

**Lezli Rubin-Kunda, *At Home: Talks with Canadian Artists about Place and Practice*, Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2019, 220 pp. 30 colour and 150 b/w illus. \$ 29.95 (paper) ISBN 9781773100470 \$ 19.95 (epub) ISBN 9781773100494**

**Mark Wigley, ed., *Cutting Matta-Clark: The Anarchitecture Investigation*, Zürich: Lars Müller Publications, 2018, 528 pp. 813 illus. € 35,00 (paper) ISBN 9783037784273**

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**Marie-Paule Macdonald**

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Approaching Home: New Perspectives on the Domestic Interior  
Vers la maison : nouvelles perspectives sur l'intérieur domestique

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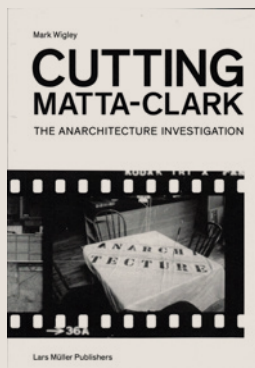
a bigger place and landscape” (128). Dorenbaum’s afterword expands on the psychological aspects of inhabiting IMA’s houses. For instance, he contemplates how an L-shaped room evokes a sense of mystery, and he considers this experience in terms of Gaston Bachelard’s meditations on the home in *The Poetics of Space*. Dorenbaum extends his discussion of imagination and architectural space to IMA’s design practices as well as broader considerations of how architectural interiors influence subjectivity. Moreover, he draws upon insights by authors such as Emily Dickinson and Jean Cocteau and architects such as Luis Barragán and Aldo van Eyck to consider the “paradox of architecture”—where “space transforms us” and the designer, “in a dialectical reversal, creates the conditions for the space to shape its inhabitants” (131).

While the book’s essays outline IMA’s innovative approach to integrating a dwelling within the landscape, they lack in-depth considerations of the theoretical and social issues that pertain to Canadian residential architecture. In this regard, the book is similar to other monographs in the *Documents in Canadian Architecture* series. For instance, the short essays in *Barry Johns Architects* (2000) concentrate primarily on the firm’s creative and design processes and offer a few brief observations of how the buildings reflect the identity of the Canadian prairies. *Shim-Sutcliffe—The Passage of Time* (2014) includes a longer essay by the architects that focuses on two of their house designs as well as a postscript by Phyllis Lambert that compares their work with Mies van der Rohe’s experimental approach to architectural design.

*boundary sequence illusion* certainly meets the aims of the *Documents in Canadian Architecture* series to examine the designs and processes of significant architectural firms in Canada. The reader, however, would also benefit from a discussion of how MacDonald’s education, training, and life experiences have

influenced his practice. Only in the cursory notes on the contributors do we learn that MacDonald worked with Arthur Erickson, Ron Thom, and John Parkin before he founded his own firm. While Dalhousie Architectural Press’s *Canadian Modern* series is more focused on architectural history, other monographs in the *Documents in Canadian Architecture* series, such as *Saucier + Perrotte Architectes 1995–2002* (2004), do include a brief account of the architects’ personal history and the firm’s foundations in the introductory essays. Nevertheless, *boundary sequence illusion* is a valuable resource for architects as well as architectural students and theorists, and it will also appeal to those less acquainted with the discipline due to the quality of its illustrations and its engaging descriptions of IMA’s designs. ¶

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Marie-Paule Macdonald

At a confluence of site-specific and conventional studio practice, three recent publications address domestic and public urban landscapes, each taking this shared theme in diverging directions. Lezli Rubin-Kunda, author of *At Home: Talks with Canadian Artists about Place and Practice*, interviewed contemporary artists in Canada, writing on homes, place, and studios; Mark Wigley’s *Cutting Matta-Clark: The Anarchitecture Investigation* examines the Matta-Clark archive, investigating the artist’s sculptural practice of cutting buildings in relation to

the notion of “anarchitecture,” collectively articulated by a group of artist-collaborators at a time when the Soho loft district was a magnet for artists interested in creating an urban ecology of self-built renovated studios; *How to Build a House Museum*, the catalogue for social practice and installation artist Theaster Gates’ 2016 exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario, plays with multiple meanings of house, from house music to house as archive, museum, and legacy. These books explore common themes of studios, landscape, and public space, while presenting differing strategies for community building and reconsidering public art institutions—urgent issues in times of the pandemic.

Rubin-Kunda’s *At Home* features interviews with artists practicing across Canada, from Vancouver Island to Halifax. A Canadian-Israeli multi-media artist and educator, Rubin-Kunda’s influences range from Fluxus work to Ana Mendieta’s connecting the body with landscape. From 2012 to 2013 she undertook two journeys to explore the studio practices of thirty-one Canadian-based contemporary artists. Most were long time residents; a few had emigrated permanently or were nomadic temporary residents. Each interview unfolded as an individual encounter where the artists’ work was gently probed. Rubin-Kunda sought them out by consulting Canadian web pages and posting notices, resulting in a snowball process that accumulated a majority of women artists. Shared themes of home and place linked the disparate practices, rather than collective movements. Typically Rubin-Kunda includes a reflection comparing each practice with her own work, whether the pieces were studio-made or site-specific.

Many of the artists teach and are connected with university art departments, thus their conversational ease, and while not all teach full time many

had moved from one institution to another. The artists include: Sharon Alward, Amelie Atkins, Catherine Bodmer, Aganetha Dyck, Peter Dykhuis, Lorraine Field, Susan Fiendel, Michael Fernandes, Nicole Fournier, Simon Frank, Tanya Harnett, Mary Kavanaugh, Annie Martin, François Morelli, Devora Neumark, Ellen Moffat and Kim Morgan, François Morelli, Marian Penner Bancroft, Susan Schantz, Jacky Sawazky, Sandra Semchuk, Stan Krzyzanowski, Josée Pedneault, Diane Pugen, Sandra Rechico and Gwen MacGregor, Tim Schouten, Emiliano Sepulveda, Victoria Stanton, Tedi Tafel, and Jeroen Witvliet. The evocative cover image shows a photograph of a sculptural installation by Morelli of metal bunk bed frames positioned in a snowy landscape with mountains in the background beyond and a male figure sweeping snow in the foreground. Its interpretations could range from a period bed frame, conjuring an oneiric memory of a shared bedroom’s dissolved walls, to a surrealist dissociated dreamscape on a tableland, or to theatrical precedents such as Giles Maheu’s *Le Dortoir*, where bedframes transformed into scenography for communal dance.

The interviews included a dialogue with Tanya Harnett, an Edmonton-based, University of Alberta associate professor, member of Carry-The-Kettle First Nation in Saskatchewan, elected to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. At the time of the interview, Harnett taught in Lethbridge, where she spoke of teaching local Blackfoot students. This reflected her interest in identity, spirituality, and place from a First Nations perspective, addressing issues from reconciliation to contaminated territory. (She once described the oil sands landscape as resembling Mordor, the despoiled landscape of Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* trilogy). A related interview on the work of Saskatoon-based of Amalie Atkins evoked prairie farm landscapes, reminiscences drawn from her Ukrainian Mennonite settler ancestry. Her practice, as it shifted

from working in textile and costume design to storytelling through dreamlike “cinematic fables,” short silent films set to music in multidisciplinary installations, presents surreal domestic imagery such as twins and siblings in identical home-sewn dresses, and seasonal festive tents evoking a summer landscape.

The interviews offer opportunities to discover artists’ original perspectives on home and place. *At Home* is a valuable work of curating and reflecting on a thoughtful, intergenerational selection of artists, and a reminder of the value of the artist-curator and the exploratory nature of the curatorial process. There is an underlying sense of individualized rather than collective practice, contrasting with the gregarious, collectively-oriented youthquake generation of artists described in Mark Wigley’s research on Matta-Clark.

From 1973 to 1974, Gordon Matta-Clark, Tina Girouard, Suzy Harris, Jene Highstein, and others gathered, often in Richard Nonas’ Harrison Street loft, to roll joints, drink tequila, and discuss “anarchitecture.” A group formed, a casually radical thinktank, loosely composed of Laurie Anderson, Girouard, Harris, Highstein, Bernard Kirschenbaum, Ree Morton, Nonas, and, unofficially, Jeffrey Lew and Carol Goodden. In 1974 the group exhibited their anarchitecture photograph collection, including many found and archival images, at the 112 Greene Street Workshop. No one documented the installation views, although Rachel and Jeffrey Lew, and Harris and her husband lived above. Wigley speculates on a purported lack of proof that the exhibition ever happened, even though Anderson, Girouard, Harris, Highstein, Kirschenbaum, Landry and Nonas then contributed a selection of the photographs to a photo-essay published in *Flash Art*.

The book’s subtitle, *the Anarchitecture Investigation*, declared a subtheme of *Cutting*. Wigley wonders whether the word anarchitecture fully or

accurately describes Matta-Clark's work. Robin Evans had used the countercultural word-collage in his 1970 text, "Towards Anarchitecture." Anarchy suggested practices such as the rip-off, or renegade idea sharing. That might unravel the overlap of certain common titles among the group. For example, Tina Girouard exhibited *Walls wallpaper* in 1971; Matta-Clark recycled the title for his completely different installation, *Wallpaper*—an expansive, wall-sized work that juxtaposed photographic prints of interior walls, hung as self-referential wallpaper as well as assembled in abstract large format hand-made books—shown in a painstakingly documented exhibition held at 112 Greene Street in October 1972. Wigley thoroughly analyzes *Wallpaper*, using the many installation photographs by Cosmos Andrew Sarchiapone and Richard Landry to track and reassemble the sequences of assembly, like temporal puzzle pieces. Wigley displays his own quirky humour, describing himself as a "serial monographer," and outlining his skepticism regarding the term anarchitecture as applied to sculptural cutting. After all, in an interview, Matta-Clark had declared that his paradigmatic 1974 work *Splitting* was not an example of anarchitecture. Another focus of *Cutting* is Wigley's extraction of meaning from the interactions between the photographic images and the sculptural fragments that Matta-Clark had cut, removed from their original locations, and re-positioned and arranged in a *mise-en-espace* that was then further enhanced by the photographs of the exhibition as installed. He also emphasized how Matta-Clark created new photographic images by collaging multiple photographs together to depict his sculpture. Wigley comments on the altered photographs, writing:

Matta-Clark is thinking when he makes his cuts, about how they will look in photographs. Between the cutting and photographing, the selection of the negative, the framing of the negative,

and often the cutting of the photograph itself ... Matta-Clark is in all the images, buried inside the architecture. You can open up architecture and find him in there, carving away.<sup>1</sup>

Here, Wigley draws an analogy with the formalist slicing of the full-scale domestic space of *Splitting* and the cut-up process of collaging and rearranging photographic images of the same interior spaces.

*Cutting* incorporates interviews with Matta-Clark's now-dwindling cohort of collaborators, including the anarchitecture group, whose members readily confirmed the existence of the anarchitecture exhibition. Key figures of Matta-Clark's extended circle passed away recently: curator Germano Celant, Girouard, sculptor Keith Sonnier, and painter Susan Rothenberg.

Matta-Clark's expanded practice included sculpture, architectural cutting, dance, film and photography. Rosalind Krauss wrote about the immediate impact of work by Matta-Clark, Lucio Pozzi, and others in the first P.S. 1 show, "Rooms," curated by founding director Alanna Heiss in 1976. Some sculptures altered the building: Matta-Clark cut vertically; Richard Nonas cut horizontally; Alan Saret carved a hole in a wall. In "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America, Part 2," of 1977, Krauss summarized Matta-Clark's *Doors, Floors, Doors* of 1976, as a "removal of a section of floor through first, second and third floors of a building," calling it an "instance of cropping" related to photography.<sup>2</sup> The now-defunct magazine *Vanguard* published a review by architect Barbara (Babs) Shapiro describing Matta-Clark's and Alan Sonfist's work in a Vancouver group show in 1980. Since then, collaborative groups and solo architects inspired by Matta-Clark have deconstructed a variety of buildings, mostly unused houses, such as Mitch McEwan's House Opera in Detroit, Iceberg in Buffalo, and Syn in Quebec. Wigley's playful approach may respond to the high serious tone of

early reactions. In any case, Matta-Clark's place in the canon of twentieth-century art rests secure since the 1970s, and the Canadian Centre for Architecture has held the Archive since 2002. Wigley's interest in Matta-Clark dates to what was called Deconstructivist Architecture in a MoMA exhibition and catalogue curated by Philip Johnson and Wigley in 1987, which included an image of *Splitting*.

The catalogue by Mary Jane Jacob, *Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective* (Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art, 1985), set a pattern for subsequent catalogues with its oft-quoted interviews with collaborators. There is demand for new Matta-Clark research, and an interest in a level of detail about the work and its influences. For example, on April 18, 1970, a Trisha Brown performance on Wooster Street featured a man walking down the side of a loft building (Joseph Schlichter, Brown's then-husband), with belayers on the roof: Jared Bark and Richard Nonas. Brown consulted Nonas about the rigging gear. Brown's experimental dance using everyday streets, rooftops and loft buildings, and Suzanne Harris' suspended dance performances, would have influenced Matta-Clark's use of rope suspension while cutting. At work he was photographed often, aloft in a bosun's chair, a harness used in yachting.

In spring 1974, Matta-Clark cut *Splitting*, working on a house at the scale of land art. Ned Smyth, Susan Ensler, Liza Béar of *Avalanche*, and others documented the process with still and film cameras. For risky jobs, Matta-Clark called on Manfred Hecht, who commented, "It was always exciting working with Gordon. There was always a good chance of getting killed."<sup>3</sup> Details about the project prompt questions, now that avant-gardism is no longer seen as all-legitimizing. Horace Solomon gave Matta-Clark access to the small working-class house in an African-American neighbourhood in Englewood, New Jersey, after Matta-Clark asked Soho gallerist



Holly Solomon for a house to cut. Presumably the occupants were evicted, given the evidence of a hurried departure and belongings left behind. Matta-Clark placed the detritus in the basement, presenting the house as empty and minimal. It is unknown whether the occupants learned that their house became sculpture. This lends resonance to Matta-Clark's response to Germano Celant's article, entitled "Ready-Made"—Matta-Clark called his work "Ready-to-be-Unmade"—in the current context of lives unmade by eviction.

Two documentary films about Matta-Clark's life and work, *A Jacob's Ladder, Remembering Gordon Matta-Clark and Office Baroque, My Summer 77 with Gordon Matta-Clark*, were released in 2013. The footage portrays Matta-Clark in focus, with high quality image and sound. Matta-Clark's charisma is visible and audible in his candid remarks. Matta-Clark convinced Bex to spend his limited time in Kassel helping install "Jacobs Ladder." Bex added that two diamond dealers, commuting between Antwerp and New York, had seen the outlaw cuts of "Day's End" in 1975 and subsequently urged him to invite Matta-Clark to Antwerp. Institutional fascination continues with surges of international exhibitions: in 2018 the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo fabricated a large maquette presenting the cuts through the dwelling spaces of "*Caribbean Orange*" (1978). Continued interest in new publications and pent-up demand for the work of Matta-Clark's work ensure that Wigley's handsome, well-illustrated tome, *Cutting* will connect with its disparate audiences. Perhaps this resurgent interest will help point out how to reconnect communities, urban landscapes and artistic creation, just as Matta-Clark's convivial nature and concern for environmental issues led to his later proposals for the establishment of community youth centres in the Lower East Side.

The Art Gallery of Ontario's catalogue for *How to Build a House Museum* (edited by Kitty Scott), an exhibition by social practice and installation artist and University of Chicago professor Theaster Gates, uses spritely wordplay on the house museum trope to further rethink the role and structure of art institutions. The recipient of an award for "leadership in creating sustainable communities" at the World Economic Forum in Davos in early 2020, Gates challenges disinvestment in South Side Chicago, and strengthens ties in the art community with his practice. His work has been compared to Rick Lowe's work with Project Row House in Houston, founded within a local artists' collective; it remains a key anti-gentrification innovation. Another related organization, The Sweetwater Foundation, led by Emmanuel Pratt, a 2019 MacArthur Fellow, represents the concerns of a recent generation in Chicago, combining art practices with real estate interventions and neighbourhood regeneration, while sensitive to climate change and connected to local citizens' groups interested in locally grown agriculture, sustainability, ecology and education.

Gates, with graduate degrees in fine arts and in urban planning has called his work "real estate art" with sly humour, in a 2014 *New Yorker* profile.<sup>4</sup> His smaller renovations, now holding a variety of crucial archives related to African-American cultural heritage, represent the urban vernacular domestic scale of the individual Chicago house and include the Listening House, the Archive House, and the Black Cinema House, all subjects of local and national interest and well documented in recent media. Larger renovations include The Bank and the Dorchester Art and Housing Collaborative, a thirty-two-unit modern housing rehab, completed in 2014 by Landon Bone Baker Architects. The site brings together affordable public housing with practicing artists' studios—community building with brick and mortar. His collective approach

has a resounding impact for contemporary practice, comparable to the curatorially-inspired practice of Danh Vo. Vo has addressed immigration issues at an international scale, while Gates' initiatives engage with Chicago urbanism, race and class boundaries, and African-American cultural themes.

*How to Build a House Museum* documented the 2016 exhibition of the same name held at the Art Gallery of Ontario, which featured Gates' take on a series of infographics produced by intellectual, sociologist, and civil rights activist W.E.B. Du Bois and his Atlanta University students, exhibited at the *Paris Exposition Universelle* in 1900, to introduce key themes. These charts and graphs addressed the idea of progress in the scientific language of their time. Gates' facsimiles presented data about the relative socio-economic progress made by African-Americans, originally charted by Du Bois and documenting indicators of literacy rates and property and business ownership, translating statistics into abstract graphic form. Gates transformed some images into pure abstractions, including a neon sign. This aspect of the exhibition introduced the second half of the catalogue, which gathered correspondence on progress using titles derived from Du Bois. Texts from sixty-one colleagues responded to the request for a personal letter, phrased as, "has there been any progress for you and our people in the arts?" The "Letter on Negro Progress" from Kerry James Marshall challenged the language of the question, preferring to write "Black Progress," and introducing the contemporary movement. Marshall emphasized: "Black lives have to matter."

Rashid Johnson's letter is a brief instruction to "Run," reminiscent of a recent Stanley Whitney drawing, *Untitled (Always Running from the Police-NYC 2020)*.<sup>5</sup> Some letters were hand-drawn sketches, or handwritten confessionals. Some addressed cultural activism, such as the letter from artist Xenobia Bailey. Chicago sculptor Robert Burnier revealed a gift, a

four-inch-high ceramic piece made by Gates, a potter, sent in appreciation of his “‘Letter on Black Progress.’” Burnier affirmed the significance of contemporary Black Chicago artists and placed the ceramic on view in his studio. Brooklyn-based artist Aisha Cousins’ letter queried Toronto’s multi-cultural climate. She noted that in 2011, 8.5% of Torontonians identified as Black—comparing Toronto’s multi-racial mix to the more predominantly African-American Chicago, with a population 30% Black and 30% Latino. She asked Gates to invite her Torontonian family to the opening to ensure a Black audience. The responses gauged some artists’ cautious optimism; others expressed the indignation of the un-noticed artist.

House DJ Terry Hunter opened the exhibition with a Walker Court party. The closing talks on October 25, 2016, underscored Gates’ themes and displayed his impressive network. Toronto-based artist Sandra Brewster introduced Caribbean and Guyanese influences. Influential musician-critic Greg Tate answered a question by naming the BBC as the top source of house music history. Speaker Mabel Wilson of Columbia University reprised her catalogue text. In response to questions, she cited W.E.B. Dubois’ thoughts on Blackness and modernity. Since the pandemic, Wilson has emerged at the forefront of contemporary urban discourse re-interpreting architectural and urban history. Her recent talk, “Home of the Oppressed,” subtitled “Democracy, Slavery and American Civic Architecture, on Washington DC,” outlined a city “formed within a landscape of chattel slavery whose laborers built and maintained the architectures of democracy.”<sup>5</sup> This seemed almost synchronized to the Black Lives Matter protests, during which Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser designated the Black Lives Matter Plaza adjacent to Lafayette Park, along with a widely imitated street mural. Wilson aims to “do more than expand the canon” in terms of architectural history, and

reveal the process whereby race influenced canonical modern city form.

The catalogue documents the exhibition’s riff on symbolic shrines and museums, naming a House of House, Reel House, Progress House, and a House of Negro Progress. The latter housed the widely exhibited posters by Du Bois, placing nineteenth-century tradition in dialogue with landscape and seascape painting by the African-American painter Robert Duncanson. Self-taught Duncanson, of the Hudson River School, moved to Canada and lived in Montreal during the height of the Civil War from 1863–1865. To Gates, he epitomized “museum art.”<sup>6</sup>

Plaques and maquettes illustrated in the catalogue spoke of transforming houses into permanent historic sites, as in the case for the home of Chicago blues pioneer Muddy Waters (McKinley Morganfield), who lived in his North Kenwood home at 4339 South Lake Park Avenue for twenty years, using the basement for rehearsals. Once listed for both demolition and preservation, the Muddy Waters house museum and Blues district have been proposed as official Chicago heritage sites. Gates’ catalogue texts included an explanatory dialogue with curator Kitty Scott on Gates’ major work and process as well as an essay by Latinx artist and historian Josh T. Franco, celebrating West Texas as home, the *mestizaje* process, and the terms Chicano and queer Tejanx.

The process guiding the house installations by Theaster Gates might be seen as analogous to house music’s evolution. A driving four-on-the-floor beat influenced DJs who absorbed the beat, and overlaid new sounds over extended intervals. Gates introduced the house music theme with Reel House, a tribute to global traveller and house music DJ Frankie Knuckles (Francis Nichols, 1955–2014). Knuckles frequented disc jockey David Mancuso’s Loft in Soho, and reached a pinnacle of fame as a DJ at the Warehouse in Chicago. The Stony Island Arts Bank holds Knuckles’s archive

of 5,000 vinyl records. Reel House’s shrine of wood, repurposed from a demolished church, houses his sound gear, adjacent to Knuckles’ trademark baseball caps. Progress Palace juxtaposes a houseberg, a seven-foot mirrored reflector, with the projection of Gates’s multichannel video, titled, *House Heads Liberation Training* (2016). Other distinctive work by Gates, such as tar painting, was also represented. Minimalist in appearance, the tar refers to Gates’ father, his roofing trade, and the resounding significance of ongoing domestic house building and maintenance. This ties back to the plaque memorializing Winston-Salem brickmaker George H. Black. His brickyard, now a listed historic site, supplied Williamsburg and Old Salem with high quality brick for fifty years. Bricks piled and spaced with shims on a trolley, alongside another stacked with white bricks made by Gates, acknowledged crafted artistry outside the museum.

*How to Build a House Museum* related the specificities of the institutions Gates has created. They are connected with African-American community empowerment, and support public art in the context of daily urban neighbourhood life. Multiple exhibitions scheduled of Gates’ work, in Minneapolis at the Walker, in Atlanta, and in Europe at the *Haus der Kunst* in Munich and Tate Liverpool, were closed in the pandemic by April 2020, as was the Stony Island Arts Bank, the location of Gates’ Rebuild Foundation, which controls six community regeneration sites. After lockdown, the Rebuild Foundation stepped up to provide a temporary food repository, providing needed domestic items to local residents.

In isolated times of empty venues, as museums reconsider their mandates, all three of these publications trace out differing social strategies to foster conviviality and community and develop shareable, socially engaged art scenes. They address a fundamental need to provide shelter and collective spaces for a creative

public: stable homes in which to nurture a practice and, at the scale of human settlements, create new, more responsive reconfigurations of public landscapes. ¶

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1. Mark Wigley, interview with James Coleman, "Mark Wigley on Why Gordon Matta-Clark Matters," *Common Edge*, Jan. 8, 2020, <https://commonedge.org/mark-wigley-on-why-gordon-matta-clark-matters/>.
2. Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America, Part 2," *October* 4 (Autumn 1977): 58–67; 61; 65.
3. Manfred Hecht, as cited in Mary Jane Jacob, *Gordon Matta-Clark, A Retrospective*, exh. cat. (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1985), 73.
4. John Colapinto, "The Real-Estate Artist: High-concept renewal on the South Side," *The New Yorker*, January 13, 2014.
5. Mabel O. Wilson, "'Home of the Oppressed': Democracy, Slavery and American Civic Architecture," 2020 Eduard F. Sekler Talk, Society of Architectural Historians, <https://www.sah.org/2020-virtual-conference/eduard-f-sekler-talk>.
6. Theater Gates, "Kitty Scott in Conversation with Theater Gates," *Theater Gates: How to Build a House Museum*, 35.

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Oliver Vallerand  
*Unplanned Visitors: Queering the Ethics and Aesthetics of Domestic Space*  
Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020  
264 pp. 82 photos.  
\$34.95 (paper) ISBN 9780228001850

John Potvin

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Oliver Vallerand's *Unplanned Visitors* sets out to investigate how various creative producers, architects, and historians have engaged with the issues and relationships between "gender, sexuality, and the built environment" (3) within a relatively short period of time, from the 1990s to the present. At the heart of the

project is an uncompromising focus on queer space and how historians, theorists, and cultural producers have attempted to define, challenge, or engender some, largely theoretical, form of queer space. Indeed, as Vallerand concludes, queer space is far too nebulous to provide a conclusive definition, given how queer is itself engaged in a never-ending process of redefinition, dismantling, and transformation. Nevertheless, the various case studies, critiques, and theories he explores throughout the book can provide a sustained alternative engagement with architecture and the built environment. What he aims to provide, as a result, is a theoretical and critical assessment of various projects that might be suggestive "for architectural practice, teaching, and histories, building towards a renewed design ethics" (9). In fact, four of the five chapters are full of unique and compelling case studies, largely from the United States, with some exceptions coming from Scandinavia.

These case studies begin with chapter two, which explores what the author identifies as the "emer-

experiment of *Queer Space* (1994), held at the Storefront for Art and Architecture in New York, and *disappeared* (1996) by John Paul Ricco are used as the primary conduits toward an exploration of what constitutes queer space. Both cases, interestingly, focus their attention on users rather than on a (star) architect, as is so often the case within the field. After all, as Vallerand attests, these projects "suggest that users...have a say in how spaces are understood, but at the same time imply that queer uses can merely be added on to existing spaces without really changing them in a more permanent way" (34). Herein lies the rub of attempting to define queer space, at least in part. Far too often, queers, for countless reasons, have had to borrow, repurpose and appropriate any means, spaces, and objects necessary to fashion a life for themselves, to fashion a (queer) space for themselves, including the proverbial closet.

The compelling case of Benjamin Gianni and Mark Robbins's *Who we are and how we live* series of architectural projects, published in 1997 as *Family Values (Honey I'm Home)* in *Architecture of the Everyday* provides literally a set of snap shots (taken from advertisements in gay papers from Ottawa and Columbus, Ohio) peering into the lives of lesbians and gay men, challenging the supposed attributes and stereotypes attached to these identities. In his discussion of the series, Vallerand concludes rather quickly that "most spaces used by queers are hidden throughout ordinary landscapes, that they are a layer among normative symbols of domesticity associated with urban and suburb environments" (36). In many ways, this is an important contribution made by the book, the simple yet still-ignored idea that queers occupy spaces as quotidian and mundane as every and anyone else, located within as well as beyond the confines of normative spaces and environments. Perhaps this idea remains too frightening for many.



ging voices" of the 1990s; a period when queer theory (as developed by theorists like Teresa de Lauretis, David Halperin, Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Michael Warner, and Laurent Berlant) was being theorized, politicized, and came into wider usage outside the academy. Two specific projects, the collective