to do as we please all afternoon.* Ease or facility of movement: *loose sports clothing, giving the wearer freedom.* Frankness or boldness; lack of modesty or reserve: *the new freedom in movies and novels.* The right to **unrestricted** use; full access: *was given the freedom of their research facilities.* The right of enjoying all of the privileges of membership or citizenship: *the freedom of the city.* A right or the power to engage in certain actions without control or interference: "the seductive freedoms and excesses of the picaresque form" (John W. Aldridge). **Tranquility** - a disposition free from stress or emotion [syn: **repose**, **quiet**, **placidity**, **serenity**] 2: a state of peace and **quiet** [syn: **tranquility**, **quietness**, **quietude**] **Interval** - A space **between** two objects, points, or units. The amount of time between two specified instants, events, or **states**. One of a series of predetermined distances covered at **regular** time **increments** with intermittent periods of rest in an athletic workout. **Mathematics**. A set of numbers consisting of all the numbers between a pair of given numbers along with either, both, or none of the endpoints. A closed interval. An open interval. A half-open interval. A line segment representing the set of numbers in an interval. **Chiefly British**. An **intermission**, as between acts of a play. **Music**. The difference, usually expressed in the number of steps, between two pitches. **Pause** - To cease or **suspend** an action temporarily. To linger; tarry: *paused for a while under the huge oak tree.* To hesitate: *He paused before replying.* **Support** - To **bear** the weight of, especially from below. To **hold** in position so as to keep from falling, sinking, or slipping. To be capable of bearing; withstand: "His flaw'd heart... too weak the conflict to support" (Shakespeare). To keep from weakening or falling; strengthen: *The letter supported him in his grief.* To provide for or maintain, by supplying with money or necessities. To furnish corroborating evidence for: *New facts supported her story.* To aid the cause, policy, or interests of: *supported her in her election campaign.* To argue in favor of; advocate: *supported lower taxes.* To endure; tolerate: "At supper there was such a conflux of company that I could scarcely support the tumult" (Samuel Johnson). To act in a secondary or subordinate role to (a leading performer). **Storage** - The act of **storing** goods or the state of being stored. A **space** for storing goods. The price charged for keeping goods stored. The **charging** or **regenerating** of a storage battery. **Computer Science**. The part of a computer that stores **information** for subsequent use or retrieval. **Store** - A place where merchandise is offered for sale; a shop. A **stock** or supply reserved for future use: *a squirrel's store of acorns.* **stores** Supplies, especially of food, clothing, or arms. A place where commodities are **kept**; a warehouse or storehouse. A great quantity or number;

ticular identities. Rather, he believed that consumers define their identities by relying on complex external systems that develop within capitalist systems, including industry, the media and peer groups.⁶ In fact, according to Riesman, a large segment of our population is made up of "other-directed" people, or people that tend to make decisions and establish values by relying on the collective judgment of society. In *Fight Club*, Brad Pitt's character (Tyler Durden) describes consumer products as by-products as a lifestyle obsession that has infected contemporary society. "We used to read pornography, now we read the Horchow Collection."

Riesman describes consumption not as a pleasant experience, but rather as a cathartic process that eases the

psychological anxiety associated with "keeping up with the Joneses".⁷ But consumers must proceed with caution as they seek catharsis because according to Tyler Durden, "the things we own end up owning us." Once initiated into the culture of consumption, we rapidly lose our will and sense of self-determination, becoming other-directed. In this case the direction comes from industry and the ubiquitous media. The notion of other-directedness suggests an interesting strategy for resolving the paradox of individuality and freedom contained within a framework dominated by consensus and conformity. In fact, Riesman explains that within peer groups there exists a competitiveness that is based in a search for approval by other members, similar

to the approval exhibited in a beauty or popularity contest. However, the competition is subtle and does not challenge the authority of the consensus as it is only intended to express marginal differences necessary to represent the myth of individuality while garnering approval.

Thus other-directed people are comfortable with subtle differentiation, such as the color of a car, as a means of representing freedom and individuality. All the while they are becoming homogenized members of a consumption based social system that is grounded by the expectation to conform to the overarching expectations of industry and others around us. In this case, the normative standards of a society reside in the consensus opinion of group

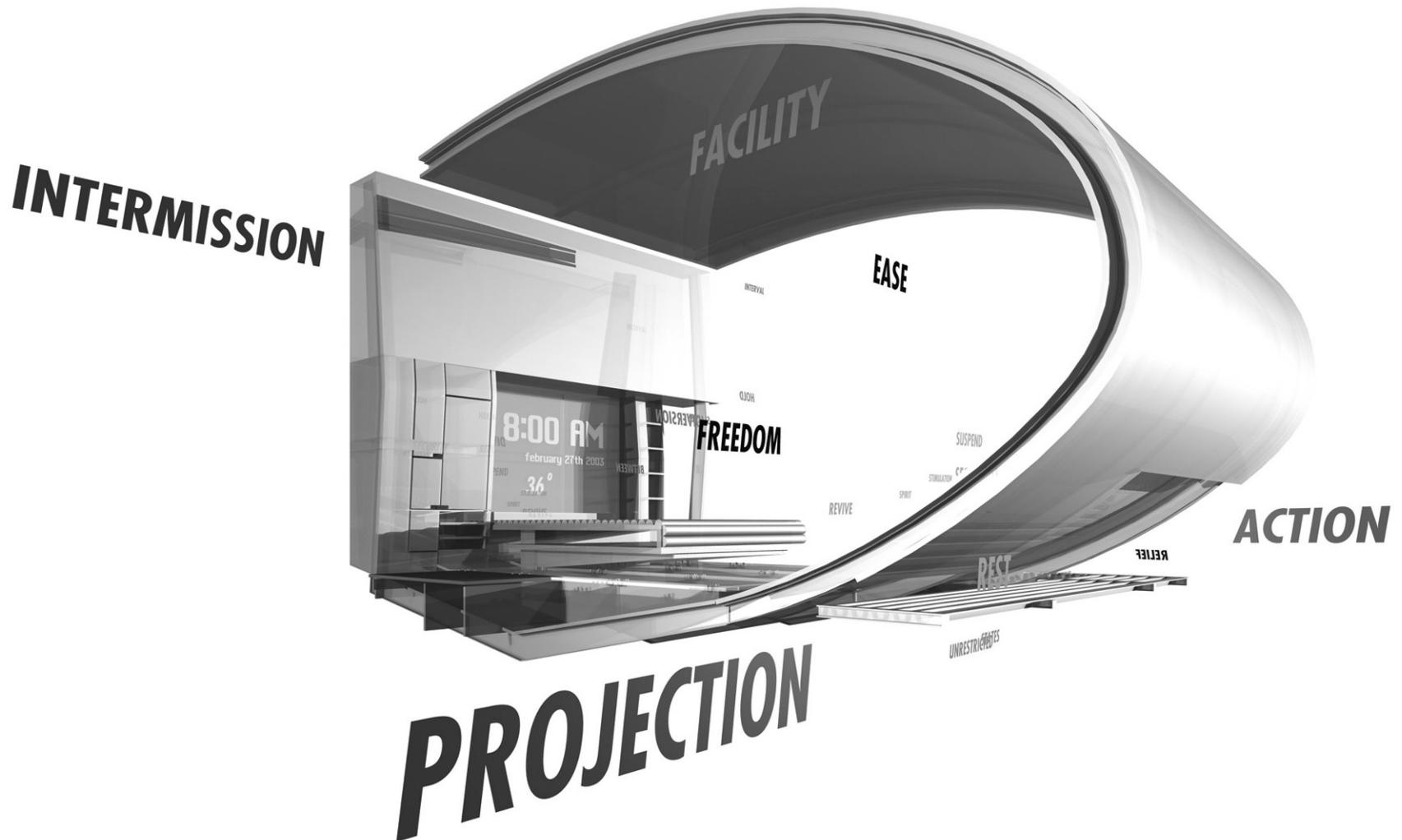
an abundance. *tr. v.* **stored, stor-ing**, stores To **reserve** or put away for future use. To fill, supply, or stock. To deposit or receive in a storehouse or warehouse for safekeeping. *Computer Science.* To **copy** (data) into memory or onto a storage device, such as a hard disk. **Space -Mathematics.** A set of elements or points satisfying specified geometric postulates: *non-Euclidean space.* The infinite **extension** of the three-dimensional region in which all matter exists. The expanse in which the solar system, stars, and galaxies exist; the universe. The region of this expanse beyond Earth's atmosphere. An extent or expanse of a surface or three-dimensional area: *Water covered a large space at the end of the valley.* A blank or **empty** area: *the spaces between words.* An area provided for a particular purpose: *a parking space.* Reserved or available accommodation on a public transportation vehicle. A period or interval of time. A little while: *Let's rest for a space.* Sufficient freedom from external pressure to develop or explore one's needs, interests, and individuality: "The need for personal space inevitably asserts itself" (Maggie Scarf). *Music.* One of the intervals between the lines of a staff. *Printing.* One of the blank pieces of type or other means used for separating words or characters. One of the intervals during the telegraphic transmission of a

members. What individuals seek is approval from other peer members because they fear "breaching the consensus."⁸ They fear the prospect of being displaced from the very source of their identity, being thrown into the unfamiliar realm of self-determination.

Borrowing the notion of "other-directedness" from Riesman, it is possible to frame an understanding of contemporary housing stock as other-directed housing. The typical home is not considered as a site for exploring and articulating the specific values of a particular family,

but rather as a device for symbolizing a families association with a predetermined consensus, and thus accounting for the ubiquitous and repetitive nature of our suburbs. Simple manipulations such as the color of window shutters or a mirrored plan are significant enough to establish the subtle differentiation necessary for individual expression. The manipulation of the home is similar to the customization of an automobile in that it provides just enough freedom and choice to personalize the product while simultaneously maintaining its integrity as a mass-produced and

highly profitable consumer product. Customization strategies employed by residential developers are similar to those employed by large automobile manufacturers, which typically control a series of automobile lines. This allows the manufacturer to use one chassis and mechanical system as a platform for several stylistically distinct automobiles. Just as the Ford Escape and the Land Rover Freelander are built on the same platform, housing developers wrap the same plan in Colonial, Tudor, Mediterranean or some other veneer, again achieving subtle differentiation.



In the case of other-directed housing, the urge to maintain the appearance of “fitting in” accounts for the ubiquitous state of the contemporary private home. As Riesman infers, it is easier to accept the standards of the consensus than it is to struggle with the development of one’s own opinions and attitudes. Self-determination often involves questioning and challenging accepted standards, which is hard work. After all, in *American Beauty* Lester Burnham ends up paying for his liberation from other-directedness with his life. On the other hand, being

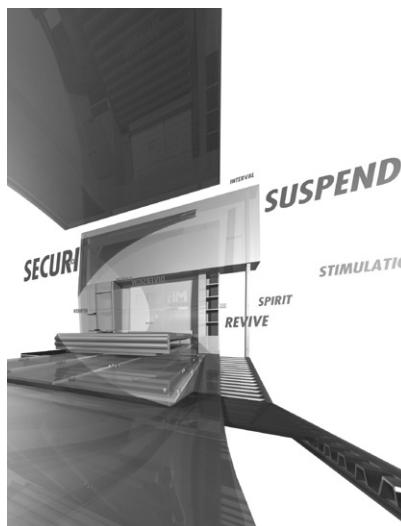
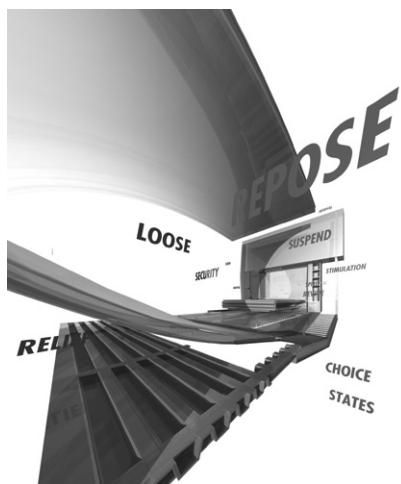
other directed allows one to easily adopt a set of values that are pre-determined and reinforced by the immediate world around us, which in large part is defined by our peer class and the media. This reinforcement creates a sense of belonging and provides a strong sense of confidence that one’s decisions and values are “correct.” This sense of confidence is exacerbated by the powerful and ubiquitous messages of mass media. The messages of consumer culture are repeated so frequently that we simply accept them as fact, and this rule does not only apply to sneakers, it also applies to the houses we live in.

Push aside the veil of confidence for a moment and it becomes clear that the more we know, the less we seem to understand. Today, the accelerated development of human knowledge has created a difficult and often contradictory context within which one establishes beliefs. Yet this complex terrain seems to be dominated by the simplistic and outmoded need to appear as if one still has the answers, and is in total control. Consequently, the belief one subscribes to becomes unquestionable and absolute, regardless of any evidence that supports contrary opinion. Again, this belief is reinforced by the media or other forms of propaganda, and becomes taken for granted. This arrogance provides a sense of comfort while repressing the ability to question, learn and move closer to an informed and comprehensive understanding of life. In *Fight Club*, Jack Ersahler describes how comfortable his home was, how it was so close to being complete. Tyler Durden questions the arrogance of the notion that the domestic space was complete by suggesting that we should, in fact, never be complete and should stop trying to achieve perfection. Perfection and completeness implies a sense of closure that governs our ability to grow as individuals. In *Fight Club*, Tyler discusses the illusion of safety inherent in the idea of an emergency

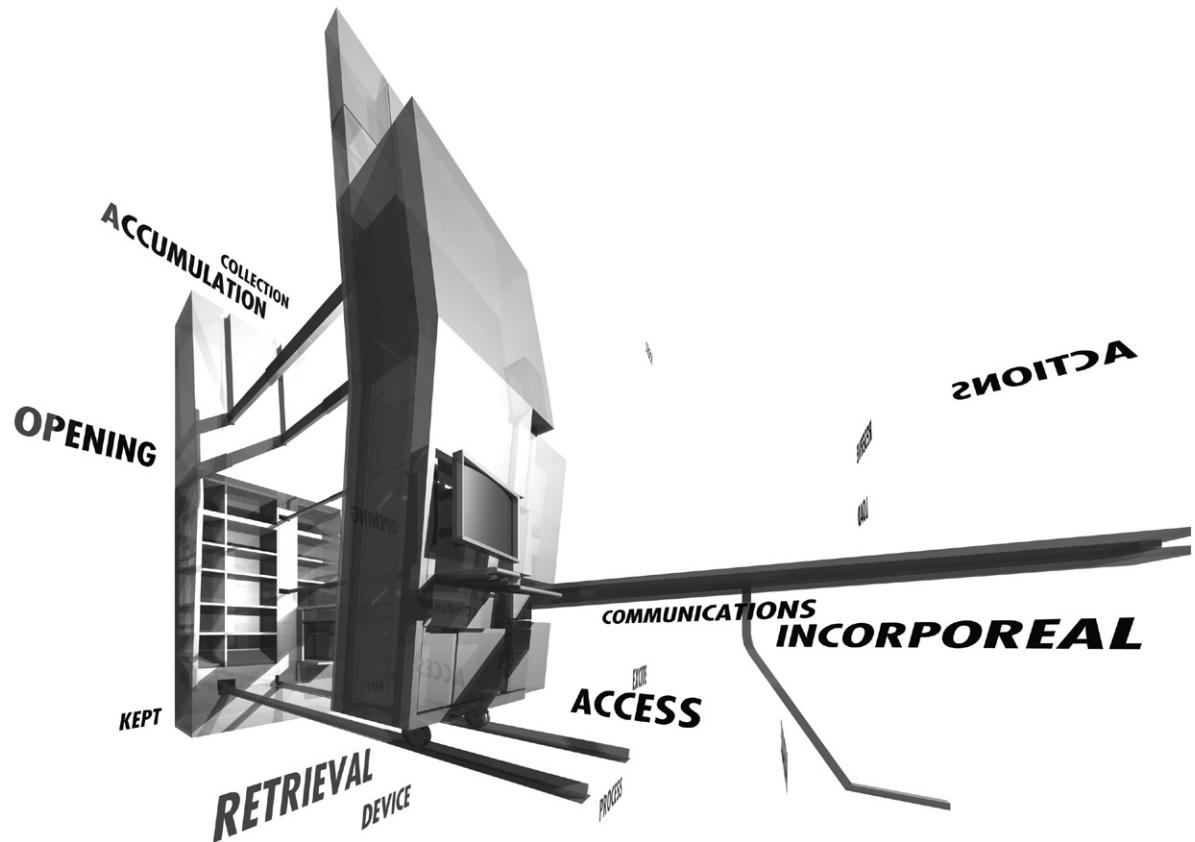
exit on an airliner traveling six hundred miles an hour at thirty thousand feet. The oxygen masks, also provided for passenger’s safety, deliver enough of the gas to make one euphoric, docile and prepared to accept one’s fate. The fate of consumers is the loss of control inherent in the chase of perfection. As D’Souza states, “For a long time it had seemed to me that life was about to begin, real life. But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to be gotten through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served, a debt to be paid. Then life would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life.”⁹ In the obsessive quest for completion, many miss out on the complexity and spontaneity that is life.

Jack Ersahler’s condominium, and all the prized possessions contained within, represents the sanitization and homogenization of domestic space in a quest to achieve apparent perfection and closure of life. The home has been reduced to an inert container for the collection of mass produced objects, and has become a consumer object in itself. The home is both part of and constitutes its own subset of what David Riesman defined as the “Standard Package.”¹⁰ The standard package is comprised of the set of consumer products that we as consumers are conditioned to desire and obtain in order for our lives to feel as if they are complete. The private house, automobile, appliances and electronics are major components of the standard package. If the private home is isolated from the remainder of the primary standard package, it is possible to describe another sub package that pertains to the home alone. Among the elements that make up the domestic standard package are the gable, porch, Palladian arched window, keystone, bay window, oculus window and the ionic column to name a few. These elements are so ubiquitous that contemporary society has been programmed to accept them as

message when the key is open or not in contact. Blank sections in printed material or broadcast time available for use by advertisers. **Charging** - To impose a duty, responsibility, or obligation on: *charged him with the task of watching the young swimmers.* To set or ask (a given amount) as a price: *charges ten dollars for a haircut.* To hold financially liable; demand payment from: *charged her for the balance due.* To postpone payment on (a purchase) by recording as a debt: *paid cash for the stockings but charged the new coat.* To load to capacity; fill: *charge a furnace with coal.* To saturate; **impregnate**: *The atmosphere was charged with tension.* To load (a gun or other firearm) with a quantity of explosive: *charged the musket with powder.* To instruct or urge authoritatively; command: *charged her not to reveal the source of information.* **Law**. To instruct (a jury) about the law, its application, and the weighing of evidence. To make a claim of wrongdoing against; accuse or blame: *The police charged him with car theft.* Critics charged the writer with a lack of originality. To put the blame for; attribute or impute: *charged the accident to the driver's inexperience.* To attack violently: *The troops charged the enemy line.* **Basketball**. To **bump** or run into (a defender) illegally while in possession of the ball or having just made a pass or shot. **Sports**. To bump (an opponent) so as to knock off balance or gain control of the ball, as in soccer. To body-check (an opponent) illegally, from behind or after taking more than two strides, as in ice hockey. **Electricity**. To cause formation of a net electric charge on or in (a conductor, for example). To **energize** (a storage battery) by passing current through it in the direction opposite to discharge. To **excite**; rouse: *a speaker who knows how to charge up a crowd.* To direct or put (a weapon) into position for use; level. **Heraldry**. To place a charge on (an escutcheon). **Regenerating** - To reform spiritually or morally. To form, construct, or create anew, especially in an improved state. To give new life or energy to; revitalize. **Biology**. To replace (a lost or damaged organ or part) by formation of new tissue. **Retrieval** - The act or process of retrieving. **Computer Science**. The process of accessing information from memory or other storage devices. The possibility of being retrieved or restored: *lost possessions beyond retrieval.* **Information** - **Knowledge** derived from **study**, **experience**, or **instruction**. Knowledge of specific events or situations that has been gathered or received by **communication**; **intelligence** or **news**. See Synonyms at **knowledge**. A collection of facts or data: *statistical information.* The act of informing or the condition of being informed; communication of knowledge: *Safety instructions are provided for the information of our passengers.* **Computer Science**. **Processed**, stored, or transmitted data. A numerical **measure** of the **uncertainty** of an **experimental** outcome. **Law**. A formal accusation of a crime made by a public officer rather than by grand jury indictment. **Knowledge** - The state or fact of knowing. **Familiarity**, awareness, or **understanding** gained through experience or study. The sum or range of what has been **perceived**, **discovered**, or learned. Learning; erudition: *teachers of great knowledge.* Specific information about something. Carnal knowledge. **Study** - The act or process of studying. The pursuit of knowledge, as by reading, **observation**, or **research**. Attentive **scrutiny**. A branch of knowledge. **studies** A branch or department of learning: *graduate studies.* A work, such as a thesis, that results from studious endeavor. A literary work on a particular subject. A preliminary sketch, as for a work of art or literature. **Music**. A composition intended as a technical exercise. A state of mental absorption: *She is in a deep study.* A room intended or equipped for studying or writing. One who memorizes something, especially a performer who memorizes a part: *He is a quick study.* **Experience** - The apprehension of an object, thought, or emotion through the senses or mind: *a child's first experience of snow.* **Active** participation in events or activities, leading to the **accumulation** of knowledge or skill: *a lesson taught by experience; a carpenter with experience in roof repair.* The knowledge or skill so derived. An **event** or a series of events participated in or lived through. The totality of such events in the past of an individual or group. **Instruction** - The act, practice, or profession of instructing. **Imparted** knowledge. An imparted or acquired item of knowledge; a lesson. **Computer Science**. A sequence of bits that tells a central processing unit to perform a particular operation and can contain data to be used in the operation. An authoritative **direction** to be obeyed; an order. Often used in the plural: *had instructions to be home by*



midnight. instructions Detailed directions on procedure: *read the instructions for assembly.* **Communication** - The act of communicating; **transmission**. The exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, signals, writing, or behavior. Interpersonal rapport. **communications** (*used with a sing. or pl. verb*) The art and technique of using words effectively to impart information or ideas. The field of study concerned with the transmission of information by various means, such as print or broadcasting. Any of various professions involved with the transmission of information, such as advertising, broadcasting, or journalism. Something communicated; a message. **communications** A means of communicating, especially: A system, such as mail, telephone, or television, for sending and receiving messages. A **network** of routes for sending messages and transporting troops and supplies. **communications** The technology employed in transmitting messages. **Biology**. The transfer of information from one molecule, cell, or organism to another, as by chemical or electrical signals or by behaviors. **Anatomy**. An **opening** or connecting passage between two structures. A joining or connecting of solid fibrous structures, such as tendons and nerves. **Intelligence** - The capacity to acquire and apply knowledge. The faculty of thought and **reason**. Superior powers of mind. See Synonyms at **mind**. An intelligent, **incorporeal** being, especially an angel. Information; **news**. See Synonyms at **news**. Secret information, especially about an actual or potential enemy. An agency, staff, or office employed in gathering such information. Espionage agents, organizations, and activities considered as a group: **News** - **Information** about recent events or happenings, especially as reported by newspapers, periodicals, radio, or television. A presentation of such information, as in a newspaper or on a newscast. New information of any kind: *The requirement was news to him*. Newsworthy material: "a public figure on a scale unimaginable in America; whatever he did was news" (James Atlas). **Processed** - A series of **actions**, changes, or **functions** bringing about a result: *the process of digestion*; *the process of obtaining a driver's license*. A series of **operations** performed in the making or treatment of a product: a *manufacturing process*; *leather dyed during the tanning process*. Progress; **passage**: *the process of time*; *events now in process*. **Law**. The entire course of a judicial proceeding. **Law**. A summons or writ ordering a defendant to appear in court. The total quantity of summonses or writs issued in a particular proceeding. **Biology**. An **outgrowth** of tissue; a projecting part: a *bony process*. Any of various photomechanical or photoengraving methods. **Computer Science**. A running software program or other computing operation. A part of a running software program or other computing operation that does a single task. See **conk**. **Measure** - Dimensions, quantity, or **capacity** as ascertained by comparison with a standard. A reference standard or sample used for the quantitative **comparison** of properties: *The standard kilogram is maintained as a measure of mass*. A **unit** specified by a scale, such as an inch, or by variable conditions, such as a day's march. A system of measurement, such as the metric system. A **device** used for measuring. The act of measuring. An evaluation or a basis of comparison: See Synonyms at **standard**. **Extent** or degree: *The problem was in large measure caused by his carelessness*. A definite quantity that has been measured out: *a measure of wine*. A fitting amount: *a measure of recognition*. A limited amount or degree: *a measure of good-will*. Limit; bounds: *generosity knowing no measure*. Appropriate restraint; moderation: An action taken as a means to an end: an expedient. Often used in the plural: *desperate measures*. A legislative bill or enactment. Poetic meter. **Music**. The metric unit between two bars on the staff; a bar. **Uncertain** - Not known or established; **questionable**: *domestic changes of great if uncertain consequences*. Not determined; undecided: *uncertain plans*. Not having sure knowledge: *an uncertain recollection of the sequence of events*. Subject to change; **variable**: *uncertain weather*. **Unsteady**; fitful: *uncertain light*. **Experimental** - A test under controlled conditions that is made to demonstrate a known truth, examine the validity of a hypothesis, or determine the efficacy of something previously untried. The process of conducting such a test; experimentation. An **innovative** act or procedure: "Democracy is only an experiment in government" (William Ralph Inge). The result of experimentation: "We are not [nature's] only experiment" (R. Buckminster Fuller).

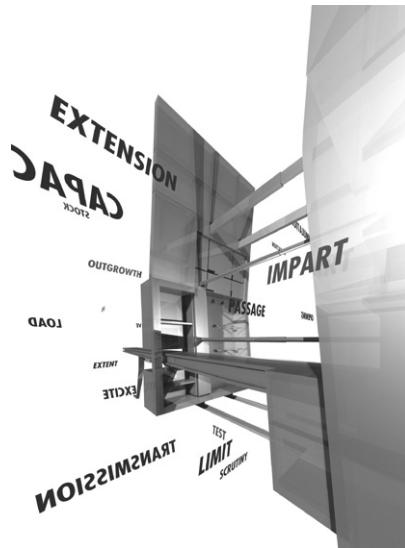


the natural elements that constitute domestic architecture. For the average person, houses lacking these elements are considered not residential.

For Jack Ersahler, the complete destruction of his showroom dwelling marks the character's break from the standard package and the conformity of contemporary life, representing the breaching of consensus. Jack redefines his existence by creating an alter ego who takes control by initiating the violent event that allows him to cease the routines that are defined by other people's expectations of how life should unfold. The sub-conscious urge to resist conformity allows Jack to invent the device necessary to rediscover the complexity and spontaneity of life, as experienced through the base act of street fighting. Tyler Durden extends this course of action to include violent acts of terrorism against a series of skyscrapers, the symbols of the corporations responsible for the domination of culture and society. Amid this

destruction, Jack's comfortable but inert condominium is replaced by a primitive and highly active space that constantly keeps inhabitants aware of their surroundings. The house is decayed to the point that it is literally open to the outside environment, rejecting the homogenizing tendencies inherent in modern equipment such as the HVAC system. In fact, precipitation requires that the home's electrical system be disabled in order to avoid electrocution. "Everything swelled and shrank and there were rusty nails to snag yourself on everywhere." Just as the distinction between in and out is blurred, the boundary between public and private is also complicated. The new home functions as an active organism that vacillates between dwelling and factory, home and commune. The home doubles as a place where the products that finance the anarchic operations of "Project Mayhem" are produced, giving it a purpose beyond the typical role of the house as an inert container for prefabricated products and experiences.





ing and engaging relationship between dwellings and occupants.

The film *Life as a House*¹¹ suggests this very definition as it creates an association between the renovation of a home and the life goal of Kevin Kline's character (George). When George learns that he has contracted a terminal disease, he and his estranged family work to complete a renovation project that has been planned for decades. The project becomes the primary focus of George during the final days of his life. The home rapidly becomes a setting in which he repairs his relationships with his ex-wife and estranged child. In this case, the home is no longer seen as an inert consumer item, but

rather as an integral extension of the family itself, as it both symbolizes and provides a context for natural and spontaneous events.

Domestic Events...

The preceding images document an analysis of a series of discreet domestic events as well as the spatial and architectonic systems that define these events. The overall organization of these events and any notion of a container that encloses the events are of not relevant to this investigation, at this time. The knowledge gained from this study will be applied to a series of site and program specific projects that will comprise the second phase of this investigation.

Notes

1. Riesman, David. *The Lonely Crowd*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.
2. Riley, Terrence. *The Unprivate House*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1999, p. 9.
3. Ibid, p.9.
4. Mendes, Sam. *American Beauty*. Dreamworks SKG, 1999.
5. Fincher, David. *Fight Club*. Twentieth Century Fox, 1999.
6. Riesman, David (with Howard Roseborough), (1955) "Careers and Consumer Behavior" in *Abundance for What?* New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993, pp. 119-120.
7. Riesman, David. *The Lonely Crowd*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981, p.8.
8. Hattori, Mineo. *Identity and Desire in Consumption*, 1997, p.6.
9. D'Souza, Alfred. Popular Quotation from "Seven Voices."
10. Riesman, David (with Howard Roseborough), (1955) "Careers and Consumer Behavior" in *Abundance for What?* New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993, pp. 119-120.
11. Irwin Walker. *Life as a House*. New Line Productions, 2001.

Both *American Beauty* and *Fight Club* suggest a virtual detachment from life that is maintained by the homogenizing forces of capitalism and consumer culture. The myth of freedom and individuality is exposed as a system that constrains and enslaves. One movie eloquently reveals the private home as a device for maintaining an anesthetized, other-directed existence, while the other moves beyond criticism by representing the destruction of the conformist dwelling and the ubiquitous "Ikea nesting instinct." The films propose a reconsideration of life and the home as a place that is not bound by preconceived expectations of occupation and defined by institutional standards, but rather as an active and spontaneous place that accommodates individual experiences and activities that promote meaningful and productive social interaction. The trivialization that comes as a result of the private home being reduced to a mere consumer object alienates the occupants from the architecture. It is clear that the home must be reconsidered as a space that engages the activities and events that constitute the dynamic condition of contemporary life. This redefinition of the home will allow connections between the architecture and its occupants to be reconstituted, leading to a more meaningful, nurtur-

