

*Situating the Situationists:*

The Disruption of a Domesticated Architecture

By Ross Keane

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Architecture at Victoria University of Wellington.

School of Architecture and Design  
Victoria University of Wellington, 2011



## *Abstract*

This research seeks to place Situationist theory into a domestic context through a critical reading of Guy Debord and the Internationale Situationnistes' writings. Challenging the notion of a domesticated architecture, Situationist techniques and strategies are used to test new ground in the interpretation of a domestic situation.

Two techniques explored are the *dérive* and *détournement*. In Guy Debord's *Theory of Dérive*, the *dérive* is described as "a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances (Knabb 52)." This technique was used by the Situationists as a way of experiencing a city through the possibilities provided by the "terrain and the encounters they find there (52)." Adding to this definition, Jonathan Hill in *Actions of Architecture* describes the *dérive* as "confront[ing] the habitual and functional experience of the city (Hill 67). *Détournement*, described by the Situationists as 'the re-use of pre-existing artistic elements in a new ensemble (Knabb 67)." is a way of constructing new meanings and expressions for previously defined elements. In *A User's Guide to Détournement*, Debord outlines several 'laws' defining the use of *détournement* as ways of creating situations, which he explains is 'the ultimate goal of all our activity (16)."

To *dérive* in the domestic suggests possibilities of a continual exploration of the spaces within the home. Traditional notions of the home's function and meaning are reconfigured in order to construct new situations; how do the spaces within a home contribute or hinder these explorations? What role does each room play within the domestic as a whole, and what are their relationships to each other as individual spaces?

*Détournement* links in closely with the exploration of spaces within the domestic. Using it as a way of challenging the traditional functions of both the spaces themselves, and the artefacts contained within [the artefacts being the markers of function in most cases], what are the implications of this misappropriation of artefacts and space? Will these interpretations bring a greater understanding of the artefacts and spaces themselves, as well as create new meanings?

The contextual critique of the domestic through a critical reading of the Situationists' theories will deepen the possibilities of how the domestic is understood. This understanding is visualised through a reworking of an existing domestic framework, a New Zealand state house. Architectural interventions are used to create new modes of inhabitation that modify behaviour and habitual living within the domestic. Here, the role of the artefact and space within the domestic is challenged and altered to create new manifestations.



*For Rudy*



## Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been completed without the support and assistance from my supervisor Dr. Peter Wood. I would also like to thank my family and friends for their encouragement in seeing this through to the end.

I wish to extend my gratitude to Mike Hannaway and Jeremy Perrott for their assistance with accessing plans of Government House, Wellington. Thanks also to Lydia Klimovitch, of Housing New Zealand Corporation, for plans of 20 Crawford Green, Miramar.

A big thank you goes to my wife Holly who, despite being pregnant for most of the duration of this dissertation, gave all she could to keep me going.





## *Contents*

<i>Abstract</i>	I
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	V
<i>Contents</i>	VII
<i>Introduction</i>	1
I	
<i>On the Passage of a Few Persons through a Rather Brief Unity of Time</i>	5
Boredom	
Change	
Strategies	
II	
<i>Architecture and Play</i>	13
Constant	
Feuerstein	
Evans	
III	
<i>Some Practical Topics That Need to be Dealt With</i>	17
Site	
Design	
IV	
<i>Now, the Conclusion</i>	31
Discussion	
Conclusion	
V	
<i>Bibliography</i>	37



## *Introduction*

To domesticate is to subdue and constrain, to tame. In architecture, the domestic is a controlled and moderate environment, a personal and private space protecting against a “fluid and menacing exterior (Hill 10).” The dangers of the exterior, the city, are guarded against within the domestic; occupants find security behind locked doors and windows, sheltered and comfortable. The stable, functional domestic environment establishes habitual living, with traditional spaces informing the behaviour of inhabitants, creating perceptions of how the domestic is viewed and utilised. The city, in contrast, is seen as fluctuating and unpredictable. For the avant-garde Situationist International (SI) though, the city itself had become domesticated, suppressed and uninspiring.

Unsatisfied with the direction that advanced capitalism had driven the forces of production and consumption within society, the SI saw everyday life as being reduced to a mere representation of experience, with human relations and consciousness controlled by the accumulation of images from the mass media. Aspiring for a complete change in the experience of everyday life, the SI advocated for the establishment of a society that would allow for an abundant passionate life through participation in deliberately arranged ephemeral moments (Knabb 53). Within this society, the Situationists recognised the capacity for architecture would lie within the construction of environments set up to create these experiential moments. It was the intention of the Situationists that these environments would allow new desires and behaviours to be formed by the inhabitants of the city.

Through a critical reading of Situationist texts, this research questions the *domestication* of domestic architecture, and examines the role that architecture can play in modifying behaviour and habitual living in a domestic context. Using key texts from the SI journal *Internationale Situationniste*, as well as prominent pre-Situationist essays, Situationist techniques and strategies will be identified and analysed to inform the reinterpretation of an existing domestic

framework.

Formed in 1957 and disbanded in 1972, the Situationist International brought together members from the dada-inspired *Lettrist International* (LI) and the anti-functionalist *International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus* (IMIB). Significant members from the LI included Guy Debord, the SI's main protagonist, Gil J. Wolman and Michèle Bernstein, with Asger Jorn and Constant Nieuwenhuys principal constituents from the IMIB. Comprised of artists, poets and intellectuals, the SI's main output was the journal *Internationale Situationniste*, with 12 issues published from 1958 to 1969.

Using texts by Ivan Chatcheglov, Debord and Constant, amongst others, part one of this research identifies the SI's contempt for capitalist society, and the tedious experience of life they saw it producing. The SI saw the accumulation of images controlling human relations and consciousness, described as *spectacles* by Debord, as causing life to shift from a true experience to a representational experience, obscuring the division between original and copy. Capitalism was also affecting the physical environment, with cities being reappropriated for the purposes of production. The SI were looking to find change in the form of a post-capitalist society, where the population's needs would be met through automatic production, allowing the inhabitants an abundance of free time to *experience* everyday life. The Situationists saw architecture as a significant instrument in the development of environments that would support new behaviours and generate new desires within the population, and part one focuses on this aspect of Situationist theory.

Defining the key Situationist strategies of *constructed situations*, *unitary urbanism*, *psychogeography*, *dérive* and *détournement*, part one concludes by examining their relationship to architecture using examples of Situationist work. *Dérive*, a technique of "rapid passage through varied ambiances (Knabb 52)," and *détournement*, defined as "the reuse of pre-existing artistic elements in a new ensemble (Knabb 67)", are then determined as significant elements for use within a domestic context.

In part two, architectural techniques and details significant to a domestic context are identified in Constant's *New Babylon* and Günther Feuerstein's writings on architecture, and with the introduction of Robin Evans' essay *Figures, Doors and Passages*, a relationship to the domestic is established. *New Babylon*, Constant's vision of a Situationist city, was a vast superstructure covering the surface of the earth, where nomadic inhabitants were free to discover new living experiences. Architecture's role was in the creation of environments and atmospheres that would allow new behaviours and desires to be discovered. Within a domestic context, *New Babylon* suggests the potential for architecture to be used to modify traditional habits and behaviours that are familiar within a domestic situation. Feuerstein's *Theses on Unpremeditated Architecture* and *Function: Provocation* texts discuss domestic architecture and the possibilities that arise from an emotional response to design, rather than a functional response. Feuerstein envisaged an architecture that moved, excited, tortured and confronted, rather than one that told you where to eat and sleep (McDonald 133). Seeing the potential in a creative interaction with architecture, Feuerstein opposed the practice of designing down to the detail, preferring occupants to make their own alterations, offering flexibility through emotional change, rather than functional flexibility. The opportunity presented by Feuerstein's texts offers the suggestion of an unfinished domestic that enables the occupants to create their own spaces within, allowing new functions to generate new behaviours. While not a Situationist text, the inclusion of Robin Evans *Figures*,

*Doors, and Passages* within the research is used as a link to a domestic context through his study of the evolution of doors and passages within domestic architecture. Evans saw architecture being used to limit the experience of the domestic by suppressing the contact and interaction with both the inhabitants and the domestic environment itself. Evans offered pre-19<sup>th</sup> century examples as a potential influence for the reintroduction of passion and sociality into domestic architecture using labyrinthine interiors and interactive internal arrangements.

Part three discusses the design element of the research, beginning with the establishment of two sites, Government House, Wellington, and a New Zealand state house in Miramar, Wellington. Both are politically affiliated, and represent opposing examples of a domestic situation. The role of Government House within this research lies in the manipulation of its plans to inform the redesign of the state house.

Using the Situationist techniques of *dérive* and *détournement*, and concepts assembled from Situationist texts, the state house environment is reinterpreted, using architectural interventions to establish new behavioural and habitual activity within the domestic situation. Disrupting the layout and structure of the state house, the spaces within are distorted to create new spatial relationships that question traditional notions of the domestic.

Concluding the dissertation, part four discusses the design's relevance to Situationist ideas, demonstrating how the research can be used to increase an understanding of domestic architecture.



## *On the Passage of a Few Persons through a Rather Brief Unity of Time*

The Situationist International

*“We are bored in the city...”*

Ivan Chtcheglov, *Formulary for a New Urbanism* (Knabb 1)

### **Boredom**

\* *Formulary for a New Urbanism*. Published in Internationale Situationniste #1 in 1958, but was originally written in 1953 while Chtcheglov was a member of the LI. It was written under the pseudonym Gilles Ivain. Chtcheglov was excluded from the LI in 1954 for “mythomania, interpretative delirium, lack of revolutionary consciousness,” as detailed in Potlatch, the LI’s journal (Ford, 56). While in contact with Debord after the formation of the SI, Chtcheglov was never a member of the SI, but his Formulary played a significant role in the development of Situationist theory.

In *Formulary for a New Urbanism*\*, Ivan Chtcheglov declared his boredom with the city, writing that “a mental disease has swept the planet: banalisation (Knabb 4).” In his view, production and convenience had mesmerised the population, becoming more than a lifeline out of poverty, but a prevalent all-consuming image where garbage disposal units were chosen over love (4). For the SI, capitalism had served its purpose and was heading down a path they were not in favour of. They saw the forces of production as ruled by the bourgeois minority, forcing labour to become a commodity. Work was a necessity in order to survive, and the masses were controlled by their dependency on wages to fuel their consumption. Within this world of production and consumption, Guy Debord saw the true experience of life as being replaced by a representation of life, made up of what he called *spectacles*, described as, notions that human relations, activities and consciousness are controlled through the mediation of images from film, advertising and other sections of the mass media (Barnard 106). Within a *specularised* society the distinction between original and copy is blurred, devaluing the importance of an *original*. Art had become a commodity controlled by a capitalist ideology, which sought to crush creative impulses, trivialise and sterilise subversive discoveries and eventually turn them into mere *spectacles* of what they once were (Knabb 26). For the SI, the *spectacle* had created an empty and meaningless existence (74), which could not be filled in the current situation. The *spectacle*, fuelled by the forces of capitalism, was also causing changes to the physical environment. The city was turning into a centre of production, being shaped for the systematic transfer of workers and goods, the housing of inhabitants, storage, and industrial and commercial business (McDonough 114).

In the essay *Another City for Another Life*, Constant opens with the announcement that “the crisis of urbanism is worsening,” going on to describe the “dismal and sterile ambience” that was created by the layout of neighbourhoods, conflicting with “established patterns of behaviour and even more with the new ways of life that we are seeking.” All sense of play had been lost

in new neighbourhoods through the focus on only household comfort and traffic, which he saw as “an impoverished expression of bourgeois contentment.” Questioning what the world was doing with all the extraordinary technical inventions that it had at its disposal, Constant saw no benefit to the rapidly constructed “concrete cemeteries” that were condemning their inhabitants to die of boredom. Constant saw no benefit to this development when nothing was contributed to leisure, and imagination was absent (Knabb 71). Constant viewed leisure - the time spent not working - as an opportunity to diversify behaviour through the creation of large areas of social space, but saw the separated concrete high-rises of the garden cities as reducing social space to a minimum, whereby stifling collective creativity (73). Capitalism’s requirement for a mass workforce to drive production was forcing the construction of working-class districts that were “suitable only for passing the night (Wigley 168).” Attila Kotanyi and Raoul Vaneigem also described the influence capitalism had on the built environment in their essay *Basic Program of Unitary Urbanism*. They write: “modern capitalism dissuades people from making any criticism of architecture with the simple argument that they need a roof over their heads...they are made to overlook the obvious fact that this...kind of dwelling place [is] not made for them, but without them and against them (87).” They were looking to create an environment, an architecture for an experimental life, where people could come together to create their own lives, where their own needs would be met (88). Bored and unhappy with the current state of society, the SI was looking for change.

### Change

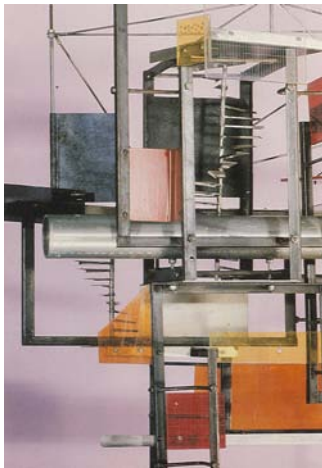
“First of all, we think the world must be changed...(25)” began Debord in his *Report on the Construction of Situations*. For the SI, it was not enough to establish a new culture within the existing capitalist society. A revolution needed to take place that would allow the creation of a new civilisation. Debord was after the “most liberating change of the society and life in which we find ourselves confined (25).” Looking to diminish time spent working (therefore increase leisure), their goal was the “immediate participation in a passionate abundance of life by means of deliberately arranged variations of ephemeral moments (53).” The strategy was to create change in everyday life, where life would become a series of fleeting encounters and creative moments. The creative experience of life would become the New Art, negating the traditional role of art in society. In order to allow for the increase in leisure time, the SI advocated the use of automation within production systems. Autonomous production would provide for the needs of the population, and the decrease in labour requirements would allow for a rise in creative activity. Asger Jorn saw the outcome of such an endeavour arriving at either “a total degradation of human life,” or the “possibility of perpetually discovering new desires” but, he explained, these desires would not be found within the current context, and so in order to find and fulfil them, collective action must be taken (58). The objective was a socialist society, with the “greatest number of goods for the greatest number of people (56),” as automation within a capitalist state would represent “unemployment and alienation (Wigley 233)” for the working-class as survival was dependent on labour for wages.

For Chtcheglov, a change in the behaviour and lifestyle of the city’s inhabitants would arise from a change in the physical environment. Architecture was the “simplest means of *articulating* time and space, of *modulating* reality and engendering dreams.” He had no intention of seeing the continuation of “the mechanistic civilisations and frigid architecture that ultimately lead to boring leisure.” Within a new civilisation would be new conceptions of space, time and behaviours, leading to an “ultimate mythic synthesis.” The new civilisation envisioned by



Chtcheglov embraced a flexible architecture, where appearances could be changed partially or completely, based on the motivation of its inhabitants (3). Architecture would be the “means of experimenting with a thousand ways of modifying life (4),” where the inhabitants main activity would be a continuous *dérive*, resulting in total disorientation through the ever changing landscapes (7). Made up of districts, the city would be broken up into quarters corresponding to the “whole spectrum of diverse feelings that one encounters *by chance* in everyday life.” There will be rooms more conducive to dreams than any drug, and houses where one cannot help but love (6). Chtcheglov saw that a spiritual reawakening “would bring back forgotten desires and allow new ones to come alive (4).” Chtcheglov wrote of the attraction and influence that free play would have on a city’s inhabitants, and that the more it is set up for play, the greater the effect on people’s behaviour, citing “the immense prestige of Monaco and Las Vegas” as an illustration of this point (7).

Chtcheglov’s description of a new architecture was a precursor to a much more detailed illustration of an experimental civilisation, that of Constant’s *New Babylon*. The creation of Constant’s vision for a future city occupied almost 20 years of his life, working on it from 1956 to 1974. Conceived of as a vast network of interconnecting structures covering the Earth’s surface, *New Babylon* was a world of nomadic living, with inhabitants constantly on the move through labyrinthine interiors, rearranging the environment according to their desires (Wigley 10). Constant used Le Corbusier’s description of the four functions of the city - living, working, recreation and traffic - to separate activity within this new world. Taking advantage of automation, all production facilities were arranged underground allowing for a minimum of laborious tasks, leaving the population free to spend their time in play. Ground level was designated to traffic, allowing the unimpeded flow of access across the landscape. Rising above the ground, huge pylons held up the vast *sectors*, covering the earth like a skin, multiplying the available space for living and recreation to take place (13). These sectors were spaces for the construction of situations, for endless *dérives*, and for the creative performance of everyday life. The layout of these built forms follow closely the form of a psychogeographic map, with the sections rising up from various places within the landscape, much like Debord’s allocation of atmospheric conditions, connected by large red arrows, in this case represented by lines of traffic across the ground (18).



1

2

#### 1. Klein Labyrinth (Small Labyrinth)

Source: Wigley, Mark. *Constant's New Babylon*. Rotterdam: Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art: 010 Publishers, 1998: 104.

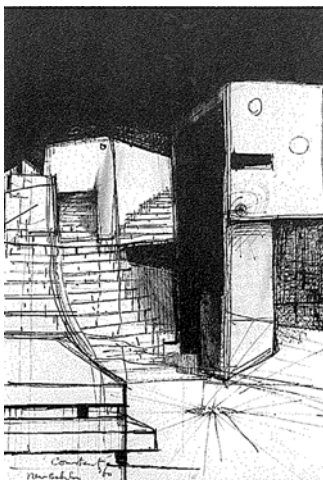
#### 2. Sectoren in Berglandschap (Sectors in Mountainous Landscape).

Source: Wigley, Mark. *Constant's New Babylon*. Rotterdam: Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art: 010 Publishers, 1998: 176





3



4

3. Paysage Artificiel (Artificial Landscape)

Source: Wigley, Mark. *Constant's New Babylon*. Rotterdam: Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art: 010 Publishers, 1998: 124.

4. Labyrinth met Trappen (Labyrinth with Stairs)

Source: Wigley, Mark. *Constant's New Babylon*. Rotterdam: Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art: 010 Publishers, 1998: 128

Within these vast structures, Constant saw the interior as spaces of disorientation. Orientation, Constant wrote, is only relevant when it is contained in a regular life pattern, where there is little change and constant points of recognition. On the other hand, disorientation allows for the unexpected, for moments of surprise and for the discovery of new experiences (226). By creating these large sections of manoeuvrable architecture where dynamic labyrinths create multiple paths of endless possibilities, Constant was looking to create a change in the behaviour and lifestyle of the inhabitants through the breaking of the habits that were dictated by the daily schedule of work imposed by a capitalist society. He declared that habits “privilege a static way of life,” and that the “New Babylonian who creates his life cannot exhibit repetitive behaviour (164).” In *Description of the Yellow Sector*, Constant detailed a particular pairing of labyrinth-houses that were comprised of “irregularly-shaped chambers, spiral staircases, distant corners, wastelands and cul-de-sacs.” Within these houses were rooms of varying ambiances; “the quiet room...the loud room with its vivid colours and ear-splitting sounds...the room of images, the room of reflection...the room for erotic games.” Constant saw these rooms as habit breaking, with extended stays offering the effect of brainwashing the occupants, erasing any habitual constraints (122). Within this new civilisation, *time* as a universal schedule would no longer be necessary as there would be no requirement to collectively plan time, rather *time* would be categorised in accordance with the changing needs of the individual (233). New Babylon offered a freedom in *time* and *space* (160), giving rise to a new dimension where *time*, measured in terms of the experience of *space*, gets comparatively longer, as *space*, measured in terms of time, gets comparatively larger (225).

Debord argued in his *Report on the Construction of Situations* that, “architecture must advance by taking emotionally moving situations, rather than emotionally moving forms, as the material it works with (39).” Kotanyi and Vaneigem saw the first task in achieving a new society was to “enable people to stop identifying with their surroundings and with model patterns of behaviour (87).” To achieve this, the SI had a number of strategies that they distinguished as being fundamental in generating a change to the behaviour and lifestyle of the city’s inhabitants. These strategies - constructed situations, unitary urbanism, psychogeography, *dérive* and *détournement* – were important to the Situationist cause\*.

#### *Constructed Situations + Unitary Urbanism*

In his *Report on the Construction of Situations*, Debord wrote about the SI’s principal concept of constructed situations (Knabb 38). A constructed situation referred to “a moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organisation of a unitary ambience and a game of events (51).” What it amounted to was the “setting up, on the basis of more or less clearly recognised desires, a temporary field of activity favourable to these desires (49).” Debord saw the construction of situations as beginning “beyond the ruins of the modern spectacle (40),” where life would be made up of these temporary, fleeting moments of interaction (41). It would be in these situations that new behaviours would emerge, giving rise to new desires, and continuing the game into another situation. Unfortunately it was never made clear exactly how these situations might work or what they might look like (Sadler 105), and due to the fact that the new civilisation was never created, or because the SI themselves were not sure how they would work, there is no evidence that a prescribed situation was ever constructed (106). The physical environment where these constructed situations would take place was to be defined by unitary urbanism.

\* The strategies were all mentioned prior to the formation of the SI, in the LI journal *Potlatch*. Sadler, in *The Situationist City*, notes that psychogeography was mentioned in *Potlatch* #1, *détournement* # 2, *dérive* #9-10-11, situation # 14, and unitary urbanism # 27 (Sadler 168).

Unitary Urbanism, described as “the theory of the combined arts and techniques as means of contributing to the construction of a unified milieu in dynamic relations with experiments in behaviour (52),” was social space, dedicated to the construction of situations. In the initial stages of the SI unitary urbanism was seen as the planning system for a Situationist city, described by Constant as a “very complex, very changeable, constant activity, a deliberate intervention in the praxis of daily life and in the daily environment; an intervention aimed at bringing our lives into lasting harmony with our real needs and with the new possibilities that will arise and will in turn transform these needs (Wigley 132).” Constant saw that unitary urbanism had two aspects distinct to it. The first was the “transformation of our habits or rather our way of life,” and the second being the “profound change in the way our material environment is produced, a dynamic urbanism (132).” Constant’s Situationist city, *New Babylon*, was based on these principles of unitary urbanism. Using elaborate systems of modifiable architecture and complex atmospheric technology, both material and psychological environments could be created that encourage and intensify frequent social encounters, which Constant explained as being vital for the culture of the city (134). The notion of unitary urbanism presents the question of whether these same ideals may be expressed in the domestic, a *unitary domesticity*, where aspects of domestic habits and the spaces encompassing habitual behaviour are identified and new understandings expressed through the design of domestic space.

### *Psychogeography*



5. Section of Guy Debord's *The Naked City*.

Source: Sadler, Simon. *The Situationist City*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT, 1999: 60

Psychogeography is an examination of “the geographical environment on the emotions and behaviour of individuals (Knabb 52).” The SI used it to study urban conditions and map out the different ambiances and phenomena found in certain areas of the city. These findings were then also used for the “development of hypotheses on the structure of a Situationist city (38).” The analyses were conducted during wanderings of the city, termed *dérives*. In *A Critique of Urban Geography*, Debord compared the variety of a city’s ambiances to that of the infinite number of combinations created from the mixing of chemicals, where a multitude of complex and distinctive sensations are felt. Debord noted that while people were quite aware of the ambiances within certain neighbourhoods, they simply assumed poor streets were depressing, while rich streets gave a feeling of satisfaction, but it was not simply the architectural style or condition of housing that created distinctive ambiances but the psychic atmosphere of a place, the “path of least resistance that is automatically followed in aimless strolls”, and other neglected phenomena (10). Maps of their psychogeographic findings were produced to indicate the varying atmospheres and zones within the city. The maps, formed from cut outs of Paris, were arranged according to their zones of atmosphere. Showing a social geography rather than an academic geography, these maps served as substitutes to the traditional maps of Paris, with large red arrows used to identify links and connections between sections of the city (Sadler 92). Using these maps, “unities of ambiance” could be discovered; identifying “their main components and their spatial localisation,” and beyond these their “principal axes of passage, their exits and their defences” established (Knabb 66). Debord, writing of a friend that blindly followed a map of London through the Harz region of Germany, asserted that wanderings like this were not simply expressing subordination to randomness but “total *insubordination* to habitual influences.” These *games* were simply a beginning for Debord, who wanted everybody to have complete power over the creation of architecture and urbanism (11).



## *Dérive*

The *dérive* is a technique of “rapid passage through varied ambiances (52).” *Dérive*, translated as *drift*, was first mentioned in Chtcheglov’s *Formulary for a New Urbanism*, who described it as a continuous activity of the inhabitants of “future constructions,” where total disorientation would be experienced through a constant changing of the landscape (7). Chtcheglov’s description of the *dérive* was related to the forming of a new civilisation, but in Debord’s *Theory of the Dérive*, he spoke of the *dérive* as an activity to be played out in the existing urban fabric. The *dérive* involved the releasing of all the “usual motives for movement and action (62)” and to simply let the encountered environment inform the activity. While the surrealists were a precursor with their aimless wanderings (63), the SI dealt less with chance, instead relying on psychogeographic influences dispelled by the surroundings to inform their paths. In *Critiques of Everyday Life*, Michael E. Gardiner explains that the “goal of the *dérive* was to produce novel environments that were more closely attuned to personal desire and affect (122).” The SI was attempting to break away from the spectacle of “constructed situations that [were] monotonous, homogenous and predetermined (122),” by engaging in “playful reconstructive behaviour (Knabb 62).” Jonathan Hill describes the *dérive* as confronting the functional and habitual experience of the city (67), as it was an attempt to encounter spaces and atmospheres within the city that were not frequented by the majority of the population.

Debord advised that a *dérive* consist of a number of small groups, made up of two or three people each, as it allowed a more objective analysis of the environment. There were also variations in how long a *dérive* would occur for. For Debord a few hours was an adequate time to execute a *dérive*, but it could also last several days, and he wrote that even “certain *dérives* of a sufficient intensity have been sustained for three or four days, or even longer (64).” Here Debord’s *dérive* differs from Chtcheglov’s *continuous drift*, as Chtcheglov described an ongoing activity that participants were immersed in, while Debord suggested that it was difficult for an ongoing *dérive* to “occur in its pure form”, as those partaking found it hard to avoid taking care of banal tasks at various points during the day (64). Debord’s *dérive* was affiliated more with psychogeographic analysis than with a future lifestyle. In a reversal of his original position though, Chtcheglov renounced in a letter to Debord and Michèle Bernstein his “propaganda for a *continuous dérive*,” citing that “continual *dériving* is dangerous to the extent that the individual, having gone too far without defences, is threatened with explosion, dissolution, disassociation, disintegration. And thence the relapse into what is termed ‘ordinary life,’ that is to say, in reality, into ‘petrified life.’” He then goes on to recall that during 1953-1954, he took part in a *dérive* that went for three to four months, and it was “a miracle it didn’t kill us.” He describes this as “the extreme limit” to a *dérive* (481). Chtcheglov’s renouncement of his *continuous drift* is an important point, as it brings into question the possibility of new behaviours and lifestyle becoming stagnant through repetition of activity. So while the role of *dérive* in a Situationist city can only be hypothesised on, it is evident that its role in the existing city was to “alert people to their imprisonment by routine (Sadler 94).”

The *dérive* embraced areas of the city that were unpopulated by tourists and commercial activity, a “transgression of the alienated world (Sadler 94)”; invading houses undergoing demolition under the cover of darkness, roaming through forbidden subterranean catacombs (Knabb 65). The goal of a *dérive* varied in motive from studying a terrain for psychogeographical purposes, to simply an exercise in disorientation. Taxis were often used for disorientation, transporting the *drifter* to specific destinations or simply moving them “twenty minutes to the west (64).” A *dérive* was

bounded by the limits of the city edges, but it could be contained “within a single neighbourhood or even a single block of houses (65).” Within architecture, Debord saw its promotion in the form of labyrinths, and in his *Theory of the Dérive*, he describes an apartment being constructed in New York, where “one will be able to enlarge or reduce [the apartments] by shifting movable partitions. With this setup three four-room apartments can be transformed into one twelve-room apartment (66).” To *dérive* in the domestic suggests possibilities of a continual exploration of the spaces within the home, while also offering the potential to explore and utilise the neglected spaces within the house: ceiling space, below the floor, under the stairs, inside the walls.

### *Détournement*

\* In *The Situationist International: A User's Guide*, Ford states that while having no direct translation into English, *détournement*'s meaning is associated with diversion, rerouting, corruption and hijacking (36).

*Détournement*\*, defined as “the reuse of pre-existing artistic elements in a new ensemble (67),” was another technique used by the SI. An exercise in plagiarism and misappropriation, *détournement* involved the reinterpretation of an existing element, giving it new meaning and context, while potentially subverting its original meaning. Heavily influenced by Lautréamont's maxim that “plagiarism is necessary...progress demands it (274),” examples of the SI's use of *détournement* included: comic strips devoid of their original text and replaced with Situationist propaganda; and Debord's films, cut together using brief extracts from newsreels, television advertisements, fiction films, and collages of images (Gardiner 121). A collaboration between Debord and Jorn resulted in *Mémoires*, a collection of small excerpts appropriated from various material such as novels, political texts, newspapers, photos, cartoons and maps, all covered with drippings of paint by Jorn (Ford 63). Psychogeographic maps were also an exercise in *détournement*, with sections of the city taking on new meaning through contextual reorganisation from the identification of ambiances and atmospheres.

In Debord's *A User's Guide to Détournement*, two categories and a series of laws were defined for the employment of *détournement*. A *minor détournement* involved the *détournement* of an existing element that had no importance in its original form and so draws all meaning from its reappropriation. A *deceptive détournement* involved the *détournement* of a significant ingredient, which acquired a new capacity through its placement in an alternative context (16). The laws, as postulated by Debord, are:

*“It is the most distant detoured element which contributes most sharply to the overall impression, and not the elements that directly determine the nature of this impression (16).”*

*The distortions introduced in the detoured elements must be as simplified as possible, since the main impact of a détournement is directly related to the conscious or semiconscious recollection of the original contexts of the elements.*

*Détournement is less effective the more it approaches a rational reply.*

*Détournement by simple reversal is always the most direct and the least effective (17).”*

Debord states that the first law is essential and applies to all *détournements*, while the other three only relate to *deceptive détournements* (17). Jorn described *détournement* as a “game made possible by the capacity of *devaluation*” where all traces of the “cultural past must be *reinvested* or disappear.”

Debord saw the *détournement* of existing architectural forms as the beginning of the journey to a *new* architecture, “an experimental baroque stage” where dynamic environments are constructed

to relate to behavioural styles (19). Using the discoveries made from psychogeographic derives, parts of the city could be “diverted for Situationist use (Sadler 110).” Chtcheglov wrote of a similar baroque style of urbanism, with castles, grottos and lakes assembled arbitrarily to form a new city (Knabb 6). *Proposals for Rationally Improving the City of Paris* contained examples of how the context of the city could be altered, with suggestions of pedestrian traffic using the rooftops of Paris, public gardens open and unlit at night, the opening of the subway at night when the trains have finished with the lights dim and flickering on and off on the platforms and corridors (12). One proposal suggested the scrambling of the information displayed at train stations, mixing up timetables and destinations as an encouragement to *dérive* (13). Jonathan Hill wrote of the example of *détournement* in the May ’68 riots, when students dug up cobblestones from the street and threw them at police. The cobblestones, detoured from their original context as thoroughfares for the movement of troops through the city, were turned into “a weapon of the state against the institutions it represented (69).”

*Détournement* links in closely with the exploration of spaces within the domestic. It can be used as a way of challenging the traditional functions of both the spaces themselves and the artefacts contained within, the artefacts being the indicator of function for most spaces within the domestic. An architecture of *détournement* can be used to question the role that traditional forms of architecture play within a society driven by the forces of capital.

Within the strategies offered by the SI, this research explores *dérive* and *détournement* as opportunities for the reinterpretation of a domestic situation. The potential for these elements lies in their ability to bring about change, both in regards to behaviour as well as physical architectural properties.

## *Architecture and Play*

*“Architecture...the place for all of life, for the whole person”*

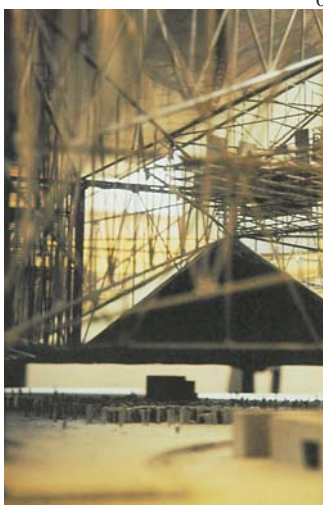
Günther Feuerstein, *Function: Provocation* (McDonough 133)

### **Architecture**

The possibilities of a Situationist organised domestic offers the opportunity to explore architecture's role in modifying behaviour and habitual living. Situationist theories create the potential to deepen how the domestic is understood both in spatial terms and emotionally. Using *dérive*, *détournement* and other Situationist techniques, traditional notions of the domestic can be challenged and distorted to create new interpretations. Looking at examples both within the Situationists and without, architectural techniques and details are appropriated to aid in the discussion of domestic possibilities. Beginning with an examination of the domestic within Situationist thinking, Robin Evans essay *Figures, Doors, and Passages* is then used to consider the role of contemporary domestic architecture within the discourse.

#### 6. Grote gele sector (Large Yellow Sector)

Source: Wigley, Mark. *Constant's New Babylon*. Rotterdam: Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art: 010 Publishers, 1998: 181.

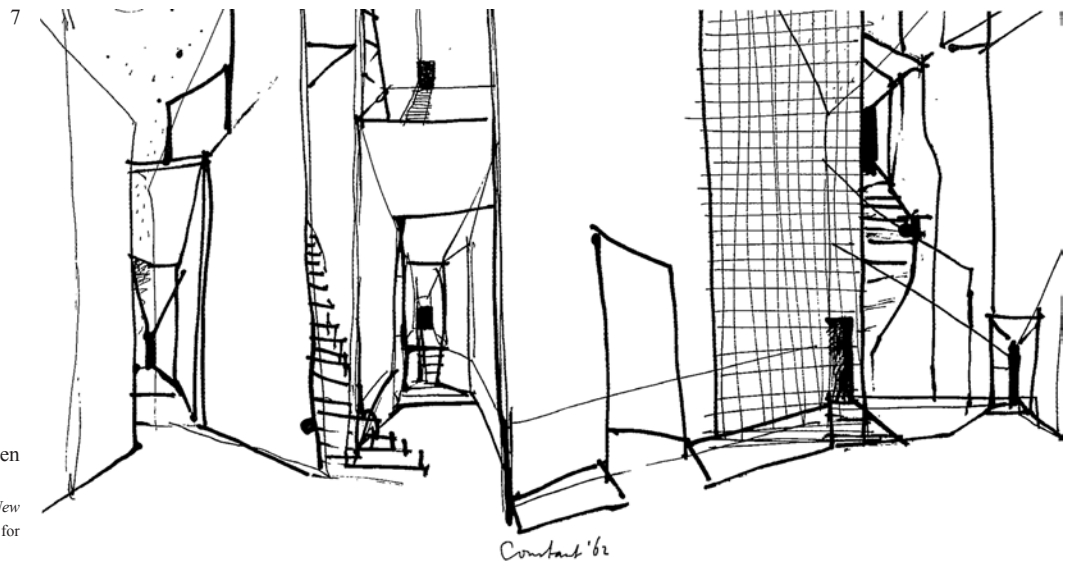


6 In Constant's *New Babylon*, domestic space took the form of hotels dispersed throughout the city, designed for intermittent breaks between situations. Constant wrote that with the rise in leisure time and the expansion of a person's radius of action, living quarters lost their importance (Wigley 169). For almost twenty years, Constant continued to present *New Babylon* using a whole range of media - models, paintings, drawings, collages, lithographs and texts - but as the project progressed, the framework continued to expand, rather than become more detailed (Sadler 123). While Constant was clear on the city's context, "automation of production...free disposal of the major part of a lifetime...activation of that time by inventive behaviour, the creation of life," he was less clear on the details of how the population would actually behave, as their behaviour could be neither dictated nor designed. This reality encouraged Constant to move from models to paintings in an attempt to "create some New Babylonian life" (Wigley 236). Hill describes *New Babylon* as "one of the most widely recognised examples of Situationist urbanism (69)," and it is important to note his use of the word urbanism over architecture. *New Babylon* attempted to

deal with the social complexities of Situationist themes in a vast new urban environment, but the finer architectural elements were lost within the overall scheme. For a shift into the domestic, *New Babylon* offers no material architectural details for a Situationist motivated design, rather it offers possibilities of the activities and the effects that architecture might produce. *New Babylon* was a search for a city of new behaviours, of new lifestyles, brought on through disorientation, creating new experiences from unexpected moments of surprise and discovery. The potential for the domestic here lies in how architecture might be used to create such possibilities.

7. Interieur met Rappen en Deuren  
(Interior with Steps and Doors)

Source: Wigley, Mark. *Constant's New Babylon*. Rotterdam: Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art: 010 Publishers, 1998: 145



*Feuerstein*

A platform to begin an exploration of the architectural possibilities for domestic space can be found in the German Situationist Günther Feuerstein's *Theses on Unpremeditated Architecture*, in which he prescribes an architecture where change and history would be allowed to influence the built form, where changes were produced by emotion, rather than planning. He explained, "men must be able to make alterations; not simply shove the furniture about but make windows and doors or holes in the walls according to their pleasure." This was more than a flexible architecture in terms of function, but one of flexibility through emotional change. Feuerstein was looking for the reading of architecture through the process of its existence, rather than the process of building (McDonough 130). An architect himself, Feuerstein rejected the functionalist dictum, seeing it as no longer containing any creative, spiritual or emotive qualities (127). Advocating for an unpremeditated architecture, Feuerstein opposed the practice of architects designing down to the finest detail, preferring an architecture that thrived on "poverty and frugality." Planning was taking over from time that could have been spent on the activities from construction onwards, of becoming familiar with materials, expanding the feel of spaces, of creating an "elastic and alterable" dwelling (127). The less money spent, the better the architecture. Savings, he saw, lay in "no air-conditioning, merely ordinary heating, no tiled bathrooms, no costly window construction, no expensive flooring, no unnecessary machines in the home, totally no washable surfaces." The money saved could then be put to use on "larger rooms, more land, more pictures, more books, more music, more travelling, more children, more presents, more help (128)." Within architecture there was no longer any surfaces of friction as society had grown accustomed to the practical and pleasant, and so for Feuerstein living ceased to be real. His proposal was for the *impractical dwelling*; where corners protruded to knock against, with extended pathways



between bed and closet, squeaky doors and unusable locks, wobbly tables and cramped chairs (127). Existence would be felt through the sweating in summer, and the cold passing through the windows in winter (128). Later, Feuerstein would write of architecture's function as *provocation*. In provocative architecture people would "feel it...have contact with it," be "moved, excited, enchanted, offended, filled up, tortured, confronted. People can create, change, look after, and destroy architecture (135)." Architecture would be built with room for "naivety, bricolage, fancy, chance, accessory, insufficiency, illusion, improvisation, change (136)." Functionalist architecture told you where to eat and sleep, work and read, but Feuerstein wanted to know "where to laugh or cry? Where to hate or breathe? (133)" The user as creator of architectural space is an opportunity for the architect to become a "creator of objects for appropriation (Hill 70)," but in order for the architecture to influence a change in the habitual living of everyday life, certain disruptive elements must be administered in order to create a reason for change.

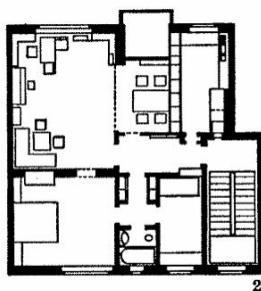
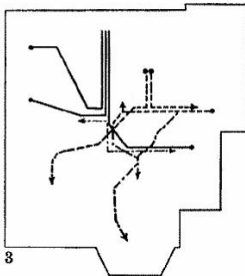
8. Alexander Klein's *Functional Housing for Frictionless Living*.

Source: University of Washington, Architecture and Images of Red Vienna. *Functional Housing for Frictionless Living*. Viewed 26th March, 2011 <<http://students.washington.edu/ems29/redvienna.html>>

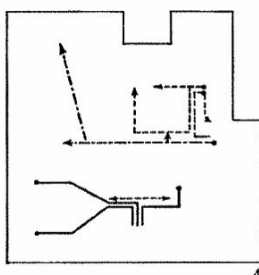
Evans



A. Bad Example



B. Good Example



- 8 Corresponding to the Situationists' exploration of the activity and movement of persons through the city, and their search for an architecture accommodating of play, is Robin Evans essay *Figures, Doors, Passages*, which traces a shift in architectural planning over the last four centuries. Lamenting the loss of "an architecture that recognises passion, carnality and sociality (90)," Evans discussed the organisation of domestic spaces and the "privacy, comfort and independence" synonymous in contemporary architecture, arguing that this seemingly "ordinary" ideal is in fact not "wrought directly from the stuff of basic human needs" but a relatively recent phenomenon (56). Evans described the cumulative effect of the last two hundred years of architecture as being similar to that of a "general lobotomy performed on society at large, obliterating vast areas of social experience (90)." Evans essay discussed the role of doors and passages within architecture, and how their use has transformed over time the social activity within architecture.

Introduced in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, passageways had by the 19<sup>th</sup> century become commonplace as the backbone of the domestic plan, with entry to rooms provided off these main routes. Prior to the existence of the passage, access was provided by a matrix of interconnected rooms with most rooms containing numerous doors connected to adjacent spaces. With the introduction of the passageway, the need for numerous doors in a room diminished, and the standard path became a single entry in and out. Now it became no longer necessary to travel through a number of rooms to access outlying spaces, as the passageway made accessibility to all rooms virtually equal. Evans saw this as disengaging the connection of rooms and reducing contact between the occupants. Incidental interaction was decreased, as entry into a room only occurred through necessity, limiting chance encounters. In addition, passageways amplified the separation between servant and served, with the domestic workers often provided with their own route so as to avoid contact with the gentlemen and ladies of the house. The separation of classes was not simply a result of the introduction of the passage, but the "novelty was in the conscious employment of architecture to dispel it," of which Evans saw as an omen of "what was to render household life placid in years to come (71)." Architecture was being employed more and more as an obstruction, limiting experience through "reducing noise-transmission, differentiating movement patterns, suppressing smells, stemming vandalism, cutting down the accumulation of dirt, veiling embarrassment, closeting indecency and abolishing the unnecessary (89)." Evans identified *The Functional House for Frictionless Living*, designed by Alexander Klein, as an example of the direction architecture had taken. Klein designed a layout where all *necessary movements* were reduced to their own distinct paths, never intersecting with each other. Comparing this to a 19<sup>th</sup>

century example, where paths “cross and intersect like rails in a shunting yard,” Klein justified his plan on the basis that “all accidental encounters caused friction and therefore threatened the smooth running of the domestic machine.” Evans saw similar reasoning being embedded into “regulations, codes, design methods and rules-of-thumb which account for the day-to-day production of contemporary housing (85).”

Evans concluded his essay offering the “matrix of connected rooms” as a feature for an architecture that looks to restore the carnality, sociality and passion (90) found in passage-less architecture. Evans’ *matrix* ties strongly with both Constant and Debord’s *labyrinth* architecture, with both looking for an element of disruption, of the unexpected, within everyday life. Evans and Feuerstein also see the potential for an architecture of friction, where the movement of the body and experiences within the domestic are sundered from their place within a practical and functional environment, with disorder causing a shift in the properties of space in the domestic.

## *Some Practical Topics That Need to be Dealt With*

### A Domestic Situation

*“Nobody now falls into the trap of habit.”*

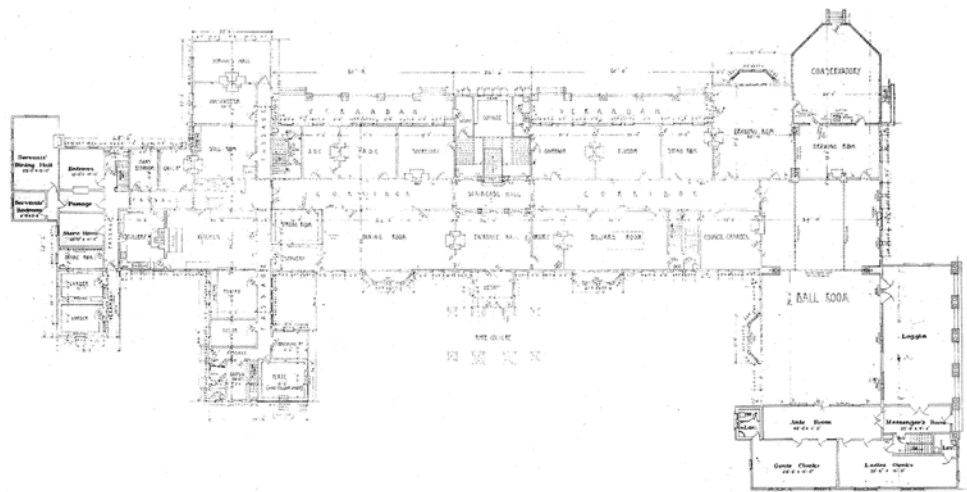
Constant, *Outline of a Culture* (Wigley 164)

#### Site

Two existing domestic residences of contrasting scales have been chosen as sites for this research. The first site is Government House, Wellington, home to the Governor-General of New Zealand. The second is a state house, 20 Crawford Green, Miramar. While connected via a political affiliation, the two sites are distinctively different. One represents the bourgeois, the ruling elite, while the other is a symbol of the masses, a workingman’s house.

Described as “the biggest state house in New Zealand (Dept. of IA 19),” Government House was built in 1910 and, although recently renovated, previously contained 27 bedrooms, 19 bathrooms, public rooms comprising of Drawing Room, Conservatory, Ballroom, Council Room, Smoking Room and Dining Room, as well as numerous sitting rooms and service spaces (5). The rooms within the House were separated into servant and served areas, with passages accessing the servant spaces and corridors connecting the served spaces.

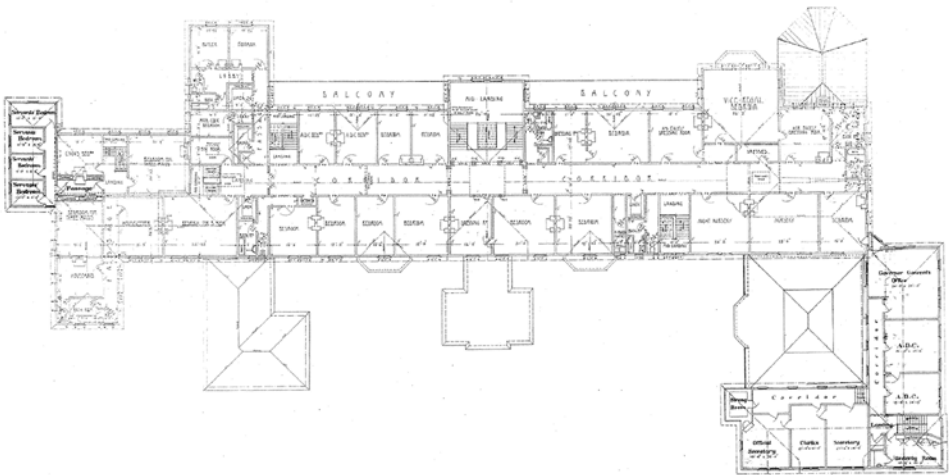
9



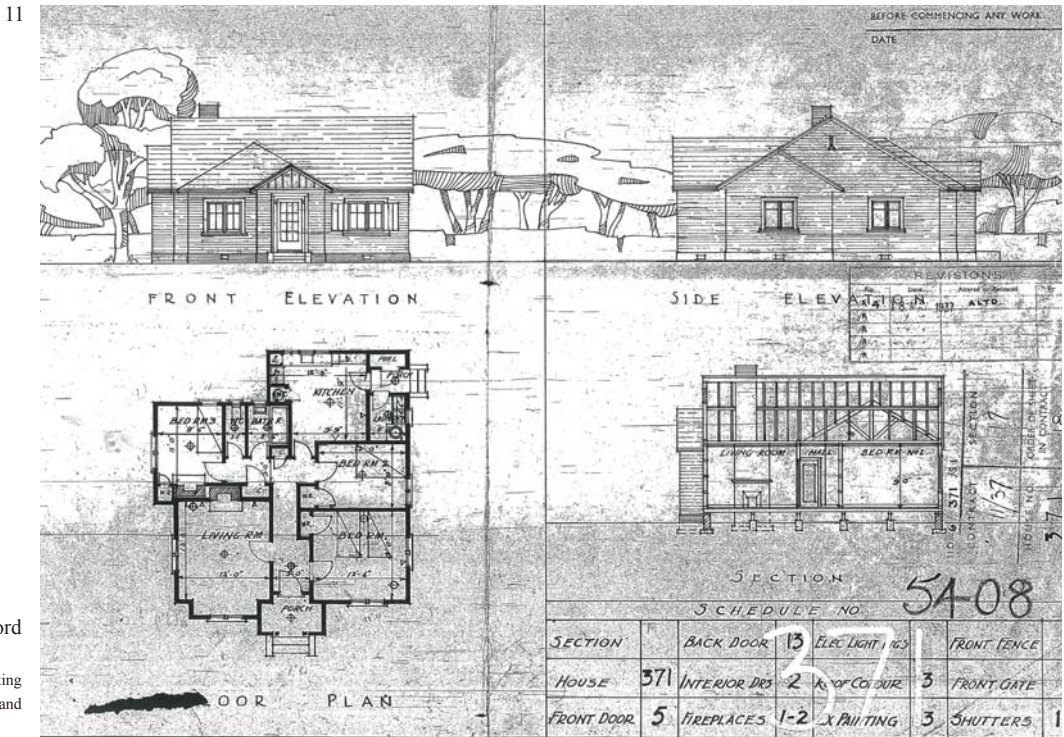
9. Ground Floor Plan Government House, Wellington.

Image courtesy of Mike Hannaway, Senior Project Manager at Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

10. Ground Floor Plan Government House, Wellington.  
Image courtesy of Mike Hannaway, Senior Project Manager at Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.



10 In contrast, the state house has 3 bedrooms, living room, bathroom, WC, kitchen, laundry, front and back porch, as well as linen storage and fuel cupboard, all connected by a central passageway. Set up by successive Governments from the early 1900s as a measure to overcome slum conditions in the urban centres of New Zealand, state houses were built as a means of an affordable and comfortable environment for the working class to live in. Due to the Government’s desire for housing to be affordable to build, “all details of the construction from foundation to roof” was standardised (Firth 40). Designed for functionality, there was an emphasis on reducing household work, as most New Zealand families did not employ help. The living room was considered the “centre for the social and recreational side of family life,” and was made to be as large as possible, with the fireplace becoming a focal point in the colder months (31). Bathrooms and laundries were minimised, and the kitchen was set up as a working space, with fittings set out to correspond with the performance of kitchen activities (32). A small space was made in the kitchen for taking meals, due to the elimination of a separate dining room with the plan (31). While the components within the house were identical, colour palettes and materiality differed from house to house so as to avoid developing monotonous neighbourhoods, with schedules prepared for each house in a street, specifying paint, roof tile, and plaster colours (40).



11. Plan of State House, 20 Crawford Green, Miramar, Wellington.  
Image courtesy of Lydia Klimovitch, Acting Records Manager, Housing New Zealand Corporation.



For purposes of this research, the plans of Government House used date from the 1930-40's, to correspond with the original plans of the state house. Changes to the original Government House plan of 1910 included an extended west wing for servant bedrooms and dining hall, and an extension to the southeast wing with the addition of staff offices, and a loggia off the ballroom.

The motivation to include two sites within the research was to establish how one domestic situation might influence another using Situationist techniques as modes of operation. For this investigation, the process involved the manipulation of the Government House plans to inform the redesign of the state house, calling into question what an architecture of a state's house might mean under a Situationist critique.

## Design

### *The House of {Un}Stately Occurrences*



12

13

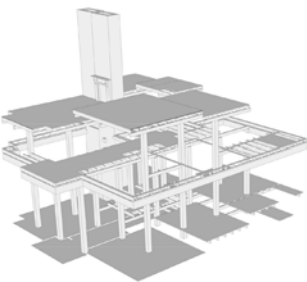
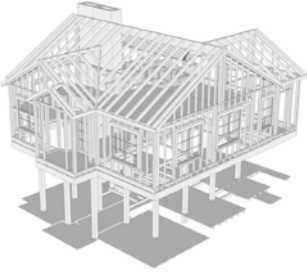
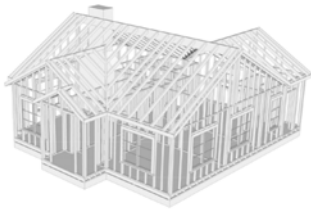
Remaining relatively untouched, the front elevation of the state house hides the extent of its internal disruption, with only the addition of an oversized chimney and a triangular steel protrusion as the most obvious signs of disturbance. Inside the front porch, entry into the house is through a modified front door; a concrete form depicting the original weatherboard wall and door, which slides open on an exposed steel beam, the whole wall shifting to expose the interior.



12. The front elevation of *The House of {Un}Stately Occurrences* reveals only an oversized chimney and a corten steel protrusion extending out of the roof.

13. Entry into *The Passage of a Few Persons Through a Rather Disrupted Domestic* through the modified front door; a concrete cast of the original entrance wall and door.

Though not fully revealed on entry into the passageway, the internal framework and layout of the original house has been completely restructured, using the plans of Government House in the design process. The spaces within Government House were assigned to the four functions of the city, as prescribed by Le Corbusier and utilised in Constant's New Babylon. These functions are Living, Working, Traffic and Recreation (for this process interpreted as Entertaining). Once the four separate lists were established, the same exercise was applied to the state house, separating the spaces into their function. From here each space from within Government House was then assigned to their corresponding space in the state house. This process informed two important



procedures within the design.

The first strategy used New Babylon as a precedent for the rearranging of levels vertically within the interior of the state house. Spaces within the house that corresponded to production were pushed underground, while the living and entertaining spaces were raised up above ground level, extending into the ceiling space. The traffic spaces remained at the original ground floor. The extension of the levels both underground and into the roof utilise the dormant spaces above the ceiling and below the floor. The new levels created are:

Working – *The Floor Below Ground Where Production Takes Place*, encompassing the kitchen, fuel room, laundry, wardrobe, cupboards, bathroom (lower), WC (lower), bedroom two (lower) and bedroom three (lower).

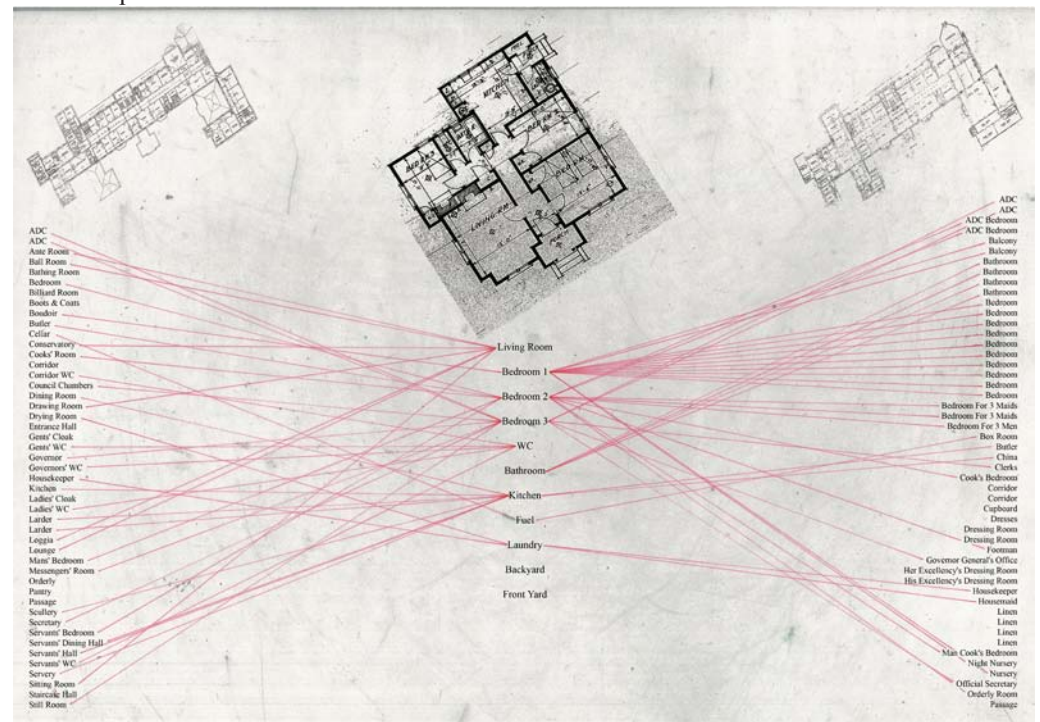
Traffic – *The Passage of a Few Persons Through a Rather Disrupted Domestic*, encompassing the original passageway and front and back porches.

Entertaining – *The Inhabited Space of Inhabited Living*, encompassing the living room.

Living – *The Place Upstairs of Disturbing Amusement*, encompassing bedroom one, bedroom two (upper), bedroom three (upper), bathroom (upper) and WC (upper).

- 14 With the disruption of the internal spaces, the next step was to create new organisations between the displaced levels. Here, *détournement* was used as a device to establish new relationships between spaces. Transposing an image of Guy Debord's *The Naked City* onto plans of both the ground and first floors of Government House generated an alternative context for Debord's red arrows, revealing unconventional links between the spaces of Government House. These links were then situated, using the first space in each group, into the three categories of *Passageway*, *Water-Waste* and *Lights*. These categories were created for their ability to visual connections between spaces.

15



#### 14. From Top:

- Existing structure of State House.
- Modified internal structure with existing structure.
- Modified internal structure without external framework.

15. Translation of Government House spaces to State House spaces.

*The Place Upstairs of Disturbing Amusement*

*The Inhabited Space of Inhabital Living*

16. The rearrangement of internal spaces within the State House pushed levels down underground, and up into the ceiling space.

17. The *détournement* of Government House and Guy Debord's *The Naked City* created new relationships between spaces within Government House, which then corresponded into changes in the State House.

*The Passage of a Few Persons Through a Rather Disrupted Domestic*

*The Floor Below Ground Where Production Takes Place*



*Ground Floor*  
 Ballroom [Loggia] Messenger's Room  
 Backyard [Ballroom, Ante Room] Messenger's Room  
 Backyard - Ladies' Cloaks  
 Ante Room [Gents' WC] Backyard  
 Boudoir - Governor  
 Governor [Boudoir] Corridor  
 Governor [Corridor] Billiard Room  
 Billiard Room - Orderly  
 Corridor [Orderly] Backyard  
 Staircase Hall [Entrance Hall, Vestibule] Backyard  
 Dining Room - Entrance Hall  
 Staircase Hall [Entrance Hall, Dining Room, Corridor] Passage  
 Verandah - Lounge  
 Verandah [Governor's WC] Front Yard  
 Front Yard - Verandah  
 Governor [Verandah] Front Yard  
 ADC - ADC  
 Passage - Dining Room  
 Passage [Kitchen, Passage] Servery  
 Washing Room [Passage] Cellar  
 Passage [Kitchen, Servants' Bathroom] Passage  
 Drying Room [Larder, Verandah] Backyard  
 Servants' WC [Passage, Bedroom] Passage  
 Still Room - Housekeeper  
 Housekeeper - Still Room  
 Passage - Still Room  
 Still Room - Passage

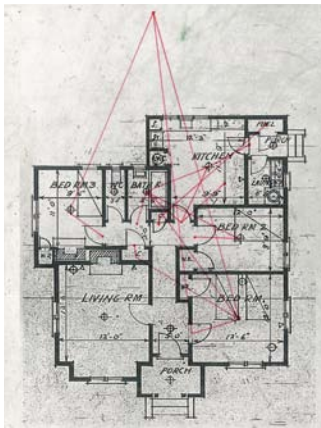
**THE NAKED HOUSE**



**THE NAKED HOUSE**

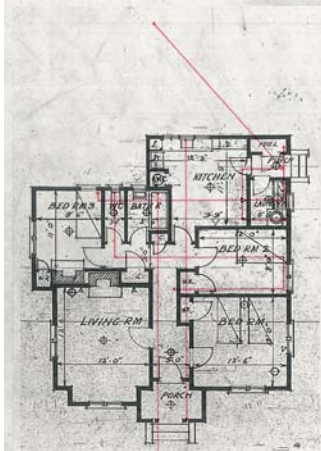
*First Floor*  
 Ballroom [Corridor, ADC] ADC  
 Backyard [Ballroom, Corridor, Secretary] Corridor  
 Backyard - Secretary  
 Bedroom - Dressing Room  
 Dressing Room - Corridor  
 Dressing Room [Corridor] Bedroom  
 Bedroom - Bedroom  
 Corridor [Bedroom] Backyard  
 Corridor [Dressing Room] Backyard  
 Backyard [Bedroom] Dressing Room  
 Corridor [Dressing Room, Bedroom, Bedroom, Bedroom] Passage  
 Bathroom - Front Yard  
 Passage [Linen, Bedroom, Bedroom] Bedroom  
 Passage [Bedroom for 3 Men, Bathroom] Bedroom  
 Passage [Bedroom for 3 Men] Passage  
 Bedroom for 3 Maids [Housemaid, Passage] Backyard  
 Box Room [Linen] Passage  
 Passage [Linen] Box Room  
 Passage [Servants' Bathroom] Man Cook's Bedroom  
 Man Cook's Bedroom [Servants' Bathroom] Front Yard  
 Bedroom for 3 Maids - Box Room  
 Box Room - Bedroom for 3 Maids  
 Passage [Cook's bedroom] Passage  
 Dressing Room [Balcony] Front yard  
 Front Yard - Balcony





### Passageway

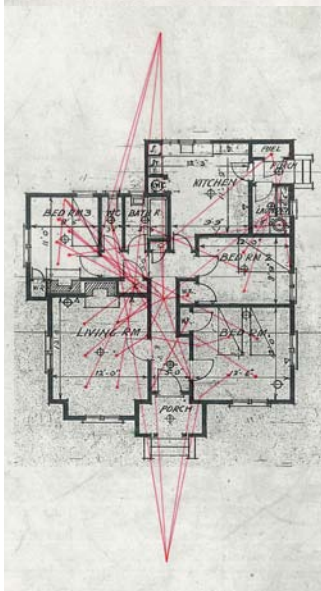
Using each group that began with a passageway in Government House, the second space was then used to identify where in the passage of the state house the intervention would originate from. As each space had a connection to a doorway in the passage, the extruded form of the door was used to demarcate the links created within each group. Traces of these links are then made visible through stairs, ramps, marks and cut outs in the structure. New ways of accessing spaces are created, replacing the existing connections between rooms. The stairs and ramps are formed from corten steel, introducing a foreign materiality into the traditional structure of concrete and timber.



### Water-Waste

The groups that began with the kitchen, laundry or bathroom were used as a disruptive tool as well as a visual connection between spaces. Water pipes running from the first space, which houses the faucet, to the final space, which contains the taps, are exposed. In order to run water, the taps need to be operated from a separate space, disrupting the conventional activity of accessing water.

A similar scenario is set up for the flushing of the toilet within the house. An exposed pipe runs from the toilet basin to the cistern, which sits in another part of the house.



### Lights

All the groups that begin with the living room, bedroom one, two and three, fuel, backyard and front yard have their connections visualised through light wires that hang throughout the house. Using the same technique as *Water-Waste*, the lights can only be switched on from other locations, derived from the final space within each group. The appearance of each light identifies the original function of each space, with chandeliers in the living room, plain shades in the upper bedrooms, and bare light bulbs in the underground spaces.

### Descriptions of each level:

#### The Floor Below Ground Where Production Takes Place

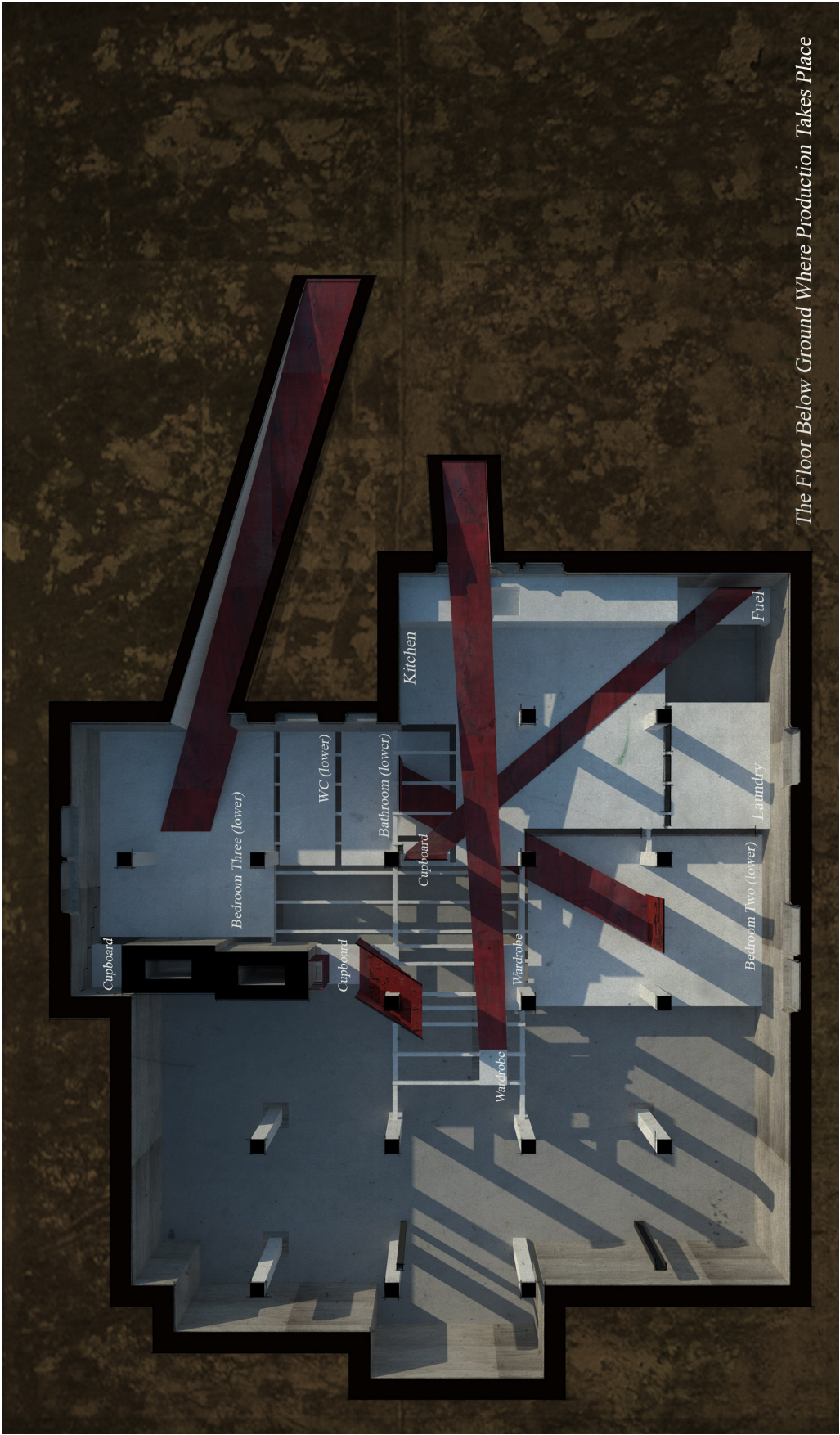
With the internal walls remaining at ground level, the floor levels underground are interconnecting, with bedroom three (lower), bedroom two (lower), WC (lower), and the bathroom (lower) raised 500mm above the bare ground, and the kitchen, laundry and fuel room another 500mm above that. The subfloor bearers and joists follow the existing structure, exposing sections of the structure where support is needed. The piles from the existing foundation have been extruded down, now forming columns that intersect the floor and create divisions within the spaces. The concrete retaining walls enclosing the whole level reveal traces of formwork, and are left unfinished. Within these walls, casts of the existing windows express the original location of the lowered floors. The chimney, extruded to form a large vertical element within the house, contains two fireplaces both accessed from the underground level; one from bedroom three (lower), with the other situated on the unfinished ground beside the cupboard. Ramps, stairs and a rung ladder provide access to the upper levels, with the ramps dissecting the concrete wall and cutting into the ground to access the backyard. The rung ladder hangs from the chimney and connects the cupboard to the living room, while the stairs, beginning at the same point, angle up to connect to bedroom one. The underground level, while seeming to be the more hospitable space due

18

18. Diagrams From Top:
- Passageway connections
  - Water-waste connections
  - Lights connections.



to the relative ease of negotiation is still essentially under the house, with minimal lighting and raw elements causing issues of dampness, dirt, and other problems occurring from exposed elements.



*The Floor Below Ground Where Production Takes Place*

19. Plan of *The Floor Below Ground Where Production Takes Place*.



20



21



22

### *The Passage of a Few Persons Through a Rather Disrupted Domestic*

Ground level provides multiple access points into the house, through both the front and back porches, as well as new entry points from the backyard. Internally, the central passage is split diagonally by a stairway from bedroom one to the cupboard underground. Open doorways reveal changes in floor levels, exposed joists and beams, stairways, and double height spaces. Stairs from the doorway of bedroom two lead down to nothing, suspended midway down to the underground, while a ramp from the back porch slips under exposed joists and beams, potentially terminating the path for all but the brave. Evidence of the shift in floor levels can be seen on the walls, with the internal lining removed where the floors were shifted up, and left in place when shifted down. The three long ramps that run in from the backyard allow access to both the first floor and the underground level. They become the easiest way to manoeuvre around the house, but they also play with ideas of comfort and security, as movement between the two levels means venturing out into the elements. The security of the house is breached through the piercing of the walls created by each ramp, raising concerns of enclosure and safety. In other areas of the house spaces can only be reached using vertical rungs, or by traversing open joists, playing with fears of heights and falling; spaces may be ignored by the occupant due to the fears or adverse feelings that the house inflicts.

### *The Inhabited Space of Inhabitual Living, The Place Upstairs of Disturbing Amusement*

Beginning 1.5 m above the existing ground floor, the upper level floors rise in stages, stepping up 300mm, culminating in bedroom one at 2.7m above the existing level. With the original ceilings removed, these spaces claim the unused roof space. With the new ceiling line, varying heights are formed, creating diverse spaces. Stairways and ramps pierce through the floors, while open sections connect visually to the underground. While traditionally the most utilised areas within the house, the placement of these levels and the difficult access to certain points makes the established functions less convenient. Casts of the original fireplace surrounds have been made in

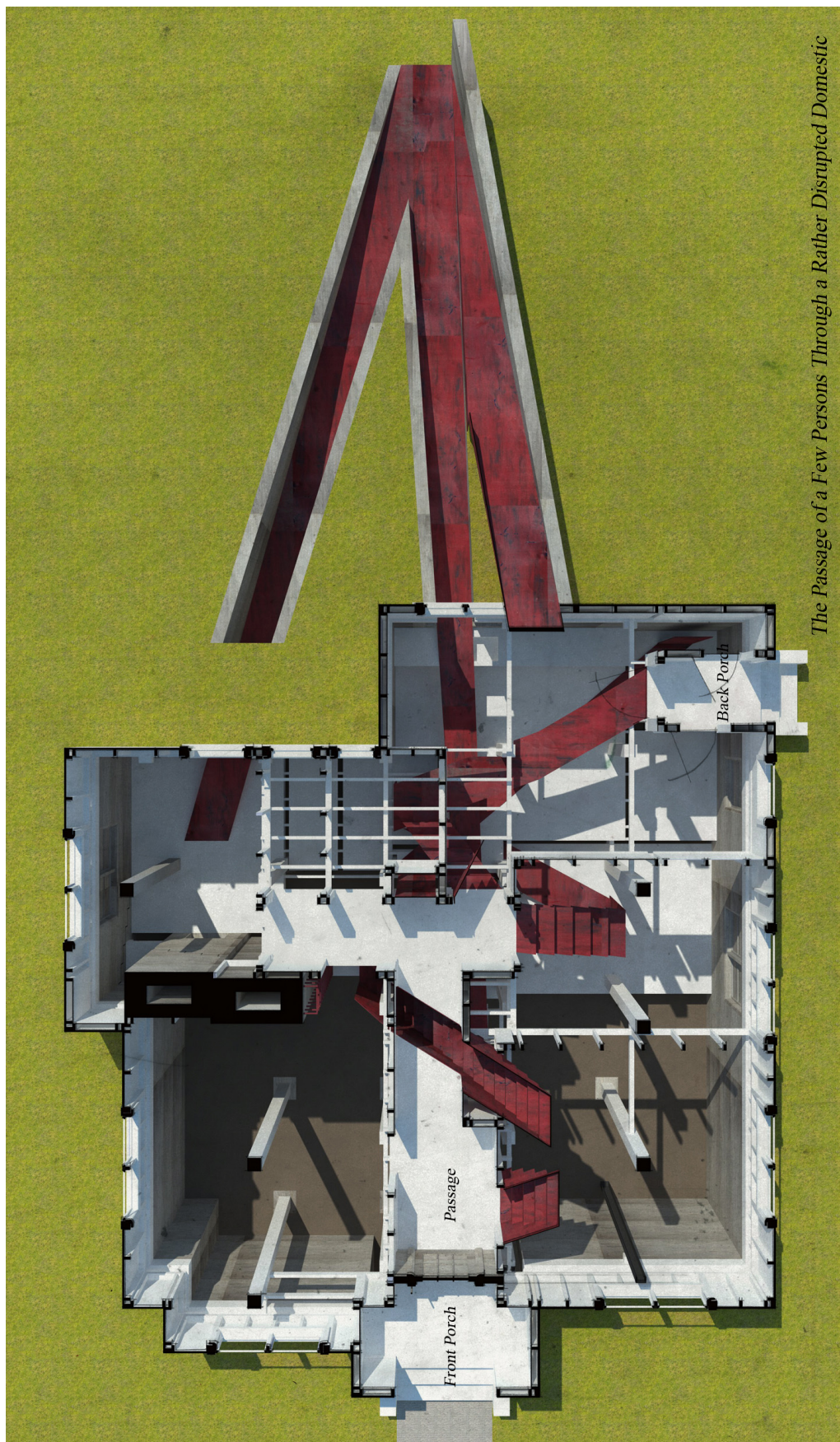
20. A view of the underground reveals the columns and joist and beam system, which are traditionally hidden beneath the floor.

21. The extent of the framing exposed under bedroom one, looking down to the lower level below ground. The stairs on the right lead to nowhere, no longer functioning as a pathway between two points.

22. View down from the backyard passage into bedroom three (lower). The concrete walls of the underground trace the connections between levels with remnants of a staircase cut into the wall. Also visible is the concrete cast of the ground floor windows.



23. Plan of *The Passage of a Few Persons Through a Rather Disrupted Domestic*



*The Passage of a Few Persons Through a Rather Disrupted Domestic*



24



25

26



27

24. View into the former bedroom three and bathroom at ground level.

25. Stairways cut through the structure of the house, while the original timber framework is exposed through the removal of the wall coverings.

26. The view from the passage out the front door reveals the sliding concrete cast front wall. On the left is the opening to the stairs up to bedroom one, while the opening on the right shows the change in level of the living room, now half way up the doorway.

27. The passageway reveals cuts in the floor and walls where they are intersected by stairways.



the concrete chimney in the living room and bedroom three (upper). Reminiscent of their original status within the house, they now stand as useless decoration, with the added inconvenience of needing to light the fire down on the underground level.

### *The Model*

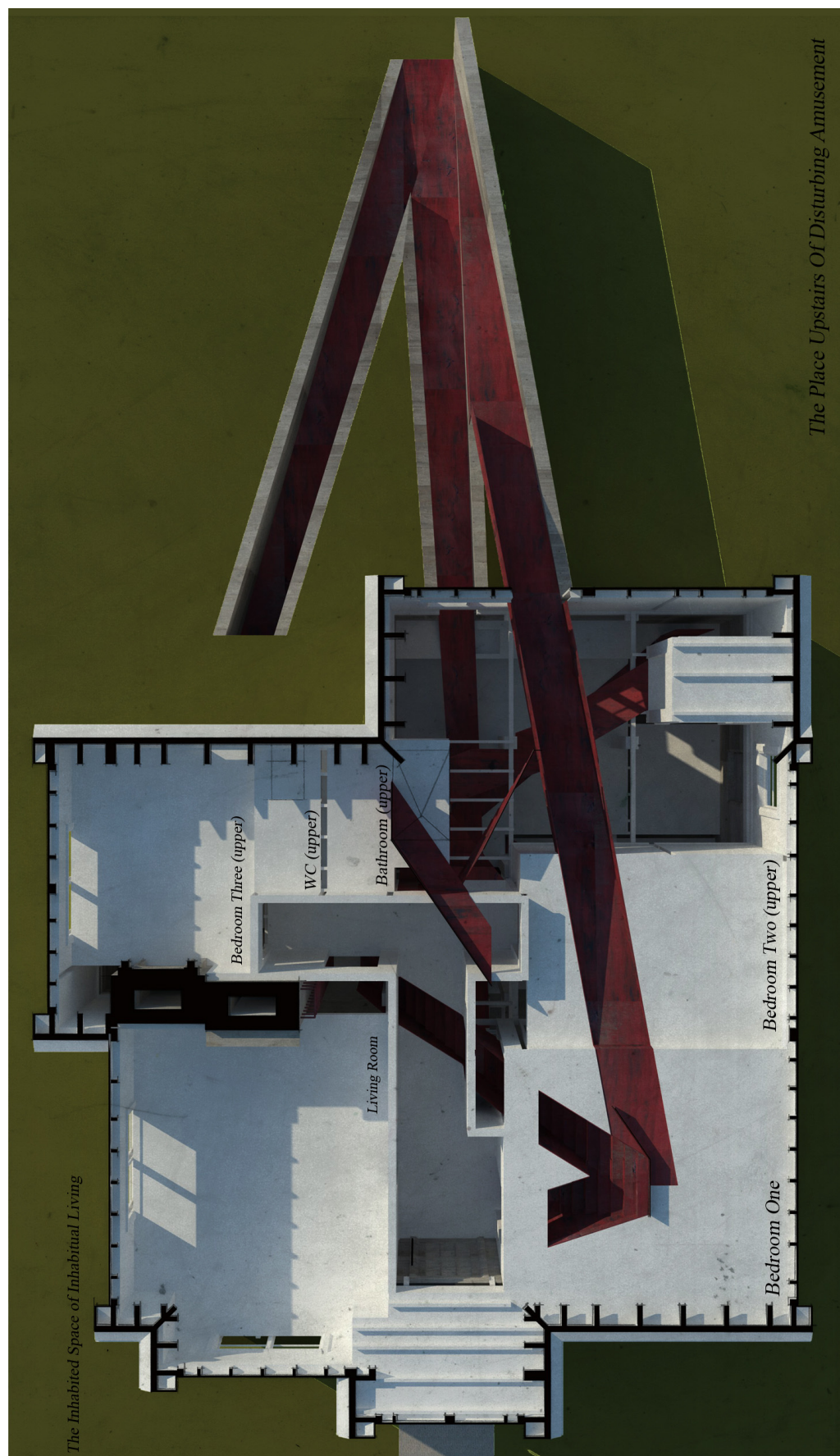
The construction process of the model became as important as the model itself, as it allowed a greater understanding of the built form. In adjusting the floor levels within the house, a deliberate decision was made to use the original construction as a basis for the new structure. By modelling each bearer, joist, column, beam and wall frame it was possible to work out how it would operate in the overall construction. The model became an opportunity to experience the design in the physical form, allowing the process of *making* to inform the work both structurally and materially.

The physical model actualises a materiality that the computer model could only hint at. Within the model, the disruption of the interior becomes tangible. Old and new elements within the design are expressed through the materiality of the model, communicating the disruption from the disrupted. Delineating the corten steel, the red aluminium strips contrast with the timber frame construction of the reorganised structure, while card is used to portray the remnants of plaster left within the building. The gaps and seams created by the displacement of walls are visible, interrupting the traditionally impervious skin of the house. Also evident are the openings and fissures caused by the changes in levels, with connections between spaces glimpsed through apertures within the floors and walls.

The stand that the model was suspended in is also an intricate part of the overall research, serving multiple purposes. The legs, made from an old totara fence post, have rough internal edges identifying the underground, while the kwila crosspieces are a deep brown colour to delineate ground level. With no top, the model was suspended in the middle on a sheet of clear acrylic, communicating the change in levels within the house.

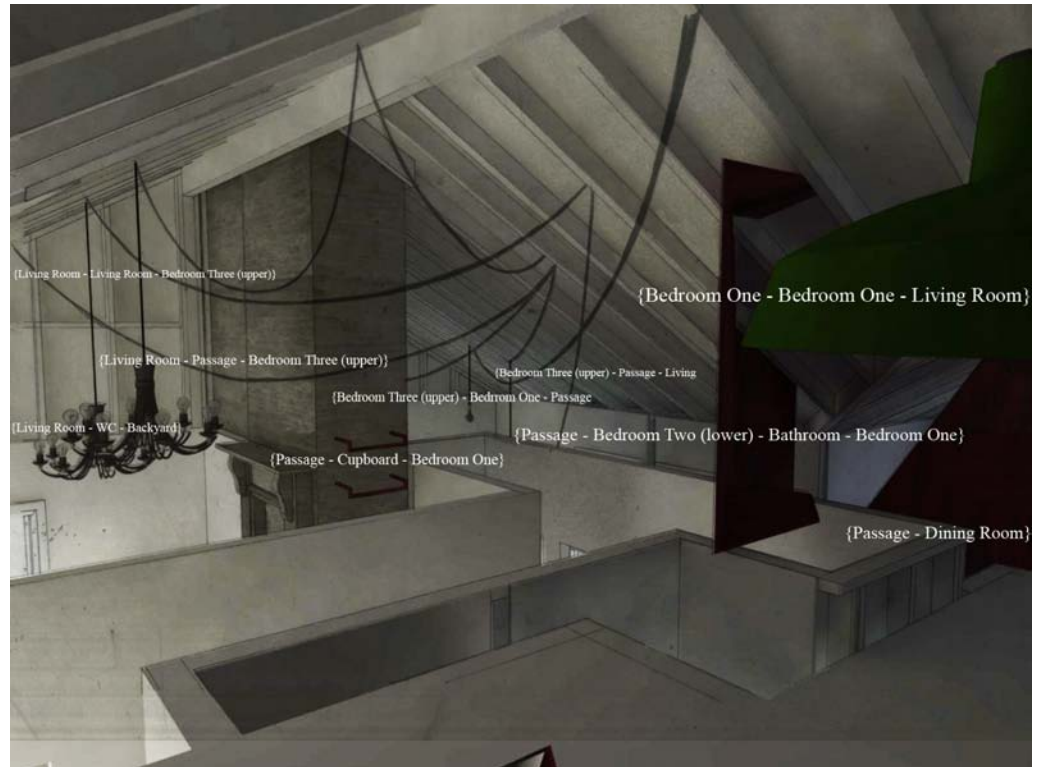


28. Plan of *The Place Upstairs of Disturbing Amusement* and *The Inhabited Space of Inhabitual Living*





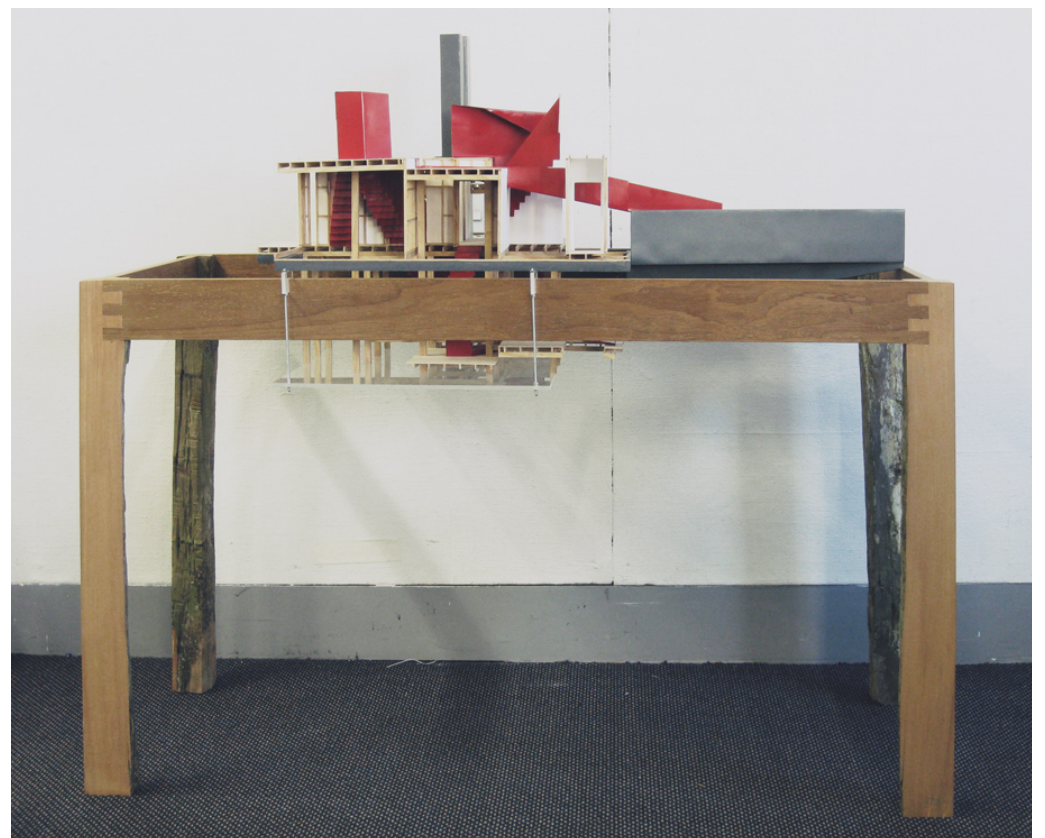
29



30

The stand's final manifestation looks at what can become of furniture within a distorted environment. Utilising a piece of frosted glass, the detourned stand now fluctuates between use, as both a light source and a surface for the placement of objects. The design of the artefacts within each domestic space becomes the next step in the disruption process, with *détournement* offering an opportunity to explore new meaning through the manipulation of existing domestic artefacts.

31



29. Overview of the living room with its concrete cast fire surround. The fire place is visible below the floor underground. On the right, stairs lead up from the passage to bedroom one.

30. Looking from bedroom one over the passageway shows the web of lights that mark out new relationships between spaces.

31. The cross piece of the stand delineates ground level, expressing the shift of the lower level underground. The existing exterior walls of the State House are not shown on the model.





32



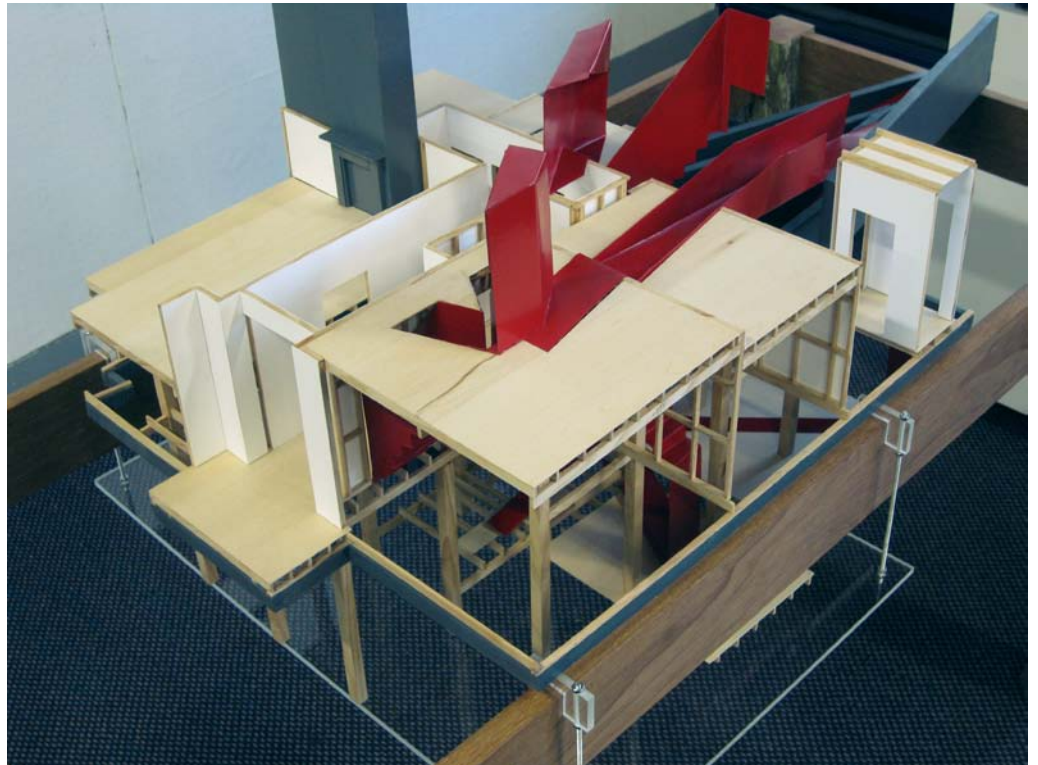
33

32. Looking through to the passage from under bedroom two (upper). The stairs from the passage lead nowhere, allowing a new function to be formed.

33. Detail of fingerjoint construction with model in background.



34



35

34. The contrast between the original passage with existing walls remaining and the space underneath bedroom one, with a view through to the space under bedroom two (upper).

35. Looking down over bedroom one and bedroom two (upper), with living room in top left corner.



36



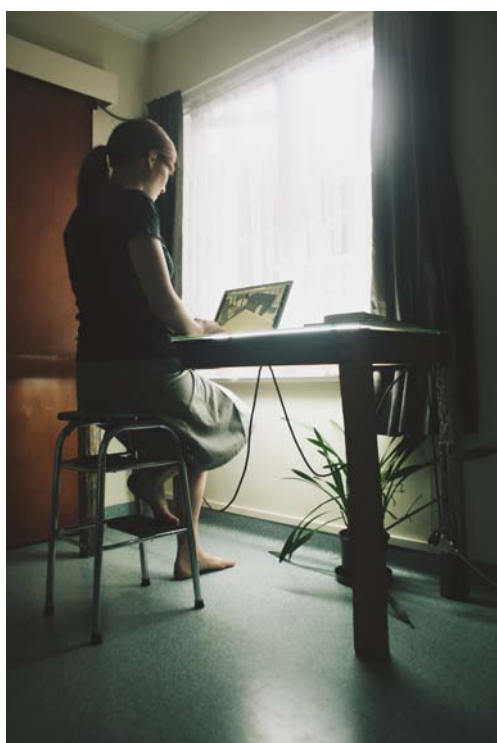
37



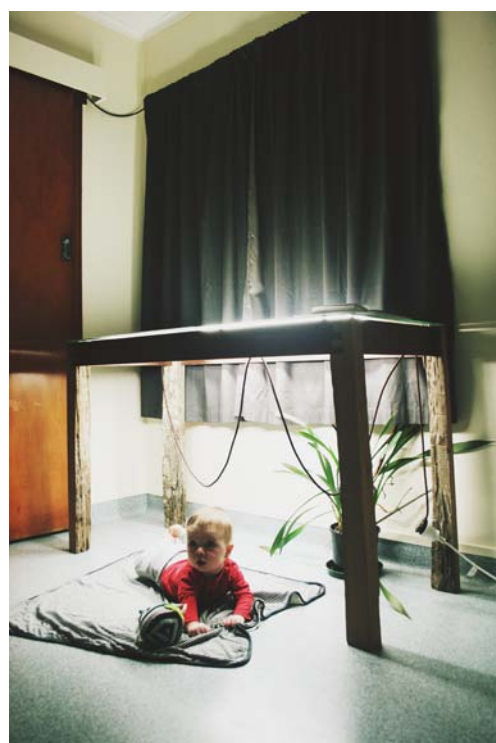
36, 37. The *detoured* stand.

38

39



38. The stand as surface.



39. The stand as light source.

30

## *Now, the Conclusion*

### **Discussion**

The intention within the research was not to create a Situationist domestic, but to use Situationist theories as a basis for creating a new understanding of one particular domestic situation. To evaluate the merit of the design in the overall research, it is appropriate to look at what was achieved within the design and its relationship to Situationist ideas.

#### *Behavioural and Habitual Change*

The desire for a change in how inhabitants of the city behaved and lived was a strong motivation for the SI. They saw the potential for architecture to be used as a principal component in environments set up for the construction of situations. It was in these situations that the SI believed new behaviours would arise. Within the domestic, certain habits and behaviours shape how the domestic is utilised and perceived. By causing a shift in how the domestic operates, new understandings of the role of the domestic will be created.

Within *The House of {Un}Stately Occurrences*, architectural interventions have been used as devices for creating change in the behaviour and habitual living of the occupants. Using level changes, new passageways, the severing of existing connections, and the distortion of functionality, a re-evaluation of domestic *needs* is required in order to establish new living arrangements. Existing spaces will be requisitioned for new uses, based on the occupants' emotional responses. Here Feuerstein's *unpremeditated* architecture allows the user to influence how the house is occupied, with their own interpretation of the *domestic* allowing for new behaviours and habits to emerge.

#### *Disruption of Function*





40

41

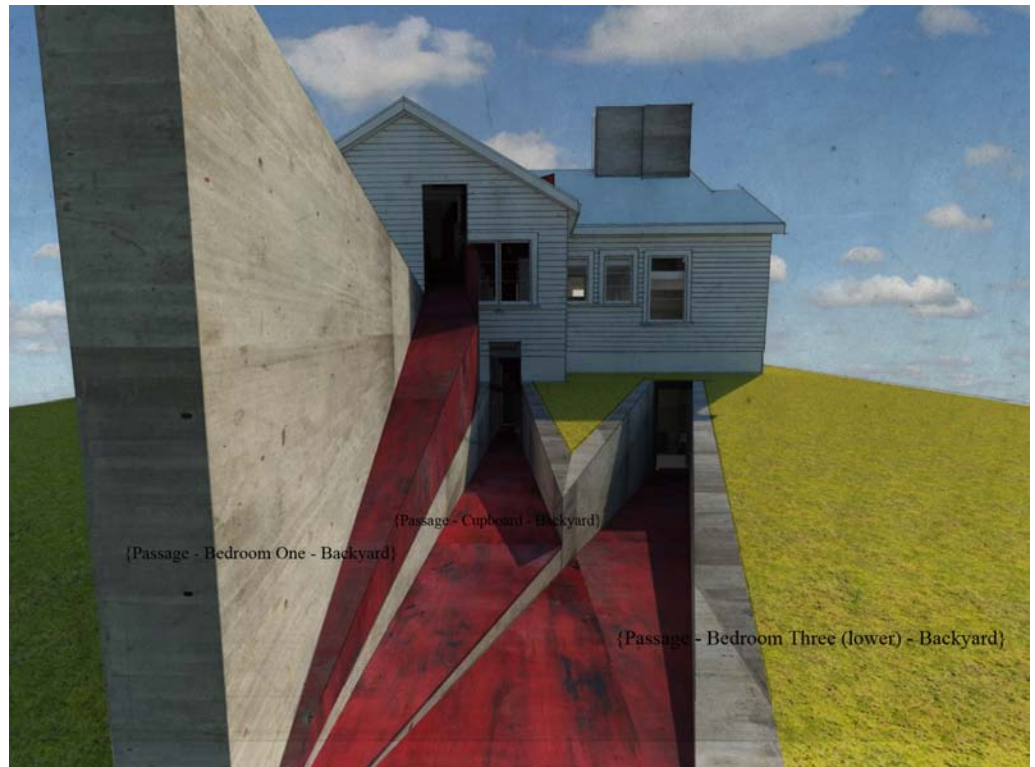
40, 41. New corten pathways connect the new levels together, slicing into the ground of the backyard, and creating openings in the original exterior walls.

43. Looking through to the passage reveals the exposed framework of the existing bedroom three space at ground level..

42



Functionality helps produce the smooth operation of activity and use within the domestic, allowing a comfortable and ordered living experience. The disruption of functionality within the domestic causes a shift that serves to enhance the living experience of the inhabitants through *provocative* situations. Spaces within the house are separated, access is arduous and boundaries are lost and enforced, causing the occupants to be “moved, excited, enchanted, offended, filled up, tortured, confronted (McDonough 136).” A ramp from the backyard cuts through the kitchen wall, passing over the bench and splitting the space in two. The living room can only be accessed through a small gap in the existing doorway, or up a long set of rungs embedded in the side of the chimney. Walls no longer separate adjacent spaces, with gaps in the floor marking their removal. Passage from upstairs to down is made either using extensive ramps that bypass through the backyard, or from descending steep and narrow stairways. The disruption of functionality within the domestic challenges the perception of the domestic as a practical, comfortable and stable

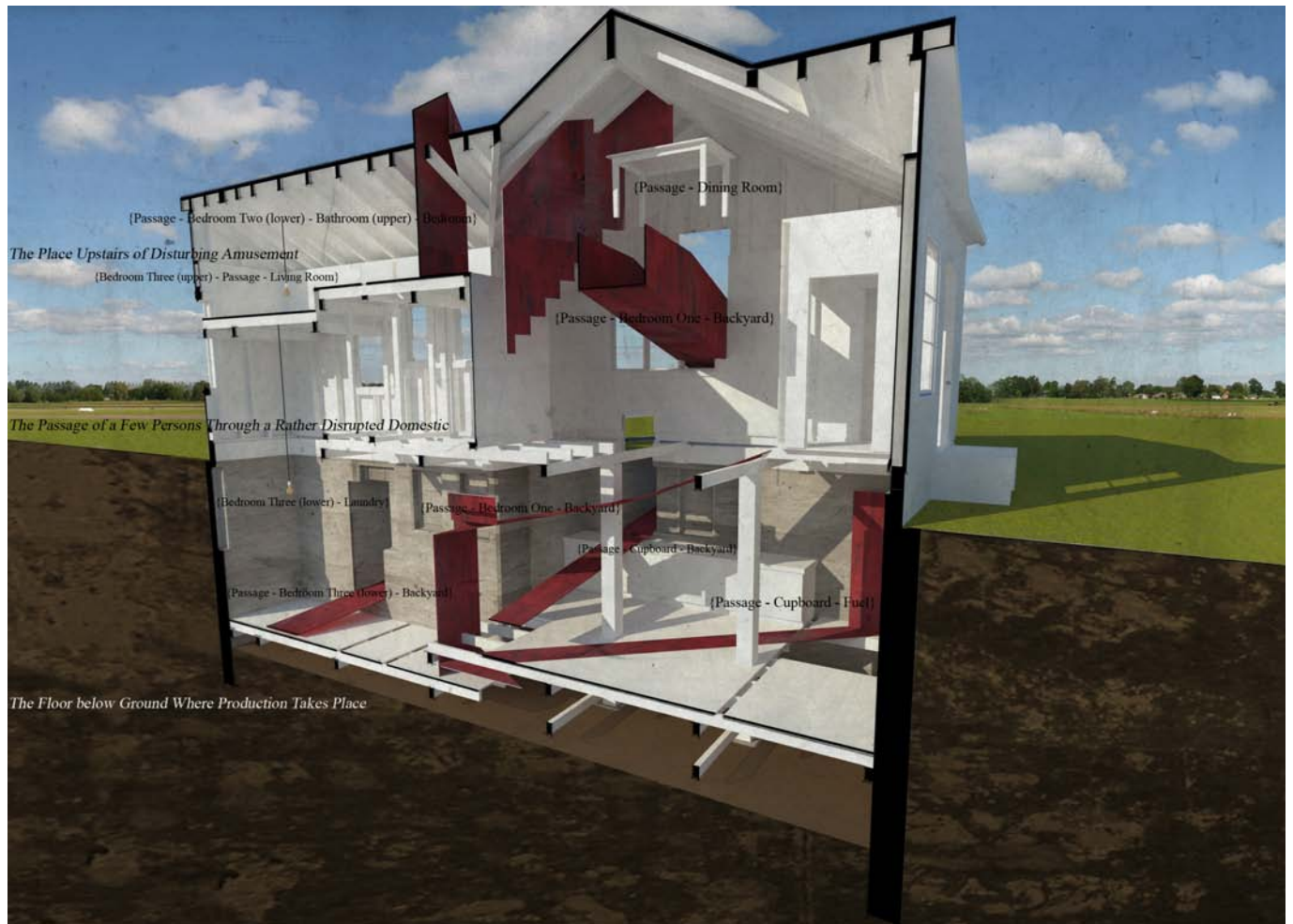


environment, designed to protect against the outside world. By allowing disorder and disruption to influence the internal environment, the psychological distinction between inside and out becomes blurred.

### *Formation of New Spatial Relationships*

With the disruption of spaces within the house and the inclusion of architectural interventions, new relationships between spaces are made. The ramps and stairs that wind up and around the house create physical connections, as do the switches and faucets of the *lights* and *water/waste* interventions connecting to lamps and taps in a myriad of different locations. Visual connections are created by marks and cuts in the material fabric of the house, pipes and wires run throughout the interior, and openings in walls and floors and voids connect distant spaces together.

Viewing *dérive* as an architectural device, the forgotten spaces within the domestic are explored, with the exposure of walls and the utilisation of the roof and subfloor spaces allowing the exploration of new areas, and finding new pathways and access points between spaces not



43. Sectional Perspective showing level changes within the internal structure. Ramps cut through the external walls into the backyard, connecting the levels together.



44



45

traditionally connected. The exposure of gaps and cracks within the construction causes the boundaries between spaces to become less certain, complicated, allowing dust to accumulate and darkness to creep in.

### *Questioning Traditional Notions of the Domestic*

In the disruption and distortion of the house, notions of privacy, comfort, security and safety are questioned. Spaces begin to merge through the loss of walls and the removal of wall linings, new openings are formed both in internal and external walls, and access to certain areas is diverted through the backyard, raising concerns of privacy both within the home, and without. Comfort is questioned in the house with its exposure to the elements through openings in exterior walls, the uncovered ground of the underground level. Narrow pathways, steep stairs, differing heights and tight spaces are awkward to navigate through, and the rusted and cold corten steel, introduced in the interventions, play with the idea of material comfort with the house. The openings in the exterior walls raise security issues, as they are a permanent link between inside and outside. The heights within the house, the openings, and the exposed joists and beams, may prompt safety concerns from the occupants.

### *Détournement*

*Détournement* has been used within the design as a device for reappropriating existing elements within the domestic. The casting of the existing front door wall into the new front door becomes a symbol of the existing static domestic situation, and on opening it reveals a new interpretation of the experience of domestic living. A similar idea is rendered in the cast fireplace mantelpieces and the underground 'windows'. In a distorted domestic, the living room, with its fireplace and mantel, is no longer the centre of living, as the experience of *living* becomes part of every activity within the house. The cast 'windows' reveal the underground production level's original placement within the house. Stairs, conventionally leading from one place to another, are revealed to go nowhere, allowing a new use for them to be appropriated by the occupants.

46



44, 45. Stairways intersect and rise to bedroom one from the passage.

46. Chandeliers hang low in the living room, connected to other spaces in the house through their wires, with switches located in various areas. The concrete cast fire surround is reminiscent of the former *heart* of the home.





47. Bare bulbs hang in bedroom three (upper), with the large concrete chimney protruding through the ceiling.

The *detoured* model stand, fluctuating between surface and light, becomes the symbol of the next step in the disrupted domestic. Furniture is often the defining element of a space that allows recognition of a room's function; dining room – dining table, bedroom – bed, living room – lounge suite. The design and distortion of the artefacts within these spaces would allow a further disruption of the activity and habitual behaviour within the house. *Détournement* becomes a simple means to diverting an object's traditional associations by creating new contextual meaning.

#### *Problems with the Domestic Situation*

The process followed was never intended as being an answer to *how* the domestic might be designed, rather it is to be seen as questioning the traditional notions of the domestic and the habitual activities associated with it. In saying this, there are areas within the process that had they been worked differently, would have resulted in a vastly different design. The use of *dérive* as a design driver, rather than simply an outcome may have opened up more possibilities to discover stronger links between Government House and the state house. Where *détournement* was used in the overlaying of Debord's work with Government House was a particular example of the potential *dérive* might have had in its place. By using psychogeographic methods as an exploration of the spaces within Government House, alternative connections between the spaces could conceivably have created an entirely different design outcome. While being a justified design decision, it can also be seen as an arbitrary resolution that would have been better executed using a more rigorous and detailed investigation into spatial connections. Problems identified within the process may affect the outcome in regards to the design, but the process is not designed to be an answer, rather it is an example of how an outcome might be achieved. It is the outcome, the disruption of the domestic, that is the goal within this research. Perhaps its role lies in being an active installation occupied for a period of time, allowing the inhabitants to discover the opportunities and challenges that the domestic holds. What the occupant takes away from the experience would then hopefully impact how they understand and interact with

traditional domestic architecture.

## **Conclusion**

The role of this research was to investigate how architecture might be used to challenge our understanding of a domestic situation. The use of Situationist theories and strategies, along with Robin Evans' *Figures, Doors, and Passages*, to inform the architecture of the state house offered the opportunity to establish an alternative appreciation of how a domestic situation might be inhabited. Within the domestic, certain behaviours are implied through the traditional arrangement of spaces and artefacts within these spaces. Reinterpreting the spaces within the state house allows new modes of inhabitation to occur, and with this the establishment of new behaviours and habits within the domestic, deepening the possibilities of how the domestic is understood.

## *Bibliography*

- Andreotti, Libero, and Xavier Costa, ed. *Theory of the Dérive and other Situationist Writings on the City*. Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 1996
- Barnard, Adam. "The Legacy of the Situationist International: The Production of Situations of Creative Resistance." *Capital & Class*. 84. Winter 2004 : p. 103-124
- Borden, Iain and Sandy McCreery. "New Babylonians." *Architectural Design*. 71.3 June 2001
- Brookes, Barbara. ed. *At Home in New Zealand*. Wellington, New Zealand: Bridget Williams Books, 2000
- Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone Books, 1994
- Evans, Robin. "Figures, Doors and Passages." *Translations From Drawing to Building and Other Essays*. London: Architectural Association, 1997
- Firth, Cedric. *State Housing in New Zealand*. Wellington: Ministry of Works, 1949
- Ford, Simon. *The Situationist International: A User's Guide*. London: Black Dog Pub., 2005
- Forty, Adrian. *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture*. London: Thames + Hudson, 2000
- Gardiner, Michael E. *Critiques of Everyday Life*. London: Routledge, 2000
- Handlin, David P. *The American Home: Architecture and Society – 1815-1915*. Boston: Little Brown, 1979
- Heathcote, Edwin, ed. *Furniture + Architecture*. London: Wiley-Academy, 2002
- Hill, Jonathan. *Actions of Architecture: Architects and Creative Users*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2003
- Hill, Jonathan. *Occupying Architecture : Between the Architect and the User*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1998

- Hill, Jonathan. *Immaterial Architecture*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2006
- Kavanagh, Leslie. "Situating Situationism: Wandering around New Babylon with Mille Plateaux." *Architectural Theory Review*. 13.2. 2008 : 254-270
- Knabb, Ken, ed. and trans. *Situationist International Anthology*. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006
- Chtcheglov, Ivan. Formulary for a New Urbanism. Written in 1953, but first published in *Internationale Situationniste* #1
- Constant. Another City for Another Life. *Internationale Situationniste* #3, 1959
- Debord, Guy and Gil J. Wolman. A User's Guide to Détournement. *Les Lèvres Nues* #8, May 1956
- Debord, Guy. Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography. *Les Lèvres Nues* #6, September 1955
- Debord, Guy. Preliminary Problems in Constructing a Situation. *Internationale Situationniste* #1, 1958
- Debord, Guy. Report on the Construction of Situations. Preparatory document for the July 1957 conference at Cosio d'Arroscia, Italy.
- Debord, Guy. Situationist Theses on Traffic. *Internationale Situationniste* #3, 1960
- Debord, Guy. Theses on Cultural Revolution. *Internationale Situationniste* #1, 1958
- Debord, Guy. Theory of the Dérive. *Internationale Situationniste* #2, 1959
- Jorn, Asger. The Situationists and Automation. *Internationale Situationniste* #1, 1958
- Kotányi, Attila, and Raoul Vaneigem. Basic Program of the Bureau of Unitary Urbanism. *Internationale Situationniste* #6, 1961
- Lettrist International. Proposals for Rationally Improving the City of Paris. *Potlatch* #23, October 1955
- Situationist International. Definitions. *Internationale Situationniste* #1, 1958
- Situationist International. Détournement as Negation and Prelude. *Internationale Situationniste* #3, 1959
- Situationist International. The Use of Free Time. *Internationale Situationniste* #4, 1960
- Krebs, Jan. *Design and Living*. Switzerland: Birkhauser, 2007
- Lautréamont, Comte de. *Maldoror and Poems*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1978
- Lefebvre, Henri. *Writings on Cities*. Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 1996
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. *The Savage Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004
- McDonough, Tom. *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2004
- McDonough, Tom. "Metastructure: Experimental Utopia and Traumatic Memory in Constant's New Babylon." *Architectural Theory Review*. Fall. 2008 : 84-95

- McDonough, Tom, ed. *The Situationists and the City*. New York: Verso, 2009
- McGaw, Janet. "Complex Relationships between *Détournement* and *Récupération* in Melbourne's Street [Graffiti and Stencil] Scene." *Architectural Theory Review*. 13.2 2008: 222-239
- McLaughlin, Sally, and Aaron Fry, "On Framing: The Situationist Strategies of *Détournement* and *Dérive*." *Architectural Theory Review*. 6.2 [2001] : 56-64
- Miller, Ross. "The Situationists: Resurrecting the Avante-Garde." *Progressive Architecture*. 72.9. 1991 : 139-140
- New Zealand. Dept. of Internal Affairs. *Gouvernement House, Wellington, New Zealand*. Wellington, N.Z: Dept. of Internal Affairs, 1989
- Plant, Sadie. *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1997
- Pinder, David. *Visions of the City: Utopianism, Power and Politics in Twentieth-Century Urbanism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005
- Rasmussen, Mikkel Bolt. "Counterrevolution, the Spectacle and the Situationist Avant-Garde." *Social Justice*. 33.2. 2006 : 5-15
- Sadler, Simon. *The Situationist City*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT, 1999
- Schrader, Ben. *We Call it Home: A History of State Housing in New Zealand*. Auckland, NZ: Reed, 2005
- Thompson, Nato and Gregory Sholette, ed. *The Interventionists: User's Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life*. North Adams, Mass: Mass MoCA Publications, 2004
- Wark, Mckenzie. *50 Years of Recuperation of the Situationist International*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008
- Wigley, Mark. *The activist drawing : retracing situationist architectures from Constant's New Babylon to Beyond*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2001
- Wigley, Mark. *Constant's New Babylon : the hyper-architecture of desire*. Rotterdam: Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art: 010 Publishers, 1998
- Winters, Edward. *Aesthetics and Architecture*. London: Continuum, 2007





