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Submission for the Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture
Kent School of Architecture
University of Kent

Submitted by Tordis Berstrand
December 2013

***Splitting and Doubling: Spaces for Contemporary Living in Works by
Gordon Matta-Clark, Kurt Schwitters and Gregor Schneider***

Abstract:

The thesis addresses the question of dwelling as a challenge and concern in the twenty-first century. It does so on the basis of three works of art, all exercising radical spatial reconfigurations of existing residential buildings. The thesis argues that these works created in the twentieth century bring strategies forward for a contemporary living space of interest today. Furthermore, that the agency of the artistic gesture exceeds the scope of the architectural work when addressing the subject of home and house in critical ways. The importance of this engagement lies in an incompatibility observed between ideas about dwelling and the experience of the contemporary age. A prevalent desire for a permanently settled and stable living space is at odds with increasingly transient and nomadic present-day lifestyles – the thesis asks how come such concepts without application endure.

Literary works, concerned with the process of modernisation in the twentieth century, are called upon to qualify this problem of dwelling in our time. While the texts provide insight into the dialectics of the modern, the chosen works of art unfold three living spaces settled in the moment of their making. When answering the immediate contextual setting with an environment for living beyond conventional building practices, Gordon Matta-Clark's *Splitting* (1974), Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau* (1927-37) and Gregor Schneider's *HAUS u r* (1985-today) give clues to the nature of the *contemporary dwelling*. As a living space beyond conceptualisation, this dwelling does not require a whole house to be held in place nor does it rely on walls for spatial differentiation. Instead, a framework for coexistence is articulated as a space of resistance to the forces of the modern, threatening to render all dwellers homeless. The thesis challenges the contemporary architect with the task of participating in the creation of this space.

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Introduction

The question of dwelling sets the thesis in motion – what does it mean to live somewhere? What kind of space accommodates contemporary life? What is dwelling in the twenty-first century? If prevalent concepts of the living space are experienced as incompatible with the present age, then this is where the enquiry begins – dwelling, what does it mean, *today*?

The notion that a particular space is required to maintain a meaningful relation to oneself, to others and to the lifeworld at large appears self-evident – life without some kind of living space is difficult to imagine. Yet, if the twenty-first century is experienced as increasingly hostile to the kind of settlement associated with this space and the term *dwelling* that signifies it, then a revision is required. The thesis, itself at risk of too easily acknowledging conventions when articulating its questions, begins by challenging concepts and buildings perceived as obstructions in the way of a more contemporary take on the living space. It does so with a particular interest in the challenge that this approach places before the architect, which is to say the kind of task that will remain. It argues that if predominant concepts of dwelling, home and house appear as anachronisms, the task of dismantling these for a thorough revision might be an exercise that the architect is particularly well suited for, as someone who already conceives of such structures.

If, as the thesis claims, the experience of life in the twenty-first century – transient, fragmented, changeable and unpredictable – contrasts concepts of dwelling based on stability, permanence and a sense of belonging, then how come such concepts endure? Where do they come from and how do they survive if contemporary lifestyles make their realisation impossible? The thesis speculates that the longing for a dwelling conditioned by life at a standstill in fact might be provoked by the experience that such has no application. It argues that because this problem might be favourable to certain parts of contemporary society, it might even be maintained as integral to the dynamics on the basis of which this society functions. If technological development, globalisation and increased mobility on all levels, for some at least, have left the problem of dwelling unresolved to the extent of actually relying on it, then to address this situation is to challenge contemporary culture in a wider sense. Ultimately, it is to extend a line of enquiry into a condition of *homelessness*, literal as well as metaphorical, caused by subscription to values beyond the settlement of the dwelling. The thesis pursues the dynamics and values that retain contemporary society in this state which can neither settle nor be overcome.

If the problem of dwelling from the outset can be identified as a modern, Western phenomenon, its range is not limited in a geographical or periodical sense. Despite an immediate focus on Western culture, the thesis acknowledges that the problem by no means is restricted to a particular geographical region but unfolds in various forms and with differing outcomes across the world. The problem of dwelling in the twenty-first century has a global scope, insofar as it appears to be inevitable

consequence of the modern process wherever such takes place and however fast it happens. And yet, the first chapter begins in the nineteenth century European metropolis where a particular longing for dwelling takes hold with a particular force. It does so by tracing the development of a certain nostalgia with the belief that an authentic dwelling possible in the past has been lost. It traces a longing for this place as a *homesickness* developing in tandem with the increasingly alienating environment of the modern industrial city. And it pursues the dynamics of this urban condition that renders dwelling a challenge beyond resolution. If the more bewildering and elusive the world, the stronger the need for an enclosed shelter, and the more intense the experience of alienation and homelessness, the greater the desire to return home, then *dwelling* becomes this lost home. The experience of life in the modern city as a process of change that uproots all grounding is echoed in the equally turbulent and crisis-driven twenty-first century. The perceived transformation of the individual being's lifeworld – from a stable and permanent *place* to a fluctuating *interface* – is a marker of how continuous modernisation is perceived to make the dweller placeless and rootless, ultimately, homeless.

While the rapidly expanding modern metropolis is the primary site of the identified crisis, the problem of dwelling is foremost the individual's personal experience of inability to settle in prescribed ways, of having no prospect of doing so in the near future, or even later. It is the experience of staying temporarily somewhere with no need or reason to get involved with that place because it will soon again be abandoned. When continuously forced to move on, driven by work, social relations or otherwise, perhaps even political conflicts or natural disasters, nothing will remain to resemble the dwelling described in dictionaries and literature. Dwelling has by then become something else, a transient and flexible relation in need of a more suitable space, if not name.

A considerable amount of written evidence is available testifying to this complex situation. Various academic discourses across disciplines have expressed a profound concern with the problematic conditions for dwelling throughout recent centuries. The thesis cuts across this body of work with a selection of literary references from philosophy, literary criticism and architectural history and theory. It thereby draws a set of lines that attempts to problematise the living space beyond preconceptions, self-evidence and hopes for permanent solutions. While the thesis thereby follows the trend of most recent literature on the topic to move across rather than stay within its own discursive field, it acknowledges that beyond the immediate importance for architecture, a profound questioning of dwelling inevitably involves all aspects of human life.

When in the first chapter the English term *dwelling* itself is opened for scrutiny, the thesis challenges the kind of habitation practised by individuals to feel at home somewhere, the authenticity of that experience and the relevance of a desire to belong to a place, or to someone. Yet, it also challenges the capacity of the dwelling space in the form of a house, a building of some kind, as the necessary

structure and repository for living and being, if not thinking itself. It searches behind what already proposes at least two meanings – the dwelling as the practice of living somewhere and the space that is inhabited and defined by this life and practice. To question dwelling is then to collapse this dual meaning with the promise of accommodation it holds, and the consequences for home and house that a collapse entails. It is to raise a critique of a term already split between more than one occupation, and it is to question the building of a structure believed to accommodate and hold together what perhaps cannot be held at all.

Eventually, when the majority of the consulted works concerned with notions of dwelling, home and house remain within the text, and in most cases of a predominantly historical or observational kind, the thesis utilises its capacity for the architectural address. It does so by opening a space from where the unsettled settlement can be reimagined and renegotiated, which is to say from where the idea that dwelling is meant to be a permanently grounded *placing* can be challenged. Three works of art conceived in the twentieth century serve as sites for this attempt to move beyond the literary references and extend the discourse on dwelling into the material fabric of built structures. Unfolding in relation to conventional dwelling houses, in two cases the artists' own residences, the chosen works facilitate spatial enquiries considered necessary for a deeper engagement with the subject matter. They do so in the way that each artist can be seen to respond to the problem of dwelling specific to his particular time and setting. As such, the works give clues to the *contemporary dwelling* as a living space and practice beyond the predefined. This dwelling, per definition unique, temporary and impossible to conceptualise, questions prevailing ideas and concepts in ways that architecture might learn from. The works chosen for the study are Kurt Schwitters' *Merzhaus* (Hannover, 1927-37), Gordon Matta-Clark's *Splitting* (New Jersey, 1974) and Gregor Schneider's *HAUS u r* (Rheydt, 1985-today).

These works of art have not only been chosen because they facilitate spatial enquiries into the dwelling space that exceed the scope of the architectural work, but because they have the potential to expose the present study to something unforeseen. This ability relies on the relation between art and home as two essentially opposed domains unable to share the same space. The conflict identified by the thesis between prevailing concepts of dwelling and the age thereby comes to intersect with the perceived dichotomy between art and home. The line separating the familiar from the alien, the inhabitable from the uninhabitable, the stranger from the known also sets dwelling and home apart. Yet, at the heart of this problem, the thesis identifies the possibility that the seemingly alienating gesture of art might open unknown possibilities for the perceived familiarity of the home. In addition, that the notion of certain dialectics at work is challenged by the contamination already ongoing within the one by the other. That architecture will benefit from this critical reflection is straightforward, any direct engagement with the physical fabric of dwelling houses should be of immediate interest to the discipline – a circumstance surprisingly not as acknowledged as one would expect considering its obvious proposition.

The thesis is structured across five chapters with each of the case studies dedicated its own – from the initial approach of the house with Matta-Clark’s work in chapter 2, via the occupation of Schwitters’ studio in chapter 3, to the eventual enclosure within Schneider’s rooms in chapter 4. On the basis of this narrative, outlined by the movement from approaching the house to occupying it, the thesis gradually unfolds a space for its enquiry into dwelling illustrated in the *split wall diagram* introduced in section 3.3 (p.99). It thereby aims to elucidate central aspects of the works’ conception and development interpreted as spatial manifestations related to the dwelling house.

In preparation of the case studies, the first chapter qualifies the concept of dwelling, from which the thesis takes off, in relation to a body of literature from thinkers such as Walter Benjamin, Paul de Man and the architectural Venice School. While the latter brings a disciplinary perspective to the inevitably architectural focus of the thesis, two texts made public in 1951 and written by the philosophers Martin Heidegger and Theodor W. Adorno, respectively, intersect with the articulation of the main problem. As literary case studies, the lives of the two thinkers are interpreted as closely related to their writing, and it is especially the event of World War II that is seen to cut through the twentieth century with significant implications for the ideas generated by the two philosophers. As such, their thinking and writing take the problem of dwelling in two opposed directions, and with such force that the implications continue to reverberate in the twenty-first century. Due to this impact, not least on architects, the thesis reads the texts in parallel with due attention to the space of contradictions and resistance that opens up between them. As a platform for addressing the contemporary dwelling between concept and lived experience, idealism and materialism, authenticity and negativity, Adorno and Heidegger taken together provide a powerful constellation.

The question of dwelling is therefore not raised by the thesis in order to recontextualise well-known concepts of home and house in the perceived reality of the contemporary age, nor to claim that the need to dwell has been rendered obsolete. Rather, the thesis opens the possibility that a living space, reflecting its time and place, will unfold with the acceptance of conflicts and instabilities in need of renegotiation at all times. In the final fifth chapter, a series of strategies are developed by means of which the architect in the twenty-first century might come to play a significant part in the conception of this contemporary dwelling.

1. THE PROBLEM OF DWELLING

Summary

The first chapter lays out the lines of the enquiry into dwelling in our time. It thereby provides a setting for the thesis and its main questions to be addressed in the following chapters. The identification of a *problem* of dwelling is central and relies on the experience that the desire to settle down in prescribed ways is at odds with a contextual setting that does not allow for this kind of settlement to take place. The challenge, seen to develop with the process of modernisation, continues in the present age, and the chapter addresses a selection of texts concerned with the force of the modern that drives this experience of homelessness. It thereby develops a series of themes of relevance for the overall aim to look behind the façade of the dwelling house in an attempt to identify the nature of a problem embodied by this structure.

The first section [1.1] begins by examining the term *dwelling* itself through an etymological excavation of the term's meanings and uses. It considers where such connotations derive from and for what reasons they endure, and it explores alternative interpretations that open up to other possible conceptions of the living space. The desire to seek refuge from an external setting experienced as increasingly hostile and alienating is reflected in Walter Benjamin's writing on the private domestic interior of the nineteenth century. The thesis considers this interior against its exterior and the house as the built structure in relation to which the dichotomies governing the domestic are drawn. The central architectural element, separating interior from exterior in this regard, is the wall, and the chapter examines how the architects of the early twentieth century struggle to resolve this barrier and the complex forces that it negotiates. If the pursuit of a modern living space, in response to the early twentieth century's interwar housing problem, is a challenge calling for new strategies, the notion of the new is itself problematic.

The second section [1.2] enquires into the nature of modernity on the basis of Paul de Man's writing on history and literature with the aim to identify the nature of the new at odds with concepts of dwelling. The paradoxical nature of modernity traced by de Man is underlined by two texts made public in the aftermath of World War II by the philosophers Adorno and Heidegger, respectively. Coinciding in public in 1951, both thinkers open the problem of dwelling for enquiry in response to the event of war experienced as an upheaval overthrowing all reason. The two thinkers, however, move in opposite directions with Heidegger tracing a nostalgic path in pursuit of authenticity while Adorno denounces any retrieval of concepts that have already succumbed to the catastrophic war. The section draws the contour of this split on the basis of a parallel reading of these two contemporary yet irreconcilable texts.

In the third section [1.3], the enquiry into the nature of dwelling, as a concept and practice at odds with its premise, is complicated further by the writing of the Venice School. Through a discussion of the dialectical play of forces under which modern society including dwelling becomes subsumed, the school's analysis of modernity is pursued from the negative perspective set out by Adorno. With the Venice School, the modern living space is complicated to the point of negation, and the importance of this approach lies in the possibility it offers to approach the question of dwelling from a square one from where its building can only re-emerge in a new form.

The thesis, eventually, introduces three works of art as case studies for building practices and living spaces preoccupied with the contemporary dwelling in the fourth section of the chapter [1.4]. The possibility of the work of art, thereby proposed by the thesis, relies on the ability to respond to questions concerning dwelling, home and house in particular ways. This opportunity is elaborated in the section in preparation of the ensuing chapters, as is the methodology that drives the studies of the works as historical objects.

1.1 DWELLING AND MODERNITY

The problem of dwelling begins with the experience of homelessness. It is a feeling that emerges when the individual's lifeworld does not correspond to expectations and needs. When concepts and conventions believed to have developed over centuries can no longer be applied, and lifestyles and routines enforced by contemporary society does not fit inside conventional structures – be they buildings or otherwise. It is therefore not necessarily a literal homelessness caused by the sudden absence of a house to return to, although it might be, nor is it simply the sensation that one's environment, due to some sudden event, has become too unsettled for dwelling to take place. Rather, it is the awareness that the routines and movements of daily life on the most profound level do not rely on any particular spatial condition or convention. It is the belief that they used to until something changed which cannot easily be undone or brought back to its old order. It is the experience that the limits and barriers drawn to demarcate territories and domains are flexible or indeterminate, that no anchoring of events is possible or even necessary, that nothing is stable, fixed, permanent or inhabitable – perhaps that it does not have to be either.

Subscription to values beyond the settlement of the dwelling marks this profound unsettlement. Like a free fall into an abyss of uncertainty and groundlessness, it is, literally, the experience that there is no ground in the sense of underlying reason governing occurrences in constructive ways. If the reassurance associated with dwelling – with its promise of a home sheltered by a house – appears comforting in this situation, it is not surprising. The thesis, however, suggests that the sheltering house is an escapist's dream theorised, described and visualised throughout recent centuries by all genres of

art, literature and scholarship. In most cases, the problem has been perceived as a profound loss of something considered so essential that it could or should not be questioned. The need to dwell, believed to come before all else, has remained a constant throughout all attempts to reconfigure the space that shelters this essential way of being *at home*. A true dwelling at the heart of a house into which no door, however, seems to open up.¹

Considering that the texts selected for wider study and analysis in the present chapter derives from the twentieth century, the discussion of modernity particular to this period is central. It is especially *alienation* as a signifier of the modern in a negative sense that is on the agenda. Once the experience of being uprooted, out of place and homeless is felt, alienation permeates all levels of life, and it connotes emotional as well as objective detachment from oneself, from others and from things. The process of modernisation, with its new technologies and rationalisation of production, minds and social life, is held responsible for dissociating the individual from his/her ability to form vital ties to the immediate surroundings. With the modern, we become free-floating agents in need of skills to navigate the city and the crowd, above all the skill of treading water in order to not simply sink into the mute anonymity of mass society. When the problem of dwelling experienced in the twenty-first century is seen an extension to and emphasis of this essentially modern condition, the contemporary age becomes a kind of *after-modern* period. When both extending, yet also in some ways differing from previous centuries, the problem of dwelling experienced today is both new and old. It must, however, be considered on its own terms, and the thesis approaches the challenge that is this contemporary living space.²

The call of the thesis to dismantle a priori conceptions through a gradual extrication from conventions is then, for a start, a call to undo ideas about terms such as *dwelling* collected and recorded in dictionaries. While such recordings are likely to elucidate meanings integral to the concept of dwelling that the thesis attempts to look beyond, they might also simply confirm it. The notion that the etymological survey might retrieve and return forgotten meanings to make sense in the present age is contradicted by the expectation that dwelling *today* means something else than entries recorded in the past can convey. Is it possible to imagine a “place of residence; a dwelling-place, habitation, house” – the Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of *dwelling* (1989a: 3) – with application in the twenty-first century? If the immediate answer to this question is affirmative, then the thesis asks what the nature of this dwelling is. Where is a “place of residence” located in the flux of the twenty-first century? What is “habitation” in an age characterised by movement and change? Does observable life conform to a

¹ Irving Howe writes with reference to the early twentieth century experience of a historical split between the past and the present epitomised by Virginia Woolf’s famous statement that human character changed “on or about December 1910” (1924). He says, “The modern sensibility posits a blockage, if not an end, to history: an apocalyptic *cul de sac* in which both teleological ends and secular progress are called into question, perhaps become obsolete. Man is mired – you can take your choice – in the mass, in the machine, in the city, in his loss of faith, in the hopelessness of a life without anterior intention or terminal value” (1967: 15).

² The term invented for the purpose of the present study reflects the idea that the era of modernity has ended and we now inhabit a different although related historical period. As such, the after-modern relates to, among others, Jean-François Lyotard’s *Postmodern* (1979) and Nicolas Bourriaud’s *Altermodern* (2009), both framing that which defies framing – the contemporary age – considered to be something on its own, even if a paradigm shift from the modern cannot yet be fully identified.

shared set of values and practices that might be grounded in a “house”? Will a placeless contemporary life be contained in just one “dwelling-place”? Should the dictionary entry be revised? Should it be deleted or marked *obsolete*?

Acknowledging that real-time recording of contemporary phenomena possibly exceeds the scope and capacity of dictionaries, even in the age of online open-source encyclopaedia, the thesis looks into a wider body of literature on dwelling, homes and houses. These *home studies*, primarily published since the 1980s, derive from a variety of disciplines – sociology, anthropology, cultural geography, economics, philosophy, psychology and also architecture. They attempt to frame the notion of dwelling, the feeling of being at home, domestic life in relation to houses, psychological implications of spatial engagement, and, not least, societal developments that begin to question an otherwise positive approach to the possibility of dwelling. The thesis studies these anthologies and conference proceedings for the purpose of confirming immediate ideas about the *self-evident dwelling* introduced above.³ While responding to the call to dwell, this body of studied work does, however, not force the thesis out of the domain of the known. Even if authors traverse a number of fields to account for the intricacies of the home environment, and the literature therefore moves beyond defined categories, becomes autobiographical or fictitious, a positive faith in homes and houses remains throughout. If the topic of the living space seems to call for alternative literary strategies, as if the thinking and writing about dwelling itself has to be somehow unsettled or undisciplined, the outcome is largely content with naming the known and categorising observations accordingly.

Insofar as one would expect architects to be particularly concerned with issues related to the building of houses, the scarcity of theoretically discursive works from the field thoroughly questioning practices is noteworthy. Several reasons might account for a reluctance to engage with the wider implications of dwelling houses, yet the lack of profoundly critical writing on the subject by practitioners as well as historians and theorists dedicated to the discipline is striking. The situation prevents the thesis from anchoring itself in the *interior* view, but then, in terms of dwelling are we not all *insiders*? A notable exception to the silence of architects is the Venice School, and it therefore plays a significant role in the elaboration on the dynamics of modern and contemporary after-modern progress enforcing the crisis of dwelling and implicitly of building. Speaking on behalf of architecture, Manfredo Tafuri, Francesco Dal Co and Massimo Cacciari, all employed at IUAV, Istituto Universitario di Architettura

³ This literature includes Altman & Werner (1985), Mack (1993), Chapman & Hockey (1999) and Blunt & Dowling (2006). Altman and Werner (1985: xx) draw a number of lines across the field of research and thinking on the notion of home with one strand having a phenomenological perspective (architecture, psychology), another an anthropological approach (geography, architecture), then there is the historical view (architecture, psychology), and finally, the socio-political view (political science, sociology). Common to these diverse strands are a number of concerns summarised by Altman/Werner as one overarching interest in *the meaning of home* (xxi). The simple definition of this meaning is articulated as “a residence invested with psychological meaning” relating to the individual, the family, and the wider social context and societal forces (xxi). The psychological question of home is further framed by Shelley Mallett in the form of a Western concept of the *dreamhome* (2004). This construction relates to the experience of home as radiating from a central point from where the individual sees his/her life journey as particularly meaningful. Constituted by memories of profound relations to family, time and place, this concept of the dreamhome echoes Gaston Bachelard’s space poetics with its faith in a dwelling nurtured by the embrace of a house (1994). Bachelard’s writing of a house is a self-proclaimed phenomenological attempt to “find the original shell” of the dwelling (4).

de Venezia [University Institute of Architecture of Venice], writes primarily between the 1960s and 1990s. A number of significant works published by the school are discussed in the following.⁴

The Venice School's in general very critical approach and profound questioning of the architectural profession's relation to the process of modernisation makes it particularly interesting to the present study. This relevance relies especially on the identification of the modern metropolis as the site where adverse forces play themselves out in the name of capitalism. The Venice School complicates the possibility for architects of giving form to the built environment in this context, not to say the possibility for dwellers to dwell. Tracing the modern process from the Renaissance city-state to the twentieth century metropolis, the school argues that the urban condition is critical for the problem of dwelling insofar as the metropolis is where the problem is most acutely felt. A line has been drawn early on, the school claims, between the private domestic setting and its external, urban context that marks a separation, a schism, between dwelling and *non-dwelling*, being at home and not. This line manifesting a desire to delimit living and working, private and public, insiders and outsiders becomes a wall in the hands of the architect who gives form to buildings. It is a solid wall behind which the dweller seeks refuge from the stranger and the strange – the *other* is firmly left outside.

1.1.1 Implications of using the term *dwelling*

The Oxford English Dictionary describes *the dwelling* as “a place of residence; a dwelling-place, habitation, house” (1989a: 3) – a description outlining a site-specific dwelling in the form of the situated building. In contrast, *a home* is described as “the fixed residence of a family or household” (1989b: 322) – that is, a social unit to which one belongs and through which one relates to a specific place. The dictionary findings thereby open the possibility that the two terms, *dwelling* and *home*, signify two different understandings of *place* expressed by the dictionary's use of the terms *house* and *household* in its respective descriptions. Where the house signifies a living domain in the form of a spatial enclosure, the household signifies a domain held together by more than nails and mortar – the place of living in the form of a container versus that which it contains. In addition, the dictionary describes *to dwell* as “to abide or continue for a time, in a place, state, or condition” (1989a: 2), leading into the meaning of *to dwell upon* as “to spend time upon or linger over (a thing) in action or thought” (1989a: 2). While conceptions of the living space beyond the immediate meanings of *dwelling* and *home* are made possible by these definitions, it is especially the notions of *place* and *belonging* that are extended. The meaning of *to dwell (upon)* might be interpreted as a slow contemplation of a phenomenon or object, a spatially unspecified activity situated in relation to some *thing*. If this *thing* would happen to be one's own dwelling house, it would still mark a different kind of occupation than inhabitation of the house in the first sense. A temporary vocation of being somewhere, possibly simply in thoughts, might

⁴ Works of particular relevance for the thesis are Tafuri's *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (1976), Dal Co's *Figures of Architecture and Thought: German Architectural Culture 1880-1920* (1990), Cacciari's *Architecture and Nihilism: On the Philosophy of Modern Architecture* (1993), as well as the latter's essay “Eupalinos or Architecture” (1980).

take place anywhere, and a concept of dwelling beyond a specific location, which is to say a *placeless* dwelling, is implicit this meaning. This dwelling, based on a temporary relationship established to a given place or space through the reduced pace of one's occupation of it, suggests a dwelling that might be suitable for the flux of the contemporary age.

The thesis acknowledges this possibility of a placeless dwelling seemingly residing within the term itself. Dwelling might then take place anywhere – in a house, on the street, within a corner of some place – thereby denoting an occurrence, an event, something that happens on the way to somewhere else rather than a permanent anchoring to a specific place. The thesis also contemplates the dictionary's other etymological meanings of the term referring to the now obsolete denotations, "To lead into error, mislead, delude; to stun, stupefy" (1989a: 2); the Old English, "To hinder, delay;" and, "To tarry, delay; to desist from action" (2). What these meanings foremost convey is a practice of dwelling beyond any specific domestic setting or spatial enclosure. It appears that at some point in time, *to dwell* changed from denoting a negative gesture involving a second person being led astray or prevented from something to become an occupation of a given location, a frame of mind or a state of being – all of a temporary nature. If holding the other back therefore is aligned with oneself taking hold, then this is where past and present meanings of *to dwell* coincide – dwelling as a *holding*. The thesis pursues this notion of dwelling as a taking hold, a holding that is also implicit the notion of the household.

John Hollander considers the notion of *home* as a place that ought to be given to all (1993: 27). This home of endless hospitality is a place that one does not have to deserve, does not have to earn. Everyone should always have access to this one place to where they might return when all other options fail. Ultimately, as Hollander argues, the right to this home is the right to a place where one can go and die – "The ultimately unspecified, not-quite-repressed definition of home ... is as the human point of ultimate return," he writes (29). The association of home with a place of dying opens a line of thinking about the dwelling place as a *living* space accommodating its own negation. Yet, before this point of final closure, Hollander introduces the Latin term *domus*, meaning *house*, as a term that questions the purely positive connotations of dwelling and home (40). *Domus*, having generated a number of variant terms such as the English *domicile*, *domestic*, *domain*, *dominion* and *dominus*, challenges the dwelling house as a welcoming structure. "Dominion and economics begin at home," as Hollander argues (40). The possibility of domestic control is aligned with the notion of the household domain as a place of certain transactions, and a relation between the Latin *domus* and the Greek *oikos* thereby comes forth. *Oikos*, also meaning *house*, forms part of the Greek term *oikonomia*, meaning *household management*, and the dwelling is marked out as a field of internal transactions aligned with the larger external economy of the *polis*, the city.

Interestingly, Hollander draws attention to the circumstance that the English word *house* of Germanic origin appears to have no root (40). Etymological excavations of the German term *Haus* conclude that this term has always meant exactly that, a *dwelling house*, and therefore nothing else before or since.

Hollander writes:

A house was always a building for human habitation, and most often the dwelling place of a family; all of the subsequent extensions of the term to cover various sorts of public building arise, not unsurprisingly, in the fourteenth century and after. (40)

The dwelling house without origin generates other kinds of houses only once the larger household of the modern city takes form. Yet, to regard this house as the root of all remaining and new-built houses of today is to claim that one house simply emerged in the image of which all subsequent houses would be conceived. Or perhaps there was always a dwelling house of a particular Germanic kind and therefore always a term for it? The thesis considers whether, insofar as the origin of the dwelling house as this unique object is unknown, the freedom offered by its absence is a possibility. If it is unknown from where the concept of the dwelling house derives, is it then necessary to know where it is going? In this sense, history demonstrates that a model house will be conceived for any epoch in accordance with the values and needs predominant at that particular time.

1.1.2 Drawing a line between interior and exterior

The title of Walter Benjamin's text "Louis Philippe, or the Interior" (1935) suggests that the reign of King Louis Philippe – between the revolutions of July 1830 and February 1848 – marks a moment in French history when the interior becomes a category of its own.⁵ Benjamin writes:

For the private individual, the place of dwelling is for the first time opposed to the place of work. The former constitutes itself as the interior. Its complement is the office. The private individual, who in the office has to deal with reality, needs the domestic interior to sustain him in his illusions. This necessity is all the more pressing since he has no intention of allowing his commercial considerations to impinge on social ones. In the formation of his private environment, both are kept out. From this arise the phantasmagorias of the interior – which, for the private man, represents the universe. In the interior, he brings together the far away and the long ago. His living room is a box in the theatre of the world. (2006a: 38)

According to Benjamin, a split occurs in the nineteenth century between the dwelling space and the work place. The dwelling becomes a private interior within which the dweller sustains a dreamworld in opposition to the experienced reality of the external surroundings. Benjamin is from the point of view of the early twentieth century interested in the emergence of the modern city as a result of capitalism and consumerism's dominance over European culture and society. The presumption that lines drawn between spaces in the emerging metropolis reveal the ideologies of its controlling forces identifies the private domestic interior as an idea, image and aspiration that work in service of these. For the upper- and middle classes settled within the urban context, yet increasingly also for the masses gravitating

⁵ Benjamin's text forms a section of the larger "Paris, Hauptstadt des XIX Jahrhunderts" [Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century] written as an outline of the never-completed *Das Passagen-Werk* [The Arcades Project] (1927-40).

towards the opportunities of the growing economies, this is the condition. Benjamin identifies how the desire for a domestic setting based on interiority develops from being a luxury for the few to become everyone's expectation and possible achievement. Collection and display of material possessions become an integral part of the fortification that sees the metropolitan citizen endlessly rearranging the interior of house and, possibly, also mind. The diverse communication media of the nineteenth century plays a significant role in this development by disseminating imagery and advertising of the desired interiors and related commodities. The overall commodification of the private interior as a two- rather than three-dimensional construct – as an image – turns the dwelling space into a motif, a scene. Captured and disseminated, the concept of private space as this interior develops by being made public in a curious double movement. The refuge from the reality of the external world is also a stage from where the individual projects his/her private space and life back into the public domain.⁶

The private domestic interior, perceived as a self-contained spatial bubble withdrawn from the forces of oppression and control seen to operate outside of it, reveals itself as complicit in the projections of the modern in more than one way. As Christopher Reed points out (1996: 7), the domesticity mapped by Benjamin is based on qualities such as privacy, comfort and family life, all hallmarks of the modern aspiration. The private domestic interior is “a product of the confluence of capitalist economics, breakthroughs in technology, and Enlightenment notions of individuality,” Reed writes (7), which is to say that the configuration of the private interior is as modern as the reality it attempts to escape from. Capitalist economics, new technology and individualism invoke differentiations such as interior/exterior, live/work, public/private and modern metropolis/domestic setting – separated by the building of walls – while a third force wedges itself in, as if to prevent these separations from settling too firmly. As Walter Benjamin observes, the architect attempts to give form to a private interior in a new style based on technologically advanced designs with the emergence of Art Nouveau in the late nineteenth century (2006a: 38). While the Art Nouveau interior strives to express the bourgeois individual's personality, its ornament being his/her signature, the means to produce these designs are found in new technology. A precarious alliance between art and architecture, technology and the private realm is thereby launched which despite attempts to propel the inhabitant further into seclusion cannot sustain this isolation. As Benjamin argues, the living space not only splits into a live/work differentiation, modern life increasingly unfolds beyond the limit of the one-sided private interior – “Around this time, the real gravitational centre of living space shifts to the office,” he writes (39). A shift with fatal consequences for the private domestic interior which becomes a kind of fantasy place when “the unreal centre makes its place in the home,” as Benjamin goes on (39). He concludes, “The attempt by the individual, on the strength of his inwardness, to vie with technology leads to his downfall” (39). If it therefore is not modernity, as such, that transforms the domestic setting into an

⁶ Charles Rice (2007) suggests that it is this circulation of visual material that ultimately produces the modern concept of the private domestic interior. Rice argues that a duality resides in the image/space relation, when it creates the illusion of a transparent domestic façade through which one is allowed to look into the private space behind. As Rice argues, the experience that this picture window facilitates knowledge about the interior that it makes visible is a deception insofar as image and space remain two distinct manifestations.

illusory space, then modern technology cuts the world in two to render the dweller homeless. And if industrial production of homes is a proposition that nineteenth century architects and craftsmen have already struggled to overcome, then the architects of the twentieth century will gradually awaken to its realisation.

1.1.3 The functionalism of a modern living space

While the practitioners of Art Nouveau embrace modern technology despite its anti-domestic inflections, avant-garde artists and architects of the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries are concerned with the domestication of art that at the same time takes place. The avant-garde – identified by having already ventured as far as possible away from home with the shared aim of encountering the new, if not alien – protests against the domestication of art as interior decoration (Reed 1996: 7). For the avant-garde, the criterion for the autonomous work becomes the extent to which it represents non-domestic values, following the conviction that autonomous art cannot be domesticated. When the avant-garde thereby reclaims art from the decorative style of Art Nouveau, it is, at the same time, an embrace of technological progress as the means through which the private, interior dreamscape is overcome. Architects of various modernist orientations collectively demonstrate their anti-domestic attitude by attempting to strip the dwelling house bare, thereby exorcising every known domestic and decorative supplement in the process of cleansing the living space from superfluous attachments. While this purification can be seen as an attempt to reclaim art from the domestic realm, it is foremost an attempt by modern architects to unite art and technology at the expense of the conventional dwelling space. It is an attempt to render this living space and the life that it accommodates modern by defining both categories anew through the conception of a new type of space.

As pointed out by Kenneth Frampton (2007: 91), Adolf Loos was perhaps the first to propagate a preference for domestic purism in this sense with his wholesale rejection of ornamentation.⁷ The dwelling houses that Loos designed in the early twentieth century, such as Steiner House in Vienna (1910), “had already arrived at a highly abstract external idiom – his white unadorned prism, which anticipated by at least eight years the so-called *International Style*,” Frampton continues (93). The rejection of ornamentation on the basis that it had no referent shifted the architect’s focus to the form of the building itself. As a result, the dwelling house was objectified for the purpose of rendering it a modern work of architecture, which is to say a free formal composition responding to the perceived requirements of modern life and living. Such seemingly precluded that anything but the purposeful remained, and an alleged *Functionalism* ensued as a result of this approach. Furthermore, architecture became the autonomous provider of what was considered the uniquely purposeful work of art – *the building*. Eventually, the approach would spread across the borders of countries in promotion of a

⁷ Frampton refers to Loos’ essay “Ornament und Verbrechen” [Ornament and Crime] (1908) and continues with reference to the critical essay “Architektur” (Architecture) from 1910, “Loos had already begun to sense the full force of a modern predicament, which persists to this day. Given, as Loos argued, that the architect from the city was uprooted by definition and hence categorically alienated from the innate agrarian (or alpine) vernacular of his distant forebears, then it followed that he could not compensate for this loss by pretending to inherit the aristocratic culture of Western Classicism” (2007: 91).

uniformly modern, international style of living, seemingly suitable anywhere and for everyone. Gone was the fear of industry, technology and mass-production. Overcome was the nostalgia for lost crafts and skills. If art, architecture and modernism thereby came to go hand in hand in the early twentieth century, a wholesale alliance with technology and industrial means of production ensured that there was no looking back. Architecture would become the master of its own building as the purposeful of the arts by providing a new modern living space challenging the familiar and the known.

However, as Reed remarks (1996: 11), “The idea of a ghost from the past, repeatedly repressed but returning, offers a striking image of modernism’s relation to the decorative and the domestic.” With a nod to the “spectral power of the decorative derived from its importance in modernism’s founding years” (11/12), the nineteenth century domestic interior described by Benjamin lives on as a repressed other in the twentieth century, continuously invoked in order to be, again, rejected. As such, the architectural Modern Movement relies on the work of negation to conjure the new living space that even if it does not resolve the dwelling once and for all, then at least is different. A seemingly anti-bourgeois, social agenda asserts itself at a time when the urgent requirement for mass housing calls for new ideas and solutions to mass dwelling. If a new type of living space for a new modern era is required in the aftermath of World War I, then this is a chance for the architects of the twentieth century to come into being as themselves modern. It is especially in Germany that new approaches are tested out in the revolutionary aftermath of war, considering that no style of the past offers itself as a viable solution for German architects to return to. If the Weimar Republic marks a new beginning for all, a flourishing environment for radical architectural thinking in the country before the war means that an avant-garde of the highest calibre is in place and ready to confront the problem of mass-housing and dwelling in the early 1920s.

Formerly Expressionist architects such as Bruno Taut and Walter Gropius seize power in municipal offices and housing associations across the country. At the same time, the official German society of craftsmen, Deutsche Werkbund, founded before the war, remains in place. With the organisation’s “Weissenhof Exhibition” in 1927, a number of German architects and international colleagues are summoned to build a complete modern *Siedlung* [settlement] in the city of Stuttgart as a showcase for the modern living space. The concept of this settlement is a housing scheme designed to accommodate communal living of a high standard for all social groups involved. Yet, if social reform is on the agenda, the rational approach to mass construction that the Weissenhof Siedlung eventually demonstrates foremost paves the way for a new style. As Richard Pommer and Christian F. Otto comments, “In the early announcements of Weissenhof, the intention of reforming the modern dwelling and settlement figured as prominently if not more so than the hope of unifying the avant-garde” (1991: 2). However, although no requirement concerning style is included in the exhibition brief, the constructed buildings turn out to be of a remarkably identical style. In addition, the eventual

exhibition houses target a bourgeois clientele despite the aspirations for a more inclusive gesture. The Weissenhof Siedlung therefore comes to signify the consolidation of the modern international style rather than the promised experiment with and resolution of modern social housing types. Pommer and Otto argue that it goes further:

The modernists won their public esteem at Weissenhof less from factional politics or a universal style than by staking their claim to have reformed life through art: investigating the prefabrication of housing, using new structures and materials, laying out site plans for light and air, adapting house plans to the conditions of modern life, and developing new furnishings for ease in cleaning, storage, and interior arrangements. (1991: 2)

At Weissenhof, art reformed life by means of strategies for rationalisation and optimisation, which is to say strategies borrowed from modern science and industry. The art of architecture and the future modern dwelling were organised according to the dynamics of forces hitherto considered alienating and anti-domestic. Other architects, not invited to the exhibition in Stuttgart, would soon drive similar dwelling types forward, if at an unprecedented scale and with a distinctly social agenda. In Frankfurt, Ernst May's concept of *Existenzminimum* [the minimum of existence] facilitated the realisation of such large-scale projects.⁸ As noted by Dennis Sharp, May launched his concept in 1929 at the second CIAM conference [Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne/International Congresses of Modern Architecture] with the question, "What does a man need?" (1978: 3). The answer, confirming the Weissenhof agenda as well as the at the time influential writing of Le Corbusier in *Towards a New Architecture* (1927), seemingly was, "Light, air and space" (3). Yet, as Giorgio Ciucci notes (1981: 71), May was critical of Le Corbusier's contribution to Weissenhof which he seemingly found too radical and to some extent uninhabitable. Architecture for the masses should, according to May, accommodate everyone, and it should be "objectively expressed in technical, social and economic terms" (Sharp 1978: 3). May's agenda, which aspired for "an objective (*Sachlich*) approach to the problems in the modern world" (4), perceived the anti-domestic objectivity of a rational, modern functionalism as the way forward from the anti-social, bourgeois individualism of the past.

While the architects of the Modern Movement acknowledged that modern life called for a different kind of dwelling as space and lived experience, mass-produced living spaces designed according to anti-domestic principles and technologies nevertheless raised new challenges. For the average dweller, such modern dwellings – alien to the purpose that their presumed Functionalism otherwise claimed – would not overturn conventions to modernise the approach to the living space. A space perceived as unsuitable for life was a self-negation when the dweller resisted conforming to the architects' pre-programming of use and life. Instead, s/he would carry on dreaming about houses from the past believed to provide the rootedness that living in the modern city did not offer. The modern architects had settled the bill without the host when the problem of dwelling in the first half of the twentieth

⁸ Between 1925-30, Ernst May, city architect of Frankfurt, was responsible for 15,000 mass-produced dwelling units in the city (Jencks 1980: 38).

century took a turn from Benjamin's exclusive interior dreamworld to May's serialised functionalism via the community spirit of the German Siedlung. These shifts in the name of the modern would not diminish the dweller's desire to find him/herself at home with the known and familiar, on the contrary, they enforced it.

1.2 THE PROBLEM OF MODERNITY

The problem of dwelling in the twentieth century comes to rely in equal measure on the struggle with modern housing types and the illusion that a more authentic dwelling in a house of one's own is a possible alternative. Yet, if the experience of homelessness evoked by the modern cannot be settled in the housing types available or the dreamhomes imagined, the problem of dwelling might not only be a modern problem, it might be a problem of the modern itself. The modern, as that which per definition is new and therefore not just different, is inevitably of an unfamiliar nature and hence impossible to recognise as anything other than foreign. Should it become known, its novelty would soon be lost, and if the dwelling cannot settle on the premises of this stranger, it cannot settle with modernity. As pointed out by Paul de Man, it is already in the fifth century that the usage of the term *modern* enters the Latin language (1983: 144). Denoting the meaning *just now* to mark a distinct difference between the Christian and Pagan eras, the term develops from the Latin *modo* via late Latin *modernus* to Middle English *modern* (OED 1989c: 947). As such, "there is nothing modern about the concept of modernity" and attempting to define its nature might well lead to "paradoxical formulations, such as defining the modernity of a ... period as the manner in which it discovers the impossibility of being modern," as de Man writes (144). Elaborating on the possibility of modernity in relation to the discipline of literature, de Man finds that while one can write about modernity, the writing itself is always a reflection of something past and therefore unable to seize the present moment, unable to be *just now*. Anything requiring a level of reflection or recollection will be at odds with modernity, and de Man calls upon the category of history as opposed to modernity in order to challenge this assumption. He writes:

Modernity and history relate to each other in a curiously contradictory way that goes beyond antithesis or opposition. If history is not to become sheer regression or paralysis, it depends on modernity for its duration and renewal; but modernity cannot assert itself without being at once swallowed up and reintegrated into a regressive historical process ... Modernity and history seem condemned to being linked together in a self-destroying union that threatens the survival of both. (151)

De Man demonstrates how the history/modernity dichotomy rather than being a simple juxtaposition is a convoluted relation that requires the fatal commitment of both categories. Modernity's cast forward overthrows historical progress while, again, almost instantly, becoming caught up and subsumed by what it has itself set in motion. This movement of mutually dependent drives creates a development that is simultaneously unpredictable and historically conscious. For the purpose of elaborating the complexity of this relation further, de Man calls upon Nietzsche who articulates a

critique of the discipline of history in the early essay “Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben“ [On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life] (1873). Nietzsche, in de Man’s reading, challenges the temporal trappings of concepts of history and modernity by juxtaposing history with *life* understood as the ability to forget the past. This ability makes it possible for animals to live ahistorically, and if only humans would accept their true nature as animals, they could reconnect with this potential “to be truthful at all times, unable to be anything else,” as de Man quotes Nietzsche (1983: 146).⁹ Unfortunately, as it turns out, this desire to forget is not straightforward without the radical gesture of cutting all ties to the past. The paradox of the modern age is thereby forecast: every new generation will pass the task of forgetting the past onto the next, and every generation will demand its own destruction for the erasure to occur. The aspect of self-negation, therefore central to the modern project, becomes clear through this paradoxical condition, and the difficulty of being modern in this sense leaves the modern project incomplete.¹⁰

The thesis considers this paradoxical relation between history and modernity in parallel with the paradoxical relation between dwelling and modernity. The correspondence suggests that concepts of history and dwelling align as narrative (re)collections of lived life. That is, as a dwelling constituted by a concept travelling along a seemingly untroubled path through changing times without losing its relevance or actuality. Such would be a concept of dwelling to be drawn up any moment without relation to any specific context. It would be a timeless and universal concept unable to manifest the radical break required for it to be modern – *just now*. Logically, modernity would be its final destination, and it would therefore not endure. In contrast, a concept of dwelling defined by the moment in which it takes place reflects this moment, it *is* this moment, and for a split-second this dwelling is not only contemporary, it is also modern. Yet, following de Man, such a realisation of the present moment is brief, since it will soon become subsumed by history and therefore no longer express the present, no longer be modern after all. The modern is therefore not simply about forgetting the past, it has no future either. Modern dwelling must become something else in the sense of becoming a different kind of living and space.

To challenge the notion of this dwelling with neither past nor future, the present section reads and examines two texts made public in 1951 by the philosophers Adorno and Heidegger, respectively. While the two thinkers were compatriots and contemporaries, they seemingly never crossed paths and the urgency of the topic of dwelling, which crossed both minds at the same time, might be explained

⁹ De Man quotes Nietzsche from the publication *Werke I* [Works I] (1954: 211).

¹⁰ As Peter Osborne writes (1992: 27), it is with the Enlightenment that a different concept of the modern as a temporally abstract and open-ended, essentially limitless category develops. With the Enlightenment *the new* no longer simply relates to the present moment, but to something in a qualitative sense of a different nature altogether. Osborne argues that with the Enlightenment, chronological time, history as it were, is determined by events taking place rather than perceived as a neutral or open-ended flow of time. Terms such as progress, crisis and epoch acquire temporal significations; events, however radical, are no longer perceived to be new beginnings but mark new periods within the existing epoch – a cast further into the, at the time, already projected future of the Enlightenment. Osborne argues that with this significant conceptual shift, modernity in “the full sense of the term” emerges (28); an invocation catching up with itself in the twentieth century, once the project of the Enlightenment comes to an abrupt end during World War II. After this closure, Osborne proposes three distinct ways of conceptualising modernity: firstly, as a “category of historical periodisation,” secondly, as “a quality of social experience,” and thirdly, as “an (incomplete) project” (23).

as a shared concern with difficulties experienced in the aftermath of World War II. As such, the concern reflects the upheavals both thinkers stood out on either side of the frontline in the time leading up to and during the war. Adorno, of Jewish origin, left Germany in 1934 only to return in 1949 after fifteen years of exile in England and the US. In contrast, Heidegger was a member of the Nazi party and remained in Germany throughout the war.¹¹ If dwelling had been rendered inconceivable for both men after the war experience, their understanding of the crisis would be drawn along very different lines. The thesis therefore reads the two texts as contemporary reactions to the problem of dwelling at a time when a profound question mark is placed before the beliefs and aspirations of modern Western culture. The devastating effects of war as well as the excesses that brought it about are calling for examination, and Heidegger and Adorno both respond to this call despite all their differences. Where they intersect is in the need to open a space for a reflection on dwelling from *within* this crisis, and the thesis attempts to locate this space from where it becomes possible to speak of the impossible modern dwelling.

1.2.1 The crisis of modern dwelling

Like a play of contradictions without resolve, the dialectics of dwelling characterising the modern age draws lines across time and space to distinguish and demarcate irreconcilable oppositions. Despite the immediate simplicity of these dichotomies – inside/outside, private/public, live/work, ideal/real etc. – they are complex when each half relies on the other for its sole meaning and existence. For the modern dwelling to take form, it must therefore be more than a one-sided occupation, it must be more than simply there or not. Furthermore, when the line manifesting the distinction is a wall, the physical limit of this barrier through which mediation between the two dissociated spaces cannot take place becomes a problem that architects must respond to. Acknowledging that the wall cannot simply be undone, transilluminated or eliminated for the purpose of a positive resolution of opposites, the thesis proposes instead to open it up. It addresses the dwelling complicated by walls by opening a space within the limit itself, which is to say that it forces an interval, a kind of delay to postpone the effects of difference operating between one side and the other. This space, essentially a void and platform for negotiation of the dwelling, might intersect with the space of crisis from where Adorno and Heidegger address the living space. The thesis argues that when both struggle to comprehend and give positive form to this space in their writing, it is due to a lack of acknowledgement of the essentially unknown nature of the space that they pursue.

When both thinkers speak of a dwelling that might become, they speak of a dwelling somehow recalled from the past. If it is a different kind of dwelling, it is not altogether new. Neither Adorno nor Heidegger promotes a novel understanding of the living space that qualifies for being modern. Instead, they look back in search of something once existing but long since lost – something forgotten that

¹¹ Heidegger became rector at Freiburg University and joined the Nazi party in April, 1933. He resigned from the rectorship in April, 1934, yet remained a member of the party until the end of the war (Sharr 2006: 5).

they try to remember, a loss inflicted by the modern, a kind of hopeless dwelling. When both address the problem in 1951, one chooses the form of an aphorism while the other the format of the lecture. The shared need to problematise dwelling beyond questions of home and house, interior and exterior, return or retrieve, one or the other, does, however, not aim for the same kind of settlement, if any.¹² When Heidegger in his lecture constructs a metaphysical model of an ideal dwelling, Adorno's aphorism dismantles the notion of any possible built structure to house it. While Adorno from his wartime exile denounces the house as past, Heidegger retreats to his forest cabin in the Black Forest to think and write. And if Heidegger, ultimately, seeks to transcend the reality of his postwar context when resorting to idealism, Adorno writes explicitly from the point of view of a ruined material culture. In between Heidegger's longing and Adorno's broken structure, a concept of a modern dwelling becomes less than straightforward.

1.2.2 Dwelling after the house

Adorno's aphorism, "Asyl für Obdachlose" [Refuge for the homeless] commences with the statement, "Wie es mit dem Privatleben heute bestellt ist, zeigt sein Schauplatz an. Eigentlich kann man überhaupt nicht mehr wohnen" (1962: 40). While an often quoted translation in English states, "Dwelling, in the proper sense, is now impossible" (1978: 38), the thesis proposes instead, "The contemporary condition of private life is revealed by its setting. In fact, one can no longer live anywhere." The difference between the two translations relates to Adorno's concern with the private living space rather than a presumed *proper* dwelling which cannot take place. The difference is significant insofar as Adorno does not appear to be of the conviction that only one kind of dwelling exists in the sense of the *proper*. Instead, the aphorism's reference to *Privatleben* [private life or privacy] and *Schauplatz* [scene or setting] brings it into the proximity of Benjamin's cultural critique of the private domestic interior discussed above [1.1.2]. When Adorno raises the question of privacy, he targets the absence of a spatial framework for what he perceives as a profound human need – a private space. If he is longing for the private interior described by Benjamin, he does, however, not qualify this lost living space further. Approaching the question of dwelling from a broader perspective, Adorno seems to measure the state of private life from its absence in a wider sense. It is not just that the private home and house has been rendered uninhabitable, but the *Schauplatz* that the dwelling space has become is a scene, if not theatre, for living which does not accommodate the required privacy. On the contrary, it exposes the private individual when modern walls become glazed, and the indifference of an illusory transparency reigns. Adorno's critique of modern life after World War II is therefore also an attack on modern architecture as the lecture "Functionalism Today" given to the Deutsche Werkbund in 1965 discusses in more detail.

¹² Adorno's collection of aphorisms is published as *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* [Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life] in 1951, with the English translation published in 1974. Heidegger's lecture is given 5 August 1951 in Darmstadt for the course "Mensch und Raum" [Man and Space] at the Darmstadt Colloquium II. It is printed in the conference proceedings published by Neue Darmstädter Verlagsanstalt in 1952 and republished in Heidegger's *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (1954). The English translation of the text used for the purpose of this thesis, with reference to the original German text, is published in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (1971). The lecture was given to an audience consisting of architects, engineers and philosophers including Hans Scharoun and Hans-Georg Gadamer (Sharr 2007: 36).

In the lecture, Adorno states, “I find that the style of German reconstruction fills me with a disturbing discontent, one which many of you may certainly share” (1997: 6). Adorno is concerned with the way that the architectural Modern Movement’s interwar Functionalism continues to dominate in the reconstruction of postwar Germany. He argues that insofar as functionalism, in itself, is not a static concept, its meaning constantly changes and adapts to current conditions – it cannot, as such, be a style with an ascribed aesthetic of universal application. “What was functional yesterday can ... become the opposite tomorrow,” Adorno claims while perhaps thinking about how buildings in Germany went from signifying one power structure to another (6). If functionalism essentially denotes purposiveness, and architecture is tasked with giving form to such, then the architect must acknowledge that an a priori functional form cannot be given. Adorno’s point is that if one form appears more purposeful than another, this relies on the way that humans synthesise form and function into one symbolic appearance that eventually comes to denote both. Any given form will over time signify its ascribed function and vice versa, the function will denote its form. The houses unable to shelter from the atrocities of war are marked by this inability, as Adorno explains:

A critical analysis of the mediocre modernity of the style of German reconstruction by a true expert would be extremely relevant. My suspicion in the *Minima Moralia* that the world is no longer habitable has already been confirmed; the heavy shadow of instability bears upon built form, the shadow of mass migrations, which had their preludes in the years of Hitler and his war. (12)

In exile in America during the war, Adorno’s concern with modernity’s self-destructive nature leads to a consideration of the tendency of rational progress to turn irrational. The publication *Minima Moralia*, from where aphorism number eighteen derives, is dedicated to the colleague Max Horkheimer with whom Adorno has also co-authored a more elaborate exposition of the concern with modernity in *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (1947). In the form of the aphorism, Adorno’s observations are projected in a tight style when he writes:

The house is past. The bombings of European cities, as well as the labour and concentration camps, merely proceed as executors, with what the immanent development of technology had long decided was to be the fate of houses. These are now good only to be thrown away like old food cans. (1978: 39)¹³

The passage is preceded by an enumeration of the discouraging effects of post-Enlightenment rationalisation as experienced in relation to housing. Traditional residencies “have grown intolerable,” new habitations are “devoid of all relation to the occupant,” the latter wants to sleep “close to the ground like an animal” and therefore “abolish[es] with the bed the threshold between waking and dreaming” (38). Furthermore, moving into existing historical buildings “embalms” the occupant alive, while a “hotel or furnished rooms, makes the enforced conditions of emigration a wisely-chosen norm,” thereby escaping the responsibility of residence altogether (38/39). The one who has not got

¹³ Adorno writes in German, “Das Haus ist vergangen. Die zerstörungen der europäischen Städte ebenso wie die Arbeits- und Konzentrationslager setzen bloß als Exekutoren fort, was die immanente Entwicklung der Technik über die Häuser längst entschieden hat. Diese taugen nur noch dazu, wie alte Konservenbüchsen forgeworfen zu werden” (Adorno 1962: 41).

any choice dwells wherever s/he can, possibly even on the street among the old food cans with which Adorno has thrown out the house.

What is first presented as a problem of the housing condition, to some extent even an architectural problem, soon transforms into a more profound existential crisis. The house is past because modern civilization cannot project it into the future – dwelling has become unethical, anti-social, even inappropriate. Adorno is concerned with how presumed enlightenment and liberation could lead to World War II's Holocaust and with Horkheimer suggests that the process of modernisation itself has trapped Western civilisation in an endgame rather than set it free, as expected, in perpetual emancipated progress and reason. Enlightenment is, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, driven by a double agenda described by Hilde Heynen as caused by a conflict between two kinds of rationality – a *critical* versus an *instrumental* (1999: 180). Where the latter signifies a ruthless rationality concerned only with finding the most efficient means to any end, the first is also attentive to the level of ethical reasoning implicit in achieving this goal. Following these distinctions, Enlightenment's process of rationalisation is a project of emancipation driven by a critical rationality reduced to an instrumental rationality when progress at any cost becomes the guiding principle. This process of self-oscillation turns rationality irrational, or *over-rational*, when dominance becomes the main instinct in an attempt to master that which cannot otherwise be subsumed under the progress rationale of instrumentalised reason. When Adorno and Horkheimer ask how it is possible for progressive, modern culture to regress once its idea(l)s are put into practice, they imply that a conflict resides within this culture itself (2002: xiv).

When in the final section of the aphorism, Adorno writes, "Wrong life cannot be lived rightly" (1978: 39), it is asserted that a serious cultural relapse evident from the condition of war has occurred. That this setback inevitably causes a decline in ethical standards leads to the consideration of whether at all anything can be ethically sound if the means to reach it are not. Adorno emphasises this ethical dilemma with resort to the topic of dwelling when repeating the words of Nietzsche, "It is even part of my good fortune not to be a house-owner," and then continues in his own words, "Today we should have to add: it is part of morality not to be at home in one's home" (39).¹⁴ In other words, being at home in one's home has become immoral, and not owning (a house) is part of good fortune. If the two statements outline a paradox, they at the same time pose questions of relevance for the present study. That is what particular value the house represents if it makes one richer, more fortunate, not to own one? And where one is at home if not in one's own house?¹⁵ Adorno concludes that the walls of the house have become useless barricades once the exclusion that they were built to secure

¹⁴ Nietzsche writes in German, "Es gehört selbst zu meinem Glücke, kein Hausbesitzer zu sein" (1910: 203).

¹⁵ Adorno's writes in German, "Dem müßte man heute hinzufügen: es gehört zur Moral, nicht bei sich selber zu Hause zu sein" (1962: 41). The latter part, "...nicht bei sich selber zu Hause zu sein," might also be translated as, "not to be at home with oneself," as pointed out by Raymond Geuss (2005: 237). This difference between *being at home in one's home* and *at home with oneself* is not insignificant for the notion of contemporary dwelling discussed in the following.

has turned into a violent elimination of *the other* left outside. Feeling at home inside this house is considered immoral when manifesting a desire to withdraw and exclude.

1.2.3 Forgetting how to dwell

Heidegger begins his lecture with the question, “1. What is it to dwell? 2. How does building belong to dwelling?” (1971: 145) – with the introductory caveat that the lecture does not speak of an actual building, does not speak of architecture.¹⁶ What then does Heidegger speak of, if not the house that holds the dwelling? While Adorno’s material reflection concerns the loss of this house, Heidegger attempts to trace the act of building “back into that domain to which everything that *is* belongs” (145). In other words, the lecture “Bauen Wohnen Denken” [Building Dwelling Thinking] is from the outset motivated by a desire to locate the practice of building within a circle of practices considered essential for being itself. Beginning along the lines of Adorno, Heidegger’s lecture lists a number of buildings in which humans cannot be said to dwell. Not because there is anything wrong with these, it is just that, according to Heidegger, they are not dwelling houses. Bridges, hangars, railway stations and market stalls house humans, but humans do not dwell inside these buildings – even if the worker is at home in the workplace, s/he is not dwelling there. Heidegger makes a distinction between *being at home* and *dwelling* by suggesting that while one can be at home in most places, dwelling is something else altogether – it requires a building of a different kind. “Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build,” he writes (160) – dwelling and building are intimately connected. Etymological studies confirm the claim when the German word for building, *bauen*, can be demonstrated to originally and actually mean *to dwell*.¹⁷ This meaning has, however, fallen into oblivion, been concealed, and Heidegger continues, “We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is, because we are *dwellers*” (148). For Heidegger, the essential meaning of dwelling as *being* comes forth – dwelling as the way in which human beings *are* on earth.

That humans have forgotten how to dwell is, according to Heidegger, a result of the way in which true meanings of words tend to withdraw and fall silent over time. While Heidegger perceives this withdrawal as a mysterious play of language, other forces contribute to obscure the clarity of minds and terms. As Neil Leach writes in his introduction to Heidegger’s lecture:

Heidegger argued that the alienation of modern existence was based on the separation of thought from *Being*, a condition epitomised by the privileging of technology and calculative thinking in the modern world. His project was therefore an attempt to return humankind to some form of authentic existence. (1997: 98)

While the process of modernisation was seen to enforce a dissociation of thought from the thinking mind, the true nature of primordial occupations such as dwelling fell into oblivion. Yet, if Heidegger

¹⁶ Heidegger writes in German, “Wir fragen: 1. Was ist das Wohnen? 2. Inwiefern gehört das Bauen in das Wohnen?” (1954: 145).

¹⁷ Heidegger proceeds from the Old English/High German word for building, *buan*, which not only means to dwell but also refers to being itself via *buan*’s relation to the German *bin* – *ich bin* = I am, and therefore, I am = I dwell. “The manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *Buan*, dwelling,” states Heidegger (1971: 147).

claimed to be speaking on behalf of all humankind when retrieving the otherwise lost authentic meaning and practice of dwelling from the German language, he would go further. As an example of authentic dwelling, he would reference his much favoured Black Forest farm seen to illustrate “by a dwelling that *has been* how *it* was able to build,” as he writes (1971: 161). If the authentic dwelling for Heidegger therefore is found close to home – his own that is – it makes itself known through the language that he speaks as well as the local building customs by which he lives. While Heidegger adds that the Black Forest farm belongs to its own time and place and therefore cannot serve as a model for dwelling and building beyond this particular setting, he seemingly believes that the *authentic dwelling* retrieved from the German language has a much wider conceptual scope.

In the lecture’s conclusive remarks, Heidegger concern with the housing situation intersects with Adorno’s when asking, “What is the state of dwelling in our precarious age?” (161). With a reference to postwar housing shortage, the question of dwelling is suddenly grounded in the acute problems of Heidegger’s own contemporary context. Yet, the philosopher does not linger too long on the kind of building which might house the homeless in this literal sense. Instead, he suggests that one is only homeless insofar as one does not *think* about “the real plight of dwelling,” which is:

... older than the world wars with their destruction, older also than the increase of earth's population and the condition of the industrial workers. [It] lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, *that they must ever learn to dwell.* (161)

So, how are we to *learn to dwell* today? What kind of authentic dwelling will take form in the contemporary of the twenty-first century? How generous is Heidegger in terms of this dwelling, which for the other, the stranger, might be very far from the Black Forest? As argued by Neil Leach, “Many have looked to an architecture of *dwelling* as a means of combating the alienation of contemporary society and of resisting the homogenising placelessness of International Style architecture” (1998: 31). Heidegger’s thinking on dwelling has inspired architects in the mid/late twentieth century – especially the practitioners of a so-called *regionalist* approach who have attempted a reconciliation of history and place to reinstate the sense of rootedness otherwise perceived to be lost. It has done so with the kind of mysticism endorsed by Heidegger when perceiving *the place* as a site endowed with particular qualities that architecture might connect with and transfer to built form for the purpose of evoking habitation of the desired authentic kind. That such ideas run the risk of becoming anti-social and nationalistic lies in the way that exclusion of the stranger and the different is unavoidable when favouring one named place above all others. Leach argues that considering Heidegger’s involvement with National Socialism, the exclusion immanent his thinking is a serious negative consequence of the call for the authentic (33). It lies in the concern with *the soil* as a prerequisite for the desired rootedness to a place of a certain meaning. As Leach writes, “The evocation of the soil in Heidegger echoes a consistent trope within fascist ideology,” through which, “the individual becomes one with the land in a process of identification that is itself mythic” (33).

When a decade later, Adorno raises a critique of Heidegger and postwar German existentialism, the concern is the retreat into myth and idealism invoked by the existentialist jargon of which Adorno finds Heidegger particularly guilty.¹⁸ Adorno accuses existentialist rhetoric for being conducive to totalitarian forms of thought when grounding terms in what is presented as original and ideal meanings. Adorno writes:

The jargon has at its disposal a modest number of words which are received as promptly as signals. *Authenticity* itself is not the most prominent of them. It is more an illumination of the ether in which the jargon flourishes, and the way of thinking which latently feeds it. (2003: 3)

According to Adorno's Marxist-inspired critical theory, the necessary mediation between subject and object, through which the subject is continuously formed, is obscured by Heidegger's jargon and its motivation, conscious or not. In contrast, Adorno's thinking seeks to retain the dialectical relation between humans and their material context when the individual gives reason to his/her lifeworld through direct engagement with it. This acknowledgement of a subject in constant movement, as a historical agent integrating subjectivity in a moment of dialectical reasoning, comes forward as Adorno's alternative to Heidegger's perceived truth recollected from a past beyond verification.

1.3 THE VENICE SCHOOL AND THE NEGATIVE

When Heidegger and Adorno open a space from where to speak about the problem of dwelling in their time, their opposed points of departure lead to equally diverse conclusions. While the present study has drawn a line between the two thinkers throughout the majority of their statements, the Venice School approaches with a slight difference. It is especially Massimo Cacciari who *listens* to Heidegger's lecture with an ear for the nuances revealing what he perceives as a predominantly negative orientation. According to Cacciari, in the essay "Eupalinos or Architecture" (1980), Heidegger's desire to learn to dwell is a hopeless waiting for a call that remains silent – "What speaks is not dwelling but the *crisis* of dwelling. And its language is *critical*: to be exact, division, detachment, difference ... It is precisely the *dweller* that is absent today," Cacciari writes (107). Suggesting that Heidegger is well aware of this absence when calling out for all beings to learn to dwell, Cacciari argues that the philosopher should not be mistaken for offering guidance on how humans might come to dwell again. If such a misunderstanding has taken hold among architects, it is a confusion to be clarified. Cacciari writes:

The problem lies in the fact that spirit may no longer dwell – it has become estranged from dwelling. And this is why building cannot *make* the Home ... *appear* ... No nostalgia, then, in Heidegger – but rather the contrary. He *radicalises* the discourse supporting any possible *nostalgic* attitude, lays bare its logic, pitilessly emphasises its insurmountable distance from the actual condition. (107)

¹⁸ Adorno raises the critique of Heidegger in *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit: Zur deutschen Ideologie* [The Jargon of Authenticity] published in German in 1964 and translated into English in 1973.

No nostalgia then, but a critical dismantling of the nostalgic longing for an authentic dwelling recollected from the past. Through this process, Heidegger, according to Cacciari, deconstructs the logic of his otherwise carefully constructed and seemingly verified claim that dwelling as a kind of being can be traced far back into the soil of German culture and language. Cacciari reads Heidegger from a negative perspective, and he does so for reasons that are, perhaps, also his own. If the Italian philosopher is driven to reclaim Heidegger from the latter's association with fascism's troublesome take on modernity, as exercised in Nazi Germany, the desire to do so might relate to Cacciari's own heritage. When the Venice School generally approach the history of modern Western architecture from a very critical perspective, the persistently negative questioning of ideologies and practices might itself spring from an experience of *absent ground*. This is not only so in a literal sense – considering the school's location in Venice – but with reference to the historical association between fascism and modernity, not least modern architecture, in the context of their country.¹⁹ If the Venice School attempts to execute a generational break from this past, Cacciari's reclamation of Heidegger's thinking on dwelling from its anti-social affiliations might be an attempt to complicate the subservience of architecture to ideology. It might be an attempt to reclaim architecture from being merely a hollow symbolical gesture into which anything can be poured and take hold.

However, Cacciari is perhaps also too generous when dispensing with the circumstance that Heidegger did not deny himself the right to retreat to the Black Forest cabin, even if acutely aware that dwelling and homeland were illusions under siege. When working around the notion of nostalgia in Heidegger's work with a desire to diminish its role for the thinking on dwelling, Cacciari appears to forget to take Heidegger's own situation into account. While Cacciari claims that the German philosopher was well aware that modern dwelling was not an option, Heidegger was nevertheless cultivating a dwelling for himself in the Alps. Not just any dwelling but an *authentic dwelling*. It might also be inferred that even if Heidegger acknowledged that dwelling was not an option in his time, such an admission would not foreclose that he could be nostalgically longing for it. Yet, Cacciari denounces nostalgia in Heidegger and reclaims the modern as an act of forgetting along the lines of De Man's definition above [1.2]. If this is easier for the one who does not want to remember – and, as noted above, Cacciari might have wanted to forget – then a theme of importance to the thesis is approached. This concerns the idea of dwelling as a previously more true, honest and comforting occupation to be retrieved from its abandonment in the past. In other words, the kind of dwelling that Cacciari clearly does not subscribe to, but also rejects that Heidegger could be mourning.

While the writing of the Venice School is instructive for an understanding of the modern as a radical break with the past, Dal Co's writing on nostalgia for dwelling is particularly relevant because it

¹⁹ The thesis refers to allegiances sworn by the Italian architects of the Rationalist movement to Mussolini's fascist regime in the early 1930s (Frampton 2012: 204-7). The building of Giuseppe Terragni's *Casa del Fascio* in Como (1932) is a prominent example of the architectural style that ensued, as is the extensive *Esposizione Universale Roma '42* complex [Universal Exhibition in Rome] built outside Rome in the late 1930s.

explains how this longing emerges in a modern context. For Dal Co, the break of the modern is a catalyst for longing simply because it defines a split following which something of a presumed importance is cut off. For the hopeful dweller – always homeless in the big city – the idea that an ideal and true dwelling has been lost due to this cut inevitably emerges, the nature of which will have the exact qualities that the dweller experiences as impossible to realise. The concept of dwelling thereby becomes a positive/negative reflection of the particular time and place in which it takes form, even if it remains a question how the dwelling projected from the present and into the past could ever be viable for the pre-modern setting in the first place. Such is the absurdity of the nostalgia for the lost dwelling, and with the Venice School, the question of how to dwell for the first time in the after-modern city is intensified.

1.3.1 The modern metropolis as the site of forgetting

Francesco Dal Co discusses a segment of research carried out in Germany in the early twentieth century examining the dynamics of the modern metropolis. The focus is on the nostalgic longing for a home and house suddenly overcoming the forces of modernity already given into. Dal Co terms this nostalgia, based on the idea of a reversal of the modern process, *the modern utopia* (1990: 13). He begins the enquiry with the writing of Ferdinand Tönnies before moving via Oswald Spengler and Max Weber to Emmanuel Lévinas, and attempts to surpass the resort to nostalgia by gradually shifting the paradoxical situation outlined by the utopian aspiration.²⁰ While challenging the dialectical pairings utilised in the chosen works' argumentation, Dal Co begins with the sociologist/philosopher Tönnies' juxtaposition of *Gemeinschaft* [community] and *Gesellschaft* [society]. While the former signifies the relationship between the individual and the community, perceived as a now lost harmonious and ethically sound reliance, the latter represents the urban society in which the individual is disconnected from the communal base because no such community exists. Tönnies' faith in the idea that community will surpass society for a positive reconciliation of an essentially only temporary conflict is described by Dal Co as the regressive aspiration of the modern utopia (26).

In contrast, Dal Co places the historian/philosopher Spengler who promotes the view that when urban conditions change, the meaning of dwelling, which cannot be understood outside its urban context, changes too (29). Spengler opposes the two concepts *Heimat* [homeland] and *Großstadt* [metropolis] and finds that insofar as the future belongs to the latter, the telluric bond between humans and their environment has to break for history in the city to progress. As such, there is no possible resolution in sight, no reconciliation of the dialectics – dwelling is forced to conform to the metropolis, somehow and at all costs. This idea is advanced by the sociologist Max Weber who finds that the city manifests a complete reconfiguration of the relation between humans and their

²⁰ Dal Co discusses the following works by the respective authors: Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* [Community and Society] (1887); Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* [The Decline of the West] (1918); Max Weber, "Die Stadt" [The City] (1920) and Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalité et infini: Essai sur l'extériorité* [Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority] (1961). According to Massimo Cacciari, Weber's essay "Die Stadt" might have been written a decade earlier (1993: 29).

environment insofar as, “it arises as a collective settlement of *people previously foreign to the place*,” as Dal Co writes (34). Historically, the modern metropolis is a novel manifestation without a past; there is therefore no previous state of authentic dwelling to return to, no reconciliation; modern dwelling takes place within the given. Dal Co writes:

The city arises at the moment in which the primitive concept of place is replaced by that of the *place of exchange*, the market, where expediency makes the uprooting of community life necessary and where, finally, forms of *illegitimate power* establish themselves. The city is therefore a form of illegitimate dwelling that constantly renews itself in an ever-increasing foreignness to the place. (39/40)

Dwelling in the city is constantly uprooted, and the dweller arriving at the city gate is always already a migrant arriving from somewhere else. No eventual city dweller can lay claim to having his/her origin in this *place*. At this stage, after having eliminated the idea of a reversal of the modern process, Dal Co turns to Emmanuel Lévinas for advancement of the idea of dwelling as an essentially uprooted practice. Lévinas is situated in the context of post-World War II when responding to the question of dwelling with the radical proposition that uprootedness *causes* dwelling rather than is *caused* by it. For Lévinas, according to Dal Co, the “essential character of the home lies with the wandering that makes dwelling possible” (35), a logic implying that uprootedness sets the wandering in search for a dwelling in motion. Dal Co thereby sees Weber and Lévinas as breaking the utopian longing for a reversal to a previous state by claiming that there could not be a metropolis, and therefore no problem of dwelling in this sense, without first the uprootedness and the wandering that has brought the city and problem of dwelling about in the first place.

This reversal of cause and effect paves the way for an alternative concept of dwelling, described by Dal Co as “that which produces difference” (36). The difference produced is the *presence* of difference, a certain *unconcealedness* that humans are faced with – something of a negative order exposed through dwelling, a *poverty* of human beings, a basic incapability to dwell. This dwelling that produces difference is a condition beyond rootedness and refuge, place and space. It is a kind of *void* amidst the known, even if not simply a negative amidst the positive. As Lévinas also writes, “The chosen home is the very opposite of a root. It indicates a disengagement, a wandering [errance] which has made it possible, which is not a *less* with respect to installation...” (1979: 172). We arrive uprooted to the city within which we cannot settle, and so we move on while fluctuating between conditions of dwelling and non-dwelling, never quite reaching the limit of either.

1.3.2 The negative dialectics of the metropolis

Massimo Cacciari’s interpretation of two texts written in the first half of the twentieth century by the sociologist Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin, respectively, brings an important aspect of the dynamics driving modern society, cities and perceived progress to the fore. Cacciari reads Simmel’s essay “Die Großstadt und das Geistesleben” [The Metropolis and Mental Life] (1903) in parallel with Benjamin’s “Das Paris des Second Empire bei Baudelaire” [The Paris of the Second Empire in

Baudelaire] (1938), and he finds that Simmel and Benjamin align in a shared understanding. This concerns the individual being's participation in a process of rationalisation that permeates all levels of society and operates under the authority of capitalism. Cacciari thereby maps a dynamic of the metropolis that gives weight to Dal Co's statement that the city constantly renews itself "in an ever-increasing foreignness to the place" (1990: 40). Once this *place* becomes the *market place*, a constant flux of transactions prevents any kind of settlement from a lasting character. Furthermore, Cacciari argues, the individual is instrumentalised in this process of constant renewal of what is essentially the same.

Simmel's essay begins, "The psychological foundation, upon which the metropolitan individuality is erected, is the intensification of emotional life due to the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli" (1971: 325). The dialectical process observed by Simmel and seen to drive the dynamics of the modern metropolis is termed *Vergeistigung* [spiritualisation], or "the process of the realisation of the *Geist*" [spirit], as Cacciari phrases it (1993: 4). Simmel's concept is based on an opposition between what he in German terms *Nervenleben* [the life of the nerves] and *Verstand* [intellect]. Continuously challenged by internal as well as external impulses, the metropolitan individual counters the *Steigerung des Nervenlebens* [intensification of the life of the nerves] with intellectual reasoning. Such continuous affirmation and overcoming operates beyond the immediate psychological rebalancing of the unsettled individual that it might also provide – ultimately, according to Simmel, *Nervenleben* and *Verstand* are mutually dependent drivers of development in the modern metropolis.

Through constant processing of nervous stimuli via *Vergeistigung*, the intellect gives reason to the metropolis, which is to say turns it into reason. Through subordination and integration, *Nervenleben* serves as a "propellant force, the fuel of the intellect," Cacciari writes (5). He summarises, "the first precise definition of the function of the Metropolis" as follows:

It dissolves individuality into the current of impressions and reintegrates these, precisely by virtue of their constitution, into the overall process of *Vergeistigung*. In its first stage of evolution, the Metropolis uproots individuality from its conservative fixity; the process begun by the uprooting will of necessity lead to the dialectical reasoning that governs, measures, and directs social relations, the interest (inter-esse) of the Metropolis. (5/6)

The social aspects of the modern metropolis' emotional/intellectual drive are closely linked to capitalism and the market economy controlling financial relations in tandem with the intellect's control of psychological relations. While the money economy thereby transcends concepts of value, the intellect transcends the impressions imposed on its *Nervenleben* through life in the metropolis. Cacciari elaborates on this interdependence, "*Nervenleben* corresponds to the continuous and relentlessly innovated transubstantiation of exchange value into use value," while the intellect "abstracts from the appearance of use value the substance of exchange value" (6). In summary, "The metropolis must set a *Nervenleben* in motion in order to realise, through the use value, the exchange value produced by the *Verstand* – and hence in order to reproduce the very conditions of the *Verstand*'s existence" (6/7). This

process drives the modern metropolis with production determining consumption in a self-generative cycle of renewal and actuality. Cacciari's own concept of *negative thought* pursues the dynamic further, and it therefore plays a key role in the understanding and mapping of the modern metropolis in the work of the Venice School. Gail Day summarises Cacciari's negative thinking as follows:

According to Cacciari, negative thought is the ideology most appropriate to the Metropolis; it represents "the discovery of the negativity of the Metropolis itself," that is, it "presupposes contradiction" and devaluation [*Entwertung*]; it recognizes that everything and everybody is engulfed in the Metropolis; it understands that "no aura can survive" and refuses the "prayer for consolation." Indeed, Cacciari argues, the negative is negative "precisely because it is *Entwertung*." (2011: 101)²¹

To express *negative thought* in the negative, the term refers to what Cacciari finds ultimately eludes both Simmel and Benjamin in their respective and otherwise very negative assessments of the modern metropolis of the early twentieth century. While both writers, according to Cacciari, distil the experience of the modern metropolis through negativity, they refrain from drawing the inevitable conclusion that not only does the metropolis materialise through perpetual crisis, but this is "the fundamental system of the social integration of the growth of capitalism" (1993: 10). In other words, the process of negative affirmation, *Vergeistigung*, constitutes a dynamic that brings about the metropolis as a manifestation of the negativity integral to capitalist economy. As Cacciari summarises, "Simmel explains only the metropolitan form of negative thought, not the function of negative thought within the Metropolis; he explains the relation in the Metropolis between *Nervenleben* and *Verstand*, not the use of this relation" (10).

Benjamin, Cacciari finds, ventures further than Simmel when utilising the categories *Schock* [shock] and *Erlebnis* [lived experience] as dialectical operators through the example of Baudelaire's prose poems. *Schock* becomes *Erlebnis* when acknowledged by consciousness as an event that can be stored and thereby internalised in the form of a memory. Benjamin considers this internalisation of the negative event, the shock, to be crucial for survival in the metropolis. When Baudelaire through his writing gives expressive form to the intensification of the *Nervenleben* caused by shocks, a rationalisation process in line with Simmel's thinking is made possible by the artist's emphatic capability. Baudelaire's writing *is* in this sense *Verstand*, when internalising the anger produced by the shock while at the same time preparing the mind for new shocks. As Michael W. Jennings writes:

This notion of a shock-driven poetic capability was a significant departure from the understanding of artistic creation prevalent in Benjamin's day and in fact still powerfully present today. The poet is, in this view, not a genius who *rises above* his age and distills its essence for posterity. For Benjamin, the greatness of Baudelaire consists instead in his absolute *susceptibility* to the worst excrescences of modern life: Baudelaire was in possession not of genius, but of an extraordinarily *sensitive disposition* that enabled him to perceive, through a painful empathy, the character of an age. And for Benjamin, the *character of the age* consisted in its thoroughgoing commodification. (2006b: 15)

²¹ Day is quoting Cacciari (1993) from the pages 10, 21 and 20, respectively.

1.3.3 Giving form to the negative experience

When the writer enters the cycle of *Vergeistigung* in service of dominant forces by accepting his own status as a kind of commodity, the early twentieth century avant-garde follows suit. As Manfredo Tafuri points out, in line with Cacciari and Benjamin, the avant-garde artists and architects sustain the power of dominant forces when they give expressive form to the negative experience of their contemporary age (1976: 84). The artistic and intellectual disciplines give in to negativity when responding to their context as commodified objects serving a designated purpose in an overarching economy over which they have no say. Tafuri explains:

The poetry of Baudelaire, like the products shown at the universal expositions, or like the transformation of the urban morphology set in motion by Hausmann, marks the new-found awareness of the indissoluble, dynamic interconnectedness existing between uniformity and diversity. Especially for the structure of the new bourgeois city, one can still not speak of tension between the exception and the rule, but one can speak of tension between the obligatory commercialisation of the object and the subjective attempts to recover - falsely - its authenticity. (80/81)

In line with Cacciari's comment that Simmel and Benjamin do not fully acknowledge the implications of negative thought, Tafuri infers that Benjamin's reading of Baudelaire does not realise the parallel between the rules of production in the city and the strategies of the avant-garde artists. In fact, Tafuri claims, avant-garde tactics explicitly rearticulate the principles of the modern city. "Rapidity of transformation, organisation and simultaneousness of communications, accelerated tempo of use, eclecticism," such are the strategies that, according to Tafuri, emulate the ones they at the same time attempt to break down (84). It is not only that the avant-garde as a whole is seen to give in to predominant forces when each group practising under the shared banner plays into the overall dynamic. As Tafuri explains, all the historical avant-garde movements – Cubism, Futurism, Dada and so forth – follow each other according to the laws of industrial production with its continued technical transformation. And so, the diverse though essentially related avant-garde movements succeed each other in refinement of the commitment to technological capitalist modernity that, according to Tafuri, at the same time defines them. One technique, more than any other, facilitates this objectification of the shock experience and that is the assemblage. Tafuri finds that the assemblage as an assembly of found objects makes commodification through objectification explicit. He explains:

For all the avant-garde movements – and not only in the field of painting – the law of assemblage was fundamental. And since the assembled objects belonged to the real world, the picture became a neutral field on which to project the *experience of the shock* suffered in the city. (86)

Tafuri enlists the assemblage work as the medium per se for artists attempting to confront and expose the conflictual and fractured nature of their situation by creating a kind of coexistence where indifference otherwise prevails. When materialising the experience of a broken lifeworld, through the projection of disparate objects on a shared yet neutral image plane, the artists respond to the internalisation of the money economy by bringing every thing onto one and the same indifferent level. Tafuri writes about the assemblage as a projection of the shock suffered in the city with specific

address to Kurt Schwitters' Merz concept – a concept of interest to the present study and further elaborated in chapter 3:

The objects all floating on the same plane, with the same specific gravity, in the constant movement of the money economy: does it not seem that we are reading here a literary comment on a Schwitter [sic] *Merzbild*? (It should not be forgotten that the very word *Merz* is but part of the word *Commerz*). (88)

Following Tafuri, the notion of *Entwertung* [devaluation] expressed through artistic work struggles to move beyond the avant-garde's proclamation that the destruction of all values is the *new* value. Tafuri argues that considering that value systems prevail, even if in the negative, actions of presumed resistance serve dominant forces when aligning themselves with the logic of these. No value is still a value, and the artists are subsumed under the negative dialectics of the metropolis whatever they choose to do, as long as they subscribe to the same register of value. If, on one level, the works are perceived as comforting in the ability to ground and materialise the shocks constantly suffered in the city, then Tafuri enlists an alternative solution to complicity when suggesting that rather than *suffer* the tension, one should simply *absorb* it (86). How then to absorb the tension? Tafuri gives no clear answer, but the distinction between suffering and absorbing would appear to rely on the extent to which one accommodates the conflict by internalising and repeating it. For the artist, who succumbs to the dominance of capitalist society, the nature of this internalisation is the crucial point, yet Tafuri remains negative with regards to the artist's ability to resolve this *task*. He continues:

The necessity of a programmed control of the new forces released by technology was very clearly pointed out by the avant-garde movements, who immediately after discovered that they were not capable of giving concrete form to this entreaty of Reason. It was at this point that architecture could enter the scene, absorbing and going beyond all the entreaties of the avant-garde movements. (96)

The architectural Modern Movement, rising on the basis of the artists' suffering, proposes *the plan* as the tool by means of which production can be coordinated and the perceived reality mediated. For Tafuri, the *Neue Sachlichkeit* [New Objectivity] "adapted the method of designing to the idealised structure of the assembly line" (101), a proposition that would make the architects' complicity even more pronounced. As contributors to the over-arching economy, a *gentlemen's agreement* between architecture and the ruling forces would be sealed, and the architects would cease to look to pre-industrial times for answers to questions such as dwelling and the production of houses. This commitment to modern technology and presumed progress nevertheless kept the prospective dweller's propensity for the modern utopia intact.

1.4 THREE ARTISTS, THEIR WORK AND HOMES

Three works of art are chosen as case studies for the present study with an eye to Tafuri and Cacciari's critique of the artistic avant-garde. The choice of art relies on a number of expectations, among them that the Venice School overlooks a possibility for resistance to the identified domination with which

dwelling struggles to reconcile. If all disciplines and practices ultimately operate under the hegemony of the ruling forces, as the school claims, the thesis argues that a space within this domination, a void to be occupied by the individual dweller, might await address. It pursues the intuition that the chosen works give clues to the nature and location of this space, to the practices and strategies that make it accessible, as well as to ways in which it might be occupied. For this reason the works have been chosen, and for this reason, in particular, they have been chosen on behalf of other works of art preoccupied with related questions of dwelling, homes and houses.²²

The choice, as such, relies on the expectation that the works offer particular opportunities to think beyond the enclosure of the house and the problem of dwelling that this structure frames. The thesis argues that this ability relies on qualities immanent the works that might not be immediately comprehensible but has to be teased out. For each work, it therefore asks how and why it came about, what the artist had in mind, which techniques he made use of, and what purpose the operation served – even if, as works of art, functionality in a conventional sense might not have been on the agenda. The relevance for architecture of such questions relies on the intuition that the works, due to the radicality of their gestures, embody knowledge of relevance to the discipline that goes beyond the architectural work. The thesis attempts to *unpack* this knowledge embedded in the artistic practices in anticipation of a deeper understanding of the relation between the individual artist's experience of homelessness, the space he made for himself, and the way that this space eventually was inhabited or not. When examined individually, the case studies come forth as specific to their particular time and place, and the thesis argues that it is precisely in this particularity that the possibility of the individual work lies. As reference material for the enquiry into contemporary dwelling, the works are therefore not expected to answer for a concept of dwelling applicable at all times.

Merzbau and *Splitting* came to my attention as an architectural student when photographs of the works were encountered in publications. In both cases, the images aroused curiosity and called for further scrutiny, even if it was not immediately clear in what capacity such studies should be undertaken. This came later, and it was during the preparations for the present study that Gregor Schneider's work emerged as a suitable companion to the other two. It did so by completing a constellation of works capable of opening the question of dwelling in unforeseeable ways, its suitability further underlined by the status of a contemporary work in contrast to Matta-Clark and Schwitters. A century therefore holds the works together, and the thesis is interested in how as examples from distinct periods within this timeframe, three different responses to the problem of dwelling takes form. The relation to modernity and the modern agenda in architecture and beyond sets the works apart. Schwitters'

²² Other works considered for the present study for their critical engagement with the living space include Rachel Whiteread's *House* (1994) and Piet Mondrian's studio in Paris (1921-36). The latter, in the form of a three-dimensional unfolding of the artist's famous grid paintings, is of particular relevance due to its status as work of art, studio and living space in one. The importance of this overlap relies on the creative process involved, which brought the work in proximity to architecture as a kind of spatial design process. The chosen works share this quality while, in addition, Matta-Clark, Schwitters and Schneider were directly involved in the construction of their spaces. It is especially this aspect of building that makes the chosen works relevant for the present enquiry.

Merzbau was created in Germany between the two world wars during a period of intense crisis and upheaval. If, at this point, the modern was pursued with a faith in the radical break with the past required for *the new* to emerge, then World War II would change the approach. At the time of Matta-Clark's work in 1970s' North America, a concern with the modern agenda's lack of humanism enforced a search for alternative solutions to problems experienced as caused by the modern rather than resolved by it. Eventually, when the teenager Schneider set to work in his house in Rheydt, Germany, in the mid-1980s, after-modern debates were in vogue, rendering the new in the sense of modern surpassed if not altogether eclipsed [1.1, p.12]. If Gregor Schneider, during the course of developing *HAUS u r*, appears to have been oblivious to the historical context within which he worked in his house, such is perhaps also a sign of the present age. The thesis returns to this question in the fourth chapter on Schneider's work.

1.4.1 When the artist takes charge of the *domus*

When the chosen works of art respond to the time and place of their making, as contemporary works critical of the moment in which they take form, a critique exceeding the scope of the architectural work is facilitated. As the Tafuri has explained, this is so because the practice of art essentially is critical when cutting, splicing, gluing, sampling and building the assemblage. Art goes straight to the heart of home and house when dismantling the premise for dwelling rather literally, and the possibility of this gesture for architecture, bound by its promise to shelter, is significant. However, the possibility of art for architecture not only relies on the former's critical engagement with issues such as dwelling, home and house. The work of art is free when unbound by the functional requirements that architecture is tasked to meet – even if it remains unclear what exactly the nature of the dwelling function and its related task is. If architecture were to employ strategies along the lines of the chosen works, its critique would inevitably be a kind of self-critique when unsettling the built structure in profound ways. And, if architecture appears unable to raise this critique of its own building, the artistic gesture is nevertheless remains a critical, if often neglected, part of the discipline's vocabulary.

The thesis is interested in ways that architecture might (re)connect with this immanent critical faculty in an attempt to surpass the line drawn by Tafuri around a discipline essentially unfree. It argues that if the dominance, under which everything in the modern age becomes subsumed, cannot be overcome, the tension of the dialectics driving this control might be *absorbed* by identifying a space from where resistance can be mobilised. Such is a space in which the negative is turned upon itself in affirmation of the domination, yet with the possibility that the reversal, at the same time, allows the inhabitant to take charge of his/her situation. In the following chapters, the thesis pursues the three spaces of such resistance that it claims are opened in the chosen works.

When the artists engage directly with the fabric of residential buildings, in two cases their own dwelling houses, the possibility of art for architecture extends. If the works thereby cause presumed boundaries between art and home to collapse, it is on more than a conceptual level. When the artist's studio is located within the domain of the house, or when the house itself becomes the work of art, neither artistic practice nor dwelling can be differentiated clearly within the house or consciousness of the artist. He is never simply dweller or artist, the house not simply for living, working or the work itself. Home and art do not become one and the same when both obtain their identity from the extent to which they are not each other. When the work of art relies on the anti-domestic gesture for identification, it cannot be at home with the home, but is forced to question this house that it occupies. It must remain something else and through this *otherness* come to master the domus.

This tension between the artistic gesture and the notion of home relies on the ability of art to take charge of a familiar terrain by transforming it into something less familiar and recognisable. When something of an alien nature, such as in this case art, is introduced into the fabric of the familiar, it inevitably establishes or maintains a connection with the stranger outside. In this sense, the artistic gesture opens the door and breaks down the wall while the feeling of home is challenged in the space between this house that both is and is not, both open and closed, known and unknown. When at some inevitable point in time, the alienating condition will become familiar, it might no longer be remembered that the familiar setting, in fact, once was threateningly alien. The problem of dwelling revolves around this essentially paradoxical situation that the eventual familiarity of the modern/contemporary experience of alienation therefore must be acknowledged. When becoming the norm, alienation makes the requirement for a familiar space, such as the desired dwelling space, a desire for a space that also in some sense is alien. While a difference might prevail between the kinds of alienation and familiarity manifested by concepts such as home and art, respectively, contemporary homelessness could tentatively be defined as the problem of being at home with the alien. The problem of dwelling is then not simply the problem of inhabiting an alienating external context surrounding a familiar private interior, but the problem that the familiar interior, as internal to the external, always already to some extent is alien and exterior.

The artistic gesture, per definition inflicting estrangement on its subject, challenges this ongoing dialectic without resolve between the familiar and the alien as it concerns the living space. It thereby approaches the space of resistance when marking an internal split and/or double – holding the house and home together – by revealing that this house has, in fact, already come apart. If one cannot be at home in the work of art, because this home is always already in the process of becoming something else from which it must repeatedly be reclaimed, then the retrieval might serve to claim a sense of home. Such would be to claim a familiar space in unfamiliar circumstances wherever these are encountered.

1.4.2 Reconstructing the living space

The possibility of the artistic gesture is the possibility of the chosen artists to express something of relevance to the thesis and its enquiry. When exposing layers of built structure – literally as well as metaphorically – or adding to existing fabric by extending or doubling it, the artists begin to build. As such, they build their houses as places for temporary occupation, yet also as works of art in their own right. They do so in immediate response to the problem of dwelling with which they are challenged in their time. If these works, on one hand, raise critiques of dwelling houses, which is to say that they raise a critique of the structure of this house, they, at the same time, propose alternatives. While the building techniques that the artists resort to are not architectural in a conventional sense, they are not alien to the discipline either – splitting, doubling, cutting and demoulding are among the gestures that reshape the houses studied by the thesis. Such gestures are familiar to architecture as a discipline already cutting space by means of walls, projecting houses in endless rows, reshaping material to attain unexpected forms, and so forth.

The tactics applied by the artists vary, yet they all employ a carefully selected building strategy examined and contextualised in detail in the following chapters. Gordon Matta-Clark's *un-building*, Kurt Schwitters' *Merz-building* and Gregor Schneider's *re-building* are such strategies beyond the text or plan. The thesis examines these as reconstructions of dwelling houses challenging the capacity of walls and the houses that are being held together. It does so with an eye to artistic practices predominant at the time of the works' creation. As such, each work in part owes its aspiration and method to contemporary art practices while, overall, the three gestures relate in their shared pursuit of the dwelling house and its limit.

Above the tactics employed hovers the question of dwelling, and the negative gestures of cutting and splicing, dividing and undermining, supporting and recasting are subordinate to the profound challenge that is this living space. The thesis argues that the need to reconstruct the dwelling house, characterising all three works, is a need to respond to a situation in which the artists' own living space is challenged. As such, the three works are chosen for the present study because they emerge as direct responses to a contemporary context in which dwelling cannot be taken for granted. Furthermore, because the artists confront this experience by means of negative gestures whereby they inevitably upset the structures that they engage with. As a sign of the century that they share, the absence of a constructive approach to dwelling leaves the artists with the option only to reconstruct their environment to suit their own individual needs. The artistic practices, that they come to master as a result, are preoccupations with the given that while dismantling one house build another, hence they are reconstructions.

1.4.3 Contemporary dwelling past and present

The works open the possibility of a contemporary living space when each spatial proposition unfolds in immediate response to the problem of dwelling experienced by the artist in his time. If the motivation for the individual artist from the outset is as a simple need to live and work somewhere, then this space will be carved out in defiance of a problematic setting in all three cases. As such, the works are testaments to three very specific historical moments, and the notion of the contemporary dwelling attains two immediate, if overlapping, meanings – the dwelling of today and the dwelling of any day. If the significance of the contemporary in relation to dwelling therefore is that there cannot be a set concept when every new day asks for something else, the living space is bound to be reinvented accordingly.

Through the time and site-specific engagement with the built fabric of houses, the chosen works approximate the notion of this contemporary dwelling. They do so in the way that the artists engage with the fabric of the environment in which they struggle to find themselves at home. Their commitment to the *here and now* precludes the effects of standardisation and formulas for living, favoured by modern architects operating during the century of the works' conception. No concept with application across time can be drawn, and no history of this dwelling in the moment is possible. In the following chapters, the thesis traces and analyses the strategies that made the chosen works possible as contemporary dwellings in this sense. It identifies the dynamics by means of which the buildings took form as both living spaces and critiques of it, positive/negative constructions, literal and discursive works – thereby proposing an alternative to predominant orders. By way of distinct approaches to the practice of building the contemporary dwelling, the works are seen to have built their critiques, the critique to have become a building and this building a place to live.

The spaces opened by the chosen works are from the perspective of writing the thesis entered into a triangular constellation rather than a linear chronology. Through this grouping that places one work in equal relation to the other two, the works manifest individual and isolated events while outlining a context for each other of relevance in the conclusive fifth chapter of the thesis. Eventually, something will be located within the triangle, and something will be located without, overall, there will be neither beginning nor end to the works and their possible relationship. The spatial rather than temporal history that is invoked by this strategy is an account in three dimensions that leaves chronological time out as a reference or historical signifier. The thesis argues that the spatial relations of the works come forward when their historical succession is ignored in favour of a constellation of the spaces anchored in their specific historical moment.²³ When attempting to distil the spatial histories of the three case studies perceived as *objects* of a particular context, the thesis aims to exemplify contemporary living

²³ Such an approach to the analysis and interpretation of inaccessible past events reflects the thinking of Walter Benjamin in the essay "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" [Theses on the Philosophy of History] (1940). Here, Benjamin invokes a concept of history as an "object" situated in the here-and-now of its construction, "a past ... blasted out of the continuum of history," as Benjamin writes (1970: 263). This blasting of historical progress is seen as an opportunity to critically undermine the historian's preconceptions by approaching particular historical moments as transmitters of something of a larger scale outside the limitations of the immediate historical narrative.

spaces unfolding in the moment. When each work is permitted its own *expansion* by means of which the artist's oeuvre, the epoch of his making and the historical context, overall, is seen to crystallise in the individual gesture, a particular historical event in the form of a spatial possibility is channelled.

To emphasise the absence of a chronological and connective interpretation, the works are placed in a non-chronological order in the following chapters. As such, the thesis begins with Matta-Clark's *Splitting* because both thesis and work begin by approaching the dwelling house as the main locus and subject matter. Through Matta-Clark's cutting of the house, the thesis opens its enquiry into the question of dwelling by tracing the concerns and ideas that drove the artist to split a house in two. Secondly, Schwitters' *Merzbau* is addressed for the purpose of addressing the artist's studio located inside this house with implications for the domestic setting coexisting with the creation of art. And thirdly, Schneider's *HAUS u r* gives access to rooms as interior spaces from where the artist seemingly cannot get out. This movement through the house, from initial access via inhabitation to leaving it behind, outlines the trajectory of the thesis and its enquiry illustrated by the *split wall diagram* introduced in chapter 3 [3.3, p.99].

The locations of the works in terms of their initial construction – *Splitting* in New Jersey, USA, *Merzbau* in Hannover, Germany, and *HAUS u r* in Rheydt, likewise Germany – situates the enquiry across two continents, if within a Western discourse. In terms of the houses within which the works have taken form, these are all physically inaccessible at the time of writing the thesis. The buildings that housed *Merzbau* and *Splitting* no longer exist, and *HAUS u r* is the artist's private residence and therefore not open to the public. As a result, the material consulted for the present study is largely representational, and the building processes are mediated by this material. The artists' documentation and reproduction exist in different formats such as reconfigurative and interpretative film, photo collages and installation in Matta-Clark's case, documentary photographs in Schwitters', and exploratory video-walkthroughs and photographic still lifes in Schneider's. This visual and textual material, constituting the works as works of art today, has been displayed frequently in museums and art galleries while other types of evidence, produced by the artists as part of the works' initiation or as a subsequent documentation or commentary, are held in archives. For the purpose of the present study, I have visited the Kurt Schwitters Archive in Sprengel Museum Hannover (August 2010), the Gordon Matta-Clark Collection at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal (August 2011), and for additional material related to Matta-Clark and Gregor Schneider, MoMA, New York (September 2011). On the basis of the evidential material found in these places, the nature of the works and building activities that brought them about, not to say the spaces created, are framed by the thesis outside the time and place of their making.

Conclusion to “The Problem of Dwelling”

The first chapter set out the problem of dwelling, identified by the thesis, on the basis of a selection of literature concerned with the experience of homelessness as central to the modern age. The chapter thereby articulated a series of themes in preparation of the following analyses of the three case studies. These themes all revolved around a conflict between prevailing concepts of dwelling and a contextual setting experienced as essentially uninhabitable. If an environment marked by instability and change was at the heart of this incompatibility, factors internal to the dwelling space were, however, also seen to play an important part. They did so when the exclusion of *the other* left outside became the exclusion of *the other* always already residing within, which is to say that there cannot be an interior without an exterior, and no house without a contextual setting that also in some ways transcends its walls. The chapter thereby suggested that the problem of dwelling at odds with its time and place essentially is at odds with itself. Furthermore, it argued that to overcome this identity crisis, the dwelling must be challenged on its own grounds in the sense of challenged by its own building as both process, spatial enclosure and occupation – a challenge inevitably involving the architect.

While the upheavals of the twentieth century have been severe, it was especially the two world wars that were seen to retain the problem of dwelling in its locked position. Taking off from the time of World War I, the chapter reached the defining moment of World War II before coming towards the present age. This movement of the modern into the contemporary of the twenty-first century was outlined through the juxtaposed writing of Adorno and Heidegger with a consideration of the two opposed positions and their implications for the postwar discourse on dwelling. The problem of the modern/contemporary living space split into extreme polarities with Heidegger’s desire to recollect the authentic dwelling versus Adorno’s altogether negative denouncement of the house. The thesis stepped in between these two positions to open a space from where to address the problem by suggesting that the negative dialectics seen to drive the modern, and hence the problem of dwelling, could be challenged from this gap. A position at the margins, however, rather than the centre, which is to say tentatively by the limits, the outer wall, the façade of a house.

The thesis thereby intimates that in between inside and outside, one and the other, a differential field of overlapping systems and identities is awaiting articulation. It argues that it is in this intermediate zone that the contemporary living space emerges as a relation between the dweller and his/her material context – a circumstance challenging the architect as the provider of spatial form. To get access to this space of resistance to the domination of forces with which the individual struggles to reconcile, an opportunity to take charge remains. The thesis argues that the ability to reclaim this living space lies in the engagement with material fabric by means of negative gestures at the same time rebuilding the spaces that are being dismantled. In the following chapters, the thesis pursues such

processes exemplified by the chosen works of art as possibilities for a contemporary living space applicable at all times because never quite the same.

2. GORDON MATTA-CLARK, *SPLITTING*

Summary

The second chapter analyses the first case study, the American artist/architect Gordon Matta-Clark's work *Splitting* (1974). It does so on the basis of the evidence that remains of a house transformed into a work of art shortly before it was to be demolished. The importance of this work for questions concerning dwelling is significant insofar as Matta-Clark is seen to get access to the house – literally as well as in a metaphorical sense – on a level that goes beyond immediate conventions. Furthermore, he does so at a time when the suburban dwelling house is maintained as the norm in the Western world. Matta-Clark cuts through the small, abandoned house in New Jersey and records as well as reworks the split house in various representational media. Through this radical gesture, *Splitting* comes to unfold the structure of a house, an artist's taking possession of it and, eventually, the image of the broken sign in one go. As such, the work contributes to the thesis with insight into the crisis of late-modern dwelling from the perspective of the broken house itself.

The chapter begins by introducing the artist, his background, practice and contemporary context in relation to art as well as in a wider sense. It thereby situates *Splitting* in time and place as a critical work with implications for questions of dwelling on a number of levels. It emphasises the nature of the work's mediation across various, at the time, available platforms, and it builds on this evidence in the absence of the house itself. Divided into three sections, the chapter begins by giving presence to *Splitting* and the process of its making through a study of the diverse visual material testifying to the work today [2.1]. It traces the parallel narratives embedded in Matta-Clark's storytelling as performed in film, photography and words, respectively, in preparation of the ensuing sections. And it introduces to and discusses existing scholarship in the context of the artist/architect's wider oeuvre for the purpose of situating the thesis in contrast to this body of work.

The second section [2.2] develops a discourse on *Splitting* and its contribution to questions concerning dwelling based on a number of statements made by Matta-Clark in correspondence and writing. The study of this material, collected from a handful of published interviews and documents from the Matta-Clark Archive, brings a series of themes forward examined by the thesis under separate headings. These relate to the challenge of inhabiting non-residential spaces because no affordable alternative is available, and the channelling of anger developing as a result of the housing struggle into alternative reconfigurations of built fabric. They discuss the project of cutting through the fabric of a building without causing it to collapse, and, eventually, consider the notion of the cut aimed at addressing the void at the heart of the structure from where the artist is able to take charge of it.

Building on this study, and the discourse on the house in a more general sense that the work contributes to, the third section of the chapter [2.3] discusses *Splitting* following three main lines of enquiry. These relate to the notion of the *whole* house, the possibility of un-building this architectural metaphor and the challenge of doing so by utilising an architectural language of representation. The section discusses the implications of Matta-Clark's dissociation of home and house, so that the latter becomes a medium through which to challenge the forces of support and collapse balancing the spatial containment of the former. It examines how Matta-Clark's cut not only unsettles the experience of stability expected from both home and house, but also questions the notion of ground in the sense of reason on which this structure is perceived to stand.

2.1 (UN)BUILDING – The irreversible cut

When Gordon Matta-Clark (1943-78) created the work *Splitting* in 1974, it was not the first building cut executed by the artist/architect, nor was it the first time of cutting into a residential building.

Excursions into the material fabric of abandoned buildings had already seen the artist cut into floors of deserted tenement blocks in the work *Bronx Floors* (1972/73), as well as perform a reconfiguration of a small office building in *A W-Hole House*, Genoa (1973). Before these works, Matta-Clark's practice encompassed smaller urban installations and happenings inside as well as outside of art galleries and often simply on the streets. The association with a movement of artists with a preference for working in the *expanded field* of sculpture was thereby established. This field, theorised by Rosalind E. Krauss (1979), marked a shift in American sculpture in the late 1960s when artists such as Robert Smithson, Richard Serra and Dennis Oppenheim relocated their art practices to remote sites away from the artist's studio and the galleries.²⁴ Matta-Clark graduated in 1968 from the Department of Architecture at Cornell University to which he had enrolled in 1962 encouraged by his father, the Chilean painter and architect Roberto Matta-Echaurren.²⁵ While the transcript from Cornell [Fig. 2.1] reveals that the aspiring architect received mediocre grades in the early years of the study, a final A+ in Architectural

²⁴ In the essay "Sculpture in the Expanded Field" (1979), Krauss argues that the term *sculpture* has taken on a negative connotation with modernity by reflecting the essential *homelessness* of a work no longer conceived for a specific site, no longer a commemorative representation, no longer a monument. Krauss traces the historical meaning of Western sculpture to the point of collapse when identified as something "in front of a building that [is] not the building, or what [is] in the landscape that [is] not the landscape" (36). Suspended between such opposite poles, the category of *sculpture* becomes a "privileged middle term between two things that it isn't," and Krauss complicates this model by introducing the categories of landscape and architecture into the equation as similarly negated practices (38). With the work of Smithson, Oppenheim et al, the limit of sculpture is challenged in Krauss' diagrammatic expansion of the sculptural field based on the structural logic of a mathematical Klein Group. A four-cornered model draws oppositional pairings between architecture and landscape, and not-architecture and not-landscape, whereby architecture and not-landscape, and landscape and not-architecture, are drawn together when reading the model diagonally. The exercise, Krauss argues, reflects a "logically expanded field" that opens the initial oppositional pairings by breaking their contradictions through the cross-linking operation (37). As such, a number of new artistic categories emerge, which Krauss labels "site-construction" (landscape and architecture), "axiomatic structures" (architecture and not-architecture), "sculpture" (not-architecture and not-landscape) and "marked sites" (not-landscape and landscape) (38). While Gordon Matta-Clark's work is not referenced as an example of this "historical rupture" of the term *sculpture*, the building cuts, however, fit in the category of *axiomatic structures*. "Whatever the medium employed, the possibility explored in this category is a process of mapping the axiomatic features of the architectural experience – the abstract conditions of openness and closure – onto the reality of a given space," as Krauss explains (41).

²⁵ The Canadian Centre for Architecture (henceforth CCA), where the Gordon Matta-Clark Estate has been on deposit since 2002, holds a copy of the transcript from Cornell sent on request to the late artist/architect's widow, Jane Crawford, in 1985 (PHCON2002.0016.002.003). The transcript documents that Matta-Clark attended ten terms between autumn 1962 and spring 1968 with a gap year between the first and second year of study – a year spent studying French literature at Sorbonne in Paris (Lee 2000: 34). CCA also holds a letter dated 9 January 1962 sent by Roberto Matta-Echaurren to his son. It reads, "Dear Gordy ... you need an end, let it be architecture (remember that no where can be now here)... Did you ever call Marcel Breuer, the architect, he is a very good friend of mine ... Philip Johnson, too, is a friend, call on him ... If you are definite [sic] decided I can write them directly ... Who may give you a very good advice is Frederick Kiesler, he lives very close from your home ... we were good friends once" (PHCON2002:0016:015). There is, however, no evidence that Matta-Clark actually consulted any of the suggested architects before enrolment.

Design implies that Matta-Clark graduated as a top student. During the time of studying at Cornell, projects of a different kind nevertheless began to take form, and one event important for Matta-Clark's future practice was the "Earth Art" show at the Andrew Dickson White Museum of Art, Cornell University (1969). On this occasion, Matta-Clark offered his services as an assistant on a number of projects, among them Dennis Oppenheim's *Accumulation Cut* [Fig. 2.2]. Oppenheim's work consisted of a 100 feet long trench cut out with a chainsaw from the icecap of the frozen Beebe Lake on the university's campus. A direct line from this work to Matta-Clark's later building alterations, utilising cutting as the primary method, is straightforward. Matta-Clark might also have assisted Robert Smithson in preparing the work *Slant Piece* for the show, and he would, according to Smithson's wife, Nancy Holt, become a frequent guest in Smithson's studio after relocating to New York from Ithaca immediately after the show (Lee 2000: 38/39).²⁶

In New York, Matta-Clark soon became actively involved in the downtown art scene flourishing in the recession-hit climate of the 1960s/70s. Pursuing the possibilities of layered urban fabric as work material, rather than the favoured remote landscapes of the *Earth Art* practitioners, Matta-Clark came to practice in abandoned pockets of the big city. If this orientation was a significant diversion from the mentors' preferred sites of natural terrain, the documentation of the work necessitated by its site-specific and in some ways still remote location became an important aspect of Matta-Clark's work. Considering that the buildings that he cut into in most cases were demolished immediately after the cut was completed, the afterlife of the events as well as their possible commodification relied on documentation. Without filmic or photographic recordings, the works would disappear. In a letter to the Real Estate Board of New York from 1975, Matta-Clark explained, "In addition to the actual splitting, I take photographic and video tape documentaries of the activity. Thus, while the work of art does not remain permanent, it does become a very media-worthy process" (CCA: PHCON2002.0016.003.009).²⁷ That Matta-Clark was writing to local authorities in the hope of gaining permission to use a building for a cut might well explain the added emphasis on the value of photographic documentation. The emphasis on the "media-worthy" nature of the work promised to compensate for any value perceived as lost due to the, in most cases, inevitable demolition of the work. When the following day contacting the Art Department at Williams College, Williamstown, Matta-Clark qualified the nature of the documentation further.²⁸ He wrote, "The photographic materials are interpolated from the special situation becoming independant [sic] though referential works, while film or video is at present documentary" (CCA: PHCON2002.0016.003.014). While a clear distinction was made between film and photography in terms of purpose, it is of interest to note

²⁶ Interestingly, in a letter dated 20 April 1976 sent to Brooklyn's Transit Authority, Matta-Clark claims to have practised for "some years" in a design and planning office in the city of Binghamton (CCA: PHCON2002.0016.004.021). The claim might nevertheless have been made up in an attempt to impress the authorities – the purpose of the letter being permission to use a building for work. Although Binghamton is on the way from Cornell to New York, it is not clear when "some years" would fit into the overall chronology of Matta-Clark's activities. It therefore seems unlikely that he would have worked in the design and planning office for very long, if at all.

²⁷ The letter is dated 16 January 1975. Matta-Clark's style of writing often displays typos and grammatically incorrect phrases. While such might have been caused by dyslexia (Lee 2000: 153), some linguistic and typographical choices also appear to reflect an interest in experimentation with words and language. The thesis quotes Matta-Clark's writing as written or reproduced.

²⁸ The letter is dated 17 January 1975.

the double movement expressed when referring to the photographic material. The still photo is simultaneously derived and independent from the initial event that it also refers back to. In contrast, moving images document the event in a more straightforward evidential manner.

One iconic photograph produced as part of *Splitting* shows the external façade elevation of the split house with sunlight shining through the central cleavage and a shadow of the house cast in the grass [Fig. 2.3]. While the image is a significant testament to the artistic gesture that would reshape a small suburban shoebox house, it is also a favoured image often adjoining articles on Matta-Clark and his work. At first sight, the image is unsettling; the immediacy of the broken house is striking – how to overcome the radical proposition of a house cut open? How to restore the sensation of a broken home emanating from the abandoned and disfigured house? If the shock effect produced is meant to question the stability and enclosure of concepts such as house and home, then the material stress placed by the cut on the built structure, not to say the overwhelming physical and psychological investment of the artist/architect who cut the house, extends the scope of the work. While acknowledging Benjamin and Tafuri's claims, discussed in the previous chapter, that avant-garde artistic practices came to serve dominant forces when giving negative form to the experience of shock and upheaval, the thesis leaves the image of Matta-Clark's cleavage to reverberate and remind us of this problematic condition.²⁹ If the image of the split house testifies to a problem beyond immediate resolution or repair, which the beholder serves to overcome through reason, then how to rationalise a broken home? Simply building a new house along the same broken lines and pretending it is whole will not resolve the problem. Neither will glossing over the split as if it did not exist eliminate the cause of the breaking. The thesis argues that when Matta-Clark cuts and leaves the house open to get access to information hidden within the structure, he approaches the heart of a problem to which the house is not the answer. To try to amend the broken structure is therefore not the way to respond, in contrast, the split house reverberates into the contemporary of the twenty-first century with the challenge to be addressed in novel ways – a challenge that the present thesis attempts to meet.

If the work of Matta-Clark has been scrutinised extensively already by historians and theorists of various orientations, it became subject to analysis immediately after the untimely death of the artist.³⁰ It is especially the eight major building cuts undertaken between 1972-78 that have been the foci of a stream of publications, articles and exhibitions.³¹ The most important retrospectives have been the display of Matta-Clark's full oeuvre in Valencia, Marseille and London (1992/93), the display of drawings in Vienna (1997), a father-son exposé in San Diego (2006), and the significant "Gordon Matta-Clark: 'You Are the Measure'" in New York (2007). The legacy of these exhibitions of Matta-

²⁹ See section 1.3.2 (page 34) for Benjamin's view on Baudelaire's writing and Tafuri's view on the integrity of the artistic avant-garde.

³⁰ Matta-Clark died of cancer on 27 August 1978.

³¹ The eight major building cuts count *Bronx Floors*, NYC (1972/73); the small office building in *A W-Hole House*, Genoa (1973); two one-family houses in *Splitting*, New Jersey (1974) and *Bin-go. ne by nineths and days*, Niagara Falls (1974); a New York waterfront pier in *Day's End*, NYC (1975); two 17th century residential houses in *Conical Intersect*, Paris (1975); a larger office building in *Office Baroque*, Antwerp (1977); and a townhouse museum building in *Circus or the Caribbean Orange*, Chicago (1978). All Matta-Clark's building cuts have been demolished subsequently.

Clark's work and life relies not least on the extensive catalogues that were published on each occasion. It is largely here that analyses of varying depth and scope have been unfolded with reproductions of visual evidence, drawings and other representations made available. Besides, a couple of catalogues have presented archival material in the form of reproduced sketchbook pages, Matta-Clark's private correspondence and pieces of written notes and textual elaborations.³² All this material has been studied and considered in relation to the issues raised concerning Matta-Clark's work in the present chapter.

2.1.1 A work split across platforms

Beyond the significant photograph of the split house, *Splitting* exists in various parallel formats working on individual terms while also complementing each other. Foremost, the work consists of a short film showing Matta-Clark cutting the small dwelling house in Englewood in two halves with the help from one assistant [Fig. 2.4].³³ Besides, *Splitting* is a number of photographic internal views of the split house [Fig. 2.5], and sectional elevations of internal spaces that reveal the insides of cut floors and walls [Fig. 2.6]. Then there is photo collage work reconstructing the interior in gravity-defying juxtapositions of its chopped up parts based on the sectional/elevational evidence [Fig. 2.7]. There is the book entitled *Splitting* [Fig. 2.8], which is an artist book narrating the process and stages of the cut in text and images while also containing a fold-out page showing the interior of the house reassembled room by room as a collaged doll's house [Fig. 2.9]. At the limit of the work, the pages of a black notebook are cut to follow the outline of this dollhouse image, so that every corner of the projected sectional view is marked with cuts of varying depth into the pages of the book – only one cut goes through them all.³⁴ The only remaining pieces from the original house are the four top corners that Matta-Clark cut out as a final gesture. These corners continue to be exhibited in art galleries and museums in the form of an installation named *Splitting: Four Corners* [Fig. 2.10].³⁵ There might have been more, there might still be more – at first, there was a building in the suburbs of New Jersey, a man with a chainsaw and a couple of cameras and helpers.

According to a press release for an exhibition named after the corner cut outs – “Splitting: Four Corners” – which took place in Holly Solomon Gallery, New York (1990) (MoMA: Artist file – miscellaneous uncatalogued material), it was supposedly in April/May 1974 that six weeks were spent on site, cutting and filming the work. In September the same year, the house in Englewood was

³² The catalogues of particular relevance to the present study are from the following exhibitions: “Gordon Matta-Clark” at IVAM Centre Julio González, Valencia (1992/93); “Reorganizing Structure by Drawing through It: Zeichnung bei Gordon Matta-Clark” at Generali Foundation, Vienna (1997); “Transmission: The Art of Matta and Gordon Matta-Clark” at San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego (2006); and “Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure” at Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC (2007/08).

³³ The film *Splitting* is a Super 8mm silent film now transferred to video and DVD. Its duration is 10:50 minutes and it is filmed in both b/w and colour. The narrative of the film is divided into segments with text boards announcing the events as they unfold. Curiously, the first of the boards states that the work is carried out in 1973 [Fig. 2.4.A]. There is, however, no indication found elsewhere in the literature or archive material that *Splitting* should have been produced a year earlier than the date normally ascribed to the work.

³⁴ The notebook is held by CCA (PHCON2002:0016:022). Gordon Matta-Clark did a number of these so-called *cut drawings* in relation to ongoing projects and as independent works. These would often comply with the given book format or be cut in larger scale into a stack of cardboard sheets.

³⁵ I have seen *Splitting: Four Corners* exhibited as part of the show “Laurie Anderson, Trisha Brown, Gordon Matta-Clark: Pioneers of the Downtown Scene, New York 1970s” at the Barbican, London (2011).

demolished, yet for a couple of months invited guests were able to visit the house. Holly Solomon, Matta-Clark's gallerist, arranged a bus trip to the house for a group of SoHo friends, and a number of accounts from the encounters with the split house survive. The artist Susan Rothenberg recalls:

The first piece I responded to 100 percent was the cut house piece. He was cutting the thing in half the way I was cutting the horse in half. His, though, was a superpower cut. It destroyed the whole concept of a house, and it was an exposé of what a building was. The house itself was very boring, a dumb suburban house in New Jersey. From outside the cut had a real formal look. The insides were like a chasm opening up the earth at your feet. Realising that a house is home, shelter, safety – knowing what a house is – is one thing. Being in that house made you feel like you were entering another state. Schizophrenia, the earth's fragility, and full of wonder. It was so subtle at every level – the way a crack fell through a door moulding, through the stairs. (Simon 1988: 87)

Besides from published accounts of friends and colleagues' experiences of Matta-Clark's work and projects, numerous of the artist's own scribbles and notes survive. These, of which CCA holds a collection consisting of short written pieces in the form of essays and word plays, reveal an ongoing preoccupation with spatial questions related to a number of projects (PHCON2002.0016.001). Among the small cards with proverbs and humorous one-liners related to art, architecture and politics, one note from 1972 reads, "3 yrs. after an architectural degree I sometimes continue to work with the facts & fabric of building space..." (PHCON2002.0016.001.005). Another, from 1973, states, "PASSING THROUGH AND AROUND / TO COMPLETE A SPACE... / NOT BUILDING BUT [RESTORING] / CHANGING THE DIRECTIONS OF A LOAD / WORKING WITH ~~A VIEW~~ AN EYE BETWEEN THE SURFACES" (PHCON2002.0016.001.023). A third, also dated 1973, states, "The ways people live ~~the spaces they have~~ beyond between and without walls putting to waist the most presumptuous building plans" (PHCON2002.0016.001.017). While Matta-Clark's notes and writing in general reveal a preoccupation with a wide range of topics, the thesis appreciates the clues to a critical thinking on architecture that frequently inform statements such as the ones above.

In the *Splitting* book, divided into four chapters, the cutting of the house unfolds progressively [Fig. 2.8]. At first, the text reads, "322 HUMPHREY STREET / AS IT WAS LEFT / ABANDONED" followed by four external photographic elevations of the house, as Matta-Clark first encountered it. In addition, two collaged photos show a messy interior space with the former residents' abandoned belongings scattered around. Then the text reads, "CUTTING THE HOUSE IN HALF / TWO PARALLEL LINES / ONE INCH APART / PASSED THROUGH ALL / STRUCTURAL SURFACES" followed by the four external photographic elevations of the cut house. Two photo collages are assembled to show the cut as it has been drawn across the floors, walls and ceilings of the downstairs living room and an upstairs bedroom. Then Matta-Clark writes, "BEVELING DOWN / FORTY LINEAL FEET / OF CINDER BLOCKS / TO SET HALF THE BUILDING / BACK ON ITS FOUNDATIONS" followed by the four external elevations of the house now split open. A photo collage assembles the cut as it traverses the interior of the house from the bottom of the staircase to the roof. This otherwise vertically orientated collage, made from four images, is tilted sideways to suggest that the upper half of the cut house is hanging in air without

support [Fig. 2.11]. Lastly, “REMOVING INTACT / ALL FOUR CORNERS / AT THE EAVES” shows the four external elevations of the cleaved house with the four top corners missing. Two mirroring images of these are seen from inside the house and the book concludes, “DEMOLISHED AND REMOVED / SEPTEMBER 1974.” The foldout poster of the split house, montaged into a dollhouse-type cross section, conclusively breaks the format of the booklet.

2.1.2 Cutting through the whole house

This event of cutting a dwelling house straight through began with a telephone call from Gordon Matta-Clark to Holly Solomon with the simple statement, “Holly, I need a house!” (Solomon 2001).³⁶ When exactly the phone call was made remains unclear, but Matta-Clark spent the first month on site in March 1974 waiting for the local authorities to give permission for the work to begin. The situation was “kind of suspense-packed up to the last minute,” as he phrased it when in late May of the same year reflecting on the project in an interview made by Liza Bear – friend and film photographer on *Splitting* (1974: 36). The desire to address a whole house had developed from the early projects only engaging with built structures in parts. As Matta-Clark explained:

When I was living at 4th Street a few years ago I was already thinking in terms of dealing with a whole building. At first, what the nature of the activity would be seemed unclear, but gradually there was a logical progression through various kinds of local references to the whole building system. (34)³⁷

Not knowing whether it would be possible to commence the work, Matta-Clark spent the time waiting by considering how to address this “whole building system.” If how to cut a whole house was the question, the lines of thinking about the task appear to have been rather straightforward when he said:

Originally what I wanted to do was just to take a cut out of it, cut through the whole thing, but there was very little that would have been shown by just cutting. And it seemed that once you’d cut, something should be made of each half. (36)

The gesture of cutting through the whole house had to expose something; cutting, in itself, was not enough. Matta-Clark therefore decided to cut the house straight through, twice, along two lines set an inch apart and open up the cleavage by tilting one half of the house down. In order to make this movement possible, the foundation below one half of the house had to be altered, and the house was then lowered to allow the central gap to open up. It is this process of carefully cutting and cleaving the house that the film *Splitting* faithfully documents, and the following passage describes the event as it unfolds within the film’s narrative. The indented sections in capital letters correspond to the text boards with which Matta-Clark divided the film into shorter segments. In between these are my own reflections in square brackets on the visual content of the film.

³⁶ In an interview made shortly before her death, Holly Solomon gives a brief account of the circumstances surrounding Matta-Clark’s acquisition of the house in Englewood (Solomon 2001). The owner of the house, Horace Solomon, Holly’s developer-husband, gave the house already set for demolition to the project. Redevelopment of the area in which it was located was underway and tracing the site of 22 Humphrey Street, Englewood, New Jersey, on Google Earth shows that the site of the house indeed sits within an industrial area today [accessed 23 Jan 2011].

³⁷ Matta-Clark lived on 28 East 4th Street, NYC, between 1971-73 [Fig. 2.12.C].

SPLITTING

[Zooming in on the front door left open, a sign attached next to the door warns, DO NOT OCCUPY. Zooming out from this restricted entrance, a full end wall of the house is framed by the camera.]

FIRST OF THE TWO PROJECTS DONE IN 1973, SPLITTING USED A TYPICAL ONE-FAMILY HOUSE IN ENGLEWOOD, N.J., A NEW YORK CITY BEDROOM SUBURB³⁸

[Entering the house is Matta-Clark's first challenge. The camera pans horizontally along the whitewashed clapboard façade until it encounters a ladder leaning against the wall. The camera zooms out and frames the whole house.]

BEGINNING AT THE CENTER OF THE HOUSE TWO PARALLEL LINES WERE CUT THROUGH ALL THE STRUCTURAL SURFACES

[Splitting the house requires tools: in the grass lies a *Sawzall* chainsaw and cables, the chainsaw blade already pointing towards the foundation of the house, hands are preparing the work. The artist/architect will climb up the ladder and cut, once – soon inside, then outside – and then twice. Sunlight shines through the house, while the non-existing shadow of the gap is cast on the grass with the rest of the house.]

THE ABANDONED HOME WAS FILLED BY A SLIVER OF SUNLIGHT THAT PASSED THE DAY THROUGHOUT THE ROOMS

[Sunlight blinds the interior of the house. The orientation of the cut is no longer clear. While the camera follows its line of light, another house is drawn across floors and open windows. The foundation is challenged by this drawing.]

BEVELING DOWN FORTY LINEAR FEET OF MASONARY, 322 HUMPHRY ST. WAS GENTLY TIPPED BACK ON ITS FOUNDATION

[The split is over now, all over the house, with only the last stone holding it together. The foundation, slightly lowered towards one end, has allowed half of the house to sit down. Inside, a woman moves around and crosses the gap created by the cut. The four top corners have been removed as well.]

THE FINISHED WORK LASTED THREE MONTHS BEFORE BEING DEMOLISHED FOR URBAN "RENEWAL"

It is of interest to note that the medium of film, well suited for complex temporal narratives, is used by Matta-Clark with a straightforward timeline accounting for the act of cutting from first to last stroke. When describing the work in later interviews, this chronological sequence of events will often be

³⁸ Matta-Clark's frequent spelling errors also mark the text boards reproduced here as shown in the film.

repeated in line with the film's straightforward documentation.³⁹ The matter-of-factness of these accounts contrasts the possibilities of processing and editing that film and photographic material otherwise allow. Matta-Clark explored such temporal and spatial possibilities in the collaged work created on the basis of photographic documentation of the cut house, which through the cut and paste practice repeated the initial gesture of cutting the house. Eventually, after the work had split into its various configurations, what seemed to hold everything together in one piece, one work, after all, was the line of the cut drawn around the house by Matta-Clark and his chainsaw.⁴⁰ Once the house was cleaved open, this central void appeared to prevent it from collapse – conceptually if not actually – and the irreversible gesture of Matta-Clark's *un-building* was a process challenging the structure of a house to this point breakdown. Ultimately, the cut was a gesture that made the house *stand back* as another kind of structure – as a work of art – by adding something *else*. Matta-Clark's notion of un-building is therefore not a straightforward reversal of conventional building processes when un-building one house while building another – un-building, in this sense, becomes a process of adding by subtracting.⁴¹

2.1.3 A space between art and architecture

The fragments of life and work that find expression in the format of the exhibition catalogues described above are juxtaposed by a handful of published monographs on Matta-Clark's work. These interpret and analyse the legacy and possible meanings of the oeuvre with different aims, scope and strategies. It is not least art historians who have felt compelled to respond to the artist/architect's work, and if Matta-Clark's practice challenges conventional art historical categories, an *extended art* criticism has been attempted to address his work. One such example is Pamela M. Lee when asking, "How does one approach an artist whose principle mode of production is bound up with the work's destruction?" (2000: xiii).⁴² The circumstance that Matta-Clark's buildings were already scheduled for demolition at the time of the work is problematic for the art historian. That the work would have no physical and site-specific endurance because it was demolished makes its status as *a work* uncertain. How then to carry out the art historical excavation of the oeuvre that Lee identifies is urgent twenty years after Matta-Clark's death? The classification of the work as centred on destruction, however, comes to stand in the way of the un-building of the art historical premise itself that Lee appears to pursue. While the negativity perceived in Matta-Clark's work ought to drive a reversal of the

³⁹ One example is from an interview made in 1977 where Matta-Clark says, "The work began by cutting a one-inch slice through all the structural surfaces dividing the building in half. The second stage was to bevel down the forty lineal feet of the foundation so that the rear half could be lowered one foot. The central 'split' was formed by the five degree tilt activating the house with a brilliant wedge of sunlight that spilled into every room" (Matta-Clark 2006a: 251).

⁴⁰ Matta-Clark's friend Christian Scheidemann describes how simple tools such as thread and pencil, plummet and tape measure were used to draw two straight lines around the outer and inner surfaces of the house then cut from the roof down using a pulley to gradually lower the cutter (2007: 119). Since Scheidemann does not make note of where he has this information from, it remains an unsubstantiated yet plausible outline of how Matta-Clark approached the cut.

⁴¹ In a letter sent to the Wm. Kauffman Organization, NYC, dated 31 January 1975, Matta-Clark writes, "My idea is to secure a building awaiting demolition and *restructure* it, producing an exciting spacial experience while inducing sculptural sensitivity and refinement to the demolition process ... Since you may now have or will have such a building it may be of interest to you to be involved with an adventurous *un-building* design statement" (CCA: PHCON2002.0016.003.027).

⁴² Lee's monograph is her reworked PhD thesis, *Object to Be Destroyed: the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark*. She received her doctoral degree from the Department of Fine Arts, Harvard University (1996) under the supervision of art historian Yve-Alain Bois.

understanding of *the work*, the opposite seems to occur when the cut is described as *anti-work*. If Lee aspires to undo her own art-historical ground while undoing Matta-Clark's, she should be helped by the circumstance that the artist/architect's work from its initiation seemingly strives to become more than a work of art, not less.

"Thinking About the Space Between" is Lisa Le Feuvre's foreword to a publication that coincides with the exhibition *Gordon Matta-Clark: the Space Between* (2003).⁴³ "What is the work?" asks Le Feuvre along the lines of Lee while suggesting that it might exist in the spaces *between* the different modes of representation utilised by Matta-Clark. As such, the work occupies the gaps between that which it frames rather than the *motif* itself, an assertion suggesting that the work extends beyond the physical limits of the house in more than one sense. Not only does it surpass the initial site and material of its own construction, but it also transgresses the secondary sites in the form of film, photography and the building cut-outs that (re)present it. What could tentatively be termed *tertiary sites* – the spaces between the secondary – is where Le Feuvre suggests that one might encounter *the work* – a proposition that simultaneously maintains and undermines the idea of this work as a positive entity when defining it as a gap.

In contrast to these critical engagements with Matta-Clark's work is Phaidon's extensive monograph, also published in 2003, holding the biographical outline together under one simple heading – *Gordon Matta-Clark*. This unifying canonisation of the artist/architect is, however, met by a diverse collection of textual material, and the central presence of Matta-Clark is surrounded by kaleidoscopically moving fragments that allow the reader/user to find his/her own trajectory through the work – the publication as well as Matta-Clark's un-buildings. Stephen Walker defines this "Phaidon moment" as the moment in which opposed strands of the Matta-Clark reception, which he terms *domestication* and *challenge*, invert (2008: 15). While *domestication* from the outset expresses a tendency to position the artist and his work according to conventional art historical models, *challenge* questions the value of these. And when *challenge* is drawn on the basis of *domestication*, a critical inquiry opens up within the embrace of the canonisation itself. Walker identifies the Phaidon catalogue, with its critical seeds growing from within, as a reflection of an overall tendency in the Matta-Clark reception towards *challenge*. Lee and Le Feuvre's texts are identified as such attempts.

Besides from its textual elaborations on the topic of Gordon Matta-Clark, the Phaidon monograph provides ample opportunity to study the artist/architect's life and work in words and images with a generous selection of visual reproductions. The section "Documents" presents some of the most important interviews of Matta-Clark as well as recollections from people who knew the artist/architect and/or his work. These include Liza Bear's important interviews originally printed in *Avalanche* (1974),

⁴³ The exhibition was shown at the Centre for Contemporary Art, Glasgow (2003) and the Architectural Association, London (2003).

and a series of interviews with Matta-Clark's circle of friends conducted by Joan Simon for the retrospective show in Chicago (1985). These sources are all relevant for the present study.

Stephen Walker's own Matta-Clark monograph is, if not the first architectural treatment of Matta-Clark's work, then the most extensive to date.⁴⁴ Walker takes off from a perceived "awkwardness that Matta-Clark's oeuvre carries" (2009: 1), an awkwardness stemming from the uneasy position between art and architecture that the oeuvre is seen to occupy. While sometimes considered both, sometimes neither, Matta-Clark's work generates confusion rather than clarity regarding its position. Walker therefore subscribes to the idea that Matta-Clark consciously and comfortably occupies a grey zone in between the two disciplines at a time when a branch of art theory is busy drawing a line between one and the other in the name of Modernism.⁴⁵ With further reference to Adrian Forty's observation that categories of architectural Modernism – such as form, space and order – tend towards a totality that excludes binary oppositions, Walker considers Matta-Clark's oeuvre as occupying a position of ambiguity at the same time within and without this Modernism's self-referential closure (10/11).⁴⁶ While *within* relates to the categories form, space and time, *without* relates to user, process and discipline – all categories identified and accepted by Walker as frameworks for a discussion of Matta-Clark's work and thinking.

While these publications all inform the thesis' discussion of Matta-Clark and *Splitting*, the relation to questions of dwelling takes it beyond the identified literature. The thesis therefore largely builds on Matta-Clark's own words, as examined in the following section [2.2], for its proposition that *Splitting* gives clues to questions of contemporary dwelling. The importance of the work for the architectural discipline thereby becomes central, and as demonstrated above by the outline of topics preoccupying most authors, the relationship between art and architecture is a frequent point of revolve. Where to locate Matta-Clark's work in relation to his own dual position as both artist and architect? What *is* the work after all? Is it simply a demolished building? Is it the film documenting the progress of the cut? Is it one photograph of a cut building among others? Or a description of the work given by the artist to a journalist? The desire to locate the multi-faceted or fragmented work is countered by the elusive nature with which it escapes such classifications. For the thesis, this work of art, with its gesture and intervention into architectural fabric, manifests the conflict within the dwelling house that is at the heart of *Splitting's* importance. The circumstance that the house was destroyed subsequently, that the work might reside in the spaces between its representations, that one should rather challenge than domesticate the art historical implications of the cut house are secondary concerns. What makes the dwelling house a work of art in the first place is of interest to the thesis insofar as the cut, which turns

⁴⁴ The publication is a reworking of Walker's PhD thesis, *Major and Minor Architectural Issues in the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark*, developed at the University of Sheffield, School of Architecture (2008).

⁴⁵ Walker refers to the American art critics Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried who in the 1960s are disputing the extent to which the disciplines of art and architecture should be regarded as absolute and therefore absolutely separate (2009: 3).

⁴⁶ Adrian Forty writes in *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (2000).

a house and home into this work of art, also provokes a response from architecture, itself an artistic discipline.

2.2 STATEMENTS – A space for art and living

Gordon Matta-Clark was a prolific artist, yet he was also an energetic writer and communicator. Opinions about all things and situations were frequently exchanged and made note of, ideas for projects were drafted in sketchbooks, typewritten drafts for work-related letters were produced every other day.⁴⁷ In general, a significant body of evidence testifies to the diverse nature of Matta-Clark's written and spoken statements related to his life and work. While parts have been published and referred to posthumously, unpublished fragments of writing in all kinds of formats are held by the CCA – notes, letters, essays, aphorisms.⁴⁸ When studying these documents, several repetitions and rephrasings occur that testify to an ongoing preoccupation with and articulation of the work, its intentions and implications. Scribbles relate to drawn sketches while drawings serve to illustrate the writing – for Matta-Clark, words and phrases appear to have been means through which to express, position and understand himself and his work. For that reason the thesis is concerned with this material.

Among the number of interviews that Matta-Clark possibly gave, a handful have been transcribed and disseminated in magazines and exhibition catalogues. As recordings of spoken statements, these published conversations encompass three interviews made by Liza Bear, the first of which took place immediately after completing *Splitting* in 1974. Bear spoke to Matta-Clark on two occasions, the first being on the site of the work in Englewood and, secondly, on the roof of 155 Wooster Street where Matta-Clark had his loft at the time [Fig. 2.12.D]. In 1976, Bear made two interviews for radio broadcasting in Los Angeles and New York, respectively, and while the first discussed the making of the work *Day's End*, the second assessed the wider oeuvre.⁴⁹ In addition, Donald Wall's interview for *Arts Magazine* (1976) discussed the implications of the building cuts executed up to that point, and a self-authored Q&A published in the catalogue for the exhibition of the building-cut *Office Baroque* in Antwerp (1977) is particularly interesting. The reception literature has most often identified the Antwerp enquirer as Florent Bex – the curator of the work and show – the interview, however, appears to have been authored by Matta-Clark and his wife Jane Crawford themselves. The circumstance that some passages are identical to pieces of Matta-Clark's own writing and

⁴⁷ The Gordon Matta-Clark Archive at CCA holds numerous dated copies of letters and drafts testifying to an ongoing correspondence with authorities, museum directors and art dealers in the hope of securing future work.

⁴⁸ The publication *Gordon Matta-Clark: Works and Collected Writings* (2006) edited by Gloria Moure reproduces a broad selection of the archival collection of Matta-Clark's written work. The catalogue accompanied the exhibition "Gordon Matta-Clark" shown at Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid (2006). It also marked the opening of the Matta-Clark Archive at the CCA.

⁴⁹ Transcripts of the two interviews are printed in Moure (2006) as "Gordon Matta-Clark: The Making of Pier 52" (215-21) and "Gordon Matta-Clark: Dilemmas" (261-69).

correspondence found in his archive supports this idea.⁵⁰ A last interview before Matta-Clark's death was given to Judith Russi Kirshner in relation to the building cut *Circus or the Caribbean Orange* in Chicago (1978).

A preoccupation with a number of problems, identified by Matta-Clark as in urgent need of address in his time, marks these conversations. As such, the building cuts come forth as responses to events particular to the contemporary context in which they were executed. *Splitting* is no exception to this tendency, and the thesis traces the critique raised by the work in the following sections. A statement entitled "My understanding of art," written after Matta-Clark was evicted from the abandoned Pier 52 on New York's harbour front, summarises the condition under which he worked. Having illegally occupied and transformed the neglected pier into the work *Day's End* (1975), Matta-Clark was forced by local authorities to leave the site while the pier and work was locked up. This experience prompted a written defence in which Matta-Clark argued that the state and reception of art measures the level of freedom in a society (2006a: 204). Stamped as a vandalising criminal for attempting to give new life to the abandoned building, Matta-Clark wrote:

Among the conditions my training and personal inclination have taught me to deal with is neglect and abandonment. These are words which when applied to children or human beings of any age evoke a profound call for alarm and rectification, yet when existing in massive proportions throughout one urban environment evokes only bureaucratic or juridic ambivalence and inaction. (204)

The task of the evicted artist/architect became to force his way back in, and if not literally into the locked up pier – only frequented by marginalised subcultures or stray dogs before it was demolished – then into other buildings. From the outside there was only one way of getting access, which is to say to get between the walls, and that was to cut one's way through these. The following sections follow Matta-Clark inside this house.

2.2.1 Making the uninhabitable habitable

While local authorities and owners of abandoned buildings might have seen Matta-Clark's building cuts as vandalism, the classification implies that something of value was considered to devalue because of the intervention. In contrast, Matta-Clark argued that his cuts made buildings considered valueless and left to decay more valuable, the friction between the two competing concepts fuelling an art practice based on the experience of social injustice. However, before the cutting of paper, photographs and buildings, Matta-Clark was faced with a reconfiguration of material fabric for the purpose of solving acute housing problems. In the wake of a so-called "boom in art" since the 1940s, New York City had become a favoured destination for artists following the rise of movements such as Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art (Broner 1990: 99). Yet, the city was unable to house the artists and their practices, and this acute need eventually became a call for adaptation of downtown Manhattan's

⁵⁰ When consulting the Gordon Matta-Clark Archive at CCA (2011), a post-it note attached to a copy of the interview stated that it had been developed by the couple. The note had, according to a librarian at CCA, been placed by Matta-Clark's widow Jane Crawford on the occasion of providing additional information to the collection's material.

abandoned industrial buildings. For an architect and maker like Matta-Clark, this situation offered the opportunity to put his skills to work by making uninhabitable loft spaces habitable. It was a building task consisting in the conversion into liveable spaces of vast open floors suspended across solid steel frame/brick structures. Unfortunately, however, no known evidence exist of these early loft adaptations for live/work and gallery purposes.

At the same time as these conversions, Matta-Clark became instrumental in setting up and running the alternative SoHo exhibition space 112 Greene Street owned by his friend Jeffrey Lew. In addition, he would soon occupy the basement of the building to execute Lew's promise that, "In most galleries, you can't scratch the floor, here you can dig a hole in it" (Schjeldahl 2011: 80). Matta-Clark later explained to Bear:

One of the things that's clearest in my mind is how this interest in working with buildings originated. It evolved out of that period in 1970 when I was living in the basement at 112 Greene Street and doing things in different corners. Initially they weren't at all related to the structure, I was just working within a place, but eventually I started treating the place as a whole, as an object. (1974: 34)

Matta-Clark lived in what has been described as a "dark and dirty" basement below the premises of 112 Greene Street's former rag picking industry in the heart of SoHo (Picchi 2011).⁵¹ The floors of the building were all populated by artists with the alternative exhibition space on the ground floor level open 24 hours a day. Here, local art pioneers with spatially subversive ideas would experiment without restrictions or resistance from anything else than the building itself. This alternative scene provided a platform for Matta-Clark's work, which soon followed him underground in a very literal sense when he came to both live and work in the basement of the building. One project initiated in this space implied digging a hole for the purpose of creating a passage below the compressive forces of the building's foundation. The project was, however, not executed.⁵²

Matta-Clark's statement that he went from "just working within a place" to working *with* this place "as a whole, as an object" outlines a change of approach at an important early stage of his career. The transition of the work – from simply taking place in a space to becoming itself this space – is a movement from the work of art perceived as an object in a room to the room itself becoming this work. One moment, Matta-Clark is inside a room yet outside the work, the next, he is simultaneously inside the room and work at that point perceived as one and the same. The fluctuation between space *and* object and space *as* object is of interest to the artist. When in 1974, Liza Bear asked Matta-Clark whether he had ever "made things as such, or ... always worked by removing or tampering with existing structures" (35), he responded:

⁵¹ Jessamyn Fiore, daughter of Matta-Clark's widow Jane Crawford, curated the exhibition "112 Greene Street: The Early Years (1970-1974)" for David Zwirner Gallery, NYC (2011). Fiore was interviewed by Francesca Picchi for the magazine *Domus* when the show opened and in the article describes the environment surrounding the initial gallery and the SoHo art scene (2011).

⁵² Another idea was to cut the columns in the ground floor gallery space at midpoint and place a small steel cube in between the two half columns. This plan was not carried out either, but as Matta-Clark later suggested, "The sheer compressive energy invoked would have made, I think, the physical reality of confronting those cubes a fairly threatening experience" (Wall 1976: 79).

I build in renovating lofts, but I've certainly not built any objects recently! That's one of the things I like about the Humphrey Street building, it has a curious object-scale ambiguity to it. The cut makes the building into a manipulated thing, like an object... (35)

While Bear did not mention *building* when asking whether the work was always a reconfiguration of existing material, Matta-Clark immediately considered this aspect in a double sense. Firstly, building for the purpose of accommodating the functional requirements of living and art making, i.e. renovating lofts, and secondly, building as the creation of an (art) object. Furthermore, *Splitting* appears to belong to a third category when its object-like quality is emphasised despite the work being neither a loft conversion nor a *built object*. As a cut building, the work might be seen as an extension to both categories.

Prior to inhabiting the basement below 112 Greene Street, Matta-Clark lived with his mother further north on the opposite side of Washington Square Gardens [Fig. 2.12.A].⁵³ After the basement residency, he moved to other addresses, foremost loft spaces shared with friends in the area around SoHo.⁵⁴ The appropriation of former industrial premises for work and/or living in the early 1970s was a concept underway for a couple of decades, as described by Gilbert Millstein in *New York Times Magazine* (1962).⁵⁵ So sought after were the spacious lofts that an estimated 5,000 to 7,000 of the presumed 30,000 artists practising in the metropolitan area of New York in the early 1960s had turned to them for accommodation (24). Besides from thereby paving the way for a demographic shift on lower Manhattan, these urban *pioneers* were also doing the first round of hard work in making the loft spaces inhabitable.⁵⁶

When in the 1970s, Matta-Clark moved from one loft to the next, the loft phenomenon was therefore an established model for living and working to the point of commercial exploitation lurking as an unavoidable next step. Even so, it continued to be a viable proposition for the creative segment of artists, and an equal mixture of artist-run living spaces, business ventures and environmental decline coexisted in the centrally located area.⁵⁷ In SoHo, Matta-Clark therefore not only found an

⁵³ Anne Clark lived on 107 West 11th Street, NYC, as written on Gordon Matta-Clark's Cornell transcript [Fig. 2.1.A].

⁵⁴ Based on correspondence studied at the CCA, a sequence of residences can be established as follows: 1969/70: 107 West 11th Street (with Anne Clark) [Fig. 2.12.A]; 1970/71: 131 Chrystie Street (with Simonds/Korman) [Fig. 2.12.B]; 1971-73: 28 East 4th Street (c/o Chemart) [Fig. 2.12.C]; 1973-75: 155 Wooster Street (with Gooden) [Fig. 2.12.D]; >1978: 20 East 20th Street (with Crawford).

⁵⁵ Millstein describes the "Loft Generation" of artists who since the early 1950s found cheap and spacious accommodation in Lower Manhattan's old industrial buildings (1962: 24). At the time of writing, a dispute between the City of New York and the artist community about the legal status of the lofts had just been resolved. However, a couple of the artists interviewed for the article expresses concern that they will soon be forced to leave, once redevelopment of the area and commercial exploitation of the properties inevitably sets in (36). As is known, this commercialisation of downtown Manhattan and the loft buildings came from the 1980s onwards.

⁵⁶ Millstein describes how the "bare filthy shell; cold, dank, flyspecked, peeling, unpainted and generally strewn at least ankle-deep with the exhausted leavings of the departed manufacturer-tenant" must be fixed prior to inhabitation (28). The artist "installs a sink and toilet if they are lacking, gets the place wired, hooks up a stove, plasters the walls and whitewashes them (no inconsiderable task; some lofts are seventy-five feet long and forty wide, and their ceilings may be fifteen feet high)" (31).

⁵⁷ Sociologist Sharon Zukin describes how the block in which her own loft dwelling was located in 1975 housed a mix of occupations: light manufacturing, workshops, artists' studios, mixed use, shop-owners, quarters for a religious sect, etc. (1985: ix). In other words, the block accommodated a diverse, for some lodgers alternative, do-it-yourself environment somehow left to its own devices by the city planners and decision makers. Gradually, the lofts were converted into living spaces and sold off, and in the late 1970s, Zukin's street had become predominantly residential. Zukin argues that legislation (or lack of it), as well as speculation in real estate in other parts of the city, had created the loft market in the first place by forcing small industries out and leaving the lofts vacant for new activities or demolition. That a profitable venture eventually emerged from turning these neglected buildings into spacious accommodations probably saved a number of the historical buildings in the long run, yet also forced many of the artists and less well-off occupants to move on in the early 1980s. At this stage,

environment in which he could manoeuvre as a creative entrepreneur – one moment renovating lofts, the next building/rebuilding an artist-run restaurant named Food – above all, he became exposed to, confronted with and forced to address the raw material of the sturdy industrial structures themselves. Food was a restaurant at the corner of Prince Street and Wooster Street in SoHo built and managed by Matta-Clark and a group of artist friends. The restaurant opened in 1971 and ran for a couple of years as a popular gathering point for local artists.

Within these cast iron, glass and brick enclosures, vast floor plans offered themselves as spacious accommodations to be negotiated by the inhabitant – in certain ways to be domesticated. Shortly before he died, Matta-Clark summarised the main contribution of the scene that he had been part of in the pursuit of an existence as an artist/architect in the early 1970s. The projection into the future of the loft implicit in Matta-Clark's use of present tense might reflect the hope that the phenomenon could overcome its inevitable commercialisation:

What they basically get is a waste pipe, perhaps a gas line, maybe if they are lucky, and electrical service to their floor, and then they have to deal with it. And to me ... that is really enough. If you're given the freedom after that of developing the kind of place that you want, then I think that what is the most interesting formula that has come out of the so-called SoHo, New York art ghetto environment, is really people struggling to invent their own spaces ... the people who do that work, who struggle, would not have to be artists ... but would also own their spaces. (2006a: 331/32)

Matta-Clark suggests that the energy investment, not to say commitment, required to invent one's own space in an environment otherwise hostile to domestic settlement offers the possibility of freedom to express oneself in return. Once the loft space is inhabited through the act of taming its raw structure, any approach to living and working in this space can be pursued. Further more, Matta-Clark does not limit the opportunity to simply concern the artist/architect – anyone can do it. The negotiation between dweller and building, required for this sense of ownership to develop, ensures that dwelling remains a process through which form is both given and taken. In this sense, the loft is more than simply an offer among others that one seeks out because it has a certain appeal. While the loft space might offer a particular kind of freedom – effectively, be a blank canvas – to make it one's own requires commitment and effort.⁵⁸

2.2.2 Aggression and denial

For Matta-Clark, art and living was transformed in the loft space through the transformation of the space itself. Further more, the wider devaluation of buildings and urban areas, abandoned and left empty as ghostly reminders of chance development, was addressed by making the lofts inhabitable.

a renovated loft space had become comparable to any other middle- to high-end New York City apartment in terms of price, if not character. The artists, the pioneering settlers, eventually became a practical intermediate link in the overall revaluation of these city assets.

⁵⁸ Matta-Clark concedes, "I must admit despite all the political barrage that I've had, I still believe that invested time and energy means it [the loft space] belongs to you in some very important ways. And I think it's important that something belongs to you, that your time belongs to you... energy, imagination. I must admit that I'm not all that much of a total collectivist socialist. There's a kind of morality that that is based on which I don't think in fact works. I don't know what it is. Maybe I'm too American. I don't buy the dogma" (2006a: 332).

For Matta-Clark, the situation was a deep regret, yet, at the same time, it offered a possibility of pursuing a life outside the conventions of society. He explained:

I think that the loft situation, at least the early loft situation in which artists were constantly confronted with their own housing needs, was an atmosphere in which many were compelled to transform their real and illusory environment as well as the nature of their works. Living in New York creates such a need for adaptation that raw, uninhabitable spaces constantly had to be transformed into studios or exhibition areas. I imagine that this is one of the ways that I became used to approaching space on an aggressive level. (249)

That transformation of raw, uninhabitable spaces made Matta-Clark aggressive, or forced a mobilisation of aggression, points in two directions. Firstly, the presence of aggression might be explained by the circumstance that the robust loft structures resisted modification unless treated with aggressive force, which is to say that mobilising a certain level of aggression to produce the required strength was necessary.⁵⁹ On the other hand, the abandoned building structures might have provoked the already socially indignant artist/architect to the point where an aggressive response was called forth, required or not. Anger built up over a prolonged period of time, as a result of an unfair social climate, was ignited once confronted with the visible traces of prevailing social misery. Matta-Clark appears to have believed that aggression was somehow required and almost natural considering the absence of any further explanation or excuses for it.

The self-proclaimed aggressive wrestling with the physical framework of buildings was taken a step further once the conversions of lofts and galleries exceeded the scope of purely functional modifications. Through the work of altering abandoned buildings, the artist/architect discovered a new direction for the artistic practice in the form of a different kind of tampering with the material fabric of built structures. This work, of a markedly different kind than the functional loft alterations that inspired them, saw cutting strategically into buildings as a new spatial/artistic opportunity and language to be explored. Matta-Clark explains that it was the rebuilding of the restaurant Food in the early 1970s that defined this turning point. While rebuilding the restaurant foremost served to make it more practical, the exercise marked a significant moment as it was to be the last time that Matta-Clark would cut up a space for functional alterations only. He explained:

One of the earliest times I can remember using cutting as a way of redefining a space was at Food Restaurant ... The first design of the place was not as practical as we needed once the restaurant became a business. Consequently, I spend the second summer redesigning the space. I did this by cutting up what we had already built and rearranging it. This cutting up started with a number of counters and built-in workspaces. It then progressed to the walls and various other space dividers. This was perhaps, the last time I ever used cutting, the cutting process, in a pragmatic way. (249)

After the rebuilding of Food, Matta-Clark began to cut built structures in a *non-pragmatic* way starting with *Bronx Floors* (1972/73). A range of different building cuts followed, and if *Splitting* was only the third in this sequence, it was, however, the first dwelling house to be addressed in its totality by Matta-

⁵⁹ Sharon Zukin also refers to “the agony and the ecstasy of renovating *raw space*” in the caption to two images showing the conditions of a Greenwich Village loft before and after conversion (1985: 7).

Clark's chainsaw. If the response to the house appears to follow a strategy selected specifically for the given situation, the desire to force a house open by cutting it straight through, which is to say to alter its foundation and sink one half down to open the central cleavage, is significant. In a statement made during the interview with Donald Wall a couple of years later, Matta-Clark explained:

Much of my life's energies are simply about being denied. There's so much in our society that purposely intends denial: deny entry, deny passage, deny participation etc. ... My work directly reflects this. (1976: 79)

The statement indicates that the aspect of denial plays an important role in the work and operates on a number of levels, from prohibited access to a singular building to exclusion from the community or society at large. As such, forcing buildings open can be seen as an attempt to create a passageway where access has otherwise been prohibited or blocked, in Matta-Clark's case in a very literal sense. At the same time, the cutting strategy is not simply an attempt to create an opening for the purpose of getting inside a building; it is the creation of an exit to let something or someone out. Matta-Clark said:

By undoing a building there are many aspects of the social conditions against which I am gesturing: first, to open a state of enclosure which had been preconditioned not only by physical necessity but by the industry that profligates suburban and urban boxes as a context for ensuring a passive, isolated consumer – a virtually captive audience ... I would not make a total distinction between the imprisonment of the poor and the remarkably subtle self-containerisation of higher socio-economic neighbourhoods. The question is a reaction to an ever less viable state of privacy, private property and isolation. (76)

If dwellers had become trapped inside their houses, their homes, then Matta-Clark wanted to demonstrate that a house was not a fixed entity, that it could be opened up, that it was perhaps already open. The social indignation, driving the work from the early loft alterations to the artistic building cuts, was, as such, a direct response to its context. Matta-Clark might have been angry with his father, his family, the architectural profession, the building industry, the New York City authorities, with American politics and the situation in his native Chile not least – he might have been deeply upset by all kinds of domination and exploitation.⁶⁰ Eventually, this anger boiled down to one single address – the building, the house, any house. That the buildings available for Matta-Clark's cutting in most cases were abandoned and/or scheduled for demolition meant that they had already been excluded, that they already occupied the periphery, and if not literally, then in terms of real estate value or any kind of conventional value. Matta-Clark later recalled the early excursions into abandoned urban spaces:

They were free to all. The wild dogs, the junkies and I used these spaces to work out some life problem, in my case, having no socially acceptable place to work. (2006a: 250)

2.2.3 Cutting as the essential probe

Had the aim been to simply break or destroy the buildings that Matta-Clark cut into, other more suitable methods and means would have been available. At the same time, had the ambition been a less

⁶⁰ Gordon Matta-Clark's father, Roberto Matta-Echaurren, was of Chilean origin, and parts of Matta-Clark's childhood was spent with his grand parents living in the country.

drastic spatial transformation, a gentler modification could have been produced. Matta-Clark, however, appears to have had a particular kind of operation in mind for which the practice of cutting was particularly well suited. Such was a cut breaking a house gently, if decisively. It was an analytical as well as critical separation of material complicating what it made visible. Matta-Clark explained:

I wanted to alter the whole space to its very roots, which meant a recognition of the building's total (semiotic) system, not in any idealized form, but using the actual ingredients of a place. So physically penetrating the surface seemed the next logical step. (Wall 1976: 79)

Matta-Clark wanted to challenge the totality of the built structure, and penetrating the surface was considered to be a necessary step. The outsider must first force his way in, and if this opening of and entering a house was a straightforward aspiration and operation on one level, it was a rather complex undertaking on another. Matta-Clark explained to Bear:

Some of the first pieces that actually dealt with impingements on buildings as a structural fabric were very small extractions. At that point I was thinking about surface as something which is too easily accepted as a limit. And I was also becoming very interested in how breaking through the surface creates repercussions in terms of what else is imposed upon by a cut. (1974: 34)

What would begin as the penetration of a surface would soon have deeper implications when the cut uncovered a much larger complexity. From the point of view of the artist/architect, the edge of the section drawn by the chainsaw revealed a history of the building's making, its life and use, secrets and plans, the future that it had been denied. A historical and material complexity was embedded in the fabric of the building's layers exposed by the cut; it resided within the gaps and voids that were revealed. Matta-Clark said:

The act of cutting through from one space to another produces a certain complexity involving depth perception. Aspects of stratification probably interest me more than the unexpected views which are generated by the removals – not the surface, but the thin edge, the severed surface that reveals the autobiographical process of its making. There is a kind of complexity which comes from taking an otherwise completely normal, conventional, albeit anonymous situation and redefining it, retranslating it into overlapping and multiple readings of conditions past and present. Each building generates its own unique situation. (Wall 1976: 77)

The action of cutting suggests a number of gestures – opening, incision, removal, division, forming – all equally destructive/constructive in nature. While the form of a given material might be disfigured by the cut, another form is simultaneously created, even if a kind of non-form. The cutting tool, which is a requirement, is per se violent in its capacity to give form regardless of the force with which it is operated. The implement that is the knife violates the material by the sheer force of its own sharpness. Matta-Clark addressed the house in Englewood with a chainsaw and afterwards confessed, “Spending those weeks and weeks with a machine in your hand as an extension of the physical event makes it a hardhat performance, producing clean-lined brutality...” (Bear 1974: 36). Seemingly without hesitation, Matta-Clark characterised his cutting of the house as brutal. Machine in hand, he became a kind of extended being cleaving through the enclosure of home and house while reorganising its

structure by drawing through it.⁶¹ “A cut is very analytical. It’s the probe! The essential probe,” he claimed (34).

2.2.4 A pregnant void

Matta-Clark found that his work addressed a point at the centre of the structure through which a connection with its larger whole was made possible. He explained to Donald Wall:

I see in the formal aspect of past building works a constant concern with the centre of each structure. Even before the *Splitting*, *Bin.go.ne*, and *Pier 52* projects, which were direct exercises in centring and recentring. I would usually go to what I saw as the heart of the spatial-structural constant that could be called the Hermetic aspect of my work, because it relates to an inner-personal gesture, by which the microcosmic self is related to the whole. In fact, one of my earlier works dramatised this when I hung myself upside down at the centre of one of my openings. (1976: 76)

The term “Hermetic aspect” is used as the signifier of a movement between subject and object – in this case artist and house – seen to establish a connection between the two while also connecting the self to its larger whole. The term *Hermetic* itself is not further explained but might refer to Matta-Clark’s interest in alchemy and esoteric symbolism, something Wall’s transcription of Hermetics with a capital H hints at.⁶² Yet, how could Wall know what Matta-Clark was thinking of if he did not say so? Alternatively, it is possible to interpret the term as referring to a hermetically isolated space or sealed off closure approached through the artist’s gesture. Keeping Matta-Clark’s often alternative and flexible use of language in mind, both options might be considered. They might also coincide. It is therefore possible to interpret Matta-Clark’s *Hermetic aspect* as signifying the gesture of cutting into a built structure in a particular way that binds the central cores of both subject and object in a shared space. Matta-Clark continues:

The activity takes the form of a theatrical gesture that cleaves structural space. The dialectics involve my dualistic habit of centring and removal (cutting away at the core of a structure); another socially relevant aspect of the activity then becomes clearer. Here I am directing my attention to the central void, to the gap which, among other things, could be between the self and the American Capitalist system. What I am talking about is a very real, carefully sustained, mass schizophrenia in which our individual perceptions are constantly being subverted by industrially controlled media, markets and corporate interests. The average individual is exposed to this barrage of half truths and monstrous untruths which all revolve around “who runs his life” and how it is accomplished. This conspiracy goes on every day, everywhere, while the citizen commutes to and from his shoebox home with its air of peace and calm, while he is being precisely maintained in a state of mass insanity. (76)

When cleaving the dwelling house in *Splitting*, Matta-Clark operates the centring/removal tactics in an almost literal sense. He cuts away at the core of the structure while cutting the abandoned shoebox house straight through. Through this cut, a central void existing within the house is approached, and, for Matta-Clark, this void represents a gap between the individual and society – in this case perhaps the evicted occupants and the economic forces behind the redevelopment of Englewood. When identifying the individual being succumbing to consumer life in the shoebox home manipulated by

⁶¹ Matta-Clark wrote this line on one of his cards – “REORGANISING STRUCTURE BY DRAWING THROUGH IT” (MoMA QNS 1973: PHCON2002.0016.001.024).

⁶² Thomas Crow (2003) elaborates on the alchemical aspect of Matta-Clark’s early work consisting of gold production and so-called *photo fries* where photographs were transformed through cooking.

external forces over which s/he has no power, Matta-Clark's social indignation awakens. The house is perceived as the means of this control and containment, and cutting away at the core of the structure – splitting the shoebox home and house – becomes a critique of this *mass-captivity*. Once the artist/architect aligns himself with this critical central point of the structure, the *split* already integral to the *whole house* is laid bare. The cut marks the void by exposing the always already broken structure of the dwelling house. "I guess it's a pregnant void, isn't it, in some ways," as Matta-Clark suggests (Bear 1974: 36).

2.3 HOUSE ANATOMY – Breaking the enclosure

Matta-Clark opens the house for scrutiny when breaking the enclosure and making previously inaccessible parts accessible and visible. Through the gesture of cutting the house open, the structure is laid bare, and an enquiry is opened into the nature and constitution of this house. While the problem of dwelling thereby is addressed in unprecedented ways, it is, however, not only the internal rooms that are exposed by the cleaving. Hidden spaces within walls and between floors also become visible, and once Matta-Clark documents and displays the cut house, the central wound, the cleavage, cannot be closed again. Parts hitherto covered up and held together by the illusion that the house was whole have been dissociated beyond reassembly and after looking into the interior from the novel perspective of the cut, the notion of a house as essentially a broken enclosure reverberates in the mind.

That Matta-Clark, contrary to the two following case studies, did not work with(in) the house where he also lived situates *Splitting* in a more general context and discussion. The moment 322 Humphrey Street is cut through, the house comes to represent every dwelling house ever built. Through Matta-Clark's engagement with the ideal as well as physical structure of the house, the gesture of cutting addresses the concept of a house *as such*. When the cleavage is forced open following the alteration of the house's foundation, the connotations of private domestic interior, safe shelter and homely setting become unstable. The symbolism of the standing structure on solid ground is no longer given, and if it seems that the broken house is no longer a house, the proposition is contradicted by the circumstance that the house still stands, still houses and is identifiable. If the broken house therefore also in a sense remains a house, this might be due to the circumstance that it always already was a broken house. When Matta-Clark carefully dissected, recorded and studied the constituent parts of this house – its hidden spaces and secret dynamics – knowledge was drawn from the house like an autopsy draws from a corpse. "It seemed to take cutting through it with a chainsaw to get to know it," as he later explained to Bear (37).

The implications of the decision to cut the dwelling house in Englewood straight through in the name of art are discussed in relation to the dissociation of home and house that the cut made explicit. While

this critical dismantling opened the possibility of different concepts of house and dwelling, the thesis argues that it also opened the opportunity for architecture to propose a different kind of structure. Insofar as the architectural metaphor of the grounded structure is seen as validating the thinking and reasoning of other disciplines, its profound importance possibly is a restraint – can architecture design for itself, which is to say design for the dweller? This question is addressed in the following on the basis of Matta-Clark’s work as well as returned to in the final fifth chapter.

The thesis begins by considering why Matta-Clark wanted to work with a dwelling house in the first place. How come his first address of *the whole house* was this particular type? Since there is no evidence to suggest that it was a conscious decision beyond the phone call to Holly Solomon asking for a house, it might have been a mere coincidence that a dwelling house was made available. The decision to cut the house straight through was, however, carefully considered by Matta-Clark, as explained above [2.1.2]. Once the house became available, the architect conceived of a strategy in response to the given situation, and when asked a couple of years later about the role that the concept of home had played, Matta-Clark explained that treating the home as an object was central. Responding to the question/statement, “I understand that it is the concept of the *home* that you use as much as the physical make up” (2006a: 250), Matta-Clark explained that *Splitting* “took most of [its] energy from the object-like treatment of the suburban home” (251).⁶³ The desire to objectify an institution like home by cleaving its physical framework was a significant choice considering the abundance of personal/emotional connotations possibly attached to it. In a statement written a year after *Splitting*, Matta-Clark gave clues to the motives behind the chosen approach:

The issue of locating and redefining the centre of a whole structure has carried over into two more recent works. *Splitting* and *Bingo* both done about a year ago ... Here no longer enclosure per se but containerisation and the ubiquitous object house became the subject matter. No manipulation made so far can be stronger than the object's identity, including a violent bulldozing. For even when flattened and cleared the scar still reads house. (CCA 1975: PHCON2002.0016.001.073)

Matta-Clark’s targeting of the central void meant that cleaving the containerisation of the “ubiquitous object house” became the subject of the address. To treat the home like an object was therefore to express an already ongoing violation of the shoebox house, even if it the gesture did raise some issues itself. The radicalism of *Splitting*’s objectification of the home was acknowledged by Matta-Clark when he said, “Once an institution like the home is objectified in such a way, it does understandably raise a moral issue” (251). However, he immediately added, “These issues are not ones that I’m involved in but continue to inspire criticism from defenders of home and property.” The rejection of any accountability for the moral issues raised by the work is significant. How can Matta-Clark free himself from this responsibility? Before the cutting of the house commenced, all the former residents’

⁶³ It is worth remembering that the interview, first published in the catalogue for the Antwerp-project *Office Baroque* (1977), was developed by Matta-Clark and Jane Crawford (see note 50, page 57). The response is therefore made to a question/statement articulated by the couple themselves.

abandoned belongings were removed from the rooms of the house and placed in the basement or scattered in the garden. Matta-Clark said:

I very wilfully took out all traces of the occupants. There didn't seem to be any way of coping with mounds of debris ... I looked at it with the most profound sense of alienation. I didn't want to get into sorting through this fragmented biographical garbage heap. I just wanted to get back to whatever the empty rooms were made of, like the layers of linoleum on the floor, or whatever there was of surfaces. The shadows of the persons who had lived there were still pretty warm. (Bear 1974: 37)

If this approach to the objects left behind by the former residents was almost cynical, Matta-Clark seemingly appreciated the traces left on the internal surfaces of the building itself like an index of lived life. He said, "There had obviously been people living there. *That* I liked. I liked the fact of its [sic] being occupied space and that I could only guess at what it had been like" (36/37). Once the former residents' object belongings had been removed or displaced, Matta-Clark was able to appreciate the traces left behind in the fabric of the house.⁶⁴

2.3.1 Setting home and house apart

When approaching the cleared out empty rooms of the house, a differentiation of the dwelling house as an object container and a home marked out by personal belongings was drawn. While the home of the former residents had existed within the confines of the house, this home had now been broken up and displaced with the relocation of the inhabitants themselves as well as Matta-Clark's removal of the remaining belongings. All in a very literal way while the house container – according to the artist/architect always already objectified by the forces of control that it serves – became even more so. It became an empty shell, a void space, even before the cut, and in between the object container and the displaced belongings, layers of lived life remained inscribed in the surface fabric of the house's interior. These historical layers were not removed and by cutting a section through, the urban archaeologist Matta-Clark exposed the history of a house. This history, signifying a kind of resistance from the former residents against their containerisation, would, however, also be objectified by the cut through which the dual agenda of *Splitting* came forth. If empathetic to the historical past of the house, the work was at the same time driven by an agenda to expose the perceived oppressive structure of this house by itself oppressing it. Once Matta-Clark's *art saw* cut the house open to objectify it, the notion of home, not already dispersed with the displaced objects, was alienated further from the spatial container. It seems to have taken a socially aware citizen to conceive the idea of setting a building in motion to raise a critique of society, a skilled engineer to cut apart and balance the structure on its foundations, an empathetic architect to assess the spatial possibilities of the cut house, and an artistic sensibility to capture the evocative photographs. Once this critique of the house was raised, and the notion of home separated from the structure, the cut object house crossed over to the realm of art. It

⁶⁴ In a conference on Gordon Matta-Clark in Chicago (2002), Jane Crawford presented a paper and said the following: "Gordon marvelled that each occupant left a mark, like a layer of skin, on the inside of their domicile. So, each cut he made, in addition to revealing layers of wallpaper or linoleum, revealed the layers of history of its occupants and its community ... Gordon became an urban archaeologist... (2003: 216).

did so by means of the alien and unsettling gesture of the cut that undermined the house by showing that it was already undermined. Furthermore, it was so due to the way that Matta-Clark would organise the documentation of his work across diverse media, each with their different purpose and task. Had the house been cut through, documented and disseminated in the name of architecture, the un-building would most likely have looked differently.

The thesis is interested in this movement between home and object of art provoked by Matta-Clark's cut. As such, *Splitting* not only raises a critique of the distinction between interior/exterior and live/work, as mapped by Benjamin [1.1.2], or home/house as differentiated above, it raises a critique of dwelling/house by addressing the relation between home and art implicit the cut house. If the event of the cut made the object house stand forth as an object, it was a broken object alternating between two significations – a recognisable dwelling house and a recognisable dwelling house cut through. And, as such, perhaps no longer a dwelling house after all. The gaping void at the centre of the house was a sign that something else, foreign to conventional notions of home and dwelling, had settled in, and Matta-Clark's returning image of the gingerbread house cut open shows this double house in one, hence uncanny, display [Fig. 2.3/2.8/2.9]. How to rationalise the experience of a dwelling house, at the same time not quite like a dwelling house? How to accommodate the double figure of something at the same time unfamiliar and familiar? Matta-Clark wrote about the alienated gingerbread house:

Nothing more than a modest shift of structure and perception could be hoped for amidst the all-pervasive suburban structure. Working with the common house for all it enlists of heart and mind was for me as much a kind of juggling act in which as familiar objects swirl even to a blur they remain unchanged. (CCA: PHCON2002.0016.001.073)

The wholeness of the house remained intact despite the cut insofar as the double house continued to exist within the confines of one house. The notion of home had, however, escaped the structure, and the double house had become a double object – both container and work of art.

The negativity of the action as well as intention was perceived by Matta-Clark as reflecting a violation already existing within the house. In order to raise a profound critique of the institution of the dwelling house in the late twentieth century, Matta-Clark felt he had to speak the language of the oppression that he identified. He therefore aligned himself with the dominant forces by appropriating their attitude. He undermined these powers by undermining the house that organised space according to their logic and desires. As such, Matta-Clark's violation of the structure of a house can be seen as a violation of the structure of the powers in control of this house. Through the gesture of exposing a void central to both structures by cutting away at the core of the house, Matta-Clark himself took possession of this house and thereby displaced the forces of control in the eyes of which a cut house would have even less value than the one set for demolition.⁶⁵ In light of Matta-Clark's conviction that

⁶⁵ One can of course only speculate what the house in Englewood would have been worth today, had it been preserved as the work of art *Splitting*.

physically challenging building conversions, such as the one of renovating lofts, made the person doing the work earn a certain right to the space, the act of cutting the house possibly gave the artist/architect this feeling of ownership. Matta-Clark's economy of the execution of power might therefore be seen as more complex than simply a question of *liberating* a house occupied by oppressive forces. Maud Lavin has left a critical remark on this aspect of the work:

Matta-Clark's work is a statement of anti-authoritarianism; the eviscerated homes and office buildings protest the sanctity of architecture as encapsulated shelter and as rigid space. However, Matta-Clark substitutes another kind of authority, individualism, for these architectural traditions ... The primary function of Matta-Clark's sliced and carved buildings is to point to the individualistic power of the artist, an affirmation that parallels rather than challenges societal conventions concerning private property and architecture. (1984: 138/39)

In line with Lavin's thinking, Matta-Clark's conclusive gesture of cutting the four top corners out of the split house, to tour the art galleries in the form of the work *Splitting: Four Corners*, makes these cuts a kind of trophies, scalps, from a conquered if not eliminated house [Fig. 2.10]. The removal of the corners, however, deflates the tension of the cleavage when seen in the photographic elevations of the completed work reproduced in the *Splitting* book [Fig. 2.8]. Once the four façades of the building were photographed one last time, they were not only showing a disfigured house, they were showing a crippled house. But then, that is looking in the *Splitting* book. Watching the film gives a different ending altogether when the camera takes the viewer out through one of the four cut-out corners, from the darkness of the house and into the garden.

2.3.2 (Un)building the structure

As can be seen in the *Splitting* film, Matta-Clark levered one half of the cut house down with the help from one assistant only.⁶⁶ Once the foundation of the split house had been lowered, tipping half of the building was an undertaking that defied the notion of building itself. Movement in a static structure, unlikely to take place unless a house is about to collapse, was generated by the gesture, and if a fine line between support and collapse was negotiated a number of times during the cutting and cleaving of the house, the two forces remained in place.⁶⁷ Setting the house in motion therefore not only meant juggling the building by complicating the relationship between support and collapse, it meant questioning the notion of a supported structure in the first place. To cut along the centre line while retaining both forces was a balancing act already before altering the foundation of the house. The possibility of collapse was imminent, the level of support already just the required – immediately after the making of *Splitting*, Matta-Clark explained:

The whole event gave me new insight into what a house is, how solidly built, how easily moved. It was like a perfect dance partner. I can't wait to do it again, perhaps working with transporting whole parts of

⁶⁶ The assistant seen helping Matta-Clark is Manfred Hecht who assisted on a number of building cuts (Buntrock 2010: 140).

⁶⁷ Curator of the Whitney Museum, NYC, Elizabeth Sussman says, "Structurally, he couldn't be sure. He originally wanted to make a narrow split using a sawmill saw. When he made the split wider, he talked to Bernard Kirschenbaum ... Kirschenbaum had worked with Buckminster Fuller on the geodesic domes, so Gordon asked him technical questions, such as what would happen if he removed the foundation blocks to make the crack bigger. Kirschenbaum reassured him. They held the house on jacks while they removed the blocks. It must have been terrifying" (Kaplan 2007) [Fig. 2.4.F].

buildings to make composite piles ... what I mean is that the realisation of motion in a static structure was exhilarating. (Bear 1974: 37)

If cutting through and forcing the house open meant exposing its already broken structure, and opening the cleavage made the central void concrete, then altering the foundation and sinking the house down questioned the house as grounded. When Matta-Clark's work challenged the balance between support and collapse, he not only challenged the standing structure itself, but the fact that it stood as well as what it stood for. The grounded gingerbread house was not only hiding its broken structure and central void, but also this abyss on which it pretended to stand. Mark Wigley discusses this notion of the *abyss* below a building with reference to Heidegger. Wigley writes:

When interrogating this edifice to reveal the condition of the ground on which it stands, Heidegger raises the possibility that the ground (*Grund*) might actually be a concealed *abyss* (*Abgrund*) and that metaphysics is constructed in ignorance of, or rather, to ignore, the instability of the terrain on which it is erected. (1993: 36)

Wigley refers to the circumstance that metaphysics since Kant has been described "as an *edifice* erected on secure *foundations* laid on the most stable *ground*" (7). The edifice is, however, "in ruins" because built on "groundless assertions" (7). For Heidegger, "Metaphysics is no more than the definition of ground as *support*," as Wigley writes (8), suggesting that the principle of the ground coincides with a requirement for the architectural figure in philosophy. Insofar as the German word *Grund* [ground] also means *reason*, Wigley approaches what he terms *the architectural metaphor*. This ground below the architectural structure is the reason that philosophy is keen to provide, and a relationship of mutual dependency is identified between architecture and philosophy. While the former provides the latter with a structure, a representational edifice on which to ground thinking, philosophy provides a theory in support of the architectural structure on which it is itself grounded. Architecture represents philosophy's essentially absent ground when projecting the "complete, secure, undivided" edifice materialising the structural logic on which philosophy hinges (25). The deferral of the fulfilment of this task ensures that both disciplines retain an ongoing purpose and validation. Architecture produces this standing object in the form of a whole, properly grounded house, a complete(d) *edifice* as validation of philosophy's properly grounded, ideally complete(d) thinking. Architecture is thereby "bound up with the forever incomplete project of philosophy," as Wigley writes (25).

This convoluted affair between theory and practice, thought and matter, concept and structure, becomes from the point of view of architecture ultimately a restraint – can architecture escape the task of repeatedly (re)affirming philosophical thinking with each new building it attempts to structure, ground and build? Might architecture overcome the reliance on philosophy to theorise what built fabric already gives presence to? Might architecture overcome the notion of ground? The thesis finds that Matta-Clark's un-building of the dwelling house in *Splitting* responds to such questions, and to attempt a closer inspection of the architectural structure produced by and for philosophy, as well as

the philosophical authentication that architecture calls upon philosophy to provide, Wigley suggests that Derrida's thinking on deconstruction presents a possible tool. As a discursive bridge, itself relying on both philosophy and architecture for authentication, deconstruction brings the workings of the architectural metaphor to the surface of philosophy by resembling a (negative) architectural metaphor. The thesis proposes that Matta-Clark's work might bring the *philosophical metaphor* to the surface of architecture when un-grounding the *edifice* in the form of the dwelling house. Derrida writes about deconstruction in relation to architecture, "It is not simply the technique of an architect who knows how to de-construct what has been constructed, but a probing which touches upon the technique itself, upon the authority of the architectural metaphor and thereby constitutes its own architectural rhetoric" (1986: 18). In this light, Matta-Clark's *probing* touches upon the authority of the architectural metaphor when demonstrating that the un-building of the dwelling house, rather than mark a "reversed construction" is "able to conceive for itself the idea of construction" as Derrida's writes (18). *Splitting* thereby breaks the authority of the architectural/philosophical metaphor when destabilising what the building stands for, as well as *the fact* that it stands.

2.3.3 Cutting the body of a house open

Matta-Clark's work *Splitting* opens a path for thinking about architectural structure as a different kind of structure, and of building as a different kind of construction than simply a verification of ground. Which is to say of architecture as, essentially, this grounding. The representations of Matta-Clark's cut house, in the form of the visual material that has preserved the work for posterity, took various forms in order to capture the un-building of a house and the exposure of its brokenness. The proposition for another structure for dwelling, building and thinking that came forth in these film and still images was unfolded in a carefully considered material engaging with established categories of architectural representation. Matta-Clark's architectural training possibly informed this approach, yet more experimental visual practices would also be applied when eventually reassembling the photographs of the cut house in collaged reconstructions of its internal spaces.

The documentation of the split house made it possible for Matta-Clark to continuously rebuild the house subsequent to its demolition, and the documentation of one house thereby became the means through which to project another kind of house. The recording of the work formed part of its continued processing, and in this sense, Matta-Clark was still un-building the house when documenting the cut after its completion. The representational material, developed to communicate the work to a wider audience, was representing a work still in the making and, as such, a building still being built, the manifestation of which did not foreclose its continued transformation. If the base material for these continued reworkings of the house in the form of photographic documentation would apply conventional strategies for architectural representation, Matta-Clark chose his photographic angles and viewpoints carefully. A number of images show spectacular situations when

framing the view perpendicular to the line of the cut [Fig. 2.5]. In contrast, the selection of photographic representations of the cut house that took the form of sectional elevations depicts rooms with the image-plane parallel to the cut [Fig. 2.6]. The views thereby reference the format of the architectural section showing background elevation either in flat or perspective view, even if Matta-Clark's photographic elevations inevitably account for depth in perspective. While the spatial quality of the photographic images is emphasised further by the play of shadow and light, the notion of a double cut is implicit these representations. When the architectural section in the form of the photographic framing depicts the sectioned house, the space between the cut image-plane and the cut building becomes part of the representation. Through this kind of parallel projection, Matta-Clark's work curiously references the parallel development in the sixteenth century of anatomical and architectural sectioning in one frame.

As Guillerme and V erin begin their archaeology of the section, the architectural section developed during the Renaissance from the drawing of ancient Roman ruins (1989: 226). Once the architectural structure deteriorated and came apart due to the wear of time, its inner workings were revealed, its constitution laid bare, and the task of representing the seen in architectural drawings saw new representational skills develop.⁶⁸ As pointed out by Robin Evans, illustrations of broken ancient ruins would not only precede the projective section, but also the illustrations of anatomical dissection developing in parallel (1995: 118). It was already in the early sixteenth century that Raphael promoted the architectural section and techniques of parallel projection while, at the same time, the controversial if not novel technique of anatomical dissection was becoming an acknowledged procedure.⁶⁹

Matta-Clark's documentation of his cut house through sectional elevations, documenting the inner workings of the *ruin*, might as such be seen as anatomical dissections performed on the house. Matta-Clark's *anatomical theatre* would thus be the film version of *Splitting*, while the photographic work, exploring the house and leaving it open for scrutiny, would reference Vesalius' illustrations. When cutting a house open to reveal the constitution of the building's broken body, especially when reassembling the captured images in the dollhouse view [Fig. 2.9], Matta-Clark paraphrased such representations of the dead body. To regard the cutting of the house as an anatomical dissection suggests that the desire to obtain knowledge of the house, its inner workings and problems, was a main drive for the work's execution. To get to know the otherwise seemingly familiar shoebox house, Matta-Clark had to cut it open for study like the autopsy examines the dead body. To determine for what reason the house ceased to serve its purpose, be useful, perhaps make any sense, its presumed grounding and enclosure had to be unsettled and exposed. For Matta-Clark, the dissection was, as

⁶⁸ Guillerme and V erin write, "It is to the hands of time that we owe the bringing to light of the frameworks that architectural techn e conceived, worked, erected and finally dissimulated in the temporarily completed appearance of perfect construction" (1989: 226).

⁶⁹ Andrea Carlino makes reference to Ptolemaic Alexandria where, according to Celsus, a medical school practised anatomical dissection as far back as the third century BC (1999: 134). However, according to Carlino, it remained an unofficial method of obtaining knowledge of the human body until the publication of Vesalius' *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem* [On the Fabric of the Human Body] (1543), written on the basis of anatomical dissections and making significant use of illustrations (1).

such, a probing of the structure for the purpose of conceiving other possible constructions. Studying the cut edge, scrutinising the layers of history embedded in the material, illuminating the hidden spaces and cavities provided knowledge for future buildings.

In addition, as Evans writes (108), the revolutionary step of Raphael's idea of orthogonal projection of plan, section and elevation raised the question of what held these projections together. Evans argues that insofar as parallel lines serve to project sections and elevations on the basis of the plan, and light paths follow straight lines, "architectural projection ... is nothing other than pictures of light" (108). Matta-Clark would also draw *pictures of light* in the film *Splitting*'s kinetic representation of the cut house, with the camera tracing the cut's line of light experienced from within the dark interior. Likewise, light is a defining aspect of the ensuing reconstructions of interiors in the collaged work, assembled on the basis of lines of light that draw the cut in the photographic documentation, which the collages are made from [Fig. 2.7]. Matta-Clark's proposition for another spatial structure in the cut and pasted work is therefore built on the basis of the void emerging along the cut line of the split house. The collaged interiors form a house, the external form of which one cannot determine because of the endlessly unfolding interior. The limit between interior and exterior, the wall that ultimately separates the two, is constantly postponed when walls, floors and ceilings continue to open up to new internal spaces. Matta-Clark built several new houses on the basis of the first in Englewood considering that every new collage suggests something different, adds another layer to the story of a house, eventually other houses, and then perhaps any house.

Conclusion to "Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*"

The chapter opened the discussion of contemporary dwelling as a material concern on the basis of Gordon Matta-Clark's work *Splitting*. The radical gesture of cutting the structure of an abandoned dwelling house straight through was seen to have profound implications for the identified problem. Not simply because a split house is bound to challenge any conventional sense of shelter and privacy, but because Matta-Clark's strategy of cutting opened the house for scrutiny without causing its complete collapse – structurally as well as connotatively. If the dual nature of the house that holds, while also, at the same time, seemingly falls apart, would be as disturbing as reassuring, the dialectics concerning dwelling were literalised by the cut. As such, Matta-Clark's house gave negative form to the experience of the late twentieth century when standing back as an uninhabitable broken building without a clear future. If this manifestation, in one sense, would make the work complicit with the forces it attempted to challenge, the opposite could also be argued if the broken house remained beyond rationalisation insofar as it remained uninhabitable.

By defying simple dialectics, Matta-Clark's cut house – at the same time whole and broken, split and double – demonstrated that there was no clear-cut answer to the problem of dwelling, no walls to keep *the other* out. The split house therefore continues to reverberate with the problem of dwelling past and present in the image of a house at odds with its own overwhelming statement – i.e. a house that is, at the same time, also not a house. The image of the cut house literalises the double nature of a living space that presumes the private domestic interior, the family setting and sheltering enclosure inside which all is safe, known and shown. Considering that dwellers at large continue to pursue the idea of this dwelling place even today, Matta-Clark's house remains a provocative manifestation of the circumstance that such a house might be a well-kept illusion. The paradoxes drawn up by the work continue to challenge, and from a structural point of view, the fine line that separates remains the elusive difference between support and collapse insofar as even the cut house holds.

The cut is, as such, a probing for other possible structures to emerge, and Matta-Clark's eventual un-building of the house is an un-building of the notion of structure itself when the architectural metaphor of the grounded edifice is destabilised. This metaphor of the standing structure on solid ground is dismantled in the process of cleaving and thereby building the other house, and if this reconstruction overcomes the architect's obligation to repeatedly reaffirm the house in its predefined form, then it does so by proposing another concept of structure. This structure, proposed by Matta-Clark, opens a possibility for dwelling beyond the walls of a house, and the final fifth chapter of the thesis returns to this space for living at the heart of a building to which has been added what has also been taken apart.

3. KURT SCHWITTERS, *MERZBAU*

Summary

The chapter studies Kurt Schwitters' work *Merzbau* (1927-37) built inside the artist's studio within his private family residence in Hannover, Germany. It follows a structure similar to the previous chapter on Gordon Matta-Clark's work *Splitting* and is divided into three main sections. The first section [3.1] introduces the artist and situates the work in the context of Schwitters' historical setting. It gives presence to *Merzbau* by gradually unfolding the remaining evidence while drawing on existing literature describing and theorising Schwitters' general oeuvre. On this basis, the thesis develops an interpretation of the Merz-building as a studio construction in close relation to the house inside which it took form. It traces *Merzbau*'s development as a gradual opening of a space from where a negotiation of home and art unfolds within the family residence. At the same time, a dialogue between this interior and its increasingly hostile historical context is identified and explored as a catalyst for the work.

In the second section [3.2], the thesis examines a number of statements made by Schwitters in relation to the building strategy and Merz-theory that defined it. The discourse on art brought forward by the avant-garde movement of the early twentieth century is reflected in Schwitters' thinking and practice considering that the artist developed his own distinct approach in parallel. Through a set of thematised sections relating to the thesis' interpretation of Schwitters' work, the thesis the specific character of the Merz method is pursued in terms of its artistic aspiration and formal language in preparation of the chapter's third section [3.3]. Here, the coexistence of art and home within Schwitters' house is examined on the basis of the artist's studio and its changing locations within the house during the years between the two world wars. The relation between interior and exterior, which is to say the dialogue across and beyond the limit of the house that *Merzbau* is seen to negotiate, is explored as a space in its own right. Lastly, the chapter looks into the way in which Schwitters can be seen to eventually reclaim this work of art as a living space for himself within the setting of the family residence.

3.1 (MERZ)BUILDING – The home that Schwitters made for himself

The first *Merzbau* built by Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948) was developed inside the artist's studio in the house in Hannover where he lived with his family [Fig. 3.1/3.2]. It was a typical Hannoverian townhouse located in the wealthy Döhren quarter south of the city centre and shared between Schwitters' parents, his wife and son, as well as a number of temporary lodgers. The importance of the house, its organisation and use for an interpretation of the emergence and development of *Merzbau* relies on the circumstance that Schwitters' both lived and worked within the walls of this building. The practice of art therefore coexisted with the domestic setting, and the artist's studio, moving between locations in the house over the years, would eventually become a work of art itself when transforming

into *Merzbau*. The family settled in the area of Döhren in 1893 when Schwitters was six years old, and when finally moving into Waldhausenstrasse 5A in 1901, the teenager Schwitters had lived in seven different houses in Hannover (Sprengel Museum Hannover n.d.). A developing interest in painting led to eventual enrolment in the Königlich Sächsischen Akademie der Künste [Royal Saxon Academy of Arts], Dresden (1909-15), where Schwitters received classical training as a painter. However, during the final years at the academy, the landscape painting took on a more impressionistic style, and Schwitters' work gradually became more abstract and expressionistic from 1917 onwards. At this time, he also enrolled for two terms during the winter of 1917/18 in the department of architecture at Königlichen Technischen Hochschule [Royal College of Technology] in Hannover. No evidence, however, exists of the work produced during this course, and Schwitters appears to have returned to abstract, expressionist painting immediately afterwards. The developing interest in avant-garde art practices would soon change the nature of his work altogether, and the first examples of collage work appeared in the autumn of 1918, to be followed by assemblage work. At this stage, Schwitters was associated with the Dadaist scene and later also referred to himself as having been a Dadaist in the early 1920s.⁷⁰ While this identification might have been an attempt to embrace alternative art practices in the chaotic wake of World War I, Schwitters would soon fall out with the group of Berlin Dadaists. When the artist Richard Huelsenbeck criticised the absence of a political agenda in Schwitters' work, he caused the latter to withdraw from the group's activities and found his own movement.⁷¹ Schwitters gave his one-man-movement the unusual name *Merz*.

With the name sampled from a collage work made in 1919 [Fig. 3.3], Schwitters began developing a wide variety of work under his Merz-banner – Merz-pictures, Merz-columns, Merz-buildings – all firmly held together by a set of basic principles discussed in more detail below [3.2.1]. Four Merz-buildings were eventually developed of which the first, the Hannover *Merzbau*, was created over a period of ten years (1927-37). The structure came to occupy a number of rooms and floors across the house on Waldhausenstrasse, as well as a glazed balcony and enclosed space below it. Inside this space, a well was opened and fitted with a spiral staircase descending to the water level below in turn reflecting the visitor's gaze. A sketch drawn by Schwitters in 1935 displays the extent of the work across three rooms of the ground floor flat [Fig. 3.4], and a later sketch shows the same rooms labelled *Vorraum* [front room], *Balkon* [balcony] and *eigentlicher Merzbau* [actual *Merzbau*] [Fig. 3.5].⁷² Knowledge of the overall interior layout of the house derives from a couple of hand-drawn floor plans made to establish possible free space for rehousing of homeless Hannoverians around 1921 (Elger 1999: 32) [Fig. 3.7/3.9].

⁷⁰ In the text "Ich und meine Ziele" [Myself and my Aims] (1931), Schwitters refers to himself as having been a Dadaist in 1923 (1981: 345/424).

⁷¹ Huelsenbeck's critique of Schwitters targeted the latter's perceived indifference to politics and what the Berlin Dadaists saw as the political purpose of art. Huelsenbeck, who visited Waldhausenstrasse 5A in December 1919, complained that Schwitters was too bourgeois in his orientation when living in his parents' Biedermeier-styled house. He later wrote, "Schwitters was a highly talented petty bourgeois, one of those ingenious rationalists who smell of home cooking, who come pouring out of the German woods or Spitzweg's gabled houses" (1991: 64).

⁷² In a letter sent to Christof and Louise Spengemann, dated 25 April 1946, Schwitters drew a plan of the ground floor flat with a hatching covering the rear three rooms reiterating the extension of *Merzbau* on this floor [Fig. 3.6].

Later Merz-buildings were constructed in other places, where Schwitters would settle down temporarily, once he was forced to flee Germany's charged political climate in 1937. The first stop on this continued journey was Norway, which had been a summer destination for the family since 1930. Schwitters settled with his son Ernst in Lysaker near Oslo while his wife Helma stayed behind in Hannover to take care of the house, the works of art it contained and the elderly relatives. While the summer hut on the western coast of Norway was already in a process of Merz-transformation [Fig. 3.10], Schwitters and his son set to work building a new *Merzbau* structure in Lysaker. Schwitters considered this his second *Merzbau*, since he did not refer to the holiday hut on Hjertøya as a Merz-building (Webster 2007: 224). Developed 1937-40, the Lysaker *Merzbau* was conceived as a building from scratch, and the enclosure, of which only a few drawings survive [Fig. 3.11], was built near the rented house where both lived. According to Ernst, the interior in Lysaker was stylistically a continuation of the Hannover *Merzbau*, although the house itself was of an altogether different, more contemporary and modern nature (89). When in 1940, *Haus am Bakken* [House on the Hill], as Schwitters called the Lysaker house, was nearing completion, German troops advanced in Norway, and Schwitters and Ernst were forced to leave the country. *Haus am Bakken* was abandoned, and a fire eventually destroyed the house and work in 1951.

Schwitters escaped to England where he would spend the rest of his life after the required internment on Isle of Man. He first settled in London, yet in 1945 when Ernst returned to live in Norway, Schwitters and his new partner Edith Thomas moved to the Lake District. Here, the fourth and last Merz-building was initiated at the Cylinders Farm in Elterwater where Schwitters in the summer of 1947 began *merzing* one of the walls inside a small barn belonging to the estate [Fig. 3.12]. The *Merz Barn*, as the work is known, still exists although the merzed wall was removed from the deteriorating barn in 1965 and installed in Hatton Gallery, Newcastle, where it remains. The *Merz Barn* in Elterwater was taken over by the Littoral Arts Trust in 2006 and as per 2013 has a photographic reproduction of the removed wall installed.

Schwitters never returned to Germany, and nothing remains of the Hannover *Merzbau* or the house on Waldhausenstrasse. Partially destroyed during an allied air raid in 1943, the house was demolished and therefore no longer exists. When bombs fell over the rear part where the studio was located, *Merzbau* was completely destroyed and with it a significant part of Schwitters work [Fig. 3.13]. For some time, he contemplated the possibility of retrieving pieces of work from the rubble, yet eventually gave up.⁷³

⁷³ In the letter to Christof and Luise Spengeman, dated 25 April 1946, Schwitters considered the possibility of excavating the site. He suggested that "American money" could be interested in retrieved pieces and declared, "I might ... save fragments of it through *careful* work. And since it was my *life's work*, it will be worthwhile. Further more, it had a reputation abroad as a new direction in art." The English translation is mine based on the German original reading, "Hingegen kann ich durch *langsame* Arbeit Teile sicherlich retten. Und es lohnt sich wirklich, da es mein *Lebenswerk* war. Und es galt sehr viel in der Meinung des Auslandes als neues gebiet in der Kunst" (Nündel 1974: 194). When throughout the following, I have myself translated text from published non-English sources, the original text will be included in a footnote with reference to its source of origin.

In the summer of 1938, while still in exile in Norway and with the Hannover *Merzbau* still intact, Schwitters reflected on the possibility that he would never return to see the work again. In a letter to the American artist and art patron Katherine S. Dreier, he wrote, “I have lost that, which I loved most of all, the home that I made for myself. You might ask, ‘Why?’ I know why. I had to move on, I was getting too comfortable” (1975: 149).⁷⁴

3.1.1 A work unfinished on principle

Three photographs taken in 1933 form the only surviving evidence of the Hannover *Merzbau* [Fig. 3.14/3.15/3.16]. The photographs, taken by the local photographer Wilhelm Redemann from Hannover Provinzialmuseum [Provincial Museum], show three parts of the structure located in the studio room to the rear side of the ground floor flat in Waldhausenstrasse 5A [Fig. 3.7 room 1/2/3]. By framing *Merzbau* in three independent views, the structure is broken into three parts, the coherence of which is not immediately clear. Whether the three parts belong to the same structure, are located in the same room, or even in the same house cannot immediately be established. However, a closer study reveals identical elements along the edges of the photographic framings, and *Merzbau* can therefore be stitched together as one coherent work on the basis of these. Plan diagrams of the studio space outlining the location of the three parts have since been drawn to show the organisation of the continuous structure [Fig. 3.17/3.18]. What these diagrams illustrate is that Schwitters (and/or his photographer) chose a central position in the studio room when framing the work against three of its four walls. This is of some significance considering that the camera could have been directed diagonally across the space at any preferred angle. On this basis, the thesis suggests that *Merzbau* was built in relation to the studio’s enclosing walls rather than organised according to its floor plan. The claim is supported by the circumstance that the central floor space was left unoccupied, *un-merzed* as it were, as is evident in Redemann’s photograph of *Grosse Gruppe* [Big Group] [Fig. 3.14]. The implications of this observation lie in the proposition that the Hannover *Merzbau* was a spatially articulated wall structure, a claim the thesis returns to below [3.3].

Whether more than three photographs, attempting to frame larger sections of the structure, were produced in 1933 remains uncertain. That a fourth, in correspondence with the fourth wall of the studio, is missing from the surviving evidence is likely to be a result of the large window overlooking the garden and neighbouring Eilenriede forest dominating the room’s northern wall [Fig. 3.7]. If the window disrupted the possibility of continuing *Merzbau* to form a coherent structure along all four walls of the studio, the opening towards the external world for viewing and light would become an integral part of the work. Through the use of glass panels and mirrors, Schwitters created a play of reflections and views across and within the space of the studio that drew the external world inside

⁷⁴ The letter is dated 22 July 1938.

from this window.⁷⁵ Besides from this utilisation of transparency and reflection, experimentation with artificial light is evident from a number of photographic details dated 1932 [Fig. 3.19]. The photographer of these is listed as unknown in the *Catalogue Raisonné* published by Sprengel Museum Hannover (Schwitters 2003), yet Ernst Schwitters produced a number of artificially lit details exploring the changefulness of *Merzbau's* sculptural forms in the early 1930s [Fig. 3.20]. While most of the negatives for these images appear to have been lost (Elger 1999: 9), a few survive showing dramatic and ambiguous formal juxtapositions with sculptural effects.

In comparison with the body of surviving photographic material, most of which is dated before 1933, Redemann's three photographs have a professional, documentary quality with their neutral daylight and seemingly objective attempt to frame larger sections of the structure. The central position of the photographer, capturing the installation in at least three shots while turning on his own axis, step by step 90 degrees leaving one step out, lends objectivity almost neutrality to the captured scenes. When framing *Merzbau* from the central point of the studio, Redemann leaves the viewer to face the structure as if facing the façade of a building from its external side. As a result, the viewer remains in some sense outside of *Merzbau* although placed centrally in the studio room – trapped within the construction, yet unable to get inside of it. Several indicators of access to the structure's interior tease with large openings calling for further exploration. There might be something within or behind – a space, a stair, a hidden object. With one's back against the window, *Merzbau* becomes a horseshoe-shaped spatiality grown along or from the walls behind it.⁷⁶

Photographs of *Merzbau* were reproduced in the French journal *abstraction-création. art non figuratif* in 1933 along with the text "Le Merzbau" written by Schwitters [Fig. 3.19]. They show details of the part named *Grosse Gruppe* [Big Group] [Fig. 3.14], and Schwitters described his studio in the text as "the construction of an interior based on sculptural forms and colours."⁷⁷ It was the first time that Schwitters used the name *Merzbau* for the spatial construct, and the text is a markedly different description of the work compared to earlier statements made by the artist. Two years earlier, in 1931, Schwitters published the text "Ich und meine Ziele" [Myself and My Aims] in his *Merz*-periodical. On that occasion, the work was described as centred around one column, *Grosse Säule* [Big Column].

Schwitters wrote:

⁷⁵ While the reflections in the glazed showcases can be identified in Redemann's photographs, Schwitters, in a letter to a friend dated 1935, wrote that he could see the old watchtower, Döhrener Turm, through the forest reflected in a mirror in his studio (Webster 2007: 51).

⁷⁶ In the text "Bogen 1 für mein neues Atelier" [Sheet 1 for my new studio], dated 6 April 1938, Schwitters writes about his Lysaker *Merzbau*, "I oriented the main window towards the view of the moor. The house was built in response to this window, and as it turned out, it almost had a southern direction. In a sense, the studio pointed towards my old studio in Hannover. The connection was emphasised further by my last creation in Hannover. It was between Christmas and New Year 1936, Ernst was already in Norway and I worked above the Shepherd's Bridge. Suddenly, I realised that the form emerging was a horseshoe. A horseshoe means luck and my horseshoe pointed towards the north, approximately towards the location where *House on the Hill* now stands. At the time, I did not yet know that I would move to Oslo." Translated from, "Das Hauptfenster baute ich nach der Aussicht ins Moor. Das Haus wurde nach diesem Fenster orientiert, und es ergab sich, daß ich ungefähr die Südrichtung hatte. Gewissermaßen wies das Atelier nach Hannover zu meinem alten Atelier. Der Zusammenhang wird aber noch stärker durch die letzte Form, die ich in Hannover gestaltet habe. Es war zwischen Weihnachten und Neujahr 1936, Ernst war schon in Norwegen, da arbeitete ich zuletzt oberhalb des Schäfersteg. Plötzlich erkannte ich, daß die entstandene Form ein Hufeisen war. Hufeisen bedeuten Glück, und mein Hufeisen wies nach Norden, ungefähr nach der Stelle, an der jetzt das Haus am Bakken steht. Damals aber ahnte ich noch nicht, daß ich nach Oslo übersiedeln würde" (1981: 366).

⁷⁷ My own translation from the original text in French, "Le 'Merzbau' est la construction d'un intérieur par des formes plastiques et des couleurs" (354).

[The column] is first of all **just one out of many**, ten or so. It is called **Cathedral of Erotic Misery**, or in short **K d e E**; we are living in the era of abbreviations. Besides, it is unfinished, and that is a matter of principle. It grows somewhat following the principle of the Metropolis; somewhere a house is to be built and the planning authorities must ensure that the new house does not distort the whole cityscape.⁷⁸

Following this introduction to the column *K d e E*, Schwitters continues with a description of his method including the grottos that have emerged within the column during its construction. Schwitters describes the different themes and objects, giving literary content to these internal spaces, and makes the statement that because he was a Dadaist when *K d e E* first began taking form, the literary content is Dada.⁷⁹ Furthermore, during the seven years that have passed from the initiation of the work until “Ich und meine Ziele” is written and published, the column has developed in accordance with the artist’s own development. Schwitters writes:

One could say that **K d e E** is the pure forming of **all the things, with a few exceptions**, that were **either important or unimportant** during the last seven years of my life; in which a certain literary form, however, has slipped in.⁸⁰

He concludes the text by stating that the overall expression of *Merzbau*, at the time of writing, is one of Cubist painting or Gothic architecture – and, then again, perhaps not quite, as he ironically adds.⁸¹ If the impression of *Merzbau* based on “Ich und meine Ziele” nevertheless remains a somewhat ambiguous contour of an object rather than an interior, another short text “Das grosse E” [The Big E], possibly from 1930/31, complicates things further.⁸² Here, Schwitters proclaims that “Das grosse E ist fertig” [The Big E is finished] (338), *Das grosse E* seemingly being a new name for *K d e E*. And not only is it finished, contrary to the *unfinished on principle* set out in “Ich und meine Ziele,” but it has become “the negative function of *K d e E*” – “a monument to pure art. It is a non-functional constellation of things that previously had a function. As such, it is Merz.”⁸³ By considering the three texts chronologically, an outline of the *K d e E* column is drawn as one out of a number of columns in the process of transforming into a non-functional constellation of things before eventually becoming a spatial interior. The process of transformation from column (object) to interior (space), not otherwise accounted for by Schwitters or anyone else from his circle, leaves much room for speculation. The following section [3.1.2] looks further into the issue of how *Merzbau* might have taken form.

⁷⁸ Translated from, “[Die Säule] ist zunächst nur **eine von vielen**, etwa von zehn. Sie heißt **Kathedrale des erotischen Elends**, oder abgekürzt **K d e E**, wir leben in der Zeit der Abkürzungen. Außerdem ist sie unfertig, und zwar aus Princip. Sie wächst etwa wie der Princip der Großstadt, irgendwo soll wieder ein Haus gebaut werden, und das Bauamt muß zusehen, daß das neue Haus nicht das ganze Stadtbild verpatzt” (343). The highlighted text in bold font corresponds to Schwitters’ original print in his periodical *Merz 21 erstes Veilchenheft* [Merz 21 First Book of Violets] (1931).

⁷⁹ The thematic content of the grottos is discussed further in section 3.1.2 of the present chapter.

⁸⁰ Translated from, “Mann könnte sagen die **K d e E** ist die Gestaltung **aller Dinge, mit einigen Ausnahmen**, die in meinem Leben der letzten sieben Jahre **entweder wichtig oder unwichtig** waren zu reiner Form; in die sich aber eine gewisse litterarische Form eingeschlichen hat” (1981: 344). From the text “Ich und meine Ziele” (1931).

⁸¹ Schwitters wrote, “Der Gesamteindruck erinnert dann etwa an kubistische Gemälde oder an gothische Architektur (kein Bischen!)” (1981: 345), which translates into, “The overall impression then somehow resembles Cubist paintings or Gothic architecture (or perhaps not!).”

⁸² *Das literarische Werk* [The Literary Work] estimates this date based on the content of the text (423).

⁸³ Translated from, “Es ist die Negativfunktion der *K d e E*. Es ist das Monument reiner Kunst. Es ist zwecklose Gestalt von Dingen, die früher einmal einen Zweck hatten. So ist es Merz” (338).

A significant number of witness accounts exist from visitors to the house in Waldhausenstrasse throughout the 1920s/30s. Insofar as Schwitters often hosted performances in the house, it became a central meeting point in Hannover for artists, gallerists, museum directors and other open-minded local residents. Schwitters' numerous friends and acquaintances from Europe's artistic avant-garde scene would also frequently visit the house, and one of the earliest known accounts is from Richard Huelsenbeck who visited Schwitters in 1919, as mentioned above. In his memoirs, Huelsenbeck describes what he identifies as a "tower or tree or house" with openings and internal spaces "in which Schwitters said he kept souvenirs, photos, birth dates and other respectable and less respectable data" (1991: 66). After Huelsenbeck, numerous accounts, often at odds with each other, would surface from visitors such as the artists Max Ernst, Hannah Höch, Raoul Hausmann, Hans Arp and Rudolf Jahns (Webster 2007).

A considerable correspondence took place between Schwitters, his wife Helma and their friends and colleagues. In addition, between the couple themselves when Schwitters was away from Hannover. These letters make various references to a number of columns in the process of taking form in the studio between the late 1920s/early 1930s. The earliest known reference is from a letter to the Schwitters couple's friend Katherine S. Dreier dated 1927.⁸⁴ During the 1930s, references become more frequent and eventually describe a whole room, thereby implying that the columns have begun to merge into one spatial interior. While this transition appears to occur at some point between early 1931 and mid-1932 (53), Schwitters will continue to name the room his *studio* until introducing the name *Merzbau* in the text "Le Merzbau" (1933). Among the number of people who saw the work in one stage or other of its development, it was above all Ernst and Helma who witnessed the work's construction – not to say lived with it, if not inside of it. Ernst, who was born in 1918 and therefore a child during the early stages of the work, would become a renowned photographer, and he began taking pictures of *Merzbau* from an early age. While nearly all of these photographs have been lost, it is, however, owing to Ernst that a significant amount of evidence related to Schwitters' general oeuvre has survived. As the first to preserve and archive his father's work and documents, Ernst's collection has since been transferred to the Sprengel Museum Hannover.

When in the summer of 1980, Ernst Schwitters was contacted by Harald Szeemann, art historian and curator of the Kunsthaus in Zurich [The Museum of Modern Art in Zurich], about the possibility of reconstructing the Hannover *Merzbau*, Szeeman was met with scepticism. For Ernst, endorsement of the project was on the condition that Kurt Schwitters' first biographer, Werner Schmalenbach, would give approval. Once this came, with the caveat that the reconstruction should be labelled as "attempted" rather than "true" (Bissegger n/d), the Swiss stage designer Peter Bissegger was commissioned to produce a set of drawings on the basis of Redemann's three photographs from 1933.

⁸⁴ Webster makes note of a reference in the letter to a column in the studio that Schwitters has been unable to work on because of painting the house (2007: 39).

Bissegger produced the reconstruction with a small team, and the final work was first presented at the exhibition “Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk” [The Propensity for the Total Work of Art], Zurich (1983). The reconstruction is based on stereometric analysis of the three photographs as well as the few surviving images by Ernst Schwitters, who followed the project closely as an advisor. Ernst established the dimensions of the studio’s floor plan as 5.80 x 3.93 m with a room height of 4.60 m. A system of coordinates based on these numbers, in which all points identified from the photographs were inserted, was then determined by Bissegger. The accuracy of the reconstruction has since been tested and verified through imitation of the photographs from 1933 with confirmation of the proportioning as being very close to identical to the original *Merzbau* (Bissegger n/d) [Fig. 3.21]. While one copy of the reconstruction is installed on permanent display in Sprengel Museum Hannover, another is transportable and frequently shown in exhibition spaces across the world.⁸⁵

3.1.2 The columns of a Merz-house

A column was photographed twice in 1928 [Fig. 3.22/3.23], one image being a close-up and the other displaying a different part of the structure as seen from a distance. The studio room itself is not visible in these images beyond the part of the wall behind the columns. Both images are labelled “K d e E,” which was the name of the column that Schwitters described in the texts “Das grosse E” and “Ich und meine Ziele” discussed above [3.1.1]. In the first text, Schwitters wrote that the column had been underway since 1923 and if so, a number of columns would have been in process simultaneously before the relocation of the studio to the eventual *Merzbau* room. A photograph dated 1925/26 by the *Catalogue Raisonné* (Schwitters 2003: Fig. 6) shows another column, the *Merzsäule* [Merz-column], seemingly integrated into *Merzbau* as the *Lebensäule* [Column of Life] [Fig. 3.24].⁸⁶ A blurry studio photograph dated 1920 (2003: Fig. 5) [Fig. 3.25] shows a column of some resemblance to the *Merzsäule*, although it has not been established whether the photo shows the column in an earlier stage or it is an altogether different work. What the photograph does show is that Schwitters by the early 1920s had appropriated the column format as a sculptural repository for found objects, even if it would take some time before these columns grew to the stage of the spatial environment seen in Redemann’s photographs.

⁸⁵ I visited the reconstruction in Sprengel Museum Hannover in September 2010 and entering the copy is as puzzling as it is instructive. While the interior lining and geometrical shapes are strangely uniform and continuous, lacking the detail and depth evident in Redemann’s photographs, the scale of the room is perceivable. A strange duality between the concreteness of the copy and its function as a spatial representation permeates the experience of occupying *the room*. One recognises the *scenes* from the photographs without difficulty, yet these are at the same time oddly simplified; one looks out of the sizeable garden window, but the view is a photostatic representation and the daylight is artificial. In the lower corner to the right of the window – the point from where the whole geometry of the space has been drawn out by Bissegger – one gets a sense of the tension between the initial box-shaped studio room and the construction that has merged with it. Perhaps, tension is not the word because the overlap of room and structure appears peaceful. The orthogonal corner of the room slides quietly behind a transportable column on wheels, the shadow behind revealing that the column is in fact mobile and not fixed to the wall. The knowledge that a virtual grid emerged from the corner behind the column and was drawn out like a net is puzzling. From this *point zero*, a geometry emerged able to calculate the whole *Merzbau*, which it took Schwitters ten years to build. From this corner the reconstruction was put in place inside a box, like a room within a room. The realisation of the methodology is as overwhelming as the construction itself, and glancing behind the transportable column in the corner, one finds that whatever else this corner holds, it keeps it hidden. Turning around, one faces the structure while looking back out through the entrance door. *Merzbau* appears completely different seen diagonally from this end.

⁸⁶ In a letter to Katherine Dreier, dated 13 January 1931, Helma Schwitters describes how the column begins to grow outwards once it reaches the full height of the studio room. (49).

If this transition is largely unaccounted for and therefore uncertain, the columns in Kurt Schwitters' studio on the ground floor are believed to have transformed into a spatial interior in the early 1930s (Webster 2007: 102). The idea that *Merzbau* was initiated already in the 1920s has also been suggested on the basis of accounts from Ernst Schwitters, who in 1964 described the early *Merzbau* as a combination of Dadaist sculptures and collage work gradually merging to form one Dadaist work (Schmalenbach 1967: 141). Later, in 1971, Ernst described a similar process yet added that what first merged to become one column would subsequently merge with other columns to become a coherent spatial structure. In other words, when the studio got too crowded by columns, these gradually grew together to become one work (Webster 2007: 8/9). However, in 1983, Ernst explained that *Merzbau* developed in the studio when his father began connecting pictures and sculptures with strings to emphasise their *interaction* (9). These strings were then substituted for wire, eventually becoming wooden structures rendered in plaster, and a variety of works located in the studio would be drawn together in one continuous structure.

Other possible developmental routes towards the spatial walk-in environment can be imagined. Schwitters' early use of cut and paste techniques – from the two-dimensional collage and assemblage work to the sculptures in the round of the columns – might have influenced *Merzbau* in a number of ways. The thesis therefore suggests that the work had a spatial orientation to a much larger extent than is usually acknowledged. The circumstance that internal and external caves and grottos formed integral parts of the columns from the early stages of development implies that these were spatial constructs all along. As hollow upright forms with spatially articulated interiors/exteriors, the columns gave Schwitters' studio work a spatial dimension prior to its engagement with the studio room itself. While this observation emphasises a more general spatial focus in the work, it also affects ideas about how *Merzbau* possibly emerged on the basis of these columns. Furthermore, what the spatial language of the columns meant for the eventual spatial articulation of *Merzbau*.

The caves and grottos, of varying dimensions and character, were thematically named and/or dedicated to people from within, yet eventually also without, Schwitters' circle.⁸⁷ While containing various objects or small installations signifying or just referring to this or that person or event, some caves and grottos disappeared over time. They were either plastered over, transformed into other spaces, merged, or had their content altered altogether. With names such as *Niebelungenhort* [Niebelungen Treasure], *Goethegrotte* [Goethe Grotto] and *Lutherecke* [Luther's Corner], a number of caves and grottos made direct references to historical events. Others carried names related to the objects that they housed, such as *Grotte mit Puppenkopf* [Grotto with Doll's Head] and *Grotte mit Kubhorn*

⁸⁷ Schwitters' caves and grottos referred to friends and historical personalities as diverse as "Haarmann, Hitler, Hindenburg, all the Roman gods, Captain Dreier of the sunken Monte Cervantes, Conrad Veidt, Mussolini, my wife and me, my son, Professor Wanken and his son Punzelchen, Mrs. Elizabeth Klenner and many, many more," as Schwitters wrote in "Das grosse E" [The Big E] (1930/31). Translated from, "Haarmann, Hitler, Hindenburg, sämtliche römischen Götter, Kapitän Dreier von der untergegangenen Monte Cervantes, Conrad Veidt, Mussolini, meine Frau und ich, mein Sohn, Professor Wanken und dessen Sohn Punzelchen, Frau Elizabeth Klenner und viele, viele andere" (1981: 339).

[Grotto with Cow's Horn]. If a difference existed in Schwitters' mind regarding the nature of his placed objects, as opposed to the found material that the columns, and eventually *Merzbau*, would be built from, then the limit between these two categories does not appear to have been fixed.

While the thesis returns to a discussion of this aspect below [3.3.3], it argues that the material, brought inside the house by Schwitters, informed the relationship between columns and studio – and by extension work of art and dwelling house – when washing through the house like the *sea of debris* described by visitors.⁸⁸ Once the columns rose from this chaotic ground, a process of transformation, perhaps already ongoing in the material, took further form. Considering that found material would affect the domestic setting by forcing it to accommodate external and possibly foreign elements, the house was in turn likely to recharge the intrusion before it was transformed into a work of art. The material would, as such, mediate between house and work, studio space and spatial construct, home and art. The artist's studio located in a dwelling house would outline a framework for the art of giving form to the formless, while the art material itself would counter this notion of formation in relation to the dwelling house. Schwitters termed this continuous forming and transforming *Entformung* [deforming/demoulding].

At one point, Schwitters appropriated an adjacent room – the front room traversed to get to the main studio room – for his art practice [Fig. 3.7 room 1]. This expansion seemingly occurred in 1933 when the studio structure was photographed by Redemann and published under the name *Merzbau* for the first time.⁸⁹ Once the work had overtaken the studio and thereby rendered the designation *studio* obsolete, Schwitters required another room for his continued practice, another studio as it were. With reference to the hand-drawn sketches referred to above, this second room was also eventually merzed, as was the balcony and the space below it [Fig. 3.4/3.5/3.6]. In addition, *Merzbau* would shoot off into the attic as a discontinued formation, and in a letter from 1946, Schwitters further included two basement rooms and one second floor room in the *Merz-house* that came to occupy Waldhausenstrasse 5A.⁹⁰

3.1.3 Interpretation of a Merz-artist

The literature on Schwitters' life and work on which the thesis relies consists primarily of a number of monographs and exhibition catalogues published after the artist's death in 1948. During World War II and the subsequent years of exile in England, the artist was largely forgotten with only occasional smaller shows. However, in 1956, a significant presentation went on display in the Kestner-Gesellschaft [Kestner Society], Hannover, curated by the art historian and director of the society

⁸⁸ Such accounts are found in recollections by Richard Huelsenbeck and Max Ernst (Webster 2007: 32). The material used by Schwitters for making these increasingly spatial works was by and large urban flotsam such as scrap paper, empty packaging and magazine cut-outs – refuse and discarded objects found on the streets and flea markets of Hannover. Nothing seems to have been too precious or trivial to find its way into Schwitters' house, studio and artistic compositions, quite on the contrary.

⁸⁹ According to Webster's revised chronology, Schwitters removed the door between the studio and the front room once the main room was considered complete and documented for publication (100).

⁹⁰ The letter was sent to Christof Spengemann, dated 18 September 1946 (Nündel 1974: 230).

Werner Schmalenbach. The show travelled on to Bern, Amsterdam, Brussels and Luttich, and Schmalenbach's monograph on Schwitters, *Schwitters Leben und Werk* [Schwitters: Life and Work], was published in Germany in 1967. It was the first profound attempt to historicise Schwitters' full artistic oeuvre, and Schmalenbach included a section on the Hannover *Merzbau*. As the first scholarly presentation of the structure, Schmalenbach's text came to set a precedent for subsequent thinking and writing on the work. It was largely based on Ernst Schwitters' recollections of the years in Hannover explained to Schmalenbach during interviews in preparation of the publication.

Despite an English translation of Schmalenbach's book (1970), it was not until 1985 that John Elderfield – art historian and later director of MoMA – published the first English language work on Schwitters. In the meantime, Friedhelm Lach's *Der Merzkünstler Kurt Schwitters* [The Merz Artist Kurt Schwitters] emerged (1971), and Lach also edited the five-volume compilation of Schwitters' own writing, *Das literarische Werk* [The Literary Work] (1973-81). The first publication to focus entirely on the Hannover *Merzbau* was Dietmar Elger's *Der Merzbau von Kurt Schwitters: eine Werkmonographie* [The *Merzbau* by Kurt Schwitters: A Work Monograph] (1984/1999). Elger's book proposes an interpretation of *Merzbau* that aligns the structure with the Expressionist movement in German architecture in the beginning of the twentieth century. Elger traces this influence in parallel with Schwitters' self-proclaimed pursuit of pure form/pure art as integral to *Merzbau's* formal development.

In 1981, prior to Elderfield's extensive discussion of Schwitters' general life and work, historian Ernst Nündel published *Kurt Schwitters: in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* [Kurt Schwitters: In His Own Words and Images] based on a selection of Schwitters' correspondence. Prior to this publication, Nündel also edited *Wir spielen, bis uns der Tod abbolt: Briefe aus fünf Jahrzehnten* [We Play until Death Collects Us: Letters from Five Decades] (1975), and research into Schwitters' correspondence with family, friends and collaborators led Nündel to suggest a number of adjustments to prevailing ideas about the nature and extent of the Hannover *Merzbau*. If a tendency to speculation, due to the general lack of evidence, marked publications on the work, a layered narrative beyond substantiation had emerged as a result. An attempt to correct some of these inaccuracies emerged with art historian Gwendolen Webster's PhD thesis (2007) and the development of a revised chronology of the work.⁹¹ Webster argues for a significant adjustment of prevailing ideas about *Merzbau's* development as proposed by Schmalenbach, Elger and Elderfield by suggesting that the work, in the form of the spatial construct situated in Schwitters' ground floor studio, was a work of the 1930s rather than the 1920s. The implications of this shift are significant if one considers that *Merzbau* then took form during the years when Schwitters was pursued as a subversive and “degenerate” artist by the German authorities. The fears that *Merzbau* could be destroyed or Schwitters himself forced to leave the

⁹¹ Webster, who has also authored a biography on Schwitters (1997) and received the doctoral degree from the Open University, Milton Keynes, UK, based her revision on a close reading of documents from the Kurt Schwitters Archive in Hannover.

country were not insignificant.⁹² Webster argues that because no reference to or evidence of *Merzbau* has been found dating from before 1927, it is a straightforward conclusion that the structure did not exist as a spatial interior before then. Schwitters had, according to Webster, the opportunity to promote the structure publicly on a number of occasions during the 1920s, yet chose not to (2007: 27). *Merzbau* would not be disseminated in publications and exhibitions until the early 1930s, and the thesis therefore follows Webster's revised chronology by suggesting that the timeframe of the development of the work goes from the studio move in 1927 until Schwitters leaves Germany in 1937.

3.2 STATEMENTS – Merz processing the present

Schwitters produced a significant body of written work and wrote about art and many other subjects, writing which he also published in a number of periodicals including his own *Merz* launched in 1923 and continued until 1932.⁹³ The five volumes of Schwitters' collected writing, *Das literarische Werk*, contains a selection of these texts bearing witness to a thinker and practitioner working across a wide range of genres and media within art as well as literature. The numerous journals and pamphlets published as part of the early twentieth century avant-garde scene was a platform well suited for Schwitters' prolific output. While establishing himself as a unique contributor to art theory and practice, Schwitters also thrived on the influence coming from artist friends such as Hans Arp, Raoul Hausmann and Hannah Höch. He was well connected, and once the figurative painting of landscapes, portraits and still lifes was mastered, the artist embarked on a fast-forward tour through the avant-garde styles and movements of his contemporaries. Impressionism, Cubism, Expressionism – Schwitters' traditional artistic training from the academy in Dresden was put in service beyond what might have been expected.⁹⁴ The social network continued to grow and came to include other pioneering artists and architects from across Europe with whom Schwitters established contacts during visits to cities like Berlin, Zurich, Paris and Amsterdam. From 1918, he became a regular fixture in Herwarth Walden's Galerie Sturm in Berlin, the place where the first *Merz*-pictures were exhibited in 1919. Schwitters wrote in a letter to Walden in 1920:

One can only define Merz tentatively by studying its previous meanings. As a matter of principle, Merz has no predetermined program. Merz takes as its starting point the given conditions and processes the present accordingly. (1975: 41/42)⁹⁵

The articulation of a theory of Merz occurred in "Die Merzmalerei" [The Merz-painting] published in *Der Sturm* (1919), and "Merz" published in *Der Ararat* (1920). While these texts give clues to the nature

⁹² When the National Socialists rose to power in 1933, Schwitters' work was included in the exhibition "Entartete Kunst" [Degenerate Art] that went on display throughout Germany in 1933-36 (Schwitters 2000: 600/612).

⁹³ A number of Schwitters' texts appeared in avant-garde periodicals published by the leading artists and architects in Europe at the time. These included Bruno Taut's *Frühlicht*, Theo van Doesburg's *Mécano*, Herwarth Walden's *Der Sturm*, Christof Spengemann/Friedrich Wilhelm Wagner's *Der Zweemann* and Hans Goltz's *Der Ararat*.

⁹⁴ Interestingly, Schwitters continued a practice of figurative painting throughout his life, producing numerous conventional portraits and landscapes in parallel with the otherwise pioneering Merz practice.

⁹⁵ Translated from, "Merz läßt sich nur vorläufig definieren, indem man rückschauend die bisherige Bedeutung von Merz betrachtet. Merz hat kein Programm mit vorherbestimmten Ziel, aus Prinzip. Merz geht von ganz bestimmten Voraussetzungen aus und verarbeitet Vorhandenes sinngemäß" (1975: 41/42).

of artistic strategies and ideas, the genre-defying style of Schwitters' writing – one moment ironic, the next seemingly more serious – makes the artist a somewhat two-faced character. One is never quite sure how serious things really become in the mind of Schwitters.⁹⁶

The five volumes of collected writing in *Das literarische Werk* extend across the various literary genres that the artist explored. Vol. 1 with the title “Lyrik” [lyric poetry] presents poems, proverbs, aphorisms and songs; vol. 2 entitled “Prosa 1918-1930” [prose] contains prose adjoined by humorous illustrations made from typographical material; vol. 3, “Prosa 1931-48,” presents prose texts written by Schwitters in German as well as in English, and vol. 4, “Schauspiele und Szenen” [plays and scenes], contains a number of pieces written between 1922 and 1946. It is, however, vol. 5 that is of particular interest to the thesis with its collection of rarely read texts as well as more known pieces. To the former category belong early texts on abstract art as well as critical/philosophical essays on contemporary issues. To the latter, texts and notes on Merz art, Schwitters' writing on architecture and his parodies on certain at the time well known art critics. Schwitters' legacy in a sense comes full circle with these parodies, which caused as much controversy among conservative critics as the artistic work did. What for some was intolerably radical to the point of insulting, would for others be unforgivably bourgeois in line with Huelsenbeck's criticism referred to above. Statements made by Schwitters, thematised and discussed in the following sections, derive from a number of the publications mentioned, in most cases reproduced in *Das literarische Werk*, vol. 5.

3.2.1 “Now I call myself Merz”

When Schwitters embraced the artistic styles and strategies of post-World War I avant-garde artists, he, at the same time, decided to launch a movement of which he could only himself be a member. He called this movement Merz and stated, “Kurt Schwitters is the inventor of MERZ and i and recognises no-one besides himself as a Merz artist or i-artist” (2000: 250).⁹⁷ After some time spent in Berlin during 1918 with the Dada collage masters Hausmann, Arp and Höch, Schwitters returned to Hannover to create his first collage work. Soon after, work of a more spatial character began to develop, and, as mentioned above, the term *Merz* was coined on the basis of a text fragment from one of these early assemblages, *Das Merzbild* [The Merz-picture] [Fig. 3.3]. “Believe it or not, the word MERZ is nothing more than the second syllable of Commerz,” Schwitters wrote with reference to the snippet of the advertisement for the German Kommerz- und Privatbank [commerce and private bank]

⁹⁶ The interest in writing and language extended to the typography and form of the letters themselves as well as printing techniques. Schwitters began designing fonts and undertook graphic design work for commercial purposes; in 1924, he opened an advertisement agency operating until his escape from Germany in 1937. As Friedhelm Lach suggests in the foreword to *Das literarische Werk*, the collage and assemblage work, often based on scrap paper findings, might well have elevated the typographical manifestations on paper to an artform in the eyes of the Merz-artist (1981: 19).

⁹⁷ The reference to “i” as a Schwitters-movement in parallel with Merz refers to an art practice described in the text “i (Ein Manifest)” [i (A Manifesto)] published in *Der Sturm* (1922). Schwitters writes that i is, “the middle vowel of the alphabet and the name for the implications of Merz in terms of an intense sensitivity to the artform. Merz makes use of large-scale ready-mades as material for the creation of art in order to shorten the path from intuition to visualisation of the artistic idea as much as possible ... i sets this path = zero. Idea, material and work of art are the same.” Translated from, “Der mittlere Vokal des Alphabets und die Bezeichnung für die Konsequenz von Merz in bezug auf intensives Erfassen der Kunstform. Merz bedient sich zum Formen des Kunstwerks großer fertiger Komplexe, die als Material gelten, um den Weg von der Intuition bis zur Sichtbarmachung der künstlerischen Idee möglichst abzukürzen ... i setzt diesen Weg = null. Idee, Material und Kunstwerk sind dasselbe” (1981: 120).

found on the work.⁹⁸ Merz, being the only part of the bank's name that remained uncovered in the collaged work, became the term through which Schwitters would approach all aspects of life, work and art. It became the name of a movement that set the artist apart from other contemporary groups such as the Expressionists, Dadaists, Futurists and Constructivists – groups Schwitters was closely related to and befriended with. The term was required on the occasion of the first exhibition of Merz-pictures, an occasion calling for a new name to designate a new genre, as Schwitters later explained:

You will understand that I named a picture with the word MERZ the MERZ-picture, just like I named the picture with "and" the And-picture, and a picture with "worker" the Worker-picture. When I was exhibiting these glued and nailed pictures for the first time in Sturm in Berlin, I was looking for a collective name for the new genre, I could not classify my pictures according to old concepts such as Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism or otherwise. So, I called all my pictures within this genre MERZ-pictures after the first MERZ-picture. Later, I extended the term MERZ to cover first my poetry, because since 1917 I write poetry and, eventually, all corresponding activities. Now I call myself Merz.⁹⁹

Conveniently free from pre-existing connotations in the artist's mind, Merz, a new word, soon became subject to various twists and turns for the purpose of fitting Schwitters' many agendas. Likewise, agendas were tailored to fit Merz. From the name of one work, *Das Merzbild*, to the name of a genre, Merzbildern [Merz-pictures], to an umbrella above the whole oeuvre, the term Merz eventually denoted the artist himself, Kurt Merz Schwitters.¹⁰⁰ If the use of Merz over time could seem to become so flexible that the term was at risk of losing any kind of specificity, the artistic Merz practice was equally adaptable – at the same time defined and open-ended.¹⁰¹

Merz-art was first described in the text "Das Merzmalerei" where the concept of *total amalgamation* of all conceivable materials was explained as a process subsuming all differentials under the shared heading of *equal evaluation*. As such, the work of art would emerge from a balanced plurality of forms. Schwitters wrote:

The Merz-paintings are abstract works of art. Above all, the word Merz refers to the constellation of all available materials for artistic purposes and, technically, the in principle equal evaluation of every single piece. The Merz-painting utilises not only colour and canvas, brushes and palette; rather, it utilises all visible materials and all required tools. In this respect, it is irrelevant whether or not the materials used were made for a specific purpose. The pram wheel, the wire netting, the twine and cotton wool are the colours of equal elements. The artist creates by selecting, distributing and demoulding the materials.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Translated from, "Sie mögen es glauben oder nicht, das Wort MERZ ist weiter nichts, als die zweite Silbe von Commerz" (167). From the text "Watch Your Step!" published in *MERZ 6 Imitatoren watch step!* (1923).

⁹⁹ Translated from, "Sie können es verstehen, daß ich ein Bild mit dem Worte MERZ das MERZbild nannte, wie ich ein Bild mit 'und' das und-Bild und ein Bild mit 'Arbeiter' das Arbeiterbild nannte. Nun suchte ich, als ich zum ersten Male diese geklebten und genagelten Bilder im Sturm in Berlin ausstellte, eine Sammelnamen für diese neue Gattung, da ich meine Bilder nicht einreihen konnte in alte Begriffe, wie Expressionismus, Kubismus, Futurismus oder sonstwie. Ich nannte nun all meine Bilder als Gattung nach dem charakteristischsten Bilde MERZbilder. Später erweiterte ich die Bezeichnung MERZ erst auf meine Dichtung, denn seit 1917 dichte ich, und endlich auf all meine entsprechende Tätigkeit. Jetzt nenne ich mich selbst MERZ" (1981: 252/53). From the text "Kurt Schwitters" published in *Merz 20 Kurt Schwitters* (1927).

¹⁰⁰ John Elderfield has pointed out that Schwitters often used the signature *Kurt Merz Schwitters* (1985: 94).

¹⁰¹ Schwitters wrote, "The word *Merz* had no meaning from the outset. Now it has the meaning that I have ascribed to it. The meaning of the term *Merz* changes with the changed perception of the individual who continues to process the term in his/her mind." Translated from, "Das Wort *Merz* hat keine Bedeutung, als ich es formte. Jetzt hat es die Bedeutung, die ich ihm beigelegt habe. Die Bedeutung des begriffs *Merz* ändert sich mit der Änderung der Erkenntnis derjenigen, die im Sinne des Begriffs weiterarbeiten" (1981: 77). From the text "Merz (Für den *Ararat* geschrieben 19. Dezember 1920)" [Merz (Written for the *Ararat* 19 December 1920)] published in *Der Ararat* (1920).

¹⁰² Translated from, "Die Bilder Merzmalerei sind abstrakte Kunstwerke. Das Wort Merz bedeutet wesentlich die zusammenfassung aller erdenklichen Materialien für künstlerische Zwecke und technisch die prinzipiell gleiche Wertung der einzelnen Materialien. Die Merzmalerei bedient sich aber nicht nur der Farbe und der Leinwand, des Pinsels, der Palette, sondern aller vom Auge wahrnehmbar Materialien und aller erforderlichen Werkzeuge. Dabei ist es unwesentlich, ob die verwendeten Materialien schon für irgend welchen Zweck geformt waren oder nicht. Das Kinderwagenrad, das Drahtnetz, der Bindfaden und die Watte sind der Farbe gleichberechtigte Faktoren. Der Künstler schafft

The artist is at the centre of a process embracing every thing, even what might not immediately be perceived as embraceable, to instigate new relationships between singular elements composed into the totality of an abstract work of art. Every part of the composition is as valuable as any other; every individual subject equals any object. Schwitters presents a methodology based on what he calls *Entformung*, which might be translated into *deforming* or *demoulding* – the removal of a cast object from its mould.¹⁰³ A particular relationship thereby emerges between material and form questioning the nature of the latter – is the form the one from which the cast is made? Is it the act of giving a material another form? Or is it the eventual form that a new object takes? On Schwitters' mind might well have been all such variations of form, the use of the word *Entformung* suggests that the process of (re)shaping material is a process of transformation of more than simply the form.

Within the practice lies a concern for the potential meanings and connotations of the *first material*. A piece of paper seen in this light is *a piece*, not just any random cut-off, but a piece *in itself*. Once such a singular piece is merged, transformed, metamorphosed into another form, perhaps even another material, it becomes something else, yet also in some sense remains the same. This movement from being a singular piece – one moment one thing, the next something else – is the destiny of material, of process, of lived life. For Schwitters, pieces of fabric or objects became the lines and planes that turned the two-dimensional image into a three-dimensional work. If the initial material remained visible, perhaps even identifiable, then that was not the point. Schwitters wrote:

The demoulding of the materials occurs through their distribution on the image-plane. In addition, by dividing, bending, covering or painting over. In Merz painting, the crate cover, the playing card, the newspaper cut-out becomes a surface; the string, brush or pencil stroke becomes a line; the wire mesh, painting or glued on sandwich wrapping becomes a glaze; cotton wool gives softness.¹⁰⁴

An essential aspect of Merz is the reuse of found material, raw and processed, and if Schwitters was not the first artist to resort to the strategy of recycling everyday objects in artistic work, he would take the concept further than most. When Huelsenbeck visited the house in Hannover late 1919, he subsequently described the studio as “a mixture of hopeless disarray and meticulous accuracy” (1991: 66). Paper, rags, stones, wooden logs, even cuff links were scattered around and when confronting Schwitters with the nature of these formed and formless presences, the artist simply replied, “It’s all crap...” (66). However, the classification of forms and materials as refuse did not necessarily mean that these had no value, or were of less value than other prized works of art and materials. On the contrary, considering Schwitters' Merz-attitude, with its insistence on the equality of materials, the

durch Wahl, Verteilung und Entformung der Materialien” (1981: 37). From the text “Die Merzmalerei” [The Merz-painting] published in *Der Zweeman, Der Sturm* and *Der Cicerone* (all 1919).

¹⁰³ Insofar as *Entformung* is not a term found in German-English dictionaries, the suggested translation is based on the translation of the term *entformen* as “to demould; to remove from the mould” (Online dictionary n.d.).

¹⁰⁴ Translated from, “Das Entformeln der Materialien kann schon erfolgen durch ihre Verteilung auf der Bildfläche. Es wird noch unterstützt durch Zerteilen, Verbiegen, Überdecken oder Übermalen. Bei der Merzmalerei wird der Kistendeckel, die Spielkarte, der Zeitungsausschnitt zur Fläche, Bindfaden, Pinselstrich oder Bleistiftstrich zur Linie, Drahtnetz, Übermalung oder aufgeklebtes Butterbrotpapier zur Lasur, Watte zur Weichheit” (1981: 37). From the text “Die Merzmalerei” [The Merz-painting] (1919).

answer to Huelsenbeck could just as well have been, “It’s all very valuable...” That an agenda in terms of the value of things was pressing was emphasised in the text “Merz” written in December 1920. Here, Schwitters explained how in relation to his Merz-painting, the material – be it a colour or found object – was unimportant once it entered into the overall composition or constellation:

Because the medium is unimportant, I take any material whatsoever if the picture demands it. When I adjust materials of different kinds to one another, I have taken a step in advance of mere oilpainting for in addition to playing off colour against colour, line against line, form against form etc., I play off material against material; for example, wood against sackcloth. I call the *Weltanschauung* from which this mode of artistic creation arose *Merz*. (1981: 406)¹⁰⁵

Merz reevaluates the world when the artist gives form and brings every thing together on the shared image-plane. If within this frame, the equal evaluation of material marks a site of a non-hierarchical harmonious order, then the inclusivity of Merz would appear to have no limit. The work would have no *outside*, and Merz could, eventually, merz the world.

3.2.2 The pure forms of abstract art

In 1920, with Merz-art in its early stages, Schwitters proclaimed, “In principle, Merz aspires only for art, because one cannot serve two masters.”¹⁰⁶ The statement emerged in response to the Berlin Dadaists when criticising Schwitters’ apolitical approach to art and Merz’ lack of commitment to direct social engagement and change. Schwitters, however, maintained that not only did Merz not have a political agenda, it should not be perceived as a kind of anti-art or anti-culture either, such as Huelsenbeck’s version of Dada was in the eyes of Schwitters. According to the artist, Merz was an independent creation, it did not serve anything or anyone, nor did it have a utilitarian purpose, it simply aspired for art – for pure, abstract form. Schwitters wrote:

It is being held against me that I did not live with the times when my work did not somehow reflect the contemporary age. I maintain that **abstract art**, and only abstract art, **reflects our time**, because it is the latest logical stage in the development of art in the our time as we know it, and this is not a matter of years or decades; rather, it will be **the art of the next thousand years**. The so-called New Objectivity in painting is a transient, temporary and partial reaction; as such, the use of the name is completely wrong, since **the new and objective art in our time is the abstraction**.¹⁰⁷

Abstraction according to Schwitters did not simply mean a non-figurative and formal artistic language cleansed of any trace of the individual artist maker. Neither was it an expressive gesture attempting to channel the immediacy of a formless sensation. It meant something in between, placing the subject at the centre of the work as the one who’s beating heart gave the work direction. Towards the end of his life, Schwitters wrote:

¹⁰⁵ The English translation of the text “Merz (Für den *Ararat* geschrieben 19. Dezember 1920)” (1920) is published in *Das Literarische Werk*, vol. 5.

¹⁰⁶ Translated from, “Merz erstrebt aus Prinzip nur die Kunst, weil kein Mensch zweien Herren dienen kann” (1981: 78). From the text “Merz (Für den *Ararat* geschrieben 19. Dezember 1920)” (1920).

¹⁰⁷ Translated from “Man hält mir entgegen, dass ich die Zeit nicht miterlebte, wenn ich sie nicht irgendwie im Kunstwerk widerspiegelte. Ich behaupte, dass **die abstrakte Kunst**, und nur die abstrakte kunst, **unsere Zeit spiegelt**, denn sie ist die letzte logische Phase in der Entwicklung der Kunst in der ganzen uns bekannten Zeit, und sie ist keine Angelegenheit von Jahren oder Jahrzehnten, sondern sie ist voraussichtlich **die Kunst der Nächsten Tausend Jahre**. Die sogenannte neue Sachlichkeit in der Malerei ist eine vorübergehende, zeitliche und partiische Reaktion; zudem ist der name total verkehrt angewendet, denn die neue und sachliche Kunst unserer Zeit ist die Abstraktion” (1981: 341). From the text “Ich und meine Ziele” [Myself and My Aims] (1931).

Abstract art is a way, it is one way of expressing one's feelings ... The picture is finished when you can't take away or put on anything without disturbing the present rhythm ... The material gives a certain movement, another may assist or fight it, and the composition collects all single movements to a rhythm ... Perhaps one can feel the rhythm of London and give a similar rhythm in an abstract picture. (385)¹⁰⁸

Schwitters' abstraction meant art as liberation. From the turmoil in the wake of World War I, with the Weimar Republic struggling to redefine Germany, Schwitters' inclination was to reject all things with a capacity to cause problems. The problems of his contemporary age, a moment of crisis, called upon art to elevate human beings. Schwitters' wrote:

Only equilibrium is the goal of the artwork, and only art is its purpose. **Art does not want to influence or affect, it wants to liberate, from life**, from all the things that burden humans such as national, political or financial problems. **Art aspires for the pure human being**, free from concerns over the state, political parties or food.¹⁰⁹

If the reality of the artist's contemporary age could be seen as an excuse for a desire to escape into elevated states of being through art, then it might be inferred that Schwitters collected his art material from the forsaken zone – the impoverished everyday life of Hannover. Once the material flotsam entered the house, it became the building material for the parallel Merz-reality. The immediate contradiction of utilising found material for the creation of pure, abstract art was overcome by redefining the properties of these found objects. A process of transformation allowed the individual piece of material to cross a gap and become part of the overall artistic composition, and the thesis widens the scope of this transition by proposing that the material transformation began as soon as the material entered the house in Waldhausenstrasse. In between the complete autonomy of the pure work of art and its complete engagement with the context that it derived from was a dwelling house. If the work of art and found material from the outset marked an interior/exterior dichotomy, then the house as domestic setting became the mediator. Section 3.3.1 below looks further into this relation.

To perceive the dwelling house as a mediator between the work of abstract art at the core of its structure and a problematic external context – which is walled out while also invited in – addresses the notion of *limit*. The limit of Schwitters' dwelling house drew a line around the Merz-work, itself subsuming all differentials in a harmonious coexistence as a delimited work. In the form of a composition made by an artist weighing each individual piece of material in order to settle its place in the overall equilibrium of forces in the work, the Merz-work gradually withdrew into itself. The indifference to the surrounding context was seen to elevate the work – in *Merzbau's* case perhaps helped on the way to this purification by the eventual whitewashing of the bricolage construction. Schwitters wrote, “The work of art differs from nature as a composition in a limited space, because

¹⁰⁸ From the unpublished text “Abstract Art” (1940-46) written by Schwitters in English at the time he was living in the UK.

¹⁰⁹ Translated from “Nur Gleichgewicht ist das Ziel des Kunstwerks, und Kunst ihr Zweck. **Kunst will nicht beeinflussen und nicht wirken, sondern befreien, vom Leben, von allen Dingen, die den Menschen belasten, wie nationale, politische oder wirtschaftliche Kämpfe. Kunst will den reinen Menschen, unbelastet von Staat, Partei und Nahrungssorgen**” (1981: 341). From the text “Ich und meine Ziele” [Myself and My Aims] (1931).

only in a limited space is it possible to evaluate all the parts against each other.”¹¹⁰ He then added, “The objective of art is emotional value; the means to achieve this, the composition. The emotional value cannot be explained, the composition is very easy to explain.”¹¹¹ The composition that was easy to explain was the non-hierarchical delimited plane of collected material in a state of equilibrium eradicating any remaining differentials through its harmoniously balanced autonomy. Once inscribed in the work, a piece of material rejected all relations to the exterior; there was no exterior and the material had no past. In contrast, the emotional value, which according to Schwitters could not be explained, was a formless presence made possible by the work through Entformung [deforming/demoulding].

3.2.3 A Gesamtkunstwerk in theory

As a conglomeration of reuse and refuse interspersed with objects appropriated from friends and family and mixed with other collected trophies, *Merzbau* was a carefully assembled three-dimensional recording of time past and passed in Schwitters’ rear ground floor studio. Not only so, but a recording of the journey that the columns, from which the work was built, had made through several rooms and corners of Waldhausenstrasse 5A between 1919/20 and 1937. As such, *Merzbau* embodied a work exceeding conventional notions of the singular when it was both more and less than one. At least until the moment of Redemann’s photographs which split the room in three parts, underlining the problem of defining the limit of *Merzbau* as one work, which is to say of framing it as one.

While found objects and material began to pile up within the walls of the house, Schwitters became concerned with the concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The idea that the making of a work of art is a unifying practice that brings dissociated art forms together in one work corresponded to Schwitters’ Merz-idea of a unifying practice gathering and merging the dispersed and fragmented in a collective building aspiring for higher equilibrium. Various references to such totalities were made by Schwitters when in writing reflecting on the *Gesamtwerk* [total work], the *Merzgesamtkunstwerk* [Merz total work of art] and the *Merz-Gesamtweltbilde* [Merz total world view].¹¹² In 1920/21 he wrote:

Towards the end of 1918, I realised that value exists only in relation to other values, and that to put restrictions on one material would be one-sided and petty. I created Merz on the basis of this realisation; at first, as the sum of individual art forms – Merz-painting, Merz-poetry. The Merz-stage then takes this further from a concern with just one art form to amalgamation in a total work of art. My final aspiration is the unification of art and non-art in a Merz total worldview.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Translated from, “Das Kunstwerk unterscheidet sich von der Natur durch Komposition in einem begrenzten Raume, denn nur in einem begrenzten Raume kann man in einer Komposition alle Teile gegeneinander werten” (1981: 363). From the unpublished text “Das Ziel meiner Merzkunst” [The Aim of my Merz Art] (1938).

¹¹¹ Translated from, “Das Kunstwerk unterscheidet sich von der Natur durch Komposition in einem begrenzten Raume, denn nur in einem begrenzten Raume kann man in einer Komposition alle Teile gegeneinander werten ... Also, um zu resümieren, das Ziel der Kunst ist der Gefühlswert, das Mittel, um dieses Ziel zu erreichen, die Komposition. Den Gefühlswert kann man nicht erklären, die Komposition ist sehr einfach zu erklären” (1981: 364/65). From “Das Ziel meiner Merzkunst” [The Aim of my Merz Art] (1938).

¹¹² Schwitters reflected on these terms in the texts “An alle Bühnen der Welt” [To All the Stages of the World] published in *Anna Blume. Dichtungen* [Anna Blume. Poetry] (1919) (1981: 39-41); “Merz (Für den Ararat geschrieben 19. Dezember 1920)” (1920) (1981: 74-82); and “Herkunft, Werden und Entfaltung” [Origin, Becoming, Developing] published in *Sturm-Bilderbücher IV: Kurt Schwitters (1920/21)* (1981: 82-84).

¹¹³ Translated from, “Ende 1918 erkannte ich, daß alle Werte nur durch Beziehungen untereinander bestehen, und daß Beschränkung auf ein Material einseitig und kleinlich sei. Aus dieser Erkenntnis formte ich Merz, zunächst als Summe einzelner Kunstgattungen, Merz-Malerei, Merz-Dichtung. Die Merz-bühne strebt fort von der Kunstgattung zur Verschmelzung im Gesamtkunstwerk. Mein letztes Streben ist die

It was the concept of the Merz-stage that became the platform for Schwitters' ideas about the total work of art. On this stage, all the arts would come together and play themselves out against each other. Schwitters wrote, "There is no such thing as art forms, their separation is artificial. There is only art. Merz, however, is a universal work of art, not a specialty."¹¹⁴ Once the scope of the Merz-work expanded from its initial withdrawal on the image-plane to become an inclusive stage for Merz-art in three dimensions, the limits of the composition were, again, challenged. If the stage would open a space, Schwitters, however, retained his call for the total work. In the early texts from 1919, "Die Merzbühne" [The Merz-stage] and "An alle Bühnen der Welt" [To All the Stages of the World], the theories of a dynamic, ever-changing, yet harmonious stage scenography were outlined vividly by Schwitters. In 1920, he summarised the scope of the stage vision as follows:

The Merz-stage knows only amalgamation of all elements to become a total work. The materials for the stage setting are all solid, fluid and gaseous bodies such as white walls, human beings, barbed wire, water streams, a blue distance, a cone of light. One utilises surfaces that densify or dissolve, surfaces folding like curtains able to decrease or increase in size. One allows objects to turn and move and lines to widen into planes. One slides parts in and others out ... The materials do not form logical objective relations, instead they follow the logic of the artwork itself. The more intense the work disturbs an intellectually objective logic, the greater the possibility for artistic creation. Like in poetry, one weighs word against word, so here, one weighs element against element, material against material. One might imagine the stage setting as a kind of Merz-picture. Parts of the image move and change and the picture lives. The movement of the image occurs in silence, or is accompanied by sounds or music.¹¹⁵

If Schwitters' vision, as was often the case, chimed in with preoccupations and discussions in art in his time, Richard Wagner was an immediate precursor for exercises in the total work of art. Wagner had already described the theatre as a space for the timely *synthesis of the arts* half a century earlier. His point was that all art forms were facets of one and the same phenomenon – *the Arts*. As elaborated by Jack M. Stein, Wagner's essay "The Art-Work of the Future" (1850) presented two ambitions for the total work. Firstly, the art of the future would be "an art of the people, by the people, and for the people," inevitably, "a *Gesamtkunstwerk* in a political and social sense" expressing the thoughts and feelings of the masses (1960: 62). Secondly, as Stein writes, "it [will portray] a work of art which is the product of a fusion of the separate phases of art ... a synthesis in which the individual phases contribute each in its own way to the total effect, a *Gesamtkunstwerk* in an aesthetic sense" (62). As such, Wagner's double agenda, social and aesthetic, constituted art as a sovereign life force, or life domain, which through

Vereinigung von Kunst und Nichtkunst zum Merz-Gesamtweltbilde" (84). From the text "Herkunft, Werden und Entfaltung" [Origin, Becoming, Developing] (1921).

¹¹⁴ Translated from, "Kunstarten gibt es nicht, sie sind künstlich von einander getrennt worden. Es gibt nur die Kunst. Merz aber ist die allgemeine Kunstwerk, nicht Spezialität" (1981: 134). From the text "Die Bedeutung des Merzgedankens in der Welt" [The importance of Merz ideas in the world] published *Merz 1 Holland Dada* (1923).

¹¹⁵ Translated from, "Die Merzbühne kennt nur die Verschmelzung aller Faktoren zum Gesamtwerk. Materialien für das Bühnenbild sind sämtliche feste, flüssige und luftförmige Körper, wie weiße Wand, Mensch, Drahtverhau, Wasserstrahl, blaue Ferne, Lichtkegel. Man verwende Flächen, die sich verdichten, oder in Gewebe auflösen können, Flächen, die sich vorhangartig falten, sich verkleinern oder erweitern können. Man lasse Dinge sich drehen und bewegen und lasse Linien sich zu Flächen erweitern. Man schiebe Teile in das Bühnenbild hinein und nehme Teile heraus [...] Die Materialien sind nicht logisch in ihren gegenständlichen Beziehungen, sondern nur innerhalb der Logik des Kunstwerkes zu verwenden. Je intensiver das Kunstwerk die verstandesmäßig gegenständliche Logik zerstört, um so größer ist die Möglichkeit künstlerischen Aufbauens. Wie man bei der Dichtung Wort gegen Wort wertet, so werte man hier Faktor gegen Faktor, Material gegen Material. Man kann sich das Bühnenbild etwa in der Art eines Merzbildes vorstellen. Die Teile des Bildes bewegen und verändern sich, und das Bild lebt sich aus. Die Bewegung des Bildes vollzieht sich stumm, oder begleitet von Geräuschen oder Musik" (1981: 79/80). From the text "Merz (Für den *Ararat* geschrieben 19. Dezember 1920)" (1920).

reunion in the total work would return to a state of wholeness otherwise perceived to be lost. Not only lost for art but for modern Western culture in general.

As such, Wagner's concept of the Gesamtkunstwerk sets Schwitters' *Merzbau* in relief as a very personal work lacking the social/revolutionary dimension in a Wagnerian sense. Furthermore, if Schwitters would follow Wagner's thinking through to the point of liberation expected to result from the reunification of the Arts, he objected to the idea that humans could bring this historical culmination about. Schwitters wrote, "Perhaps one day, we will see the Merz-Gesamtkunstwerk emerge. We will not be able to create it since we would ourselves also just be part of it, be material for it."¹¹⁶ For Schwitters, the scope of the Gesamtkunstwerk beyond human control was reflected in the inclusion of "unknown quantities" in the equation of the equilibrium that Merz aspired to give form. Schwitters wrote,

The great secret of Merz lies in the evaluation of unknown quantities. This way Merz governs that which cannot be governed. And this way, Merz is larger than Merz. The secret lies in the fact that in a union of a known and an unknown quantity, one changes the unknown when changing the known. This is because the sum of the known and unknown always remains the same, must remain the same, and that is remain in an absolute state of equilibrium.¹¹⁷

Schwitters operated with the notion of an unknown partner related to every known quantity, like a shadow particle. This other half would follow suit when the known part was reevaluated. As such, nothing would be left out, should the world begin to transform into a total work of Merz-art.

However, according to Dietmar Elger, Schwitters never actually referred to *Merzbau* as a Gesamtkunstwerk (1999: 133). Once Merz became a spatial practice, the notion of the horizontal stage-setting shifted to a vertical *wall-setting* defining the limit of the work in one sense. The following, and section 3.3.2 below, elaborates further on this notion of verticality in the work.

3.2.4 Collage/assemblage/bricolage

The material that Schwitters collected for his Merz-work was perhaps uneven in forms and shapes and also bringing along unknown histories and purposes, yet Schwitters believed that it would release its so-called *Eigengift* when implemented in a Merz-work. It would participate in the shaping of the work without making reference to anything outside the composition, in effect, the material used would transform in the moment of being integrated into the work of art. Schwitters wrote:

This way, I have created pictures from the material that I happened to have easily to hand ... These objects will be inserted into the image as they are, or modified depending on what the image requires. When evaluated against each other, they lose their individual character, their *Eigengift*, they

¹¹⁶ Translated from, "Vielleicht werden wir später auch einmal Gelegenheit haben, das Merzgesamtkunstwerk entstehen zu sehen. Schaffen können wir es nicht, denn auch wir würden nur Teile, und zwar Material sein" (1981: 82). From the text "Herkunft, Werden und Entfaltung" [Origin, Becoming, Developing] (1920/21).

¹¹⁷ Translated from, "Das große Geheimnis von Merz liegt in dem Werten von unbekanntem Größen. So beherrscht Merz, was man nicht beherrschen kann. Und so ist Merz größer als Merz. Das Geheimnis liegt darin, daß man in einer Gemeinschaft von einer bekannten und einer unbekanntem Größe die unbekanntem mit verändert, wenn man die bekannte verändert. Weil die Summe von bekannt und unbekannt stets gleich bleibt, stets gleich bleiben muß, und zwar absolutes Gleichgewicht" (1981: 133). From the text "Die Bedeutung des Merzgedankens in der Welt" [The importance of Merz ideas in the world] (1923).

dematerialise to become material for the picture. The picture is a self-contained work of art. It does not refer to the world outside. A coherent work of art can never refer to something outside without losing its meaning as art. Only in reverse can someone from outside refer to the work of art: the beholder.¹¹⁸

While this emphasis on the exclusivity of a Merz-work, its limited composition and sublimation of everyday objects is a returning theme in Schwitters writing on Merz, John Elderfield has argued that it is impossible not to consider where the various bits and pieces derive from (1977: 19). According to Elderfield, one cannot help speculating about the places from where the artist might have drawn the material, which is to say what a reference implies for the interpretation of a given work. Elderfield, taking his cue from the word *Eigengift*, unusual even for Germans and translating directly into *self-poison*, claims that Schwitters' abstraction of the work cannot neutralise this *poison within*.¹¹⁹ The collaged piece belongs somewhere else from where it can never be fully separated. Traces of previous constellations inform its identity despite new material alliances. As a sign, the collaged piece of material refers back, out of the work, to a referent located somewhere else.

Rosalind E. Krauss (1985) describes a similar tendency among Picasso-scholars to what she considers ultimately is a devaluation of Picasso's collage work. The tendency, along the lines of Elderfield, is to identify meanings of a work solely on the basis of a practice of "proper naming" – i.e. the ability to name the referents. In Picasso's case, these are mostly perceived to be people that he knew, especially the women in his life, and if Krauss is opposed to this kind of analysis, it is because essential aspects of the collage form thereby are neglected. In contrast, and with reference to Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics, Krauss is interested in how the collage works as a signifying process expressing *itself* through its material workings, the work that it becomes. Furthermore, how its immaterial concept, the signified, brings forth a possibility in the way that the collage, as a constellation of juxtaposed signs, represents the *absence* of referents rather than their *presence*. According to Krauss, no referents exist outside the work as origins from where it derives and still draws its meaning. By emphasising the prefix *re-* of representation, Krauss sees the collaged sign as establishing something essentially new, a *now*, when presenting *again* by presenting *something else*. Krauss suggests that the signified in this sense is a proposition, a cast forward, rather than a reaching back or out. According to Krauss, de Saussure's model thereby permits the work *intention* rather than simply the function of being an *extension* to already existing referents given presence by proxy. Krauss writes:

That form cannot be separated from Picasso's meditation on the inner workings of the sign – at least as it operates within the pictorial field – is a function of the combined formal/significatory status of the most basic element of collage. For it is the affixing of the collage piece, one plane set down on another, that is the center of collage as a signifying system. That plane, glued to its support, enters the work as the literalisation of depth, actually resting *in front of or on top of* the field or element it now partially obscures.

¹¹⁸ Translated from, "So habe ich zunächst Bilder aus dem Material konstruiert, das ich gerade bequem zur Hand hatte ... Diese Gegenstände werden, wie sie sind, oder auch verändert in das Bild eingefügt, je nachdem es das Bild verlangt. Sie verlieren durch die Wertung gegeneinander ihren individuellen character, ihr Eigengift, werden entmaterialisiert und sind Material für das Bild. Das Bild ist ein in sich ruhendes Kunstwerk. Es bezieht sich nicht nach außen hin. Nie kann sich ein konsequentes Kunstwerk außer sich beziehen, ohne seine Beziehung zur Kunst zu verlieren. Nur umgekehrt kann sich jemand von außen auf das Kunstwerk beziehen: der Beschauer" (1981: 134). From the text "Die Bedeutung des Merzgedankens in der Welt" [The importance of Merz ideas in the world] (1923).

¹¹⁹ Elderfield writes, "We simply cannot be unconscious of the *personality poison* of the materials. No matter how rigorously abstract Schwitters' structure is, it is still no antidote" (1977: 19).

But this very act of literalisation opens up the field of collage to the play of representation. For the supporting ground that is obscured by the affixed plane resurfaces in a miniaturised facsimile in the collage element itself. The collage element obscures the master plane only to represent that plane in the form of a depiction. If the element is the literalisation of figure against field, it is so as a figure of the field it must literally occlude. (37)

Krauss shifts the notion of the collage as sign from being an index of external referents to an index of the internal, yet hidden, ground that each collaged piece represents. Once a collaged piece covers the initial image plane to which it is glued, it is complicit in the production of a new image plane – a new ground. Formally then, the collage is a double, at least, covering while at the same time reproducing, indexing, the covered. As a signifier it refers only to this backdrop, which it hides yet repeats. The collage creates an illusion of a ground while hiding that it is already a grounded image, and this complex weaving of the present and the represented, ground and grounded, is according to Krauss the possibility of collage as sign – ultimately it refers only to itself and its own constitution, an understanding that echoes Schwitters' claim to the autonomy of his bricolage work. Krauss summarises, "Collage's very fullness of form is grounded in this forced impoverishment of the ground – a ground both supplemented and supplanted" (37/38).

Schwitters' Merz-approach to materials extended to all the genres that he worked in – pictorial, sculptural, spatial, verbal and performative. The circumstance that the "merz"-fragment, sampled and glued onto the first Merz-picture, remained uncovered would therefore not necessarily refer to the bank that the name derived from. It would not necessarily allow the line drawn by Tafuri between the names Merz and Commerz when questioning the economy of Schwitters' work [1.3.3]. According to Schwitters, the name was a result of formal and pictorial choices made in the creation of the work. The same strategy applied to the artist's Merz-poetry when words were used for their suitability for a particular poem due to either graphical or audial qualities. Schwitters explained,

Material for poetry consists of a letter, syllable, word, sentence, paragraph. Words and phrases are nothing more than parts of the poem. Their relationship with each other is not the usual everyday language that serves a different purpose: to give expression to something. In poetry, words are separated from their initial context, transformed and brought into a new artistic composition; they become poetic form-elements, nothing more.¹²⁰

The transformation of everyday fragments into works of art occurs through a process that sees material leap from the level of the mundane into the realms of art. In the process, these fragments lose any prior identity, and the diverse sign systems that a work is based on lose any value that they might have been ascribed elsewhere. The fragments simply become valueless form elements, and the formal play in the collage becomes an autonomous practice, the artistic merit and quality of which relies on the subjective preferences of the artist.

¹²⁰ Translated from, "Material der Dichtung sind Buchstabe, Silbe, Wort, Satz, Absatz. Worte und Sätze sind in der Dichtung weiter nichts als Teile. Ihre Beziehung untereinander ist nicht die übliche der Umgangssprache, die ja einen anderen Zweck hat: etwas auszudrücken. In der Dichtung werden die Worte aus ihrem alten Zusammenhang gerissen, entformelt und in einen neuen, künstlerischen Zusammenhang gebracht, sie werden Form-Teile der Dichtung, weiter nichts" (1981: 134). From the text "Die Bedeutung des Merzgedankens in der Welt" [The importance of Merz ideas in the world] (1923).

While Schwitters' appropriation of the collage technique for work in all genres and media is likely to have been influenced by the work of friends and colleagues, as suggested above, he did, however, remain faithful to the technique for the rest of his life. While most other artists, including the progenitors Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso who *reinvented* the collage form around 1912, would move on to other means of expression and artistic styles, it is significant that Schwitters did not.¹²¹ While continuing to paint figurative and naturalistic paintings, the main body of the work would make use of cut and paste techniques in some way or other, as if Schwitters had found his ultimate creative language and method. Through collage, and soon assemblage and bricolage, he was able to work according to the preferred purely formal and abstract ends, and to balance the tensions played out on the image-plane while insisting that any fragment could be held in harmony within this one frame. Ultimately, that this was a framing questioning the grounds on which it was itself drawn, at the same time represented and hidden. Krauss writes:

It is often said that the genius of collage, its modernist genius, is that it heightens not diminishes – the viewer's experience of the ground, the picture surface, the material support of the image; as never before, the ground – we are told – forces itself on our perception. But in collage, in fact, the ground is literally masked and riven. It enters our experience not as an object of perception but as an object of discourse, of representation. Within the collage system all of the other perceptual *données* are transmuted into the absent objects of a group of signs. (1985: 38)

3.3 THE LIMIT AS A PLACE OF ARTICULATION - A space between walls

The central proposition of Kurt Schwitters' Merz-concept, unfolded through the statements above, is to bring every thing down to one and the same plane. Every piece of material included in a Merz-collage or assemblage, and every thing or object utilised in the building of a Merz-column, eventually *Merzbau*, must be liberated from all previous affiliations. The material must be emptied of connotations, cease to relate to anything external, let go of its quality as a sign, loose its *Eigengift*, become simply *a piece* – a form playing into the overall constellation of forms making up the work of art, ultimately a new spatiality. This transfer of material from one context to another – in Schwitters' case found objects and waste from the streets of Hannover – takes place through a process of equal evaluation appraised by the artist. As such, Schwitters' weighing of the value and artistic potential of a given material is a process of revaluation. The artist *feels* his way forward, and once equilibrium is achieved in the work in accordance with the artist's *feeling*, its autonomy ensures that no relation to the external world disturbs the harmony. The work ceases to have a context beyond itself, it becomes *every thing*, a totality – from its own interior point of view.

¹²¹ As pointed out by Dorothea Dietrich, collage work was popular already in Victorian times often in the form of composite photographic imagery (1993: 9).

With the emergence of Schwitters' stage theories, as described above (3.2.3), the artistic concepts take a turn towards spatial and motional structures in accordance with the rules of Merz. The notion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, addressed with this new speculative design, sees all art forms coincide and merge within the Merz framework. However, by unfolding Merz in three dimensions, the notions of composition and limits are also challenged – where to draw the line around this work? With *Merzbau*, the limit of the work, in one sense, becomes the walls enclosing the studio room in relation to which emotional/formal values are negotiated and balanced. Once the work begins to *spill out* and into adjacent rooms, this limit becomes uncertain. As for the part of the structure that remains within the confines of the main studio room, which is to say the Merz-building portrayed by Redemann, it takes the form of a spatial wall when Schwitters' building stops short of merzing the central part of the room. If Schwitters is conscious of building a spatial wall, he is, however, not going to wall himself inside of it or within it. Instead, the artist builds *Merzbau* against the studio's existing walls, so that he faces the structure when located in its central void – the position from where Redemann captures the photographs [Fig. 3.14/3.15/3.16].

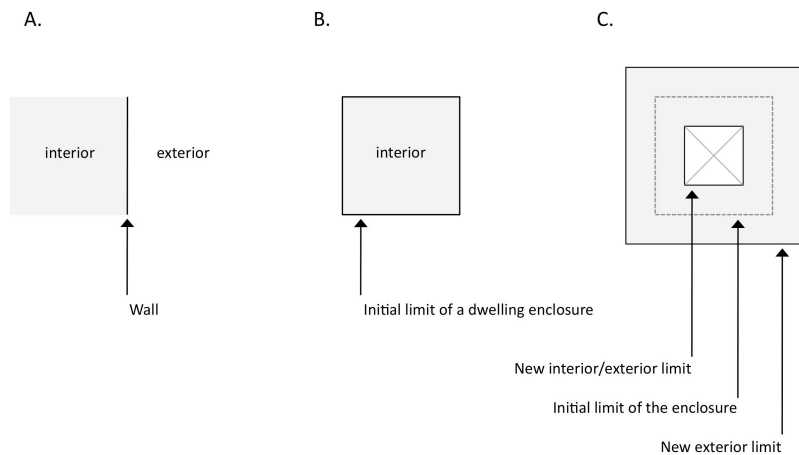
If, in the previous chapter, Gordon Matta-Clark was seen to break the enclosure of the dwelling house in order to get access, to get inside, Schwitters articulates a space that questions the limit of the house from an interior position. He does so by leaving the existing walls intact while building inwards from their vertical plane, thereby reorganising the values and meanings of the house and studio in relation to his own central position. From this point, Schwitters' spatial articulation of *Merzbau* sees no walls – when the central floor space is left un-merzed, it is both interior and exterior to *Merzbau*. This void space, enclosed by the structure yet outside of it, is of a different spatial order. It both is *Merzbau* and then perhaps not. It both belongs to the work and then not quite. The spatial wall is inhabitable and thereby marks a liminal zone between the central void that it faces and the external context that it turns its back on and leaves out. The thesis argues that this liminal zone, opened by Schwitters with the building of *Merzbau*, opens a space for negotiation of the contemporary living space between the central void and the external context with its own adverse agenda.

The attempt of the thesis to get access to the problem of dwelling by getting access to the house addresses the wall that manifest the dialectical positions of interior/exterior, live/work, remembering/forgetting and home/art introduced and discussed in chapter 1. The thesis proposes a simple spatial diagram as illustration of the spatial event that sees the separating wall itself split in two (see the following page). This split occurs when the internal face of the enclosing wall moves inwards while the external face moves outwards. The space that emerges within this split/double wall is a liminal zone extending across the line initially limiting the enclosure. It thereby marks a distance, an interval between two liminal conditions, one either side, which it must negotiate insofar as they have no immediate fixity in that they might not simply be walls. Within this liminal zone, at the core of the

diagram's plan, a space emerges that is both interior and exterior. This space literalises the notion of the central void addressed by Matta-Clark.

Split wall diagram:

The diagram illustrates how the wall separating inside from outside (A) forms the enclosure of an interior (B) that splits to demarcate a liminal zone (C). This space, with an inwards as well as outwards face, encloses a central void – at the same time an external and internal space.



Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau* makes it possible to explore the liminal zone as a space that does not simply synthesise opposed practices and spaces in a seamless coexistence, or attempts to separate the same from the different by building new separations within this zone. Rather, the work makes it possible to address contemporary dwelling as an occupation between walls that are not impenetrable but must be negotiated continuously as part of the settlement. The thesis is interested in how *Merzbau* in the form of a complex spatial wall negotiates this interval that it draws across the liminal zone. When at the same time facing outwards and inwards, even if the former means facing a blank wall and the latter an empty void, the structure opens a possibility for the living space by mediating between two conditions that it cannot simply exceed or withdraw from. As such, *Merzbau* fluctuates between the horizontality of the central floor space and the verticality of the studio room's surrounding walls. It falls and rises, folds and extends itself across and within this space that it builds. The thesis returns to a discussion of these positions below [3.3.2].

That concepts might exist on both sides of walls, so that the determination of a wall could be mistaken for expressing only half the concept, resonates with Geoffrey Bennington's reading of Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (1967). Bennington is interested in Derrida's analysis of the sign as theorised by Ferdinand de Saussure and addressed by Rosalind Krauss above. Bennington explains:

The whole classical notion of the sign, as divided into signifier and signified, rests on an inside/outside opposition, and on the presupposition that the outside somehow reveals the inside. As Derrida shows, an underlying assumption here is that the inside, the signified, exists ideally prior to and independently of the

outside: the outside is the accidental (*arbitrary*) means of access to the inside; it should ideally not obstruct access, should be transparent. The plate-glass *walls* of the modernist cube appear to be analogous to such a transparency of the outside. On the other hand, in so far as there *is* an inside, it must necessarily have an outside to define it as an inside: the border, even if made of glass, must be at least as much a place of separation as a place of communication (this combination of separation and communication defining the notion of the limit as a place of *articulation*). (1987: 16)

Following Bennington's reading of Derrida, the *outside* is commonly understood as a sign simultaneously delimiting and giving access to an *inside*, to the signified. This ideally transparent skin functions as a face, a façade, separating yet also communicating between two realms. As a distinction between one side and the other, the outside constitutes a limit in the form of this "place of *articulation*." However, to think de Saussure's sign through the analogy of this building creates two outsides – the one of the façade, the signifier that Bennington describes, yet also the one of the space in front of this façade, the external space in the form of the *outdoors* containing the sign and from where one perceives that which it signifies. Furthermore, while the sign as façade hides the signified behind it, it also defines a limit in the other direction, which is to say that it limits the outside as perceived from the inside. The "plate-glass *walls*" give in to their own transparency as devices for separation as well as communication. The limit as "a place of *articulation*" becomes a double-sided engagement; as such it becomes a space between two faces contained by a larger external space from which it cannot be distinguished by means of walls.

The following discusses three aspects of *Merzbau* in continuation of the themes raised, the convoluted space that the work proposes and the plan above referred to as the *split wall diagram* hereafter. The first section [3.3.1] examines the coexistence of the two practices of art and home inside Schwitters' house in Waldhausenstrasse. The thesis asks what the relationship between art and home might have been for the artist and his family by tracing the movements of the artist's studio within the confines of the house. A series of diagrams maps this relationship between studio and house over the years in plan and sectional views [Dia. A-D, p.219-21]. The second section [3.3.2] discusses how Schwitters' Merz-practice, when extending into bricolage work in its final destination, manifests a grounding of the autonomous work of art in relation to the walls of the studio and house. The thesis argues that this practice of representation of the studio walls as inhabitable structures defines a kind of settlement of interest to the question of contemporary dwelling. The third section [3.3.3] challenges the notion of this vertical grounding of the autonomous structure through a discussion of the ways in which Schwitters eventually inhabits *Merzbau*, when placing objects and personal belongings as references to external events and individuals.

3.3.1 The practice of art at home

For Schwitters art and home had to coexist. Besides from a brief period of sharing a studio in Berlin with László Moholy-Nagy, Schwitters worked from his family residence in Waldhausenstrasse.¹²² The

¹²² It was during the winter 1922/23 that the two artists shared a studio. (Sprengel Museum Hannover n.d.).

thesis asks how it was possible for the two practices of artistic creation and domestic living to coexist and overlap in one house. How could Schwitters move seamlessly from one realm to the other in his daily routines of working and living with his family? How did *Merzbau* take form as a work of art within the confines of a space previously serving as a living room? Separation of functions by means of walls is likely to be part of the answer to these questions – the realm of art will have been kept separate from the realm of family life by designating different rooms of the house different purposes. However, as will be discussed in the following, evidence suggests that a clear-cut line between studio and dwelling space did not exist at all times, even if Schwitters appears to have had a designated studio somewhere in the house throughout. Whether the art practice was restricted to these spaces remains uncertain and in some ways unlikely considering Schwitters' manifold undertakings and experiments. It is therefore possible to speculate that the prolific and genre-defying artist and maker easily occupied any space available without concern for spatial separations or designations.

The studio, which can be seen in the background of a number of photographs of Schwitters' work [Fig. 3.22>3.26], comes forth like a busy living room full of props, tools, material, sketches and works of art – all things and objects easily relocated to other rooms if necessary. As such, the studio could be moved around and unpacked anywhere – even if wherever in the house it was unpacked would be a domestic room before all else. A relation between the artist's studio and the house, signifying the relation between art and home, thereby developed over time, and the present section looks into this aspect of Schwitters' work. It does so by tracing the changing locations of the studio in Waldhausenstrasse 5A over time, and while it remains largely unclear what might have motivated the number of relocations, some pointers give clues. These derive primarily from the recollections of friends and colleagues, as accounted for by Webster in her revision of *Merzbau's* chronology (2007). This revision establishes that the move to the rear ground floor studio, where *Merzbau* eventually was built, had occurred by early 1927; furthermore, that Schwitters immediately before this move occupied another room on the ground floor marked as room number 4 on the floor plan drawn up in 1921 [Fig. 3.7].¹²³ Up until this final relocation, accounts suggest that rooms in the basement and on the second floor were in use for studio purposes at different times.¹²⁴ In terms of a possible studio on the second floor, such has most likely occupied the private residence of Kurt and Helma's front apartment [Fig. 3.9]. With the two living rooms decorated in keeping with the artist's parallel practices of figurative and abstract art, one room contained traditional wooden furniture in the German Biedermeier-style [Fig. 3.2/3.9 room 9], while the other with bare white walls and a black-painted carpet was commonly referred to as the *Bauhaus-* or *De Stijl-room* (Webster 2007: plate 7) [Fig. 3.9 room 8]. It was also in these two rooms that Schwitters hosted his monthly Merz-soirees that drew Hannoverians with a taste for

¹²³ Webster refers to a letter sent to Katherine Dreier, dated 29 January 1927, in which Schwitters writes that he has relocated the studio to the rear side of the house because his parents need his old studio as their bedroom. Webster traces the reason for this relocation to the departure of the Boetel family who occupied the rear rooms from 1921-26 (2007: 39).

¹²⁴ The director of Hannover's Provinzialmuseum, Alexander Dörner, as well as Elizabeth Maack, a first floor tenant in Waldhausenstrasse 5A, both claimed to have seen constructions in the basement of the house (33).

the extraordinary to the house, and the thesis speculates that early accounts of columns on a balcony possibly refer to the balcony fronting the *Baubaus-* or *De Stijl-room* on this floor.

Tracing the studio movements within the house, from the time of Schwitters' marriage to Helma in October 1915 until the flight from Hannover in January 1937, reveals how the art practice came to occupy a significant part of the house over the years. Rooms would accommodate the studio for a period of time and revert to one dwelling house function or other, such as bedroom or dining room, again later. As shown on the series of plan diagrams attached to the present chapter [Dia. A-D], each floor of the house was marked by a particular relation to the artist's studio with the ground floor as the most active. It was here that Schwitters occupied a central room of his parents' flat [Dia. B1] until relocating the studio to the eventual *Merzbau* room in 1927 [Dia. B3]. During the time of the Boetel family's stay in the house (1921-26), the central room accommodated the double purpose of Schwitters' studio and his parents' dining room (Webster 2007: 39) [Dia. B2]. When Schwitters' father died in 1931, Henriette Schwitters resettled her living quarters to the front of the house while letting the central rooms to the Bergmann family, who occupied these from 1931-37 [Dia. B3]. All along, from 1918-35, the full first floor, supposedly with a layout identical to the ground floor flat, was occupied by the Brockmann-Maack family [Dia. C].

Tracing the studio movements on the basis of sectional diagrams of the house [Dia. E-H] shows how the art practice eventually came to tie a knot around the central ground floor studio. From the initial location [Dia. E/F], Schwitters would gradually spread out and occupy the rear side of the house [Dia. G], eventually stretching his discontinued *Merz*-building across its floors [Dia. H].¹²⁵ Once a room was designated *studio*, works of art settled in. As mobile creations independent from the rooms in which they were conceived, these could easily be relocated to other rooms/studios. The occupation of the house and home by the practice of art – including its works, props and material *sea of debris* – became a reclamation of the living space through a long and complicated journey unfolding between one war and the next. Within this space of time, Schwitters invented an art practice in response to a turbulent contemporary context. It was a *Merz*-practice rolled over the walls of the house like the paint roller eventually painted *Merzbau* all white, as if attempting to gloss over any remaining relation to the troubled surroundings.

When refuse found on the streets of Hannover was brought inside, the constitution of the house changed. Once *alien* material was welcomed indoors, the *purity* of the dwelling space was tainted and a process of transformation set in motion. *Merz*-columns would rise from the material flotsam, they would split from walls and take any form required or possible. In the process of this building, a second

¹²⁵ Webster cites Schwitters from a letter to Christof Spengemann, dated 18 September 1946, in which the final extent of *Merzbau* counts six rooms besides from the main room (72). These encompass the adjoining front room and balcony on the ground floor, two basement rooms, one room on the second floor and one in the attic [Dia. H].

transformation would take place – the abstract form language employed by Schwitters would dissociate the chosen material from its history when all traces of this past were removed, written over or erased. Schwitters might have operated this estrangement of home, house and building material as part of the overall Merz-strategy, yet no one thing would settle in a conventional way in his house. If the notion of transformation according to Merz from the outset took a *formless-to-form* approach, it is possible to suggest that what have first been meticulously organised as a careful sectioning of the house (art versus domestic) eventually became a messy hotchpotch of *Kurt Schwitters allsorts* that even the whitewash of Redemann's professional photographs could not gloss over. Such an interpretation reverses the widespread idea about *Merzbau's* developmental progress – which is to say from chaotic accumulation of material organised in Dada-style collage/assemblage work to a unified Constructivist structure – by suggesting that once *Merzbau* was considered fit for Redemann's photographs, the status of the house was more uncertain than ever. Was it even a house? A dwelling house? And rather than sign off this finished work, Schwitters would reclaim his Merz-house by inhabiting it – a reclamation ultimately involving an element of domestication of the column-based structure. Section 3.3.3 below looks further into this aspect of the work's relation to questions of dwelling.

3.3.2 Vertical grounding

At a time when containment and surveillance of citizens seen to practice against the party line of the ruling forces was increasingly enforced, a radical artist like Schwitters could become a prisoner in his own house. Schwitters' responded by building another kind of house inside the one that, on the surface at least, provided an alibi for staying behind in Hannover until 1937. This other house, of a completely different order than the one within which it took form, might be seen as an attempt at resistance to the oppression felt. As such, the alternative structure would counter the containerisation operated by *the other* outside, even if located near the limit of the sheltering structure – or perhaps exactly because of this location. That Schwitters did not speak of the relation between *Merzbau* and the house on a more general level suggests that the latter foremost provided a convenient and available (back)ground for the former. Built along the perimeter of the studio, *Merzbau* only penetrated the walls of this room where a small window was placed from the corner library onto the glazed balcony [Fig. 3.4]. As such, the merzed areas of the rear ground floor of the house were carefully protected from any exposure. Besides from the glazing of the balcony implemented in 1935, the windows were whitewashed or otherwise blinded, so that no one would be able to look inside.¹²⁶ The reason for such protective measures is likely to be found in the fear that the work could be discovered and destroyed, yet concern for the inhabitants of the house – the various lodging families and Schwitters' parents – might also have played a part.

¹²⁶ In a letter to Katherine Dreier, dated 25 November 1936, Schwitters regretfully explains how due to the political circumstances he is unable to show the studio to anyone and has been forced to whitewash the windows (66).

As a result, *Merzbau* responded to its immediate physical limits by leaving these intact while unfolding a space in an inwards movement away from the walls. When Schwitters built his spatial wall in front of the existing, he was hiding this *ground*, and to paraphrase Krauss in section 3.2.1 above, *Merzbau* became a (three-dimensional) depiction of the (two-dimensional) walls behind it, which it obscured. As such, the bricolage building of *Merzbau* can be seen to reference the strategies of collage. The collaged image-plane, with its inward gesture that knows no exterior, represents itself only in the absence of referents. It repeats the ground to which it is glued and thereby represents this ground while also hiding it. Ultimately, it builds another ground and grounds itself in this building. Likewise, *Merzbau*, the bricolage building, represented the walls in front of which it was built, which it was hiding and onto which it appeared to be *glued*. The existing studio walls outlined a vertical ground like the image-plane of the collage/ assemblage, and *Merzbau* rearticulated this ground by *re-presenting* it in the sense of repeating it. The image-plane required as a supporting ground for the Merz-picture became the wall required for *Merzbau*.

Where the collaged piece represented the plane onto which it was glued by repeating it, *Merzbau* represented the walls in front of which it was built by spatialising these. Where the collage would *invent* rather than simply *extend*, the bricolage wall suggested another spatiality by articulating the liminal zone of the house. The thesis argues that the autonomy of the work established through its dissociation from the immediate context was a necessary first step for Schwitters in the Merz-process of reevaluation required to define the new living space. As such, the structure would withdraw into itself before, again, reaching out and transcending the walls, symbolically if not literally. The following section looks further into how Schwitters negotiated the limit of *Merzbau*'s outwards relation.

3.3.3 Building as a relation to *the other*

Schwitters appears to have been in two minds. On the one hand, he wanted to forget everything by embarking on the construction of an abstract interior with no immediate relation to the dwelling house in which it was built or resemblance to anything outside of it. The purity of the abstract, whitewashed interior would ground itself in the building of a spatial wall literally leaving the existing wall in relation to which it was built behind. On the other hand, Schwitters wanted to remember everything when placing personal objects of affection, memorabilia, even bodily excretions within visible and invisible spaces of the structure.¹²⁷ These would serve as pointers to lives and histories unfolding in the world beyond the double wall of *Merzbau* and the house that held it. At the same time, and in between remembering and forgetting, were the collected objects from which the bricolage building was itself built. As the building blocks of the whitewashed structure – the pure, abstract work of art – these objects were processed and recharged. They were in one sense forgotten when disappearing behind the surface, yet, essentially, they were *Merzbau*.

¹²⁷ A bottle of urine was seen and reported by several visitors to the studio, and, according to Webster (34), a bottle of the artist Naum Gabo's urine is also likely to have occupied *Merzbau*.

As such, three categories of objects existed in the work. Besides from the building material collected from the streets of Hannover, the bricolage structure was inhabited by a diverse collection of Schwitters' private belongings placed around *Merzbau* as referents to external events and individuals. In between was a category of indexical objects, over time disappearing into unknown depths of the structure when caves and grottos were boarded up as *Merzbau* continued to grow. These tokens were things that Schwitters took from his friends and family, often without their knowledge and consent, and the spaces in which these things were arranged were often dedicated to the owner of the respective object.¹²⁸ Through this placing of belongings and found material, life beyond the time and place of the house became part of the work and the living space that it offered the artist, and by extension his family.

The contamination of the purity of the work, caused by the placed objects, could, however, be seen to contradict the stated intention of composing an abstract, limited and autonomous work of art. As a consequence of Schwitters' reclamation of the work through his inhabitation of it, its exclusiveness was broken. A curious weaving of formal structure and personal attachment through this reclamation of the work as a living space would blur the boundaries between home and art, practice and setting, the familiar and the unknown – “art and non-art” as Schwitters put it (1981: 84). Ultimately, through the occupation of the work, *Merzbau* became autobiographical, in a sense confessional. While the personal investment of the artist could be taken for an attempt to *merz* himself with the structure, or an aspiration to internalise *Merz*, it is also possible to suggest that Schwitters simply responded to his time and place in the way that seemed most meaningful to a creative mind. *Merzbau*, with its numerous embedded and applied references to Schwitters' own life, can therefore be read as a recording of this life at a particular moment in time which, as we know, would soon draw to a close in terms of the Nazi dominance. If the inevitable turn of history would not bring the Hannover *Merzbau* back, then Schwitters' response was to continue his *Merz*-building in every new location.

Conclusion to “Kurt Schwitters, *Merzbau*”

The chapter on Kurt Schwitters pursued the development of *Merzbau* within the artist's family residence in Hannover during the years between the two world wars of the twentieth century. It studied how relocations of the artist's studio informed the creation of mobile *Merz*-columns until these eventually settled into the rear ground floor studio in 1927. In this room, *Merzbau* gradually took form as a spatial walk-in environment, the nature of which was traced and discussed on the basis of three surviving photographs captured by Wilhelm Redemann in 1933. Once Schwitters' *Merz*-strategy progressed from collage and assemblage techniques to the bricolage building of *Merzbau*, other parts of

¹²⁸ As noted by Webster, this is an area where rumours flourish with regards to the nature of the acquired objects (159). John Elderfield conveys an anecdote of Schwitters stealing Sophie Taübers bra and placing it in a cave with her name (1985: 160).

the house became merzed as well. As such, Schwitters constructed an alternative living space within the house, and the chapter argued that *Merzbau* thereby emerged as a direct response to the domestic setting with which it coexisted. Furthermore, that it defined a space between this dwelling house and the turbulent historical context in relation to which it took form.

As a structure built in immediate response to its contextual setting, *Merzbau* opened a space for a dialogue between forces otherwise separated by the walls of the house. When Schwitters constructed an inhabitable, spatial wall against the limit of the house, he faced the interior as well as exterior limit of this enclosure. And when grounding *Merzbau* in the studio room by building a spatial wall inwards from the vertical ground of its walls, Schwitters settled his Merz-house in the discourse of ground rather than in its granted support. Furthermore, the structure fronted a central void outlined by the open un-merzed floor in the centre of the studio, at the same time the only position from where to contemplate the Merz-building in some form of totality.

The thesis argued that Schwitters thereby opened and articulated an interval between two *faces* to be negotiated at all times, inwards and outwards. This liminal zone was set out by the thesis in the *split wall diagram* as a space for negotiation of the contemporary living space – always double, two-faced and split between one and the other, yet also a possibility for coexistence. The dwelling house demarcated by this zone would become something else – it would disappear and possibly reappear, yet it would not remain the same. In Schwitters' case, the house on Waldhausenstrasse had already negotiated the art practice for years through the shifting locations of the studio and the work material stored around the house. The domestic setting had long since been contaminated by *alien* gestures when Schwitters' Merz-building spread across the rooms of the house. Once the Merz-house was inhabited by the practice of placing objects of various kinds within its folds and crevices, the potential of Merz grew further. The thesis returns to the possibility of this extension in chapter 5.

4. GREGOR SCHNEIDER, *HAUS U R*

Summary

The chapter on Gregor Schneider's work *HAUS u r* (1985-today) explores the artist's rebuilding of the house in which he grew up located in Rheydt, Germany. Besides from constituting the site, work of art and childhood home in one, the house was also Schneider's place of living during the time of creating the work. Accommodated under one roof, all three – house, home and work – therefore became inseparable, perhaps indistinguishable, while the practice of rebuilding the house added layers to the already convoluted relation. The thesis attempts to read and interpret *HAUS u r* in a movement across this complexity, and the chapter follows the structure of the two previous case studies by gradually unfolding the work in response to the words and visual evidence produced and disseminated by the artist himself as well as others.

The first section [4.1] gives presence to Schneider and his house with references to spatial works created by the artist before, during and after the time of building *HAUS u r*. The section speculates on the process of developing the work, and it refers to existing scholarship on the artist as well as a discourse relating Schneider's practice to Freud's uncanny with its notion of the *unhomely*. The second section [4.2] brings out a number of statements made by Schneider in interviews published between 1996 and 2010. These are organised in categories relating to a series of themes announced by the work and theorised accordingly by the thesis. As frameworks for the interpretation of the work, the scene is eventually set for a discussion of *HAUS u r* in the third section [4.3], where the thesis pursues three movements in relation to which the possibility of the work for questions of dwelling emerges. These movements, which analysed in succession becomes one, encompass Schneider's spatial journey from he returns to work in the house, to the gradual rebuilding of it over the years, and the eventual escape when finally working himself through and out of the building.

4.1 (RE)BUILDING – Another house for another time

Gregor Schneider (1969-) is a contemporary German artist born and raised in the small town of Rheydt, now a borough of Mönchengladbach in the country's western part. Because the house, in which Schneider grew up and to which he later returned, has itself become the work of art, it is the central point around which the present study revolves. The practices of living and working within the framework of this house are so entwined that it is difficult to introduce the artist without immediately also introducing the house on Unterheydener Strasse 12. A number of labels can be applied to it – childhood home, family residence, artist's studio, bachelor pad, construction site, work of art and possibly more. During the time of the work's development, the house encompassed all such designations while, at the same time, existing more or less anonymously in the townscape of Rheydt. Located in close proximity to a neighbouring lead factory owned by Schneider's family, the house had

been declared uninhabitable by local authorities in 1985 due to the factory's contaminating production. The Schneider family was forced to move out, and as a result the house was abandoned and left empty. Schneider, the teenage son, however, returned in 1985 for the purpose of using the property for his burgeoning art practice. Already the same year, a number of drawings were presented at the first solo exhibition "Pubertäre Verstimmung" [Adolescent Depression] in Galerie Kontrast, Mönchengladbach. Interestingly, on the invitation card to the show, it is written that the artist at the time lives in a place called Korschenbroich [Fig. 4.1]. It is therefore likely that the family relocated to this town northwest of Rheydt after abandoning the house. Schneider's note on the card implies that even if he was using the house in Rheydt as his studio at the time, he was still living with his family in Korschenbroich. A few years later, between 1989-1992, when formal artistic training was undertaken at the following institutions: Kunstakademie Düsseldorf [Art Academy of Düsseldorf], Kunstakademie Münster [Academy of Fine Arts Muenster] and Hochschule für bildende Künste [University of Fine Arts of Hamburg] (Sadie Coles HQ, n.d.), Schneider might have been coming and going in Rheydt. The locations of the academies across Germany imply that Schneider was not living in the house in Rheydt full-time during these years, even if work on *HAUS u r* seemingly continued. In contrast, after Schneider was appointed Professor at Universität der Künste in Berlin [The Berlin University of the Arts] in 2009, his website continues to inform that he "lives and works in Rheydt" (Gregor Schneider 2013).

A photograph shows the street elevation of the house in Rheydt – a non-descript three-storey residential building [Fig. 4.2]. Judging from the façade displaying three rows of almost identical windows, the house appears to have contained three independent flats before Schneider began altering its configuration. With the ground level entrance door to one side, access to the house is through a small porch two steps up from the pavement level. Everything about the house, as seen in the photograph, appears unremarkable and commonplace – a lamppost stands right in front of it as if glued to the façade, most windows have lace curtains blocking the view inside, yet one window reveals a small potted plant or is it someone looking out? Next to the house is a metal gate that hinders direct access to the lead factory looming in the background. To the other side of the house, a wall screens what might be a small garden with some plants and trees visible above the wall. Everything else, depicted in the frontal elevation of the house, is trivial to the point of having no significance or meaning whatsoever – the image simply says *house*.

This image of the house is the first one encounters when browsing Schneider's website and hovering the mouse over the title "HAUS u r" in the biographical section. The work is the house and the house is this enclosure rising from the wet tarmac and stretching towards the indifferent whiteness of the sky. While it is possible to travel to the house on Unterheydener Strasse, there is no immediate access to it. It is a private house belonging to Schneider and is therefore not accessible to the wider public

without invitation. For that reason, it is on the website that one must look for a glimpse beyond the façade of the house, and Schneider is generous with photographic representations of the interior rooms that make the work *HAUS u r*. As if these photographs would not be comprehensible without first having encountered the whole house that seemingly contains it all, one cannot enter the house/work without *passing through* this image – for some reason this is important to Schneider. When clicking on the image of the house, three series of photographs, making up the online version of the work, become available. Once the visitor has entered the house and arrived at this gate with three possible routes forward, the navigation of house and work is left to the guest. When I first visited Gregor Schneider’s website in 2009, the work was listed as concluded in 2007, a status that has since been changed. As per 2013, the work is listed on the website as still in progress.

While Schneider’s early artistic career is marked by the development of *HAUS u r*, taking off once he got access to the childhood home in Rheydt, a number of other rooms were developed elsewhere. These rooms in other places include *Toter Raum in Vaters Büro* [Dead Room in Father’s Office] (1988-89) [Fig. 4.4] and *Total isolierter toter Raum* [Completely Insulated Dead Room] (1989-91) [Fig. 4.5]. Both works were constructed within buildings located in the area of Giesenkirchen southwest of Rheydt, which is the borough of Mönchengladbach where Schneider’s father appears to have had his office. In addition to these spatial experiments, Schneider also made alterations to gallery spaces, such as in Galerie Löhrl, Mönchengladbach (1992), Konrad Fischer Galerie, Düsseldorf (1993/94) and Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld (1994). These re-buildings were direct responses to existing gallery spaces whereas the Giesenkirchen rooms had a more conceptual approach as extreme spatialities hidden within their commonplace setting. The nature of the house in Rheydt sits somewhere between these two categories – extreme and commonplace – which the following explores in more detail.

4.1.1 Being in two places at once

To ask what is the work in the case of *HAUS u r* is to ask on what kind of evidence a study of the house can be based. The answer to this is less than straightforward. While the house in Rheydt still exists, it is a private house and therefore not accessible. Because Schneider is a contemporary artist, his work has not yet been archived, catalogued or otherwise concluded. Considering that Professor Schneider in recent years has become one of Germany’s most prominent contemporary artists, a request for a meeting prompts a polite response from an assistant explaining that the artist is too busy for such undertakings.¹²⁹ And because of all this added together, the literature on Schneider’s work to be discussed further below [4.1.3] is not extensive either. *HAUS u r* is a contemporary work with all the uncertainties that this involves, something that the thesis takes into account. When choosing the work as a case study for the present study, the thesis is interested in the way that house and work merge beyond established categories, and through this overlapping and possible fusion embody the

¹²⁹ I contacted Gregor Schneider via email on 18 July 2010 and received the response from his assistant on 5 August 2010.

quality of the contemporary moment – which is to say that house and work simply exist here and now and therefore must be approached accordingly. The full scope of the work is not yet known, if it ever will be.

Schneider's extensive website provides the main site for research into the nature of *HAUS u r*, and the website with its white text on a black background has images of the work popping up like rooms in a house with no immediate coherence save for the logic of navigating the website itself. This aspect raises the question of the extent to which the architecture of the website influences the visitor's understanding of *HAUS u r*. While this is not easy to determine, one finds that after a number of visits to the website, an idea of the layout of the house, which might otherwise have been taking form, become, again, confused.¹³⁰ The artist himself has also expressed an experience of disorientation, he said in 1996:

By now my work has become independent. It has its own inner dynamics. The sheer amount that I have built in here means that I can't distinguish anymore between what has been added and what has been subtracted. There is no way now of fully documenting what has happened in the house. (Lock 2003: 35)

So, how are we to know the house, the work and the difference between the two? How are we to know what the work is *about*? The following considers the evidence available testifying to Schneider's activities in the house where he also lived, had grown up and already moved away from once. This brings the enquiry back to the website and the *gate* from where three possible routes inside are available. Here, images are sorted according to spatial/temporal classifications defined by the artist with the three main categories: "HAUS u r 1985-1994," "HAUS u r 2000," and "HAUS u r rooms 1985-today."¹³¹ The first section contains seventeen images of completed rooms labelled "u r" or "u" plus a number. While the "u r"-designation refers to a completed single room, an "umbauter Raum" [rebuilt room] or an "unsichtbarer Raum" [invisible room], "u" refers to works in progress that are not room enclosures.¹³² The second category contains seventy-eight images seemingly captured in the year 2000 offering views behind, between and across the rooms shown in the first section. Schneider's dissemination of these *in-between* views suggests that his conception of the work extends beyond the completed rooms, and that working on individual rooms does not ignore that these are connected after all. However, what appears as messy residue spaces might well be staged as meticulously for the camera as the images of the completed rooms. The third category includes a number of rooms of a different kind than the easily recognisable kitchen [Fig. 4.6], corridor [Fig. 4.7], studio [Fig. 4.8] and bedroom [Fig. 4.9] that belong to the first category. The third category contains images of rooms such as *Puff (aus Berlin)* [Brothel (from Berlin)] [Fig. 4.10], *Liebeslaube* [Love Nest] [Fig. 4.11], *Kaffeezimmer* [Coffee Room] [Fig. 4.12] and *Total isoliertes Gästezimmer* [Completely Insulated Guest Room] [Fig.

¹³⁰ Interestingly, the accounts from curators and gallerists, who have visited the house in Rheydt guided by Schneider himself, do not add significant information about the nature of *HAUS u r*. The descriptions available mostly confirm what can already be established by other means. Visitors include the curators Udo Kittelmann and Daniel Birnbaum who visited the house prior to the exhibition of *HAUS u r* at the Venice Biennale (2001). The latter wrote the essay "Interiority Complex" for *Artforum* about the visit (2000) also referred to below.

¹³¹ The website was accessed 24 April 2012 for the purpose of the following description.

¹³² This is the description of Schneider's terminology provided in the catalogue to his show in Los Angeles (Schneider 2003a: 226).

4.13]. If the inclusion of these types of spaces extends the notion of the conventional dwelling house, they might nevertheless be integral to its setup for Schneider.

Besides from the photographic material, the website also gives access to a number of videos from as early as 1988. These films are attached to key solo shows listed in the website's biographical section, and they provide dynamic tours of the house as well as still life video documentation of selected rooms. In contrast to the photographic evidence of Schneider's semi-secret interiors, especially the images belonging to the first category described above, some of the films add a significant extra dimension to the work by weaving the otherwise disconnected rooms together when Schneider moves through the house with the camera. In fact, was it not for this video documentation, one could not know for sure whether at all the photographed interiors actually belonged to the house. Schneider's rooms are photographed *frontally*, one after the other with doors closed, and there is no possible patching up of overlapping corners like in the case of Kurt Schwitters' three *Merzbau* photographs described and discussed in the previous chapter [Fig. 3.14/3.15/3.16].

At one point *HAUS u r* takes a turn. When Schneider begins to copy rooms from the house in other locations, such as gallery spaces in other cities, the work moves beyond the immediate limit of the house. Eventually, Schneider also cuts rooms out of the house and rebuilds these elsewhere in new configurations. As temporary structures, these relocated interiors disappear again, and there is no evidence that removed rooms have been brought back and reinstalled in the house in Rheydt. At this point, the question of the work and its evidence becomes a question of what Schneider actually did. What kind of building practice unfolded in the house permitting these copies of rooms and relocations to other sites? According to the evidence released by the artist, *HAUS u r* consists of a number of spatial modifications of rooms throughout the floors of the house in Rheydt. However, one cannot know what has taken place from simply looking at the visual evidence – the nature of the work escapes documentation. There is nothing so far in this introduction to the work that reveals the nature of *HAUS u r*, and it is not until one reads the full titles and descriptions of the photographs that it becomes clear what Schneider's building practice in fact relies on. "Room within a room" and "Wall in front of a wall" are the most common labels implying that Schneider's walls and rooms are doubles of the existing walls and rooms, and over time possibly doubles of such doubles. By repeating the existing structural framework of the house, Schneider has created double spaces on both sides of doubled walls and rooms – enclosed spaces with gaps between them. A maze has developed while new rooms have emerged. Some rooms are staged and minimally equipped, others are disorganised and possibly occupied by Schneider as both living and workspace, it all eventually becomes a work of art.

4.1.2 Completely insulated dwelling house

Nine years pass from Schneider returns to the house on Unterheydener Strasse and begins doubling its walls and rooms (1985) until a copy of one of these rooms is constructed in Galerie Andreas Weiss, Berlin (1994). The selection of photographs categorised as “HAUS u r 1985-1994” shows the rooms built during to this first stage of the work. Schneider produces a series of double walls and rooms and numbers these interventions, so that the first doubling exercise appears to have been *u r 0*. A photograph of the work from Schneider’s website shows three connected, whitewashed brick walls forming a small spatial enclosure [Fig. 4.14]. It could either be the blind end of a narrow corridor or a niche within a larger space – the caption added to the image describes the work as a “Room within a room, chalky sandstone, mortar and wood, 1 door, white walls and ceiling, cement floor,” (Gregor Schneider 2013). In other words and despite appearances, a small enclosure with a cement floor, a ceiling and a door through which one enters/exits the room. When the same photograph is reproduced in the catalogue to Schneider’s exhibition in Los Angeles in 2003, it is labelled, “u r 2, CHAMBER, Rheydt, 1988” (Schneider 2003a: 19). While the two photographs are identical, something happened between 1985 and 1988 – *u r 0* became *u r 2*. The small room without designation in 1985 had become a *chamber* by 1988.

Photographs of *u r 2* taken in Rheydt (1988) are exhibited at Konrad Fischer Galerie, Düsseldorf (1997) [Fig. 4.15]. The photos labelled *u r 2*, *ABSTELLKAMMER* [Box Room] display the chamber in a different state compared to the two previous images. They also reveal the relationship between the room, its entrance door and the room from where one enters. In addition, the 1988 room is described as slightly smaller than the 1985 room – according to the website the width has shrunk from 128 cm to 96 cm and the height from 236 cm to 225 cm. This shrinkage suggests that Schneider has modified the room by doubling its walls. He has built a room within a room already within a room using breezeblocks held by a wooden framework. The blocks have been plastered over and the floor, previously of cement and covered by a brown carpet, has in 1988 become a concrete floor. Schneider will reconstruct this latter version of the room a number of times in various locations, the first time in Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland (1996) [Fig. 4.16]. On this occasion, one notices that the door to the small room is located closer to the corner of the larger room compared to the situation in Rheydt.

If these spatial events and displacements of Schneider’s doubled box room come across as minor and insignificant to the point of being rather meaningless, then such are the histories of most of the doubled rooms. The nature of the work is such that its signs and movements are almost imperceptible – one cannot be sure what has happened from one version of a room to the next. If one asks what is going on, why he did it, what it means and why an audience should be interested, then the answers are not straightforward. The rooms are simply recognisable. They are familiar and trivial to the point where to look behind their immediate insignificance seems to lead nowhere. If, eventually, we no

longer know what we are looking at then what are we looking for? The thesis is interested in how Schneider's continued doublings of these seemingly over-familiar dwelling house rooms reach a point where identification reverses and the rooms in all their triviality come forth as somehow alien. Section 4.3 of the present chapter looks further into this aspect of *HAUS u r*.

Until the displaced Berlin double, the work is largely kept under wraps (Loock 2003: 37/54). On the invitation card to the show, a photo of the room in Rheydt is labelled "Raum UR 3 1988" while a photo of the corresponding room in Berlin is labelled "X Raum UR 3A 1994" [Fig. 4.17].¹³³ On the website, the two photos of the identical rooms are first shown side by side, then individually and both named *Verdoppelter Raum* [Doubled Room]. The photo of the room taken inside the house in Rheydt has the description:

Room within a room, plaster boards and a wooden construction, 2 doors, 1 window, 1 lamp, grey floor, white walls and ceiling (245x263x243cm (LxWxH))

While the other photo, taken in Berlin, carries the description:

Room within a room, plaster boards and a wooden construction, 2 doors, 1 window, 1 lamp, grey floor, white walls and ceiling (247x332x249cm (LxWxH)).

In other words, besides from being located in different parts of Germany, the room in Berlin is slightly larger than the one in Rheydt. The subtleties continue to make the difference in Schneider's work, yet with the show in Bern that soon follows (1996), the strategy of doubling rooms elsewhere develops further. For the first time, a number of rooms are copied in another location, and the show also marks a significant shift in that it moves the newly constructed *u r 12, TOTAL ISOLIERTES GÄSTEZIMMER* [Completely Insulated Guest Room] [Fig. 4.13], built as an addition to the house in Rheydt (1995), to Bern for reconstruction in the museum space.

The first decade of working in the house marks the time that it takes Schneider to reconfigure the interior so profoundly that its initial layout is altered beyond recognition, even recollection. The initial house in Rheydt becomes another house in Rheydt, yet the two houses are located on the same address, behind the same front façade, carried by the same supporting walls, one within the other. While Schneider does not publicise the work during this first phase, an interview is made by the Bern show's curator, Ulrich Loock, and the transcribed conversation provides significant insight into the nature of *HAUS u r* and Schneider's thinking (Loock 2003). The thesis returns to this interview below [4.2].

After Bern, Schneider relocates and reconstructs rooms from the house in places such as Portikus, Frankfurt am Main (1997) and Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1998), eventually culminating

¹³³ These work titles are written opposite photos of the two rooms on the invitation card to the private view in Berlin (Gregor Schneider 2013).

with 24 rooms from the house rebuilt inside the German Pavilion at the 49th Venice Biennale (2001). While the Venice showcase is very important for the recognition of Schneider's artistic work and career in general, the part reconstruction/part relocation to Italy of several rooms from the house has severe implications for the building in Rheydt which becomes so disfigured that it is rendered largely uninhabitable (Schimmel 2003: 103).¹³⁴

After Venice, the mobile dwelling house comes to Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2003), where it is on display for a full year. Returning to the fragmented history of *u r 2*, *ABSTELLKAMMER* [Box Room] mentioned above, the catalogue from the Los Angeles show displays another image of the room (2003a: 98) [Fig. 4.18]. It shows one of the brick walls at an angle to what appears to be a white plasterboard wall yet could be a door. If so, the photo must be taken from within the 1985 room, but what is more striking than the actual motif is the caption below stating, "u r 2, CHAMBER, HAUS u r, Rheydt, 1988 (moveable wall)" – which one is the movable wall and where did it suddenly come from? Schneider's house responds in this kaleidoscopic manner to attempts to trace its history. It is a house where two rooms can occupy the same place at the same time, yet where one room can also occupy two places with a significant distance between them. The extent to which these doubled rooms are perceived as identical relies on interpretation.

4.1.3 The unhomely home

While the literature on Gregor Schneider and his work is not extensive, a couple of significant publications have emerged of relevance to the present study. The catalogue for the Los Angeles exhibition is one of those (Schneider 2003a). It presents itself as "the first comprehensive survey of [Schneider's] career to date," and it works as a Gregor Schneider monograph while such still awaits writing.¹³⁵ It contains the translation into English of Ulrich Loock's interview with Schneider from 1996, mentioned above and perhaps the most informative and intriguing testament to *HAUS u r* yet published. Besides, the catalogue presents an invented interview with the fictitious character Hannelore Reuen written by Schneider in collaboration with the art historian Amine Haase. Hannelore, who seemingly settled into the house in Rheydt in 1990, is a character invented by Schneider when neighbours began enquiring into the seemingly empty ground floor flat. While Hannelore has mostly existed as a name below the doorbell to prevent the untimely interest, she has also materialised occasionally in the form of a life-size rag doll lying face down in the corner of an exhibition space such as seen in Warsaw (2000) [Fig. 4.19]. As such, Hannelore might be perceived as a counterpart to the man lying on his back on the floor of *Kabinett für aktuelle Kunst* [Cabinet of Contemporary Art] in Bremerhaven the following year [Fig. 4.20]. His name was N. Schmidt and he

¹³⁴ Gregor Schneider wins the Golden Lion for his installation of *TOTES HAUS u r* [Dead House u r] in Venice. The change of the title from *HAUS u r* to *TOTES HAUS u r* occurs once Schneider begins to remove rooms from the house for exhibition elsewhere. Cut out from the body of the house in Rheydt, the rooms mark a dead house; relocation and exhibition kill the work and, eventually, the house. "Exhibitions are always the death of work. We all fail in our endeavors. After the exhibition I will be alone again. Then I will go back to square one and start my work again," Schneider says prior to the first larger showcase of *HAUS u r* in Bern (1996) (Loock 2001: 143).

¹³⁵ The quote is from the back of the catalogue cover.

was seemingly dead. With the title of the interview, “He Is Never Going to Get Out,” quoting a statement made by Hannelore during the interview, its premise has Schneider coming to the house to enquire about Hannelore’s experience of living there. The ambiguity of the artist/landlord/enquirer’s role and position remains unsettled throughout the invented conversation, and the reader is left to negotiate certain glitches in the dialogue that reveal its double nature. At the same time, these also leave clues to the work in a wider sense, and the thesis picks up some for closer study.

Another significant exhibition catalogue was published with the show in Venice (2001) and contains essays by Elizabeth Bronfen and the show’s curators Udo Kittelmann and Daniel Birnbaum (Schneider 2001). Bronfen discusses *HAUS u r* in parallel with the trailer to Alfred Hitchcock’s film *Psycho*, leading to the topic of Freud’s *uncanny* and its possible resonance with Schneider’s doubled rooms. Bronfen draws attention to the way in which Hitchcock begins the trailer by showing a small commonplace motel inside which a terrible crime is explained to have taken place (34). Focus is drawn to the absence of visible traces of this event, and the circumstance that the innocently looking motel in all its harmless recognisability in fact hides a gruesome history. Bronfen finds that the sanitised bathroom, where Norman Bates kills the young woman, is paralleled by Schneider’s doubled rooms where unknown events might have taken place. Bronfen writes, “Though seemingly empty these are actually full with traces that can be perceived once one privileges what is not there” (40). The thesis returns to Bronfen’s text in section 4.3.2 below when going further into the thinking of Freud in relation to Schneider’s work.

The Zurich-based Parkett Verlag’s presentation of Gregor Schneider (2001) includes an essay by Ulrich Loock written on the basis of the interview transcripts mentioned above. Loock revisits Freud’s thinking on the uncanny in relation to Schneider’s relocation of *HAUS u r* to Venice (2001). The argument goes that Schneider, when installing the rooms from Rheydt inside another building, “contextualises the house with itself in order to locate the other side of its meaning,” as Loock phrases it (138). Rather than attempt to bring new layers of the work to the fore, Schneider’s house remains situated within its own preset condition of interiority, Loock argues. The notion of an other side is thereby perceived as a negation immanent the house itself, and Loock finds that Schneider attempts to connect with this *non-dwelling* when installing the childhood home inside the German pavilion in Venice. Loock, who has also received a guided tour of Schneider’s house in Rheydt, considers how the two different constellations of the house in Rheydt and Venice, respectively, fluctuate between the domestic setting and this negation. Schneider is seen to identify “the uncanny foundations of domestic living and thereby rais[e] the possibility of a way of dealing with this unfathomable element that shatters any existential stability” (149). Loock conclusively chimes in with Bronfen when suggesting that it becomes the role of art to preserve these traces of the uncanny while the conflict they represent comes to the surface (149). While the thesis approaches a similar path of thinking about Schneider’s

work as eventually bringing a latent unconscious to the fore through the doubling practice, it does, however, not identify a positive resolution to the problem Schneider addresses with the same optimism as Bronfen and Loock.

Renate Puvogel's text, also published in the Parkett-publication, touches only briefly on the topic of the uncanny when it suggests that the still life within the non-descript rooms of Schneider's house is deceiving. While Puvogel finds that the distorted proportions of the doubled rooms give clues to the double nature of double walls, it is the changes caused by otherwise imperceptible presences that is her focus. Describing the inability to grasp and rationalise the house as its main claim to accommodate something unknown, Puvogel's interpretation of the work is therefore closer to the present study. This notion of an uncanny remainder that can never be fully worked through, overcome or reconciled is discussed by the thesis in section 4.3.2 by extending the notion of Freud's uncanny to Otto Rank's work on the double that also inspired Freud. With the focus on the double, the thesis approaches the most recent interview available made by Gilda Williams on the occasion of Schneider's show at Sadie Coles HQ in London (2010). This conversation primarily revolves around the strategy of doubling practised in *HAUS u r* as well as in other of Schneider's works, particularly the installation *Die Familie Schneider* [The Family Schneider] (2004).¹³⁶

4.2 STATEMENTS – The difference between a full and an empty box

The three published interviews – by Loock (2003), Schneider (2003b) and Williams (2010), respectively – illuminate the artist's approach to *HAUS u r*, the building of the double house and the life between its walls during the years of construction. While Schneider contributes with a number of significant statements, if sometimes with a puzzling logic, the interviews approach the implications of the work from different angles. The following sections pursue a number of these as well as the statements made in an attempt to unfold the possible implications for an interpretation of *HAUS u r* relevant to the thesis' concern with contemporary dwelling. As intimated above, *HAUS u r* manifests an engagement with the dwelling house that is of a highly unusual character, and the thesis argues that this building – as a practice of doubling a house and the double building that ensues – holds a key to unlock a particular kind of interiority. That Schneider's building is categorised as a work of art perhaps owes as much to the absence of any other suitable term for the artist's unusual practice of doubling his childhood home within itself.

The interview made by Ulrich Loock, first published in 1996 with the title "I never throw anything away, I just go on..." pursues the motivation behind Schneider's practice. Loock attempts to corner

¹³⁶ *Die Familie Schneider* [The Schneider Family] is Gregor Schneider's staging of life within two identical, neighbouring houses in London's East End (2004). Visitors were allowed to browse through both houses, one person at a time, one house after the other, for ten minutes each. As it turned out, it was not only the houses that were identical, but the residents and their activities, themselves repetitive, were also repeated in each house.

the artist inside as well as outside of the house, literally, insofar as the conversations take place in both Rheydt and Bern. Loock challenges Schneider by asking straightforward questions, calling for straightforward answers that Schneider in some instances is reluctant to give. Instead, the artist responds by approaching the question from a different angle, as if attempting to stay in control of the situation and, ultimately, the work. At one point, Loock sets in with a recitation of work titles from the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition of Schneider's work in Krefeld (1994). Loock reads:

... Wall in front of wall, wall in front of wall, wall behind wall, passage in room, room in room, passage in room, wall in front of wall, room in room, room in room, room in room, red stone behind room, lead around room, lead in floor, light around room, light around room, wall in front of wall, figure in wall, wall in front of wall, wall in front of wall, room in room, wall in front of wall, wall in front of wall, wall in front of wall, ceiling under ceiling, section of wall in front of wall, wall in front of wall, section of wall in front of wall, wall in front of wall... I find it fascinating, it's a kind of poetry... up until 1994, six walls behind wall. The description of the works seems almost exclusively like the reiteration of something that is already there. (Loock 2003: 35/36)

While the recitation does not call for a response, Schneider immediately meets Loock's conclusive remark in the following way:

There were also works that you can't recognize as such. I build complete rooms with floors, walls and ceiling that you can't see as a room in a room or a room around a room. There has been a constant stream of new rooms made from various materials. Some of them - imperceptibly - rise up, sink back down or complete a full rotation. My work is really about the fact that I am always starting work again. (36)

By emphasising that the recited list does not fully embrace the variety of work produced, which is to say that less straightforward spatial doublings have also taken place, Schneider brings an important aspect of his work to the fore. That is whether the doublings can be seen to produce something new, to invent anything, or they simply repeat the existing, as Schneider appears to oppose on this occasion, if not overall. The thesis returns to this discussion below [4.2.2], yet Schneider's response to Loock's recitation further emphasises that not only are existing walls and rooms doubled, but the artist always returns to double yet another wall and room. The work is therefore not only a repetition in a material sense but also in terms of effort. Schneider suggests that this repeated effort in a sense *is* the work, thereby inevitably substantiating Loock's description of the work as essentially about repetition.

The fictitious interview with Hannelore Reuen, conducted and conceived by Gregor Schneider himself, is published with the title "He Is Never Going to Get Out" (2003b). The title, quoting a statement made by Hannelore during the interview, refers to Schneider's inability to let go of the house, or perhaps rather to get out of it, to escape it. While primarily interrogating Hannelore about the experience of living with himself in the house, the interview can be read as a confessional piece. If its convoluted nature and set-up escapes a first reading of the otherwise straightforward dialogue, a number of curious situations occur throughout, as if Schneider deliberately makes use of the imaginary conversation to leave certain clues to the work. For example, when Hannelore explains how Schneider used to be a helpful landlord assisting her with the laundry, she suggests that he only did this for the

purpose of observing her (184). Schneider, the enquirer, then asks, “What is so troubling about him observing himself?” to which Hannelore replies, “He observed me too” (184). The convergence between Hannelore Reuen and Gregor Schneider becomes apparent, and Hannelore is also well informed about Schneider’s artistic motivation and personal life throughout. As if speaking through his mind, which the reader of course knows is exactly what she is doing, she states, “Schneider says: his work always tells him what the next step is. Like us having to do this interview now, so Hannelore Reuen can answer questions. Yes, that is the horrible part. I can’t get out of it anymore either” (200).

Gilda Williams’ interview with Gregor Schneider (2010) is the third source of statements for the following sections. The published conversation is of interest because it gives a voice to Schneider’s thoughts on his doubling practice at a time when the house in Rheydt appears to have been left behind. Considering the artist’s concern that this would never happen, Schneider nevertheless talks about the early work in the house as if the rooms still surround him. He also addresses other kinds of projects initiated elsewhere. “Now, as always, I am concerned with rooms that I cannot physically access, which are unknown to me,” he explains (4), a statement possibly referring to the subsequent constructions of inaccessible black cubes and prison cells.¹³⁷ The following sections thematise a selection of statements collected from the three interviews and differentiated across four categories. These framed discourses on Schneider’s work will set the scene for the eventual interpretations offered in the third section of the chapter [4.3].

4.2.1 Replaying walls and rooms

When Gregor Schneider reconfigures the interior of his childhood home on Unterheydener Strasse, he distorts the initial layout of the house in a particular way. While retaining the basic outline of the house, which is to say its enclosing walls, the interior alterations are carried out without interfering with the building’s envelope and primary load-bearing structure. The two houses that ensue from this building practice – the existing *bast* and the double – coexist for a start. According to Schneider, concept and building practice are straightforward, “I’ll explain how I work – my work is easy to describe – I place a wall in front of a wall, a room inside a room. It’s as if parts of rooms are replayed” (1). If this recollection of the work’s methodology twenty-five years after its initiation sounds simple, the nature of a house and the exercise of copying its walls within its rooms is, however, less than straightforward when occurring over time. The copied rooms become smaller than the already existing rooms, and the scaling exercise produces distortions in a number of ways, proportionally and formally,

¹³⁷ These later works include a black cube inspired by the Caaba placed at the centre of the Great Mosque in Mecca. Schneider’s cube was censored from the Venice Biennale in 2005 due to fear of terrorist attacks if it was to be installed as planned on St Mark’s Square. It was later paraphrased by Schneider for the show *Das schwarze Quadrat. Hommage an Malewitsch* [The Black Square: Homage to Malevich], Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg (2007). In the room installation “4538 KM,” Deurle, Belgium (2006), Schneider constructed a sequence of rooms within the Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens resembling the American detention centres on Guantánamo Bay seen in images that he found on the Internet. This theme was pursued further in the exhibition “Weisse Folter” [White Torture] at K20K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2007), with a set of repeated rooms and a critique raised of practices of torture that does not leave traces on the body or the room in which it takes place.

yet also on a psychological and experiential level. Over time, the distinction between the two houses blurs, they come to accommodate and support each other, they merge in places, if not overall.

The teenager Schneider, who returned to the house in Rheydt in the mid-1980s, was rejected from military service as well as fine art studies – for a start, he had good time. He stayed indoors, inside the house, and copied its walls and rooms in front of and within the existing walls and rooms – he claimed not to know what he was doing. “I’m not interested in the room itself. The first time I built a room, I had no idea that’s what I had done. It was someone else that told me,” Schneider explains to Look (2003: 36). He continues, “...I build rooms, that I don’t perceive as a room in a room or a room around a room ... I look at a wall and am interested in any unevennesses on its surface: the tiniest hole, the slightest protuberance” (55). Suggesting that the copying of walls simply occurs, so that these can be studied in minutiae, as surfaces independent from any context, is a proposition that relates the building of *HAUS *u r** to some of Schneider’s earlier experiments. “These involved going into a room, leaving it again, hoping that the experience would linger there and then inviting other people into that room,” he explains (55). In this sense, the building of rooms inside rooms is perhaps both more and less than required considering that simply entering and leaving a room possibly facilitates the kind of investigation into notions of presence and absence that Schneider is after. He says:

I am interested in observing and... well, there’s nothing like experience. A whole world opens up with all sorts of things that are not recognisable but which are there and which influence the way we feel, think and act, how we live our daily lives. (37)

When exploring whether past events linger in rooms, perceivable by later occupants, Schneider challenges the limits of perception. This is an investigation first undertaken with insulated boxes inside which the artist would hide himself. These initial studies led to the construction of the work *u r 8*, *TOTAL ISOLIERTER TOTER RAUM* [Completely Insulated Dead Room] (1989-91), a *dead room* built within an existing room in a seemingly conventional German dwelling house [Fig. 4.5]. The doubled room was a box-shaped enclosure with thick layers of sound-absorbing material in the form of a lead, soil and glass wool lining. Only one door gave access to the completely darkened room, and once this door closed there was no way out, the door could not be opened from inside. When building the room, Schneider was concerned with the possibility that a living being could be occupying the room and yet be completely detached from his/her surroundings, be imperceptible – ultimately left to die. Could the dead space itself even be considered to exist in a positive sense, or was it a void, a kind of black hole?

I was hoping that life would be the difference between a full and an empty box ... I was interested in notions of immediacy ... In that room you would no longer have been sensually perceptible. You would have been gone. Whether it was a hole or a window, I don’t know, I never went in ... I was simply interested in impossibilities. (66)

An interest in impossibilities led Schneider to explore spatial entities such as sealed boxes and doubled rooms within a house. If in the early days, the artist was compelled to go to such spatial extremes in order to challenge the presence of absence and vice versa, the limit of perception would eventually be pursued within the setting of domestic everyday life. No less radical spatial/perceptual investigations within Schneider's own childhood home – a place supposedly full of memories, familiar corners and well-trodden paths – would unfold once copied walls became copied rooms. The impossibility associated with the constructed absence in the early experiments is paralleled by the impossibility of constructed presence in the later, in the dwelling house. "Perhaps my work is also a preparation for one day not having to build anymore rooms," Schneider suggests (55), as if everybody has a certain quota to build, and he simply has been trying to get his done. Speaking through the double, the rag doll Hannelore Reuen, Schneider explains about himself and his work:

Now he would say that he doesn't plan things at all, but rather the things make themselves, that he just lets things take their course. It's just like with his rooms: he only repeats what he found there in the first place. He actually doesn't want to make anything, to invent anything. And so these rooms are created that look quite normal; but, in always doing the same thing, he falls into a trap. He says himself that he works with things that he can't recognise anymore. And also with things that aren't perceptible anymore. As he works on the house, it becomes unknown to him ... He can't even talk about his work anymore. (Schneider 2003b: 200)

Schneider thinks that he has fallen into a trap by simply repeating something already existing without any additions, any invention, any clear idea about what he is doing and why. While simply observing the walls and rooms that he has built with the stated aim to make them "look quite normal," the repetition of the doubling practice turns the perceived normality into something else, something unidentifiable if at all detectable. Ultimately, in Schneider's house, normality becomes a stranger.

4.2.2 The practice of doubling a house

Schneider's claim that his doubles simply testify to the already existing walls and rooms in front of which they are built as identical twins, neutral and silent, is maintained throughout the years of working in the house. In 2010, he reiterates:

My working method is always one of doubling. A double just in front, just beneath or just inside what already exists, or a plausible double placed at another site. So, there is no invention. What little I invent is barely noticeable and unobtrusive. Doubling is a gesture which confirms what already exists in the present, not in the form of a statement or proof but like evidence in a court of law. (Williams: 1)

To perceive doubling as a simple confirmation of the existing, with no claim to invent or propose anything new, is to insist on a straightforwardness of the doubling gesture that raises a number of issues. First of all, there is the way that Schneider's description of doubling as artistic strategy diminishes his own stake in the seemingly self-evident logic of the practice. The personal investment and motivation behind the work is suspended when describing the act as a simple repetition of a physical presence, and Schneider's attempt to evade a possible deeper meaning or implication of the work continues:

The doubling of what already exists legitimises the work in the simplest possible way. This resolves the question of legitimation ... without giving it great importance. My work is focused in on itself. I don't think much of psychologising artworks. (2)

Schneider's double refers back to its original only – a wall is a wall and a room is a room. Nothing exists besides or beyond the double as simple repetition. There is no other meaning or added quality integral to the work, no trace remains from the past life of the artist and/or his family in the house, no psychological implications, nothing outside the work. Instead, Schneider claims, the work is all about the materiality of the double and the original that it copies. He says:

I choose to rebuild a room in order to really analyse the structure of it. By rebuilding a room, I truly understand the room. What is exciting for me is that from the moment I rebuild a room, the original room that lies behind it becomes hidden, and the newly built room is accepted as a room that has always existed. For me this emptiness is a part of the work. The more one continues to rebuild the same room, the more inexplicable the layers between the original and the copy become. (2)

Schneider claims that he gets to “truly understand” a room by doubling it, yet what is there to understand? That a room can be detached from the continuity of the built structure of which it forms part without causing this house to collapse? That recognisability of the space between the original room and its copy decreases proportionally to the complexity of doubling the double? What kind of *analysis* of the room's structure is it that Schneider carries out? If the statement implies that a desire to seek knowledge about built fabric is part of the work, then what is it that Schneider wants to know about the house? The answers to these questions linger.

Once the double room hides the original room behind it, the illusion is created that the copy is the original – a realisation that according to Schneider provokes a feeling of *emptiness*. The notion of this absence might relate to the physical gap between the two rooms, yet also derive from a sensation of loss once the familiar house disappears behind the walls of new rooms, even if this outcome is desired. Such an experience would undermine Schneider's claim that nothing exists outside the physical presence of the work; that he simply is its maker and witness. At one point during the interview with Williams, the artist laconically confesses, “I once visited a psychiatrist, and he said he couldn't help me understand this need of mine to build a duplicate room” (2). Williams has suggested that Schneider, by always doubling something existing, appears to ascribe particular meaning to the casting of his forms from existing moulds. Furthermore, that his approach is close to traditional art practise when faithfully mimicking reality in detail. Schneider's response evades the address by taking refuge in the possibility that perhaps the work simply cannot be explained since even the psychiatrist was not able to. The resistance to interpretation of the work and its motivation is strong, yet the disavowal with reference to the psychiatrist is also revealing. It reveals something about Schneider's compulsion to repeat, yet also about the tendency of traditional art practices to copy reality and therefore also to repeat – to repeat in the first place and to repeat the first place.

Schneider's childhood home on Unterheydener Strasse gradually disappears behind the doubles over time. As such, the initial house is forgotten when slowly disappearing from sight, even if, structurally, the childhood home is not completely eradicated when merging with the doubles repeating it from all sides. The notion of the first home and house might, however, loom behind the added layers of walls otherwise attempting to obscure any recollection. Mark Cousins suggests that considering the disappointment most people experience when revisiting the first house that they remember, it does not seem to be important in an empirical sense (1993: 38). If the desire to recollect and retrieve a perceived lost origin is at the heart of much literature concerning dwelling, it touches on this indisputable existence of *the first place*. Cousins' complicates the relation to this house when asking, "At an empirical level, why on earth should one be interested in the first of something?" (35). Considering that memories of the first house not necessarily relate to a house that one has actually lived in, but can be memories of other houses, the *original* is an abstract concept. In fact, we might simply have forgotten the first house, and only traces linger to return in the form of a patched up imaginary building. Cousins suggests that the first house might be the site of the origin of memory itself, for which reason we shall never be able to remember it. "It is quite impossible to remember the origins of the memory. We have to start not from an origin but from the core of repetition in the house," he suggests (38). The thesis is interested in the way that the gesture of repetition might call forth something forgotten and therefore already known. It returns to this possibility below [4.3].

4.2.3 A room is a room is a room

If Schneider in 1996 states that he is not interested in the room itself, he talks about his interest in analysing the structure of a room for the purpose of a deeper understanding of it in 2010. What has happened in the meantime? Has the artist changed his mind about rooms over the years? While it is possible to argue that a deeper interest in spatial enclosures is likely to develop as the inevitable outcome of a practice of doubling rooms through a prolonged period of time, Schneider might also refer to the *idea* of a room rather than its actual physical constitution. As such, this *room*, no longer necessarily part of a house, is a category prior to building and architecture, inhabitation and purpose. As Brigitte Kölle writes about Schneider's work:

[Schneider] simply says he builds rooms. Mostly he uses the singular form as though *the room* were a constant, as though one room were not by definition linked to another, as though there were not different rooms, mental, physical, visible and invisible, rooms that we find ourselves in and rooms which open up to us. (n.d.)

As though there was not a house, one could add. Schneider's description of his work and the rooms that he doubles are according to Kölle like descriptions of rooms without qualities. They are like rooms materialising a first spatial principle in relation to which every thing and every event eventually will take place. Schneider simply builds a double wall or room and waits to see whether anything will happen. Implicit this waiting is the possibility that he will not be able to tell whether anything eventually does happen, because he might not necessarily know.

The title of the work, *HAUS u r*, refers to the site of the house, Unterheydener Strasse. It refers to the location as a kind of *ur-site*, thereby emphasising the notion of the place as an origin. The *u* and *r* of the title mark the first and last letters of the street name while also spelling *ur*, a prefix in the German language added to words as signification of a primordial connotation. In addition, the notion of a first ground might relate to the city of Rheydt, absorbed by Mönchengladbach in 1975, or in a wider sense to Germany. The thesis suggests that Schneider through the naming of the house and work as *ur-house*, and by establishing the category of the room as a primary category, reinstates a notion of originality otherwise obscured by the repeated practice of doubling. Schneider's house marks an *ur-site*, first of all for himself in the form of his childhood home but also in terms of the exploration of rooms that he undertakes. It is a site that must be reconstructed to be worked over, it cannot simply be recollected or brought forward, it has not already existed in the way that it must, again, be built.

Insofar as Schneider's methodology places the double wall in the space between the *ur-wall* in the background and the artist himself, it outlines a spatial movement of closing in. While the artist eventually is enclosed by his own creation, the double room, a space is also created outside this centrality, which is to say on the other side of the wall. These complex spatial displacements and overlaps, created by the doubling practice, are illustrated by the *split wall diagram* introduced in relation to Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau* in the previous chapter [3.3, see also p.128 below]. Following this diagram, Schneider locates himself within the central void of its plan when locating himself within the double room. At the same time, the space between the double walls surrounding this central space corresponds to the liminal zone unfolded by Schwitters' *Merzbau*. However, as Schneider says, a room always evades total recognition, "When you're in front of a painting, you still recognise it as a painting. Rooms are different ... You don't see a room completely. All the time, there is something behind you," he explains (Roug 2003). If it is not possible to contemplate a whole room in one go, at one glance, this is because something always remains unseen behind the contemplating eyes of the subject. While a visual limitation does not foreclose that human perception still works in-the-round, it is in this blind field that Schneider, his camera, and by extension audience converge. The otherwise inevitable gap between artist/work and audience is bridged here – that is, we all come to see the house through the eyes of Schneider.

4.2.4 Daring the unknown

"As he works on the house, it becomes unknown to him," Hannelore Reuen says (Schneider 2003b: 200), and in a press release for an exhibition of Schneider's photographic work at Galerie Nelson-Freeman in Paris (2011), the artist is quoted for saying, "The more I deal with it, the more unknown it becomes. That's the challenge for me, to keep running on the spot." After years of attempts, Schneider appears to have realised that what he is chasing, attempting to trap or to give shelter is an evasive

being that cannot be cornered in a room. Building for the unknown means to continue to produce work, the immediate meaning and purpose of which is ungraspable. It means repeatedly doubling rooms in the house as a continued reaffirmation of the undertaking itself. Schneider's inwards movement of doubling rooms within rooms becomes a commitment to itself, when to double a room holds no immediate architectural or functional promise nor fulfil a conceivable rational or emotional requirement. Through the repeated effort of doubling, the unconventional housework, if not homework, becomes an artwork – Schneider explains, “I was interested in heading for some neutral point that I myself cannot know. Moments like that only arise through chance” (Loock 2003: 36). Repeating rooms in an inwards movement is a way of zooming in, getting closer, shifting to another spatio-temporal dimension; a state emptied of all personal associations and meanings, a neutral zone, a void within the familiar house. Inside this gap, everything and nothing resides – ultimately, the situation is out of the observing artist's control, which is to say the way he seemingly wants it.

The persistence of Schneider's preoccupation with and pursuit of what he continuously refers to as *the unknown* is daring; it brings his childhood home and house to the point of conceptual breakdown. The circumstance that events might have taken place in rooms, that rooms might be moving or changing imperceptibly, that something or someone possibly hides behind or within a wall are examples of this concern with the unknown that keeps returning as a theme during the interviews. It is the possible influence of something otherwise imperceptible, invisible or unrecognisable that preoccupies Schneider. Essentially, the artist appears intrigued by aspects of *being* beyond comprehension if nevertheless affecting human existence profoundly – such as, for example, death, emptiness and absence. When building *u r 8, TOTAL ISOLIERTER TOTER RAUM* [Completely Insulated Dead Room] (1989-91) [Fig. 4.5], Schneider challenged life's final closure by building a space for this ultimate experience. As such, the room facilitated what the artist possibly imagined death to be like – to disappear from the reach of others into a space of endless darkness from where one cannot get out. Building this room can therefore be seen as an attempt to *take charge* of the event of death by providing a spatial setting for it. In contrast, *HAUS u r* might be seen as an attempt to accept the unknown through the doubling of living rooms, if not exactly rooms to live in although Schneider seemingly did.

If in the early works, Schneider approached the notion of the unknown through radical spatial gestures calling upon extreme conditions, the doublings within the house in Rheydt appear to welcome a wider scale of the unidentifiable. Such potential phenomena are met with the openness of a pure, white surface – the bright artificial light making every corner visible and shadows from the sparse furnishing near absent. Visibility, however, does not appear to be the aim. When Ulrich Loock suggests that the artist through his room doublings might be “anxious about revealing something that is not visible” (36), Schneider responds that “the terms visible and invisible are not so important as conscious and unconscious perception, recognition and non-recognition.” The statement suggests that while it might

be possible to identify the double wall as a wall, it will not be apparent that this wall is a copy of another wall hidden behind it. In this sense, the double room holds a secret that the original room did not. Schneider continues, "... the built wall is visible but not recognisable..." (36). However, pushing the capacity of the double room that holds a secret further, Schneider states, "The question is not whether my rooms are secret, but whether you recognise yourself in them" (Williams 2010: 1). Do we become strangers to ourselves when occupying Schneider's rooms? Do they make sense to us, add up, set the ground for a life that we know? Or do we sense the slight distortions of doors too close to corners, walls out of proportion, windows oddly blind? Are we disturbed by having to navigate a labyrinthine stacking of rooms when frequenting a relocated part of the house in an art setting somewhere? Do we fear the rough edges of the spaces cut out from the house in Rheydt, because we do not know what these spaces want from us, what the artist has in store for us, if we belong inside of them?

Schneider continues the practice of doubling while insisting that it makes sense to patiently, or stubbornly, continue to set the scene for something unknown to take place. That the effort is worthwhile is not only affirmed by the repetition of the gesture, but also insofar as Schneider is at all able to conceive the idea that there is something to pursue in the first place. It is the simple thought that something exists beyond human grasp which might inhabit the limit of thought, the fringes of the imaginable, the edge of a built environment and therefore influence our being. Schneider's fascination with such imperceptible phenomena further entertains the idea that perceivable traces of past events linger in abandoned spaces. Considering the notion of the trace in relation to the clearing of German villages for mining purposes, he says:

That is the baffling thing, that things that have gone nevertheless leave a trace ... You are walking through the landscape when you suddenly get the feeling that there could have been a house there, because there is still a pavement there ... That is when you get the strongest sense of a time shift. But it would be a disaster if we really picked up on that sort of thing. We would constantly be running into walls. (Loock 2003: 68)

Yet, Schneider is already pushing against the wall when exploring the limits of perception in relation to its plane vertical surface. That a wall has to be built in order to make the investigation possible is a straightforward and literal approach, yet Schneider's wall is a copy, a double hiding another wall behind it. The exploration is therefore not simply a study of the wall, any wall, or the building of a wall in a given location to see what will happen, if anything. It is specifically to copy a wall in front of another to thereby eliminate the notion of the *original*. Not only because the already existing wall becomes hidden, but because every embedded trace of time passed and every childhood memory disappear as well in the process, are forgotten once and for all.

4.3 THE POSSIBILITY OF RUNNING ON THE SPOT – And forgetting the house

”To build a wall motivates me most,” Schneider says (2005: 31). Yet, if this is so, then how come the artist does not build new walls and new rooms? How come that the walls built inside the house are doubles of the existing? Does the double wall find its purpose and legitimation in the fact that it is a copy because it cannot simply stand on its own? Did Schneider not know what to do, when he first returned to the house in Rheydt, and therefore simply started copying the house? Answers to such questions will remain speculative considering Schneider’s reluctance to go deeper into a discussion of his work in the interviews referred to. The thesis, however, argues that the work *HAUS u r* is concerned with the walls hidden behind the doubles as much as the walls that hide. As such, the motivation behind the work is seen as a desire to build walls that hide what they are.

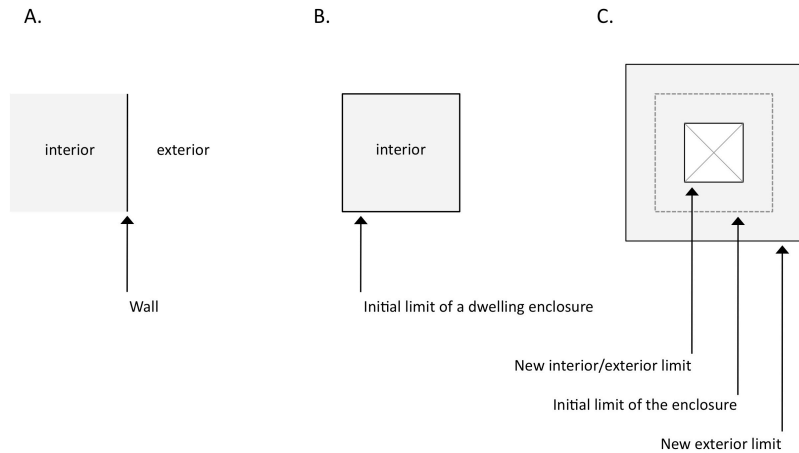
In an almost deadpan fashion, Schneider explains that he simply copies what already exists without giving presence to anything new, without referring to anything external or inventing anything else. He claims that by building walls in front of walls and rooms inside of rooms, everything essentially remains the same. If the layout of the house gradually changes, as an inevitable result of the building activities, this is not something that the artist is concerned with. However, if the practice of doubling a house is not about producing a new house, it does not appear to be an attempt to retrieve something from the past either. Schneider does not rebuild the house, so that it will, again, become the home that was lost when the family moved out. He does not attempt to call the childhood home forth like an old photograph processed anew through layers of fresh material to linger nostalgically over a happy time spent in its rooms. Instead, Schneider claims – through the medium of Hannelore – the house becomes unrecognisable as the work progresses and through this transformation becomes unknown to him (2003b: 200).

If Schneider thereby seems to admit that some kind of change is taking place after all, the house appears to vanish rather than emerge in a new positive form. Once the familiar house disappears in a maze of walls and rooms, the artist can no longer tell one from the other – it becomes another house. By simply doubling the house like running on the spot, because the sheer repetition makes it feel worthwhile, Schneider alienates himself from the house that he knew. The notion of *the unknown* therefore exists on a number levels, and *the unknowable* becomes a favoured category for all that which cannot be known but nevertheless exerts an influence on the life environment. *Knowing* for Schneider appears to be less important than *not knowing*, and the emphasis on *the unknown* a kind of returning alibi to avoid getting to *know*. If the simple confirmation of something already existing produces something else after all, Schneider seems to perceive this new house as a negative manifestation of something beyond comprehension.

When hitherto acknowledging the artist's objection to psychologise the work, the thesis has noted in passing only that the practice of doubling could reflect a compulsion to repeat a repressed childhood home and house. Furthermore, that the inwards orientation of the work, its hermeticism, could express a desire to withdraw into an interior condition where the artist would be on his own. The thesis has accepted the immediate absence of a deeper relation to context, place and history insisted on by Schneider, when a double wall is perceived to simply copy the original behind it. Yet, Schneider's silence on the repetition of the house comes to speak for itself, and the thesis is interested in what it is that Schneider does not want to know, or to put it another way, might not know that he knows. If Schneider does not want to see the house/work aligned with its maker, in this case himself, this might reflect an intuitive resistance to the expectation that the thinking and mental constitution of the artist would reveal something about the spatial configuration of the house. Such an alignment would assume that an artist translates directly into the material fabric of his work, and that speaking about both as reflections of each other is to speak about something considered to some extent the same. In Schneider's case, this *sameness* would coincide with a strong desire for dissociation, when the repeated doubling of the childhood home in Rheydt can also be seen as an attempt to leave the house behind. The thesis argues that Schneider's continued repetition of walls and rooms serves to leave the house behind rather literally and in a double sense, which is to say that the childhood home is left behind the wall doubles as well as by Schneider once he escapes. The thesis elaborates this proposition further in chapter 5.

While the attempt to wall in and forget one's childhood home is an extreme interpretation of *HAUS u r*, the almost metaphysical significance that Schneider ascribes *the room* further contributes to the work's radicalism. Emptied of all conceivable meaning, life and purpose, everything and nothing possibly resides within this empty space. In this sense, Schneider's double rooms can be seen to approach the notion of the *central void* pursued by the thesis and discussed in the previous chapters in relation to the work of Gordon Matta-Clark and Kurt Schwitters, respectively. Where Matta-Clark's *Splitting* was seen to break and enter the enclosure of the dwelling house, Schwitters' *Merzbau* articulated the liminal zone of this house as illustrated in the *split wall diagram* shown on the next page. *HAUS u r* can in continuation be seen as an intimation of the void at the centre of the diagram's plan (C).

Split wall diagram:



The central void that emerges through the diagrammatic splitting of the walled enclosure is an external space according to conventional logic of indoors and outdoors. If on the plan diagram, the space appears more internal than the liminal zone surrounding it, it is not the same kind of space. As a void, it has been crossed out in the diagram following the conventions of architectural drawing, so that it is immediately identifiable that the central square does not represent an indoor space. Instead, it might be seen as an internal space pushed further in and then out – absence given form, emptiness between walls. It is an interior exterior or exterior interior, at the same time belonging and not belonging to the house, even if located right at its centre. While the liminal zone, the space within the split wall, according to the diagram, has two external limits – the inwards and the outwards – the central void has only one outwards face – like Schneider’s house.

The following sections open a discussion of *HAUS nr* in relation to this central void, literalised by the double room inside which Schneider finds himself trapped and running on the spot. While continuing to double the walls and rooms of the house, it is not until these are cut out and displaced elsewhere that Schneider is able to leave the house behind and move on with his work and life. The thesis explores how this departure from the house is made possible by disfiguring, displacing and declaring the house dead. That is, how Schneider appears to slip out through the empty void that he builds inside his house. The first section [4.3.1] considers this movement of leaving the house behind through an inwardly oriented spatial journey that takes place during the first nine years Schneider spends in the house. The second section [4.3.2] then explores how Schneider articulates the interior of the house according to the coordinates of the existing, at the same time, negotiating the force of the unknown seen to permeate the work from all sides and on all levels. The third section [4.3.3], eventually, finds Schneider face to face with the central void of his childhood home and house rendered so meaningless and indeterminate by the practice of repetition that the artist is ejected from the house in a movement inside and out.

4.3.1 Leaving the house behind

When building another house inside the existing, Schneider appears to gradually forget his childhood home and the house that enclosed it. When the continuously doubled structure becomes ever more complex, clear-cut lines through space can no longer be drawn to reveal a meaningful section of the old house. Through the repeated building activities with parts of the doubled structure displaced to other sites, the interior of the house becomes so disfigured, is eventually so chopped up, that only imagination and the external façade set a limit for the spatial excesses produced by Schneider. While the work manifests an inwards movement away from this external wall, the façade itself is left untouched and continues to mark a clear distinction between the interior and exterior of the house in Rheydt. As a sign, the street front, as it remains at the time of writing the thesis, signifies a conventional German dwelling house in a typical semi-residential area [Fig. 4.2]. In Schneider's case, however, this signifier has no signified.

Robert Venturi in the chapter "The Inside and the Outside" from *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966) says, "Since the inside is different from the outside, the wall – the point of change – becomes an architectural event" (1977: 86). To which Geoffrey Bennington in the essay "Complexity without Contradiction in Architecture" (1987) adds, "In so far as most architecture is concerned to build walls separating inside from outside, it would appear that architecture is all about events" (15). Following Bennington, Venturi's insistence that space does not transcend walls is a resistance to the idea that the façade of a building could express the interior that lies behind it rather than simply put up a detached face (16). Bennington draws a line to Derrida's treatment of de Saussure's notion of the sign, also discussed in chapter 3, with its reliance on the inside/outside dichotomy. Following this thinking on the space from where one contemplates the sign – the outside that reveals the inside, the signified – the sign/signifier *is* a transparent façade. In contrast, Venturi's exterior is the space external to a *non-transparent* façade, and, as such, Venturi acknowledges the separation of interior and exterior as two distinct spaces. Venturi acknowledges that the sign is situated *in space* where Bennington with Derrida suggests that insofar as inside and outside must be defined in relation to each other, they also *are* each other and a clear difference can therefore not exist. There cannot simply be a wall before all else; the inside cannot simply be an inside, and the sign not simply the face of something existing behind it. At the same time, the space enclosing the sign cannot be exterior if nothing resides within it.

In response, Schneider's façade is detached from the house behind it, insofar as it does not reveal the nature of this interior. On the contrary, it hides it when creating the illusion that the house on Unterheydener Strasse is a typical residential building. By reflecting the surroundings, the external façade conforms to the standard appearance of a dwelling house in the region, and Schneider makes use of the possibilities that this screen façade facilitates. As such, it becomes a cover for the activities

taking place inside the house during the first decade of the work's development. The extent to which the external wall itself is doubled remains unknown besides from accounts of layers of unaligned windows witnessed by visitors to the house.¹³⁸

As an architectural device, the event of the wall establishes the provisional order of a house. The agency of a wall is one of differentiation, it cuts a house into pieces – the event of a wall is therefore a spatial cut. A double wall marks a call to a more complex house when the wall defines more than simply outside or inside one room or the other. Schneider's walls are placed in front of the walls that they double, the rooms that these doubles eventually form are placed inside the rooms that they come to hide. In between these two rooms, another kind of space emerges like a passageway between both defining a liminal zone resembling the space opened by Schwitters in the *split wall diagram*. While hidden from view in the photographic documentation, it is in the video work, such as the 30-minute long *Nacht-Video* [Night Video] (1996), that the relationships between the rooms in the doubled house become evident [Fig. 4.21]. In the video, Schneider moves around the house in one filmic take insisting on exploring every opening and passageway that he encounters. The camera is handheld, the artist's breathing is audible, and the house alternates between darkness and artificial light. Schneider keeps going until running out of steam rather than coming to a dead end – there is always another way out of a room than the door. Once acquainted with the artist's filmic logic, every air duct in sight becomes an invitation to explore another space. "You could basically turn the house inside out from there. You could get out through shafts and empty spaces. It is also an escape route," Schneider explains with reference to the air duct in *n r 12, TOTAL ISOLIERTES GÄSTEZIMMER* [Completely Insulated Guest Room] [Fig. 4.13] (Loock 2003: 96).

The guest room was built as an attachment to the rear side of the house in Rheydt in 1995. The construction of the small lead-insulated room is documented in a series of photographs published on Schneider's website [Fig. 4.13.b]. The photographs of the finished interior show a whitewashed, minimally furnished cell illuminated by a strip of neon lighting from the ceiling. The air duct, covered by a removable grille, is visible on the wall opposite one corner with a freestanding radiator. The escape route that the duct provides leads into the space between two walls clad in lead to prevent any kind of transmission between inside and outside. However, as Schneider says, one can turn the whole house inside out from this point – it is, as such, an escape route in a wider sense. It is a point from where the house might escape itself, yet it is also the point from where Schneider begins to address the notion of a world outside the house. The guest room, resembling a prison cell, is attached to the house and therefore not a copy of an existing room. It is in this sense already an external space. It will, however, take another couple of years before Schneider actually turns the house inside out by cutting out rooms for display elsewhere. At that point, he will also escape the house himself.

¹³⁸ Udo Kittelmann describes this phenomenon (2001).

4.3.2 A stranger in the midst of the known

While the radical nature of house and work eventually makes both increasingly unintelligible, not least for Schneider himself, the notion of *the unknown* gradually takes on new meanings. Had Schneider hoped that the work could help him understand something about life and death or his own being in a house, he appears to content himself with the condition of uncertainty, of not being able to know – with the *unknowable*. Schneider explores this interest in the circumstance that as an occupant of rooms one might be under the influence of unknown phenomena that cannot be seen, recognised or otherwise perceived with the building of the slowly rotating coffee room (1993) [Fig. 4.12]. The room, built inside another room of the house, changes orientation when occupied, and its doors might therefore not be aligned with the rest of the house should a guest attempt to exit the room – “Someone might open the wrong door at the wrong moment and plunge into an abyss,” as Schneider puts it (Loock 2003: 36). The notion of an *abyss* refers to the space in between the original room and its rotating double, implying that the room on wheels is not a double in a strict sense. By enclosing this other room that is not an exact copy, the initial room itself changes character when it becomes a room containing an abyss. The rotating room is raised on a base on wheels, and the rectangular box on top is driven by a small motor making the room rotate so slowly that anyone inside are unlikely to notice the movement. The gap between the rotating room and its host room allows the rotation to take place, and it also makes it possible for Schneider to move between the two spaces with his camera. In the film, *Nacht-Video* [Night video] (1996) [Fig. 4.21], the external side of the coffee room is exposed including a cut-out seen in the wall opposite the room’s window. Schneider is likely to have framed the room through this hole when photographing it [Fig. 4.10]. About the coffee room, he says:

The not-consciously-perceptible motion of things and the different times of day produce what I call an unknowable space of time. And so, a place comes into being that can’t be a place; a sense of something that we don’t know. (36),

A sensation of emptiness is provoked by the drop into the depths of unknown meaning that the *abyss* opens up. Once a copy is perceived as the original, the history of a house is rewritten. The initial room is then not only left behind, but it is in effect left out. When entering one of Schneider’s room doubles, one steps into a house, the strangeness of which cannot immediately be grasped because of the illusory veil of the familiar and recognisable that Schneider has added. Whether the space that one recognises in a photograph is one or the other, original or copy, childhood home or coffee room on wheels is not the point. The space opens a void within the fabric of the house, and Schneider experiences a sensation of emptiness when facing this room devoid of all meaning built into a work that he no longer understands. It is a place “that can’t be a place,” because it exists outside the coordinates of all conventional living and logic – a space in which one no longer recognises oneself. An unfamiliar spatiality residing at the heart of a house, a stranger exposed in the midst of the known. At this point,

Schneider appears to conceive of the guest room attachment with the inbuilt escape route that opens the possibility of leaving the house behind, once and for all.

First though, the artist must dissociate and displace the rooms of the house to materialise and manifest a ruin to which he cannot return. He leaves the front façade to hold the work together, once its parts are dissociated to attain their own lives in new configurations in the context of art museums. In these other locations, Schneider leaves the task of inhabiting the fragmented house to others, ultimately to strangers whose identities he will never know either. A number of scholars have turned to Freud's essay "Das Unheimliche" [The Uncanny] (1919) for clues to this *unknown* that Schneider and his work address. This is not surprising considering the practice of doubling and general consensus that encountering the work provokes an experience of something *uncanny*. However, what the repressed material might be for the individual, who senses something hidden lurking in Schneider's photographs or installations, cannot easily be generalised – everybody is inclined to project his/her own anxieties. The ordinariness and almost trivialised character of the rooms on display suggest that Schneider is well aware that the photographs of his rooms will be openly deceiving. Only the most naïve will perhaps think that these are untroubled rooms. The thesis therefore suggests that if there is something *unheimlich* about *HAUS u r*, along the lines of Freud's thinking, it is that Schneider so willingly plays along with strategies of doubling and hiding and thereby obscures the possibility of knowing what he himself knows, although perhaps has forgotten.

When writing "The Uncanny" in 1919, Freud drew on Otto Rank's paper "The double" published five years earlier (1914).¹³⁹ Exploring the double's relation to literary fiction and psychoanalysis, Rank asserted that in literature the double was most often utilised in order to address the relation of the self to the self. One such example was E. T. A. Hoffmann who not only wrote over the theme of the double repeatedly but also suffered from delusions of being surrounded by doubles while writing (1971: 35). For Rank, this preoccupation with the double figure outlined an ancient desire to overcome death by doubling the self through separation of the immortal soul from the physical, mortal body (1958: 62). This split was, however, seen by Rank to develop into a self-obsessive and -observing narcissism threatening to destroy the self once the first stage of the narcissistic self-love projecting the double had been overcome. Freud, building on Rank's theory, assumed that the double would therefore become an "uncanny harbinger of death" (2003: 142), and the theme of the double therefore "the most prominent of those motifs that produce an uncanny effect" (141). On the basis of this concept of the double, Freud concluded that the notion of the uncanny relied on the return of something familiar yet repressed surfacing in the form of a strangely familiar occurrence. It was especially F. W. J. Schelling's writing that was seen by Freud to frame this dual quality when the former wrote, "Uncanny is the name for everything that should remain hidden and secret, yet has

¹³⁹ Rank's paper "Der Doppelgänger" [The Double] was first published in 1914 then revised and extended in *Der Doppelgänger: Eine psychoanalytische Studie* [The Double: A Psychoanalytical Study] in 1925. The latter was translated into English in 1971.

come to the fore.”¹⁴⁰ Freud referred to the circumstance that etymologically the meanings of *das Heimliche* [the homely, familiar] coincides with *das Unheimliche* [the unhomely, strange] because *das Heimliche* also means *secret* (134). The two terms, *heimlich* and *unheimlich* in this sense come to mean the same – what is known and familiar is also at the same time hidden and secret, and “this uncanny element is actually nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed,” as Freud explained (148). The notion of the repressed familiar suddenly resurfacing from the darker depths of the unconscious is therefore encapsulated by the term, even if it remains impenetrable and therefore produces the uncanny effect when it makes itself known.

When Ulrich Loock (2001) ventures into an interpretation of *HAUS u r* along the lines of Freud, he follows the notion of the uncanny according to its meaning of an exposed constitutive secret. In Schneider’s case, this secret relates to the home and house, and for Loock, it is through the self-centredness of the work that the house comes to reveal something else about itself. Loock claims that Schneider’s house “constantly [seeks] to make a connection with what it is not, with an uncanny deeper level that fundamentally questions the existential possibility of dwelling, of finding refuge in a house” (138). As a result, the house is seen to bring its own negation to the surface to be worked through. Elizabeth Bronfen (2001) considers the uncanny in Schneider’s work as a strangely familiar presence lurking behind the double walls along the lines of Loock. Yet, Bronfen perceives Schneider’s house as a kind of phantom produced by “repressed but still virulent knowledge preserved as in a crypt” (41). Bronfen asserts that “by disturbing what is safely familiar, the experience of a negation of the *heimlich* paves the way to a more adequate understanding of the self” (47). In this sense, Bronfen acknowledges the possibility of surfacing the repressed knowledge through a process of *becoming aware*; something that the aesthetical work, the phantom house, is seen to refrain from in order to maintain the effect and uncertainties of the uncanny.

Following Loock and Bronfen’s readings of Freud in relation to *HAUS u r*, the contours of a psychological complication of Schneider’s house, if not Schneider himself, are drawn. Yet, the thesis does not subscribe to the hopefulness of these interpretations that see *HAUS u r* open a path for reclamation of the dwelling house in a positive sense simply by surfacing the negation. It does not subscribe to the idea that *the other within* can be exorcised for a happy return to dwelling once the broken structure of the house is glued together as if there was not an immanent conflict. The thesis argues that with Schneider’s work, the notion of a house in this positive sense is surpassed, and it is so beyond the disfigured structure on Unterheydener Strasse 12. The image of the house front speaks for all such houses when it displays the empty, deceiving sign [Fig. 4.2].

¹⁴⁰ Freud quotes Schelling in German, “Unheimlich nennt man Alles, was im Geheimnis, im verborgenen ... bleiben sollte und hervorgetreten ist” (2003: 132). The English translation of the quote is my own.

4.3.3 Repetition with a difference

The element of repetition integral to Schneider's doubling strategy extends beyond the doubled walls and rooms of the house when repeated over a prolonged period of time. The artist, ultimately, comes to repeat himself, and Looock writes:

It is a labour of representation that uses the same or similar materials to replicate in the same place something that already exists there, beneath one or more layers. The representation is located exactly in front of the thing it is representing. Gregor Schneider's work is a production that negates itself in the sense that it involves neither transformation nor transfiguration: production without a recognisable product, a praxis of unproductivity. Such praxis holds out no hope of that moment of recognition which is promised, for instance, by Duchamp's displacement of some everyday object or even by Michael Asher's subtracting and doubling. But since two things cannot be in the same place at the same time, the added structure is not identical with what it represents. (2001: 143)

Looock's assessment of Schneider's work suggests that even if *HAUS nr* is a representation of something existing, it is not an exact replica of that which it fronts and hides and therefore avoids coinciding with. Considering that two things cannot be in the same place at once, original and copy are both the same and the different, and, in this sense, Schneider's work becomes productive when it produces something new. The double perceived as a representation of something existing that becomes hidden opens the possibility that doubled walls and rooms work along the lines of the collaged piece theorised by Rosalind E. Krauss and discussed in chapter 3 above [3.2.4]. Krauss argues that the collaged element conceals the ground to which it is glued "only to represent that plane in the form of a depiction ... a figure of the field it must literally occlude" (1985: 37). Perceived in this light, Schneider's practice of copying walls in front of walls exceeds the simple relationship of selfsameness, and a double wall depicts the wall behind it while expressing itself through the work that it becomes. It brings forth a possibility when presenting the wall of the house *again*, the double presents *something else*, and the question emerges regarding what it is that is being invented after all.

When layers of construction over the years multiply beyond simple concepts of original and copy, one and the other, the complexity of the house increases. Schneider himself says, "No one could get to the original structure any more without systematically drilling apart and destroying the house" (Looock 2003: 35). It is thereby implied that while existing and copy, on one level, become the same, insofar as they become inseparable, on another, a new house emerges. This house is different from the one Schneider set out to double back in the mid-1980s – a new architecture has emerged, yet it is an architecture without a name.

If Schneider's building practice aims for a different kind of spatial transformation than the conventional dwelling conversion, it is foremost the idea of formation itself – building as a commitment to the repetition of a house. In *Difference and Repetition* (1968), Gilles Deleuze elaborates on the concept of difference as a *difference-in-itself* rather than a difference between self-identical objects. The aim is to establish difference as a concept that precedes identity and the singular, which is to say

not only difference as something in itself but also as the multiple and the formless. In order for something to be, it must become through a self-differential process, a repetition through which it becomes something else – the one repeated as another within itself. When Deleuze defines the nature of being as this becoming, he is referencing Kierkegaard’s Nietzsche-inspired concept of repetition as “the fundamental category of a philosophy of the future,” as he puts it (2010: 6).¹⁴¹ Deleuze finds that the two thinkers substantiate the idea of repetition as this “thought of the future” by perceiving repetition as “the double condemnation of habit and memory” (8). This is not simply to say that repetition occurs because of a repression of memories or past events, rather, repetition points forwards because it essentially is constitutive. As “the supreme object of the will and of freedom,” repetition is, according to Deleuze (6), opposed to laws of nature – it is “a will willing itself through all change” (7). Repetition circles the will of the *private thinker* as “an interior of the earth opposed to the laws of its surface,” Deleuze writes (7). So, repetition is driven by a force from within, a movement that brings something else out while also in some ways remaining the same.

This concept of repetition as difference developed by Deleuze is instructive for an interpretation of Schneider’s doublings. The new walls and rooms that are built within or near the existing become manifestations beyond their immediate resemblance to something else. Schneider, who seemingly feels no urgency to remember, recall or recollect the traces of his own lived life in the house when repeating its walls and rooms, does not show any sign of nostalgia when confessing, “I am sitting in an ordinary-looking room that happens to be built inside another room, and I can no longer remember the original” (Williams 2010: 2). The statement implies that the double house, even for the artist and despite all his reservations concerning the issue, has become something else.

Conclusion to “Gregor Schneider, *HAUS u r*”

The chapter on Gregor Schneider’s house in Rheydt – simultaneously abandoned childhood home, artist’s studio, a work of art in the making and the artist’s residence at the time of building – developed a series of propositions. Firstly, it argued that when Schneider returned to work and later also live in the abandoned childhood home, the artistic practice of doubling the walls and rooms of this house caused something unforeseen to happen. The immediate predictability and reassurance Schneider might have felt, when settling on the simple gesture of doubling the walls of a familiar house, became a leap into the unknown when over time developing into a large-scale doubling exercise encompassing the whole house. Not only did the work target the physical fabric of the built structure in unprecedented ways, but the practice of doubling the house over a prolonged period of time created a spatial environment beyond comprehension. As such, the notion of the unknown became integral to Schneider’s work before he might himself have fully realised it, or perhaps he knew exactly that the

¹⁴¹ Nietzsche’s concept of the eternal recurrence derives from *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* [The Gay Science] published in 1882, whereas Kierkegaard’s *Gjentagelsen* [Repetition] was published in 1843.

gesture of doubling – seemingly so straightforward that it could only unsettle the economy of the house completely – was required to summon the desired unknown.

While one house took form, another disappeared, and if the first house, at this point, could no longer be recollected, the second would not endure. Once the stranger in the form of the double settled into Schneider's house, there was no reversal to its former state and configuration, no viable future for the disfigured house. Eventually, it would not be inhabitable, and at that point, Schneider seemingly settled in Berlin where he took up a professorship. The work on the house in Rheydt thereby outlines a movement of leaving the house behind in more than one sense. In contrast to conventional journeys away from one's childhood home – seeing the one *coming-of-age* venture out into the world – Schneider returned to build himself progressively deeper into his house. By doing so, he left the house behind, as a coherent sequence of rooms organised in functional relations, when internally covering it up with walls and room doubles. The front façade would be the only evidence to remain after the artist himself finally got out.

Schneider's work borders on the graspable, and if the artist, ultimately, stared indifferently into the empty void at the centre of the *split wall diagram* before leaving his house behind, then this is one aspect of *HAUS u r* suggested by the present chapter. When coming face to face with the open proposition of this space in a rather literal way, Schneider disavowed the knowledge it conveyed and blindly carried on doubling while claiming to be running on the spot in an endless repetition of something beyond comprehension. Ultimately, the pursuit therefore defers the question of remembering what Schneider perhaps wanted to forget when pursuing the possibility of not knowing as a way to avoid committing to the past. The relevance of Schneider's work for a consideration of dwelling in the twenty-first century relies on this unwillingness to know.

5. SPACES FOR CONTEMPORARY LIVING – The implications of the loft, Merz and rewalling

Summary

The final chapter returns to the question of dwelling in the twenty-first century by bringing the contributions of the case studies forward as strategies for the contemporary age. The first section [5.1] summarises the studied works and buildings by identifying a set of catalysts seen as the turning points around which each case revolves. Expressing a particular relation to the respective artist's contemporary context, these catalysts are brought forward to the present age and examined for the wider possibilities they offer the thesis and its main questions. This elaboration unfolds in the second section of the chapter [5.2] when the identified catalysts are placed in a triangular constellation through which they come to respond to each other. A further set of possibilities opens up through these intersections, and strategies for contemporary dwelling exceeding the scope of the individual work are articulated by the thesis on this basis. If the problem of dwelling in the twenty-first century thereby emerges as a challenge to both architects and dwellers, the chapter unfolds the parallel tasks that ensue.

5.1 AFTER THE HOUSE – Three catalysts for a critique of dwelling

Returning to the house after taking it apart is to find the structure exposed and dismantled in ways that exceed a possible reassembly. It is to face the possibility that a stable and secure ground on which to dwell cannot be established. That contemporary dwelling must orient itself according to other points of reference than conventional concepts and traditions. When life beyond the broken structure of a house spreads across geographies and buildings, time zones and media, spaces become stitched together by the movements of individuals. Ultimately, these spaces enter a different configuration than the room assembly or division of the conventional house. To insist on using the term *house* when speaking of these dissociated rooms is then to insist that some kind of coherence remains. That despite the splitting of a house, the doubling of its walls and dissolution of barriers and grounds, a broken and fragmented structure is still a structure, and a house is still a house of some kind. Considering that the etymological origin of the term *house* is unknown, a spatial configuration or form seen as particularly true or otherwise authentic is not given.¹⁴² The rootless house remains open for endless configuration, and the contemporary living space is in a continuous process of formation and in principle impossible to complete. The house will express the movement, fragmentation and groundlessness that defines it once the inhabitant becomes involved in the making of this living space without fixed properties, continuously left behind, yet possibly returned to again.

¹⁴² As noted on page 15 in the first chapter of the thesis, John Hollander argues that the etymological origin of the term *house* is unknown, insofar as it derives from the German *Haus* (1993).

A concept of dwelling based on the dissociated house acknowledges the dynamics of contemporary life with the mobility of humans and flexibility of minds that this life requires. It acknowledges that life unfolds momentarily in one place before moving on to the next, thereby responding to the placelessness and homelessness established by the first chapter of the thesis to characterise the modern experience. The radical change of practices called for by the contemporary age therefore challenges dwellers and architects alike – how to organise a dissociated life? How to make oneself at home in more or less random places? How to design spaces accommodating the unpredictable life and practices of contemporary individuals? If such questions push against the limits of building, dwelling and thinking as well as the walls of rooms, then the thesis points out that the concerns involved are not any different from the questions dwellers and architects have asked, or should have been asking, for centuries already. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, the house attempting to hold a fragmented life together has been challenged for a while.

The following sections unfold how the private dwelling house for Gordon Matta-Clark, Kurt Schwitters and Gregor Schneider became the medium for art for very specific reasons related to each of the artists' specific contemporary situation. Un-built, Merz-built or re-built, the artists' houses were cut to pieces and sliced beyond recognisability; they were broken and ruined if not bombed away completely. Even if the façade of one house still stands, its rooms have been cut out, removed and reinstalled temporarily elsewhere. Its walls have been rebuilt inside other houses, dismantled again and possibly stored away if not simply thrown on the skip. The artists, however, are not fully responsible for what has happened. Matta-Clark's first cutting of a *whole house* was demolished and cleared away as part of a larger redevelopment plan immediately after *Splitting* was completed. Half of Schwitters' family residence in Hannover, including *Merzbau*, was destroyed by an allied air raid in 1943 that left the remaining half to be demolished. Schneider's abandoned house, already condemned by the authorities and declared unfit for dwelling in the 1980s, awaits its further destiny, if not destination, in silence. How then after these events, which are not unique, is it possible for the *whole house*, the grounded structure, to retain any meaningful promise of the permanence, longevity and stability desired and associated with *dwelling*? How is it possible that the utopian longing for this dwelling survives in the twenty-first century? The thesis maintains that if the house for various more or less dramatic reasons ceased to be an option for the chosen artists, it might be even less of an option for anyone today. The following considers this claim in more detail.

The studies of the three works in the previous chapters provide three sites for the enquiry into the problem of dwelling. Matta-Clark's work *Splitting* enacts the breaking and entering of the dwelling house enclosure, thereby exposing the broken structure while leaving the insides of walls and floors open for scrutiny. With the structure dissected and recorded in sections and elevations, the work opens the discussion of contemporary dwelling as a discussion of *the house*. It does so because Matta-

Clark, as an architect with architectural concerns, saw the house as the locus of significant challenges in his postwar, late-modern time. From within this dissected house, Schwitters' *Merzbau* defines a space in relation to the walls of the artist's studio by building a spatial wall in front of these. From within this liminal zone, a negotiation of a living space takes place in relation to the spaces adjoining the emerging Merz-wall – on the outside as well as inside – contextualising and opening a space within this zone. The void space emerging to its interior side, Schwitters' un-merzed floor, is the location from where Schneider faces the emptiness of the blank double walls of a dwelling with no history in *HAUS u r*. Trying to forget the house when leaving it behind, Schneider's room doubles literalise the experience of a void central to the contemporary dwelling experience. From within this space, revaluations of dwelling and the house are articulated by the thesis.

The following sections identify the circumstances leading to the three works' explicit or implicit critiques of the dwelling house. The notion of a *knott* tied between each artist, his contemporary context, chosen art practice and eventual dwelling leads the thesis to pursue the central aspect of each study seen to tie work and proposition together. Perceived as catalysts for dwelling, art and critique in one, the thesis enquires into events and personal experiences informing the creation of the works in their time in order to identify these central points. It traces the artists' relation to dwelling and how this relation might have informed the spatial practices employed as well as the possibilities created. Figuratively, the thesis attempts to get hold of a central point of reference, a catalyst within the works that through exposure opens a wider possibility for thinking the living space today.

5.1.1 The loft experience

In the beginning of Matta-Clark's film version of *Splitting*, the uncut house is framed in a frontal view presenting a whitewashed clapboard façade with a protruding porch and entrance door [Fig. 2.4.B]. Above the porch, two windows and a third further up look out, the façade is finished off by a gabled roof drawing a thick black line that prevents the house from merging with the sky. A text board shown in the film describes the gingerbread dwelling house as, "A typical one family huose [sic]" [Fig. 2.4.A]. When the camera pans out and moves around the corner of the house, the long side façade becomes visible and a centrally placed ladder, leaning against the wall, promises the action about to take place [Fig. 2.4.C]. Once cut, transformed, extensively documented and explored along the contour line of this cut, the film returns again to the external view of the whole house [Fig. 2.3], in the same way that Matta-Clark repeatedly returns to the four external elevations in the *Splitting Book* while showing the progressive stages of the emerging cut [Figs. 2.8]. The thin dark line drawn around the centre of the building becomes the regress of one house while numerous other houses eventually result from the collaged reconstructions made later [Figs. 2.7].

The time that it takes to cut a house in two halves, the journey from one house to two half houses, is an aspect that Matta-Clark reflects on subsequently when structuring the film and book strictly according to the chronology of cause and effect. Yet, the literalness of this translation between event and document hides the less than straightforward time of a split house. When eventually integrating photographic material into the new visual constructions in the collages, or when montaging film footage into a chronologically linear narrative, the first production of the work, the cut, is superseded by a representation that while documenting the cut begins to build the house again. The initial house gives way to this other building, and once the different formats of documentation coexist, the house lives on in parallel worlds with each media structured according to its own logic and geometry. The one element that retains the linear concept of time is the cut, even if executed in two parallel lines. As the event around which the work revolves, the cut is an irreversible momentum, and however turbulent Matta-Clark's spatial exercises in the collaged work become, how often the image of the whole house is abandoned and then recalled, the cut cannot be undone. It marks a clear before and after the work and house.

The event in Matta-Clark's own life, identified by the thesis to mark a similarly significant change, occurs when the newly graduated architect returns to New York City after studying at Cornell. Matta-Clark settles into the SoHo art scene after a brief stay with his mother midtown and begins to convert abandoned lofts into live-work spaces for colleagues and friends. This building work inspires new ideas, and the artistic practice of cutting into built fabric for purposes beyond architecture, shelter and functionality develops. The involvement with the loft scene can therefore be seen as central for the building cuts that come to define Matta-Clark's artistic practice, and the thesis identifies the encounter with the loft as the catalytic turning point facilitating the critique of the dwelling house raised by *Splitting*. It further argues that the development of the combined live/work loft space is significant as a new spatial category to emerge in the second half of the twentieth century. A development for which Matta-Clark plays a pioneering role.

For the artist, living beyond the house meant to inhabit one loft space after the other while roaming around dormant areas of the city in pursuit of material for work. The buildings available were left open to anyone's fancy, the notion of private space was merely provisional and concepts of value seemingly so relative that signage or other measures attempting to keep trespassers out were easily overcome. For the already marginalised artist/architect who did not want to become part of the business of conventional architectural practice, nor work as an artist from the studio while selling on the market, the alternative was both an opportunity and a test. While the force required to make the uninhabitable lofts inhabitable motivated Matta-Clark to address abandoned buildings for artistic purposes, the skills and expertise gained fuelled a highly critical practice. In the case of *Splitting*, Matta-Clark questioned the dwelling house profoundly when targeting the fine line between support and collapse that held the

house together. Eventually, the notion of a house would be surpassed, even if it was still standing. The uninhabitable dwelling house became a work of art.

In the process an artist's studio unfolded – in a loft or somewhere else – as a shared live/work space without walls. Yet, when cutting houses in the name of art, if not architecture, Matta-Clark's art practice moved elsewhere. Once the nature of the work changed, from the creation of objects and installations in the studio to real-time interaction with existing built fabric in the city's *terrain vague*, the studio primarily served for preparatory work. For all the other artists, whose practices remained within the spatial confines of the living domain, the loft continued to offer new possibilities for both art and living. Cutting a house in two might therefore not have produced two new houses – one for dwelling and one for art – yet, it produced two half houses both forming a recognisable dwelling house *and* work of art perceivable in one go, in one view, one thought, one word – simply a house, if of another kind.

5.1.2 Merz-revaluation

The thesis returns to Kurt Schwitters' studio inside the family residence on Waldhausenstrasse in Hannover before the war and the bombings that destroyed the house. This is the early 1930s, the time when the National Socialists rise to power, and Schwitters' studio on the rear ground floor of the house begins to transform into a spatial environment. It is the time when the horseshoe-shaped wall structure, opening its arms towards the north where the window opens the wall, begins to speak a decidedly different spatial language than the dwelling house inside which it unfolds. That the growing tension between Schwitters and the ruling powers influences the development of *Merzbau* is inevitable, the work is as such a product of its setting. Judging from the artist's frequent references to the oppression in written work and correspondence, there is an awareness of the situation.¹⁴³ The thesis therefore suggests that while Schwitters from the outset might have used the walls of the studio as a background for the bricolage composition, the relation between the existing walls and spatial structure becomes more complex over time. The walls, eventually hidden behind *Merzbau* when faced from the empty, un-merzed floor space at the centre of the studio, are repeated by the structure. Not necessarily for the simple purpose of creating a double barrier between the artist and the hostile surroundings, but so that a different more flexible wall will enclose the artist. If this expressive and fragmented spatial wall is articulated by Schwitters in a form of one-way communication, it is, however, a response to the pressure felt from outside. And if the existing walls of the house hold Schwitters *in check* and are impossible to penetrate out of fear of making the work known, then re-grounding the studio/living space in the face of this closure is Schwitters' response. While the Nazis might attempt to domesticate avant-garde artistic practices by silencing outspoken artists, the building of an inhabitable work of art up against the walls of a dwelling house becomes a kind of protest.

¹⁴³ Webster's revised chronology describes how Schwitters' and Helma increasingly publicised *Merzbau* until 1934 when the political situation became too dangerous and the work was silenced before eventually hidden from view (2007: 100).

Merzbau's dissent is forthcoming in the way that it proposes a *common ground* based on the idea of *equal evaluation* practised by Merz. Ultimately, the revaluation of found material in the work of art involves the enemy him/herself considering the limitless nature of Schwitters' Merz-concept. The collected findings from the external world enter and *wash* through the house, sooner or later this flotsam is transformed into works of art when merzed into Merz-pictures, Merz-columns and the eventual Merz-building. The work of art becomes the studio space itself and vice versa, the studio is transformed/merzed into *Merzbau*, while the structure continues to grow into/onto the adjacent rooms of the house. As such, *Merzbau* takes form between the two world wars of the twentieth century, and if the first war felt like liberation for the artist with its destruction of old values, the possibility of peace that its cessation offered was equally inspiring. In 1919, Schwitters wrote:

I felt myself freed and had to shout my jubilation out to the world. Out of parsimony I took whatever I found to do this, because we were now a poor country. One can even shout out through refuse, and this is what I did, nailing and gluing it together. I called it *Merz*, it was a prayer about the victorious end of the war, victorious as once again peace had won in the end; everything had broken down in any case and new things had to be made of the fragments: and this is Merz. (Schmalenbach 1967: 32)

Schwitters did not return to the work, home and house in Hannover that he was forced to leave behind in 1937. Instead, a number of other temporary places of residence were found on the artist's continued journey in search for a new place to settle. These temporary living spaces count a small hut by the coast of Norway, an unfinished house built by the artist and his son outside Oslo and a barn in the English Lake District. All were customised according to the principles of Merz. Wherever Schwitters settled in, his Merz tactics were parasitical and able to inhabit any type of space, adapt to any kind of condition, respond to any obstacle or invitation. The Merz-concept informed, confronted as well as conformed to any given situation with its strategy of surpassing all conventional values by bringing all found things to a perfectly harmonised *square one* in the work of art and beyond. The individual element's ability to adapt and contribute to the overall equilibrium in the work was the only requirement for its integration into the total composition.

With a library and a living room eventually installed in *Merzbau*, Schwitters built himself a living space. The only part left unaddressed was the central part of the studio, the open un-merzed floor. From this point, the structure was faced from a kind of *outside*, even if, at the same time, one was positioned *inside* of the house, studio and structure. Perhaps Schwitters felt a counterbalance was required against the dark forces mobilising outside his house when he left a void at the centre of *Merzbau*. The extent to which he considered this central location an integral part of the structure, or simply a convenient point from where to orchestrate its overall equilibrium, remains open for interpretation. The revaluation of the situation made possible from this vantage point was not insignificant.

5.1.3 The rewalling of a home

In the mid-1980s, Gregor Schneider returns to the house in Rheydt where he grew up. The abandoned childhood home has remained empty, and Schneider soon sets to work with his practice of doubling the walls and rooms of this house. Over the years, it becomes a construction site for building activities exceeding what teenagers conventionally occupy themselves with, yet Schneider is not the average German teenager. Without any claim to invention or purpose, any presumed ambition or plan, any desire to explore the work's deeper implications, Schneider maintains throughout that the doublings simply confirm an already existing house. The possibility that the repeated copying inevitably generates another house does not appear to concern the artist until experiencing that he no longer remembers the old house, nor recognises the new. Through the continued practice of doubling, Schneider loses sight of the work, the house, as well as possibly himself when claiming not to know what is going on. Eventually, he simply slips out of the house and leaves it behind.

A kind of seamless coexistence between Schneider's combined live/work practices take place for years when the work *HAUS u r* and the house on Unterheydener Strasse gradually become one and the same. Considering what is known, or perhaps rather not known, about the artist's private life, it is not certain how this coexistence began to take form. That the continued doubling of walls and rooms inside the childhood home becomes classified as a work of art possibly reflects the absence of other names for the undertaking. As such, the case of Schneider approaches the questions of dwelling raised by the thesis. The circumstance that Schneider's activities can be seen as driven by the simple need to be somewhere while doing something, whatever this *thing* might be called, reflects a basic form of dwelling. When engaging with what is near and available, Schneider responds to the immediate context in which he is situated in a direct fashion. Even if the inwardly oriented doubling practice engages with the very near and internal only, when turning its back on everything external to the house. Seemingly oblivious to the surroundings beyond this enclosure, Schneider's home/art coexistence has a hermetic orientation that makes certain conditions for the contemporary dwelling clearer – it must engage with both sides, which is to say confront its external as well as internal limit. One cannot simply fortify oneself inside the enclosure as if the central void leads nowhere – one cannot simply slip through this space in a movement inside and out. Contemporary dwelling unfolds through the articulation of the liminal zone between two faces, inwards and outwards, before and beyond the unknown forces approaching from within and without.

The silence regarding external events or circumstances informing Schneider's practice of doubling complicates the work's relation to a wider contextual setting beyond the house. Nothing appears to motivate or influence *HAUS u r* except from a silent, uncanny notion of indifference – external as well as internal to the house – leaving the artist to his own devices and dwelling for years. However, one overriding external event that cannot have gone unnoticed despite the artist's seclusion is the

unification of the double Germany in 1989. The coincidence that the wall, splitting a country in two, falls at the time of Schneider's preoccupation with the doubling of walls in his house in Rheydt is significant if not spoken about by the artist. The parallel concerns with walls and doubles on the scale of country and citizen might nevertheless reflect a common urgency on a deeper level. The history of Rheydt with its historically fluctuating status between independence and union with various geographical neighbours underlines this suggestion brought forward by the thesis.¹⁴⁴

A notable chapter of the area's history was initiated in 1933 when the minister of propaganda Joseph Goebbels, who was born in Rheydt, declared the town's return to a status of independence.¹⁴⁵ A curious remaining sign of the double nature of the place of Schneider's house is the circumstance that Mönchengladbach today has two main railway stations – the only city in Germany, if not the world, to respond to notions of doubling in this particular way. In 1975, Rheydt became, again, a borough of Mönchengladbach, and the thesis speculates that the Goebbels incident, as well as the ambiguity of the place with its fluctuating identity, might reverberate on a deeper level of Schneider's work in the house. Does Schneider's family hold a secret from the Nazi era? Perhaps related to the lead factory behind the house? Did family members disappear or lose their lives on either side of the front line during World War II? Is there a trauma silenced over the years associated with the house, the place or both that Schneider knows or perhaps is trying to forget? While the nature of such questions possibly border on the ethically sound, the thesis cannot disregard the possibility that the troubled past of the country at large looms inside Schneider's house and work, not to say mind. The possibility that deeper wounds and memories are embedded in the fabric of the house and inform Schneider's work cannot be foreclosed.

The critique of the dwelling house, ultimately raised by the artist's compulsion to repeat its walls and rooms, is widened in its scope by the larger contextual framework within which it can be seen to unfold. The thesis speculates that *HAUS u r* by responding to notions of doubling and double identity responds on behalf of this larger contextual setting from which the artist derives, and to which he inevitably belongs. At the same time, to see *HAUS u r* as a response to a more general concern does not in itself exclude the artist's claim that he simply copied the walls of his house because it seemed important to do so, and carried on because it became meaningless if he stopped. Through this practice, Schneider eventually found himself in an *empty room* from where a recollection of the *walled-in* house was no longer possible. The frequent references to *the unknown* during interviews are significant in this respect. This unknown is most often described as something that defies or tests the limits of

¹⁴⁴ The city of Rheydt is founded on a Roman settlement and remained a small village of unfortified farms throughout the Middle Ages. In the fifteenth century, it was almost completely destroyed by a fire yet rebuilt, and in 1794 came under French dominance. Rheydt returned to Prussia in 1816, and the city grew significantly throughout the nineteenth century due to its textile production. In 1907, it became the county seat but was subsumed under Mönchengladbach in 1929.

¹⁴⁵ On 24 March 1933, thousands of people gathered on Adolf-Hitler-Platz, today's Marktplatz, in Rheydt. The occasion was a speech by Goebbels who had just been awarded honorary citizen of Gladbach-Rheydt. Goebbels promised the crowd that Rheydt would return to its municipal independence which happened on 1 August the same year (Sollbach-Papeler 1997: 123).

perception, something that possibly cannot be known – something *outside* (of the artist). By deferring all questions regarding the doubling practice to this unknown, the reasons for as well as implications of the work are firmly silenced by Schneider. As such, they might be considered as repressed when the artist does not *want* to know. As a result, the repeated doubling of this perceived unknown, which the artist possibly *does* know yet tries to forget, becomes the point around which *HAUS u r* revolves.

Inevitably, the critique raised by the work becomes itself double when both total in its absence as well as its presence. The former because Schneider rejects the possibility that a critique is being raised by the work, and total considering the complete reconfiguration and displacement of the dwelling house that nevertheless takes place. Insofar as one accepts that Schneider does not know what he is doing and why, the work simply becomes an accidental critique. However, had the aim from the outset been to make the house uninhabitable, then this state could have been achieved much sooner. The thorough process of gradually working himself through the building in a movement inwards and out must have served another purpose, which is to say that it *had* a purpose in the first place. Even if Schneider no longer remembers what made the doublings worthwhile to begin with, why he came to *renwall* his childhood home in Rheydt, the work is bound to have been a necessary processing of the artist's own complicated being (in a house).

5.2 STRATEGIES FOR A CONTEMPORARY LIVING SPACE

The section above draws out three main themes around which the case studies are seen to revolve: Gordon Matta-Clark's loft experience, Kurt Schwitters' Merz-evaluation and Gregor Schneider's rewalling of his childhood home. As catalysts of importance for the conception and creation of the works and their implicit critiques of the dwelling house, the thesis explores the implications of these themes in the following. It does so by placing the three catalysts in a triangular constellation that allows intersections and formation of a further set of propositions. The loft, Merz and rewalling respond to each other when brought into proximity, and the point of convergence located at the centre of the constellation is instrumental in bringing the wider implications of the catalysts forth. By facilitating this platform for dialogue between three critiques articulated by the chosen artists in the past century, the thesis opens a space from where the problem of dwelling is addressed.

The catalysts around which the studies are seen to revolve further reflect the *split wall diagram* employed by the thesis for its discussions of the three works. The house is the locus for this enquiry with the breaking and entering of the enclosure, the spacing of the wall cut open and eventual confrontation of the void emerging at the centre of the plan as the interventions illustrated by the diagram. Matta-Clark's encounter with the loft environment, motivating the artist/architect's practice of cutting into buildings, responds to the task of breaking and entering the problem of dwelling in the form of the

house enclosure. Schwitters' Merz-concept, governing the artist's entire outlook on life and art, makes it possible to articulate a space within this wall that the breaking and entering opens. And Schneider's rewalling of the house, overcoming the memory of a childhood home left behind, brings the artist to face the emptiness of the central void at the heart of this living space. Bringing these catalysts together by way of the constellation therefore gathers something in a sense already set apart, which is to say the notion of the *whole house*. If the triangular constellation therefore can be seen as an attempt to reassemble the otherwise dismantled structure of the broken house, propositions beyond the notion of this settlement emerge in the following sections. These do not attempt to reconcile the already dissociated parts but pursue possibilities for dwelling and architecture that come forward exactly because of the dissociation.

5.2.1 Living in the artist's studio

The thesis turns to the loft as a possibility for dwelling and architecture with a view to the critical potential of the artistic gesture discussed in chapter 1 [1.4.1]. If the gesture of art is perceived as critical because it gives presence to something of an alien nature, then the power of this critical agency might be expected to increase once art addresses *home*. Insofar as being *at home* is perceived to mean to be in a familiar environment, a tension is inevitable and a conflict perhaps unavoidable when a stranger in the form of art inhabits this known domain. However, when the space of artistic creation merges with the living space, such as the integration that took place in the loft, art and home find a way to coexist. In the loft, the space of artistic creation and the living space – artist's studio and dwelling place – become one. This combined live/work space not only appeals to artists, it has a wider application and becomes an established dwelling type and commercialised accordingly. The thesis speculates that a significant aspect of the loft's attraction beyond art circles might rely on the non-domestic space and atmosphere it offers the inhabitant – bearing in mind that the neighbourhood of the loft building initially is not of a residential nature either. As such, the loft is from the outset an industrial space with historical undertones as the workspace from which the domestic interior was sectioned off in the first place – discussed in the first chapter with reference to Benjamin's history of the private interior [1.1.2]. It therefore becomes a platform for a confrontation of the dialectics of dwelling imposed by walls that separate interior and exterior in an attempt to keep the forces of modernity outdoors. The thesis argues that it does so with the promise of a space without clear designations, functional differentiations or social hierarchies.

Once appropriated by the anti-domestic practice of modern/contemporary art, the loft is dissociated further from the notion of the familiar homely setting. To inhabit this anti-domestic environment is possibly an overcoming in line with the overcoming of the alienating lifeworld at large. Rather than barricading oneself inside plush interiors in the illusion of a safe and secure life environment, the loft forces the dweller to face and overcome the raw propositions of modern life. In the loft, the alien has

already settled in and along with such possibly alluring qualities, in the eyes of modern/contemporary urban dwellers, certain architectural features emphasise the impact of the dwelling type further. The vast open floor space available for new lifestyles and practices is one such significant characteristic that not only opens a shared space for living and working but also makes the loft a blank canvas ready for new inscriptions. The loft thereby outlines a particular space in the history of the modern dwelling already holding a chapter on the modern open plan.¹⁴⁶

Walter Benjamin's nineteenth century distinction between private domestic interior and public domain is surpassed by the loft's double accommodation of living and working. Because the loft in its immediate open form has no internal walls, distinctions between occupations of the space are not prescribed. Everything will merge unless prevented from doing so by other means. While installing space dividers in an open plan space remains a possibility and will have occurred in numerous cases, the open plan is the hallmark that distinguishes the loft as a dwelling type. The loft accommodation therefore not only stimulates the spatially adventurous mind, but it also forces the inhabitant to consider how activities can be organised within that one space. While organisation of this kind is likely to take place in any house or household, the loft dweller is particularly challenged considering that s/he must draw the line between occupations him/herself – an autonomy that suits the inhabitant who wants to break with traditions and conventions, or the dweller with a double live/work agenda.

For the artist who lives and works in the loft, the impact of the spatial condition possibly extends beyond the required coexistence of practices. As Gilbert Millstein points out, the dimensions of works of art created in the loft studio increase in proportion to the size of the space. Millstein quotes an anonymous sculptor from the first wave of loft settlers for saying, "Who was it said, 'First, we shape the building and then the building shapes us'? My loft has turned out the best sculpture I've ever done. It's *demanding* more of me" (1962: 24).¹⁴⁷ Implying that direct interaction between occupier and occupied space is inevitable in the loft, the statement emphasises the significance of the specific spatiality. Whether the loft space therefore can be seen to encourage a particular orientation in art, or is appropriated by the artist because it serves what is already on his/her agenda remains an open question. Christopher Reed argues that American art after World War II becomes too large for display in conventional dwelling houses in a deliberate attempt to distance modern art from the domestic setting (1996: 11).¹⁴⁸ That such oversized works are likely to have been produced in spacious loft studios suggests that the proximity to the domestic aspect of the loft has been overcome somehow.

¹⁴⁶ As noted by Gwendolyn Wright (2001: 117), "A set of shared convictions" was proclaimed by the most distinguished social housing projects of the early twentieth century. These schemes designed by the likes of J. J. P. Oud, Walter Gropius and Bruno Taut encompassed new industrial technologies providing standardised units with open floor plans. Free movement of air and light was a means to achieve a healthier environment, if not a live/work environment.

¹⁴⁷ Millstein writes, "There seems to be some sort of mystic interaction between the size of a loft and the square footage of the work painters and sculptors turn out these days. They work big and the question is one that has provoked a good deal of metaphysical argument, like the disputed priority between chicken and egg" (1962: 24).

¹⁴⁸ Reed argues that a postwar generation of American modernists, such as Robert Motherwell, Adolph Gottlieb and Mark Rothko, attempt to distance themselves from their prewar European forefathers by rejecting the tendency of the latter to domesticate modern painting by making it intimate (1996: 11).

Whether anti-domestic art is informed by the notion of dwelling, which its creation in the loft studio possibly coexists with, or the domestic aspect of the loft decreases, because art is created within its domain, remains an open question. If the anti-domestic quality of the loft eventually turns both art and living less domestic in nature, this might also rely on anti-domestic currents at work on a larger scale. Which is to say, again, that the lifestyles of artists and dwellers alike already are in a process of transformation when the lofts are first inhabited.

When a larger group of people in the decades following World War II develops a preference for a living space that resembles the artist's studio, the phenomenon reflects societal changes in a wider sense. Working conditions including art practices are changing. For the artist, the creation of art might be central and conventional habits and practices concerning dwelling and family life long suspended, if ever subscribed to. Whether this makes the loft foremost an artist's studio – while for the non-artist it is foremost a living space – a critique of conventional concepts of dwelling and art practice is implicit in the loft movement. That this critique is raised through appropriation and transformation of abandoned industrial buildings with open floor plans is in a sense a coincidence, if a significant one considering the type of urban dwelling that the loft comes to define. A different type of building would have called for a different kind of spatial response, perhaps a less radical overcoming, perhaps an even stronger one. In the long run, the blank canvas of the loft space appeals to *modern spirits* with its tabula rasa of conventions and traditions – pertaining to dwelling as well as the creation of art. While accommodating a modern anti-domestic art practice, dwelling in the loft adapts to alien spatial practices while surpassing the deadlock of the *modern utopia* discussed in chapter 1 [1.3.1]. Forced to respond and adapt to a dwelling situation for which no preset convention exists, the loft dweller cannot be nostalgic or look to the past but has to find new ways. The thesis argues that this requirement to reinvent the dwelling is the possibility and attraction of the loft space that endures in the twenty-first century.

If from the outset, the open platform for living and working, art and home provided by the loft answers specific needs at a given moment in history, the overall scope of the loft-movement as a regenerative force continues to reverberate. Not only has the loft become a sought after dwelling type in itself, but gentrification of deprived urban areas often sees artists and their studios mobilised in service of urban planners and local authorities to generate new life and activity beyond their immediate domain.¹⁴⁹ As such, artists continue to embody a resource for society at large beyond the individual work of art, and should the thesis be inclined to consider where the artists went next, once forced out of the commercialised loft scene, it would be asking this question in the hope that clues to other new

¹⁴⁹ A contemporary example is the transformation of the Hackney Wick area in East London, UK. Development in the aftermath of the 2012 Olympic Games, however, challenges the community of artists and practitioners settled in the area's warehouses with large-scale planning and commercialisation underway.

dwelling types would emerge.¹⁵⁰ The possibility of art for dwelling might, however, be more complex than simply of question of spatial occupation and appropriation. As demonstrated by the study of Gordon Matta-Clark's work *Splitting*, seen to revolve around the catalyst of the loft, the potential of this work for the present study unfolds on the basis of a complex set of negotiations between the artist and his contemporary context. As such, Matta-Clark's loft responds to the moment in which it becomes a viable answer to specific needs and desires, and, as such, it responds to the question of contemporary dwelling raised by the thesis. While a condition of homelessness experienced today is bound to find other spatial solutions than abandoned industrial buildings of the loft-type, although such might still have relevance, the thesis looks further into the possibility of the artist's studio as a catalyst for the contemporary living space.

5.2.2 When the artist strikes

To look beyond the possibility of the loft as a dwelling type emerging in the twentieth century with a continued appeal and relevance raises the question of the artist's studio as this catalyst and locus for the modern/contemporary living space. What is an artist's studio if not a living room in a house? However, if an ongoing negotiation between studio and living space gives new life to the notion of dwelling – an interpretation of the loft that the thesis pursues – it also asks what it is about art that despite all presumed foreignness to home and the domestic setting appears to accommodate both. What is it about the artist's studio, the artistic gesture or the work of art itself that speaks to dwelling, so that a dialogue between two domains experienced as opposed becomes possible? So that one practice can occupy the space of the other? The thesis pursues this moment in which the living room becomes an artist's studio and vice versa, simultaneously setting the two spaces apart and tying them together. It does so with reference to Jacques Derrida's thinking on the *truth* in painting.

Derrida begins *La vérité en peinture* [The Truth in Painting] (1978) by considering “the idiom in painting,” thereby raising the question of what *in painting* means – “The idiomatic trait or style (that which is singular, proper, inimitable) in the domain of painting” (1987: 1).¹⁵¹ While Derrida considers the medium of painting specifically, the thesis considers the enquiry as concerning the nature of art in a wider sense. And while Derrida counts four aspects of this truth in painting, the thesis adds a fifth. Derrida's four categories include, “*the thing itself*” in the form of the painted canvas (5); secondly, “the truth faithfully represented, trait for trait, in its portrait ... its double,” which is to say that which is depicted, the motif (5); thirdly, “the *picturality* [sic],” referring to painting as a medium in contrast to for example literature, music or architecture (6); and, fourthly, “that which is true *on* that art which is called pictural [sic],” meaning the value of painting as the purveyor of truth (7). The fifth category added by the thesis for the purpose of the present study is *the artistic gesture* – the brushstroke that

¹⁵⁰ One answer to the question could be that Berlin has become a popular destination for *homeless* artists in recent years. As for the UK, Margate has since the opening of Turner Contemporary in 2011 been a destination for artists and art-related activities as the deprived seaside town has started to flourish.

¹⁵¹ Derrida refers this question on the truth in painting to Cézanne who in 1905 wrote in a letter to Emile Bernard, “I owe you the truth in painting and I will tell it to you” (Derrida 1987: 2).

initiates the painting, if one is to remain within Derrida's chosen artform. The painter's stroke that brings a motif to the surface of a canvas in a visual representation of something lying behind this surface is an essential gesture *in painting* that brings out its so-called *truth*.

Derrida considers his four categories as *outlines* that circle the pursued truth, that which *is* painting, like *containers* limiting the work by drawing its outer edge. He writes:

Four times, then, *around* painting, to turn merely around it, in the neighbouring regions which one authorises oneself to enter, that's the whole story, to recognize and contain, like the surrounds of the work of art, or at most its outskirts: frame, title, signature, museum, archive, reproduction, discourse, market, in short: everywhere where one legislates on *the right to painting* by marking the limit, with a slash marking an opposition [*d'un trait d'opposition*] which one would like to be indivisible. (11)

On the outskirts of the work of art, along with Derrida's other listed *containers*, are also the walls of the studio containing and making this space recognisable. This line that the studio draws around the work in a spatial embrace that sets both work and studio apart is preceded by the artist's *stroke*. Until the moment of this gesture, the space of the work is simply a room with another designation, perhaps a living room. The studio unfolds the moment in which the artist *strikes*.

Derrida writes, "A trait never appears, never itself, never for a first time. It begins by retrac(t)ing [*se retirer*]" (11).¹⁵² So, the stroke is like a *drawing*, a withdrawal into itself, at the same time giving and taking. The trait that defines the work of art is only a trait because it has already appeared once, is already a recognisable feature. It appears in a double movement of withdrawal and repetition and is like the stroke of the artist's brush *in painting*, the repeated movement that brings the motif forth as something always already existing. Through this gesture of retracing the ground, the thesis argues that the artist's stroke opens a space, and this space is the artist's studio. Derrida continues, "I follow here the logical succession of what I long ago called ... the *broaching* [*entame*] of the origin: that which opens, with a trace, without initiating anything" (11). When the artist cuts through and reaches beyond the surface of the ground in order to draw the work out, s/he is broaching a space that was already there and a work, the outline of which was already drawn. By extension, a studio space always already part of the living space from which it emerges and to which it might, again, return. The artist's repeated effort to broach and inhabit this space for art and living is an attempt to retrace something familiar – a familiar space. Derrida writes about this space of the trait that it "remains to be broached in order to give place to the truth in painting. Neither inside nor outside, it spaces itself without letting itself be framed, but it does not stand outside the frame. It works the frame, makes it work, lets it work, gives it work to do" (11/12).

¹⁵² The French term in square brackets is Derrida's original wording included in the translation of the text by Geoffrey Bennington & Ian McLeod.

The trait is the element that becomes the familiar feature of a work through the artist's repeated effort to draw it out when retracing his/her first tentative stroke. Because the stroke is always already repeating the last, there will be neither beginning nor end to this repeated inhabitation of the space drawn by the artist from one work to the next. The contemporary living space is wrested from its alien ground with the need to leave a trace that becomes this repeated insistence on familiarity – insistence on tracing the familiar. This need is the artist's as well as the dweller's, yet the dual nature of the artist's stroke, at the same time familiar and alien, speaks to the nature of contemporary dwelling which cannot be just one or the other. However, before looking further into the parallel practices of art and dwelling in section 5.2.4 below, the artist's studio, the space that emerges when the artist/dweller strikes, calls for further examination. Studying, again, the three chosen works in their relation to the dwelling houses through and inside which they took form, the works respond in different ways to what the thesis terms the *loft perspective*. This term signifies the level of coexistence between studio/art practice and living/domestic space, which is to say the relation between the two domains once the artists set to work.

5.2.3 The art of holding the house

Matta-Clark's studio coexisted with the living space in the various lofts he inhabited throughout the decade of working in New York City. At the same time, the artistic practice of cutting into built fabric unfolded elsewhere as a site-specific occupation outside the studio. The architectural cut, in the sense of the cutting and slicing that made the uninhabitable lofts inhabitable in the first place and thereby created a shared space for living and working, also inspired an art practice that was forced to go elsewhere. *Splitting* was such a work directly engaged with the suburban dwelling house that it was raising a critique of, and in Matta-Clark's case the question therefore emerges whether his loft had a studio function after all. Did home and art become so harmoniously integrated in the loft that the art practice no longer could operate critically inside this space? Did the site-specific work created by Matta-Clark in the 1970s express a homelessness of art itself, which is to say a practice no longer accommodated by a studio? Was Matta-Clark an exception where other artists retained their studio practice in coexistence with loft-living? While the coexistence of live/work, art/home and studio/dwelling in Matta-Clark's loft is of relevance to the present study in a more general sense, the circumstance that site-specific work emerged in tandem with the loft space is significant.

In contrast, Schwitters worked from a studio that over the years moved between rooms of his family residence before it became the work of art itself in the final *Merschbau* destination. If working from home was a necessary solution in Schwitters' case, it will have been the only available option for many artists, then as well as now. The home-studio will have unfolded in many shapes and locations from occupying the corner of a living room to an individual space or annexed building. In such circumstances, the home/art negotiation will have been ongoing despite attempts at spatial separations

within a given house. Even if a specific room behind a closed door would be designated the studio, the artist might not have adhered to a strict separation of practices. This goes for any artist working from home, yet for Schwitters, the studio occupied one room and then the next while the artist himself most likely moved around the house more freely. Considering that various corners and corridors of the house became occupied by work material and emerging structures, Schwitters' Merz-practice took possession of the house beyond the studio, and a clear line between art and domestic setting might not have existed at all times. The eventual construction of *Merzbau* – a spatial wall merging art and living in one space – eventually located both practices in what might be considered as Schwitters' *loft* – his Merz-loft.

For Schneider, a return to the abandoned childhood home turned the whole building into artist's studio, work of art and living space in one seemingly undifferentiated coexistence. Which is not to say that the artist did not fill his house with walls, yet the extent to which these served to separate one domain from the other remains unknown and perhaps besides the point. That Schneider might have lived and worked in his childhood home, because this house was the only available option, draws an immediate line to Matta-Clark's loft. The inhabitation of an abandoned space is one similarity, the coexistence of artistic practice and living in a shared, if not open, space is another. The circumstance that the artist/dweller, homeless in the contemporary of the late twentieth/early twenty-first century, would be forced to return to work over his/her abandoned childhood home is, however, a marked difference that possibly says something important about Schneider's time close to the time of the present study. Where Matta-Clark's solution was to approach abandoned industrial spaces at the margins of society and culture for a place to live and work, Schneider went back to a previously occupied and familiar space, went home as it were. If he had nowhere else to go, the thesis speculates that a return to this central, if abandoned, place occurred because there was work to be done. Where Matta-Clark domesticated a former workplace when inhabiting the loft, Schneider rendered a familiar domestic setting alien, unrecognisable and unknown by making the house uninhabitable. If Schneider's childhood home became his workplace and therefore in this sense became his *loft*, the coexistence of live/work occurred as a kind of negation of both. Not simply because the artist eventually was forced out of the house by his own work, but in the way that concepts of working and living themselves lost clear definitions, or perhaps attained other meanings.

While the *loft perspective* in the three case studies signifies the artist's response to his particular spatial condition for living and working, it is noticeable that a distinction between the two practices cannot be upheld in any case. A shared space appears to have been the answer for all while both practices were forced to change in order to accommodate *the other*. Once the house itself – the site of working and living – became the work of art, the notion of work as well as house also changed. For Schwitters and Schneider, this change did not prevent their continued living in this house/work, temporarily at least,

yet in Matta-Clark's case, the house was neither dwelling nor studio. Matta-Clark's studio split when part of it remained in the loft while the other part relocated to the site of the work. The practice split in a way that resembled an architectural practice divided between the drawing office and the built work elsewhere. While not all loft artists pursued a site-specific practice like Matta-Clark, Robert Smithson et al, a tendency to work beyond the confines of the studio, however, characterised the art of the late twentieth/early twenty-first centuries.

If it remains unknown how Matta-Clark worked between his *two studios* – the loft and the site-specific work – the architectural background might have made the dual arrangement seem less unusual. If the *home-studio* in the loft was for thinking, sketching, studying and the construction of models, the *work-studio* on site facilitated a direct encounter and engagement with the chosen building. A distinction thereby returned with the intellectual/contemplative home-activities contrasting the dynamic/physical site-activities. Yet, the thesis speculates that in Matta-Clark's case, this distinction between thinking and building, knowledge and practical skill was mediated by the notion of *making* a dwelling in the loft. As such, the living space would wedge itself in between the space of thinking about a work and the execution of it outside the walls of this space. The studio/dwelling in the loft would be contrasted by a dwelling/building elsewhere, in between which a living space at the limit of the loft would unfold. The centrality of the home-studio, as a space of making visible and known in a kind of retracing of the familiar, as discussed above, would be contrasted by the externality of the site-specific work facilitating the dialectical process required to make both home and work of art appear.

Historical precedents for this intimate relation between the studio/study/work and home/dwelling/domestic setting further illuminate the unique contribution of the loft space. From the discussion of coexistence of spatial as well as mental practices in an open plan space, a line can be drawn to the historical space of the *studiolo* located within the domestic setting of the Italian Renaissance household. As described by Dora Thornton (1997: 27), the small study space of the *studiolo* formed part of the private living domain in line with other intimate spaces such as lavatories, bathing rooms and storage rooms. Often situated near the master bedroom, it held an air of secrecy further emphasised by alternative locations in remote or hidden corners of the residence. The *studiolo* was a small enclosure where the house owner would keep works of art, books and other artefacts for study and contemplation. The private room was a place of collecting, displaying and producing knowledge, not unlike a cabinet of curiosities, and, as such, it was a particular kind of space in the context of the house. If not exactly a *central void*, considering the richness of the room in terms of content, and not exactly an artist's studio either, the *studiolo* nevertheless comes forth as this *other space* that the thesis claims the domestic setting requires – at the same time external and internal, central and marginal. As a precursor of the artist's studio, the *studiolo* is of interest to the present study due to its

particular spatial qualities and features, and the following section traces the artist's studio historically on the basis of the notion of this space that opens to other realms.

5.2.4 A room to remember

The historical studiolo was not only a space for contemplation and study of books, objects and artefacts but also for visual stimulation. This aspiration saw studioli decorated in various ways as cabinets full of references beyond the house. The visual element encompassed elaborate wall decorations, one example being the intarsia in Federico de Montefeltro's studioli in Urbino and Gubbio constructed between 1474 and 1483. The wood panelling with elaborate perspectival imagery represented rather than actually displayed objects, and the walls functioned like image planes for projections that opened to other spaces beyond the confines of the room. As Robert Kirkbride points out with an interest in how studioli worked as memory devices and knowledge chambers:

The studioli do represent a significant turning point in the role of sight in verifying experience. In particular, the chambers manifest a transformation in practices of envisioning knowledge, from an inward habit of mnemonic composition toward a more extroverted mediation of the world as a theatre for the corporeal eye and its prosthetic instruments. (2008: 3)

As such, the walls of the studiolo functioned like the painter's canvas with knowledge obtained, disseminated and stored visually as well as textually. In the case of Montefeltro's studioli, the surfaces of the enclosing walls became projection planes for realms beyond the temporal and spatial setting of the room. The space opened onto unknown worlds from its confines within the domestic setting, when the perspectival imagery of the walls cut the studioli like the image plane intersects the representation and the artist's stroke cuts the studio. The historical movement from studiolo to artist's studio comes forward as this need for a space set deep within the domestic setting and acting as a gateway to other realms. A space from where one welcomes and familiarises oneself with the unknown and the stranger through the creation of both.

The artist's studio developing in Europe through recent centuries is based on this notion of interiority when cultivating the idea of an introvert space within which the artist silently channels his/her inspiration in solitude. Michelle Grabner writes about the modern artist's studio:

The auratic tradition of the modernist studio designated it as a place set aside for the production of autonomous work – the site, often, of disengaged artistic labour, where, in isolation, discrete aspects of artistic competence were explored and refined ... The studio, on this model, is a *room of privilege*, a domain of male authorship that is determinedly undomestic. (Jacob & Grabner 2010: 1/2)

Exclusivity clings to the male artist's studio as this undomestic *room of privilege*, and Grabner draws a reference from the studio belonging to the Neoclassical painter François Porbus invented by Honoré de Balzac in the short story "The Unknown Masterpiece" (1837). "Porbus' atelier is the germ of the modern studio," writes Grabner (1) with its romantic vision of "a mysterious place, vast and dark, littered with ancient props and the evidence of disciplined work" (1). If this description evokes the

studiolo and the notion of the artist's studio drawn from it above, the Parisian Left Bank atelier of the eighteenth/nineteenth centuries is, however, a different kind of space insofar as it does not share the domestic setting. As Daniel Buren and Thomas Repensek explain, the atelier is not a space measured to a domestic scale in terms of its spatial qualities (1979). When comparing the European studio type with the American, Buren and Repensek compare the atelier and the loft. They write:

Two specific types may be distinguished: 1. The European type, modelled upon the Parisian studio of the turn of the century. This type is usually rather large and is characterised primarily by its high ceilings (a minimum of 4 metres). Sometimes there is a balcony, to increase the distance between viewer and work. The door allows large works to enter and to exit. Sculptor's studios are on the ground floor, painters' on the top floor. In the latter, the lighting is natural, usually diffused by windows oriented toward the north so as to receive the most even and subdued illumination. 2. The American type, of more recent origin. This type is rarely built according to specification, but, located as it is in reclaimed lofts, is generally much larger than its European counterpart, not necessarily higher, but longer and wider. Wall and floor space are abundant. Natural illumination plays a negligible role, since the studio is lit by electricity both night and day if necessary. There is thus equivalence between the products of these lofts and their placement on the walls and floors of modern museums, which are also illuminated day and night by electricity. (51/52)

Buren and Repensek define the American loft of the twentieth century as a space illuminated by electricity, in which the artist might work for twenty-four hours without noticing the difference between night and day. Furthermore, works created in this space are prepared for immediate relocation to museum/gallery spaces and therefore neglect domestic display altogether. The radicalism of the loft space compared with the studiolo is noticeable, yet where the atelier-style studio also neglects the domestic in scale and motivation, the loft is an intended living space and in this sense draws a circle back to the early modern study.

Prior to the post-World War II loft space, the New York City studio apartment became an established live/work option designed and advertised specifically for artists. Built around the turn of the twentieth century to accommodate both domestic and artistic needs, the small apartment usually consisted of one room only. A coexistence of practices was required in this space in line with the later loft, even if the apartment most often accommodated only one person. If European precedents had inspired the American studio prior to this development, a tradition of studio/dwelling preceding the loft developed in the American context.¹⁵³ As Katy Siegel points out (2010: 311), the pragmatism of the American live/work space is perhaps an attempt to streamline artistic production. Yet, a certain live/work balance has always marked the artist's studio, even when this space has not been connected to the dwelling domain. The notion of dwelling has always been an aspect of the artist's workplace because the artist's work routine follows a different time schedule than the average worker's (313). While there is no nine-to-five routine, the flexibility of a one-space solution is practical – neither walls nor commute prevent the artist from working when s/he is inspired to create.

¹⁵³ Michael Peppiatt and Alice Bellony-Rewald writes, "It appears self-evident today that a distinctly American studio exists ... Nothing connects it to the plush, well-filled ateliers our grandfathers and great-grandfathers admired ... Yet this freedom from the past was achieved only after many generations of American artists had absorbed centuries of tradition. Up until the 1930s, when the loft-like atelier made its tentative debut, the leading American studios closely resembled their European counterparts" (2010: 68).

However, once working life beyond art circles becomes more flexible in the latter part of the twentieth century – with the option to work from home as one significant consequence – work routines for a wider group of people begin to imitate the artist's. As Siegel points out, once more people begin to work like artists, they also want to live like artists, hence the commercial success of the loft (313). A curious reversal then occurs in the twenty-first century when the lives and practices of artists come to imitate the average worker's. It seems that artists no longer live and work like artists, as Siegel puts it (314). While more successful artists in terms of financial income might have large studios located (in former industrial buildings) away from their living space, not unlike the French *atelier*, less affluent artists work from studios organised in rows of small cells on former warehouse floors, in former lofts. In these places, regular office hours are observed, and as Siegel remarks, this “environment crosses two unpleasant labour forms of the early and late twentieth century: the sweatshop and the office cubicle” (314). Another circle is drawn.

While Matta-Clark's twentieth century loft movement settled into abandoned industrial spaces, the studio of the early twenty-first century is organised like a nineteenth century factory. If reasons behind this shift are to be found in the commercialisation of the loft and the profit obtainable from excessive sub-division of its open floor, the contemporary cubicle-like organisation of artists reads as a symptom of the age in a wider sense. The artist in the twenty-first century, unwilling to settle into this kind of containment, might abandon the sub-divided loft and become homeless like the dweller travelling from place to place while working *on the road*. Not unlike the itinerant artists of medieval times travelling to find work and learn new skills, if not simply to meet other artists with a similar “thirst for knowledge and a yearning for freedom far beyond anything that had ever moved their fellow-craftsmen” (Wittkower & Wittkower 1963: 46). The contemporary studio “is analogous to bricolage, ad hoc and fractured, no longer the sole site of artistic enterprise,” writes Grabner (Jacob & Grabner 2010: 4). Like the living space, the studio has split across a number of spaces, become mobile and therefore also in a sense placeless. The irony of the twentieth/twenty-first centuries is perhaps that its counterpart, the abandoned dwelling house, by becoming the space of alienation and overcoming *per se*, as outlined in chapter 1, might appear well suited for artistic practices. The three chosen case studies testify to this development, and if the dwelling house therefore might be reinhabited and given the *artwash* – in Rheydt, Margate or elsewhere – dwelling possibly continues in other spaces. The following section pursues this other kind of dwelling.

5.2.5 The placing of belongings

A still image drawn from the *Splitting* film shows Gordon Matta-Clark holding the house in Englewood after altering its foundation and levering one half of the building down [Figs. 2.13]. The image shows the moment in which the forces of the built structure are redirected, and the artist not yet knows

whether the house will hold up or collapse. It holds, and the alternative household that the image of Matta-Clark makes manifest lingers for a moment as an image illustrating the present study's main hypothesis that the artist's gesture holds a promise for contemporary dwelling. This promise that the alternative house holds is a *re*-valuation of the living space that becomes a kind of *de*-valuation when Matta-Clark cuts through the house. The objectification that is performed by this cut sets both home and house apart in a gesture questioning the relation between the *container* and the *contained*. A reference can thereby be drawn to the Greek term *oikos*, from the outset simply a *house* but also the root of the term *oikonomia* meaning *household management*. The English terms *ecology* and *economy* draw on this ancient concept of the household as a basic unit of the larger economy of the city – the *polis*. That the household must be balanced in accordance with its larger context is implicit in the term.¹⁵⁴

The connotations of the *oikos* and the household that the term signifies are relevant for the overall economy/ecology between home and house in Matta-Clark's work *Splitting*. Once the former residents' abandoned belongings are discharged, because the artist cannot overcome their presence loaded with emotional content, the house itself is treated like an object when cut through, unsettled and disfigured. In between these extreme gestures, the open void of the cut house marks an irreversible shift of whatever value the house and private belongings might have held for the previous owners. Matta-Clark's gesture of revaluation aligns the house *as object* with the private belongings *as objects*, rather than retains one as the container of the others. The notion of the *oikos* economy, following which the dwelling house is only one type of *object belonging* among others, is thereby maintained. In the form of this object house placed in line with other object belongings defining the household, the house, itself conventionally seen to frame the inhabitants and their belongings, changes status.¹⁵⁵

In addition, the house, perceived as a thing among others rather than an all-embracing structure, is countered by the signification of the *oikos* as the floor plan of an ancient Greek house. This plan conventionally has a central court in the form of an outdoor space at the heart of the household, and this reference is important because the notion of a central, yet external, space around which the household is organised parallels the central void of the *split wall diagram* discussed above [chapters 3 and 4]. A tension between the house, containing a central void, and the object house, standing in line with the rest of one's belongings, outlines a positive-negative figure of the contemporary dwelling that the thesis returns to in section 5.2.8 below. In the meantime, when Matta-Clark cuts the house straight through and sets home and house apart as objects belonging to a shared household, he reevaluates the notion of dwelling. While the house becomes an empty container, the private belongings are like free

¹⁵⁴ Etymologically, *oikos*, in the sense of house, is the root of the terms *ecology* and *economics*. As noted by Janett Morgan, Athenians had no word for house and "the terminology in classical texts simply indicates a differentiation between the natural and the built environment. Houses appear not to have existed in a modern linguistic sense" (2010: 52/53). Again, Hollander's note that the German word *Haus* appears to have no root comes to mind – what kind of house is this rootless shelter? If it seems that this house, distinct from the antique *oikos*, is in a state of crisis, then the thesis suggests that the notion of the household is relevant for the present age.

¹⁵⁵ In Sarah B. Pomeroy's translation of Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* (1995: 31), the *oikos* is explained as "a large entity embracing the members of the family, slaves, animals, the house itself, land, and all that was produced, consumed, and disbursed by the household." Pomeroy further positions the *oikos* as the basic unit of Greek society and Xenophon's writing from the 4th century BC as the earliest surviving work dedicated to the subject.

agents with the potential to demarcate another living space. Entered into a constellation somewhere else outside of the house, these objects might outline another residence, someone else's *home*, and for that reason, Matta-Clark had to reject the former residents' abandoned things.

When the dweller places his/her belongings for the purpose of demarcating a dwelling area, or leaves them behind to demonstrate a need for detachment, the gesture performs a *placing* that gives the individual a sense of *belonging* to this place, or not. The notion of *belonging to a place* emerges through this *placing of one's belongings* for the purpose of establishing a deeper relation to a given location, even if of a temporary nature. *Belonging to a place*, as the grounding of the dweller somewhere, becomes the *placing of belongings*, as the grounding of the dweller in this situation. The home- and houseless individual *places* him/herself by arranging personal belongings in a particular way. By the same token, the house as belonging – the house that sits in line with the rest of the household belongings – is no longer a house in a conventional sense.

The domain that the dweller's placing claims is never simply appropriated for the first time. By placing his/her personal things, a familiar ground is retraced and the placing recalls something already known. When inhabiting a new space, the dweller marks out his/her domain through the placing of belongings that used to belong somewhere else. This repetition of a familiar setting becomes the repetition of a home, and the dweller opens a new space for living through this repeated retracing of a house. S/he does so in line with the artist's stroke that repeats itself while drawing a space for the other. The trait that the dweller and artist repeat is the trait of home and work, respectively. As such, the dweller's placing and the artist's tracing meet in the repetition of a trait that draws something familiar out as distinct from something unfamiliar.

5.2.6 Recharging the value of things

Kurt Schwitters travelled from place to place after leaving Germany in 1937. While it is unlikely that he was able to carry more than a few bags of things on the number of journeys he was forced to make, the question of what to bring must have surfaced every time. From what is known, Schwitters' wife Helma brought works of art from the house in Hannover on her journeys to visit Schwitters and Ernst during their early years of exile in Norway.¹⁵⁶ Yet, even if some compensation for things lost or missing therefore will have occurred, the artist was forced to build his environment from scratch in every new place where he came to settle down. In terms of life *on the road* in between these destinations, it might have been convenient that Schwitters already enjoyed travelling with boxes and suitcases in tow when touring Europe in the early Dada days. What was brought along on these trips is not certain, yet possibly a selection of props for performances, copies of the Merz-publications and works of art to show and to sell. Schwitters lost all these things and more when the house in

¹⁵⁶ Schwitters wrote in a letter dated 28 January 1937 (or 1938) that Helma had brought pictures to Norway (Webster 2007: 69 note 153).

Hannover was destroyed. The only surviving material from the time of *Merzbau*'s construction will have been the few items Helma was able to bring along on her journeys. All other personal belongings, works of art, materials, tools, tokens and memorabilia ceased to exist in 1943. With the development of what must have been a refined sense of assessing the nature and formal qualities of any given object or material, Schwitters will have become an expert in choosing those few things to bring along. The years of producing Merz-art will have been an invaluable experience in this sense. While the main criterion for the selection of a piece of material for a Merz-work was its potential for integration in the equilibrium of the total work of art, Schwitters' weighing of his belongings when packing a suitcase possibly stretched this intuition further.

The use of found material for Merz-art was from the outset a strategy conceived out of necessity in the chaos and deprivation after World War I, yet it immediately tied the artistic practice closely to its contextual setting. This engagement with context brought the material fabric of Schwitters' own lifeworld to the fore in his work when art was created from what was near at hand. Material fragments perceived to have no value were revaluated in the name of art, the notion of value itself being challenged. When integrated in the work, found material lost all significations and became pure form, or so Schwitters claimed. As such, no association with external problems, or adherence to predefined values imposed by others would survive the transition from world at large to work of art. No politics would control and corrupt. Art for Schwitters – Merz-art – meant complete revaluation of all preset values wherever these would come from and on whatever basis they could rely, even if Merz did not question the value of value itself.

The mobilisation of art for the purpose of a complete reappraisal of all values extended to the house. Waldhausenstrasse 5A was given an *artwash* over the years of moving work and material from one room to the next while resetting the household's domestic values. Societal norms and cultural conventions, all the things the artist claimed that he wanted to dissociate himself (and his family) from, will have been *washed through* if not *out*.¹⁵⁷ The things Schwitters perceived as problematic, that made life difficult and evidently started wars, were excluded or recharged. In the work of art – the aesthetic composition that did not have to comply with anything else than formal concerns – these problems became part of a different economy, ultimately, a different household. Art for Schwitters meant liberation, it was an alternative, and it is not surprising that the artist, eventually, also wanted to inhabit this space of art, the work itself. While the studio room already provided a *common ground* for the constellation of objects and material, a space where these were tested and tried, negotiated and settled, *Merzbau* became the bricolage building to spatially ground its maker in its piecemeal construction. The work became the site of Schwitters' negotiation of internal as well as external forces, clashing and

¹⁵⁷ As quoted in chapter 3 [p.91], Schwitters considered art to be a liberator "**from life**, from all the things that burden humans such as national, political or financial problems. **Art aspires for the pure human being**, free from concerns over the state, political parties or food" (1981: 341).

merging beyond the confines of a house, the persecution of an artist and an artistic practice that would soon cease to have an outlet. In *Merzbau's* eventually autonomous, purified and abstract space, Schwitters placed his belongings and left a mark by means of which he placed himself in his belonging to this space that he had himself opened up within the dwelling house without a future.

What the Merz-building thereby proposes for the contemporary of the twenty-first century is the possibility of a complete revaluation of the living space. An alternative economy develops by managing the household beyond conventional value systems when resetting these according to alternative standards. The possibility opened up by such a revaluation with its proposition that everything can be recharged and *demoulded* places a challenge before architecture – can the discipline, itself intrinsically artistic, execute the revaluation practised by art? The question extends to the possibility of resetting the values of that which architecture itself works in service of, as that which stands behind the discipline and possibly determines its movements. If for example certain preconceived ideas about dwelling and domestic life require architects to provide certain dwelling types, then Merz proposes an objection to this kind of dominance. This notion of protest implicit in Schwitters' Merz-building and strategy also relies on the utilisation of material discarded by the system that the work thereby raises a critique of. A kind of deconstruction then, as summarised through the analysed practises of Matta-Clark's un-building, Schwitters' Merz-building and Schneider's re-building. Yet, the latter perhaps operating somewhat in the blind, as the following section discusses further.

5.2.7 The paradox of knowing and forgetting

Gregor Schneider's desire not to know is immediately at odds with the expectation marking the modern age to be able to know, see through and listen to all phenomena and voices. However, the desire of the modern, and by extension the contemporary, is a desire at odds with the requirement to forget that also defines the ability to be modern as discussed in chapter 1 [1.2]. How to forget what one knows? How to know anything if one does not remember the past? If the paradox of being modern is to both know and to forget, then a reversal of this contradiction suggests that to be modern is not to know that one in fact remembers. Schneider did not want to know what he was doing and why he felt the need to. He simply wanted to forget, which is to say to forget the house, and he would forget it over time by gradually making it into another house. The thesis speculates that this desire not to know and to forget for Schneider became a practice of doubling the childhood home in the hope that this house could be covered up and hidden, ultimately, perhaps repressed. A compulsion to repeat that would see Schneider continue his doubling practice for years until, eventually, the house was disfigured to the extent that it lost all recognisability and ability to contain. Schneider felt that the house thereby became unknown to him, even if he did not forget that another house had existed before it. Welcoming this transformation, the artist continued to double the walls and rooms, as if

whenever the repressed childhood home resurfaced in uncanny glimpses of recognition, it could again immediately be walled away.

What then does it mean to rewall a house? First of all, the term *rewalling* does not appear to exist – in the dictionary or elsewhere. If it is possible to maintain a building practise that nevertheless rewalls a house over a prolonged period of time, then what is going on? The extremity of Schneider's practice is significant as the doublings spiral beyond the consciousness of the artist and into increasingly negative gestures. Repression, indifference and closure mark the tactics of a building practice attempting to execute the need to put the past behind. However, when this past cannot be fully erased and its forms cannot be definitively undone, the artist attempts to wall it all in – in the name of art perhaps, yet, literally, by building walls in front of walls.

Schneider's building activity leads to new internal spaces. In between the old walls and the new, originals and copies, spaces emerge as if the walls have been forced open. In the video works of *HAUS u r* [Fig. 4.21], Schneider rummages around these wall spaces as if using the gaps as corridors and passageways in a kind of alternative infrastructure of the house. On these tours guided by Schneider and his camera, various objects can be seen lying around – is it refuse, building material, Schneider's belongings or what kind of *sea* washes through this house? Gaps visible between, above and below rooms appear to have purposes of unspecified kinds, if they not simply serve as repositories for things cleared out of the doubled rooms. Because some gaps are dark and narrow with raw surfaces and the wall structure exposed, the impression is given that Schneider actually *is* moving around inside the walls of his house. To perceive the doublings as such literal spacings, giving access to the insides of walls, is an interpretation that opens another perhaps darker aspect of the work. Historically, cavity walls have served a number of purposes ranging from escape routes and hiding places to sacrificial spaces and trappings, the latter two functions also involving the sacrifice of humans.¹⁵⁸ While such implications might well have crossed the artist's mind throughout the years of working and living in the house, the dark connotations of rewallled spaces are matched by the literal darkness behind the walls of the whitewashed interiors on display.

If rewalling and whitewashing are expressions of a desire to forget, Schneider willingly faces the interiors of his room doubles devoid of a history beyond the one of their making. As such, the rewalling of the house, also implying the walling-in of the artist himself, does seem to *work*. By simply building for this *unknown* that he claims, Schneider incidentally makes a living space for himself inside his rewallled rooms. Once the rooms are doubled elsewhere, outside the house, a sensation of being in two places at once occurs, and when eventually cutting the double rooms out of the house and

¹⁵⁸ As elaborated in *The Walled-up Wife: A Casebook* edited by Alan Dundes (1996), a trace of such practices exists in a ballad about a woman sacrificed to ensure the positive outcome of a building project. The theme is found in a number of versions of the legend deriving from Eastern Europe as well as from India and South Asia.

displaying them externally, Schneider finally escapes.¹⁵⁹ Once the house in Rheydt becomes a disfigured interior behind an untouched front façade, the logic of a rewalled house is complicated further by the absence of walls and rooms. Yet, before following Schneider's rewalling of the house to this point of no return, the thesis holds back in an attempt to turn the artist's resistance to knowledge into a possibility for dwelling in the twenty-first century. The paradoxical claim that Schneider's practice of rewalling encompasses a positive contribution to dwelling in the present age relies on the extremity of the work. While, on the one hand, rejecting to engage with the history of his own life and house, on the other, Schneider willingly faces the blank walls of its double rooms, the surfaces of which he scrutinises at length. If this examination involves searching for traces of something of an unknown nature inscribed in the surfaces of walls, it possibly also pursues the shadow of the artist himself when in between the walls that enclose and the one who built them, a space unfolds though which Schneider stares with such fixity that he does not seem to see anything.

To stop and draw a section through this house – a place eventually left behind with Schneider's forgotten *belongings* – calls for Matta-Clark's ability to draw a line and cut a house. Even if this cutting most likely will struggle with an internally perforated house like Schneider's, an imaginary section of *HAUS u r* exposes the complex nature of both house and work. It shows layers of built fabric, doubled rooms and the gaps between them, possibly also *other* kinds of spaces. Yet, the cut would have to be made before Schneider himself started cutting the house up. While Matta-Clark, the architect, sectioned a house in a straight line, Schneider, the artist, dissociated its rooms one by one. The difference between the two approaches is as significant as the one between their purposes – while the artist obscured to forget, the architect exposed and got to know something that he wanted to remember. Such is *the architect's stroke*, through which a living space eventually is projected, that it opens a house for continued drawing and building. The stroke makes familiar and known by retracing the contour line of the always already unfinished house – the central void at the heart of the structure is exposed in the process. It remains for the inhabitant to ascribe meaning to it.

5.2.8 Accommodating *the other* (within)

When Gregor Schneider believes that something unknown might be accommodated within, between and behind the double walls of his house, he regards such phenomena as essentially unknowable. However, speaking of something that cannot be known while at the same time making space for it, both denies and accepts the alterity. That a childhood home, the history of a region and the tragedy of a culture is believed to cease to exist because a house is rewalled is an interpretation of *HAUS u r* proposed by the thesis. As such, Schneider channels his time and place by placing himself at the centre of its possible trauma. The artist, having returned to square one – the childhood home, a place already

¹⁵⁹ When in 1994 reconstructing a room from the house in Rheydt in Galerie Andreas Weiss, Berlin, Schneider experienced that he was back in Rheydt when he was, in fact, in the Berlin room. The other way around, when he was in the room in Rheydt, he wondered what was going on in the Berlin double (Loock 2003: 54).

abandoned once – lives inside this house, again, and he works there too. There is no difference between living, the doubling of walls and rooms and the work of art that emerges as a result of both – everything overlaps in Schneider’s house like its layers of walls. The house eventually becomes one studio dwelling – a space to study, a study of spatial relations, ultimately, a kind of loft.

In contrast, Kurt Schwitters presumes to *know* when through intuitive forming and composition of found material building the Merz-wall inside his family’s house. Schwitters’ work is in a sense also a rewalling, although of a different spatial order than Schneider’s. Even if the aim is similar in the attempt to distance the living space from a problematic contextual setting, the threat might in Schwitters’ case be more tangible and acute considering the targeted persecution by the Nazi regime. The artist responds by turning the back of his house, studio and work against this external enemy, while himself facing the wall from within the void emerging at the centre of *Merzbau*. Considering that it would not be possible to build a wall enclosure without creating this space within, this is the un-merged point from where Schwitters greets his wall before entering the living space that it provides.

Gordon Matta-Clark identifies the void as a central element of any built structure, and he addresses both structure and void when aligning himself with the core of the building while cutting away at its centre, as he puts it.¹⁶⁰ In the case of *Splitting*, the structure is a shoebox dwelling house, and the gesture of cutting signifies the artist’s taking possession of this house – something anyone, he claims, in theory can do. By cutting through the whole house, a free flow between interior and exterior is facilitated while knowledge about the house enclosure becomes available. The central void is exposed, and if for Matta-Clark this void represents “the gap which, among other things, could be between the self and the American Capitalist system” (Wall 1976: 76), it is more than metaphorical, even if not explicitly *a room* as Schneider makes it. It is an opening in the built structure, a gap calling for a settlement between opposed forces of the perceived internal and external. It is the framing of a space within a dwelling domain, inside which the alterity always already resides and therefore must be faced, acknowledged and, ultimately, accommodated. As such, the central void does not hold on to permanent identifications.

All three artists approach this space from the shared intuition of placing themselves centrally in their respective house and work. The instinct to connect with this *gap* through alignment with a perceived centrality facilitates a dialogue in all three cases. This dialogue that the *spacing* performed by the works makes possible bridges a perceived slip in the structural coherence of the houses. It creates a connection by crossing over a gap that cannot simply be filled once and for all when it is a constituent part of the house to begin with. The permanence of the negative space in the form of this void is the permanence of the house insofar as the two belong together – are one. The structural flaw without

¹⁶⁰ In the interview with Donald Wall, Matta-Clark states, “The activity takes the form of a theatrical gesture that cleaves structural space. The dialectics involve my dualistic habit of centring and removal (cutting away at the core of a structure)” (1976: 76).

which the house would not be a house is this other space that essentially contradicts, if not undermines, the house. The shared strategy of the artists to approach this alterity within by establishing a dialogue through accommodation of its open-ended proposition suggests that the possibility of the living space hinges on addressing this central void.

What then is the name and nature of this space both permanent, because always already part of the house, and temporary, because always in a state of change, always something else than the rest? A kind of negative space that withdraws from context, if not simply contradicts it, yet still belongs and forms an integral part without which the house would not stand up. As such, a negative space required to make a house hold, a household that the individual occupant must take charge of. Is it possible for the architect to corner this void or will it remain to some extent unknown, unrecognisable and impossible to contain?

5.2.9 A home for all things

To approach the nature of the central void, the thesis calls upon Plato's notion of *khôra* described as the *receptacle of becoming* in *Timaeus* (c.360 BC). This receptacle complements Plato's two orders of existence with their notion of the *model* – the intelligible and unchangingly real – and the *copy* – the changing and visible (Plato 2001: 177).¹⁶¹ The receptacle, which Plato eventually does name *space*, outlines a medium required to make the copy appear by way of the model. While this space is a permanent presence, that which it holds fluctuates in its coming and going. As John D. Caputo writes, “*Khôra* is the immense and indeterminate spatial receptacle ... providing a *home* for all things” (Derrida & Caputo 1997: 84). Through this holding of something else, the receptacle, however, remains an intangible, if intelligible, container of otherwise sensible things. Caputo continues, “[The] impossibility of finding a proper name for *khôra* ... is not some failing on Plato's part ... but a *structural feature* of Plato's thought” (95). As such, the name *khôra* is designated the receptacle in the absence of a possible *proper name* for this indeterminate phenomenon. *Khôra* becomes the name for that which makes something else appear, and to speak of *khôra* is therefore to speak of something else. Derrida writes:

Khôra receives, so as to give place to them, all the determinations, but she/it does not possess any of them as her/its own. She possesses them, she has them, since she receives them, but she does not possess them as properties, she does not possess anything as her own. She *is* nothing other than the sum or the process of what has just been inscribed *on* her, on the subject of her, on her subject, right up against her subject, but she is not the *subject* or the *present support* of all these interpretations, even though, nevertheless, she is not reducible to them. (1995: 99/100)

The central void, expressed and approached in the chosen works as this gap that holds ascribed meanings, might be comprehended through the notion of *khôra*. Matta-Clark's cleaving and re-centring of the dwelling house, Schwitters' spatial wall with its un-merged central floor space and Schneider's double rooms with their original-copy relation all approach this *spacing* that holds. The *split*

¹⁶¹ The thesis relies on Francis MacDonald Cornford's translation and running commentary of Plato's cosmology first published in 1937.

wall diagram proposed by the thesis illustrates the spatial implications of the artists' spacings in a model that, if not outline Plato's intelligible original on the basis of which all sensible phenomena are drawn or moulded, then unfold the making of a living space by repeating something already known when retracing the lines of its familiarity. With this stroke, trait and the drawing it produces, a space emerges the centrality of which positions a living space available for inscription by its inhabitant. Derrida writes about the unnameable space of the trait that gives us the truth *in painting*:

It is situated. It situates between the visible edging and the phantom in the centre ... *Between* the outside and the inside, between the external and the internal edge-line, the framer and the framed, the figure and the ground, form and content, signifier and signified, and *so on* for any two-faced opposition. The trait thus divides in this place where it takes place. The emblem for this *topos* seems undiscoverable; I shall borrow it from the nomenclature of framing: the *passee-partout*. (1987: 12)

For Derrida, this line that holds a work together by outlining it is like the *passee-partout*, a double frame with a double edge. This trait of the work divides space like the wall splits in the diagram to produce a liminal zone – a space that opens up, a spacing, a receptacle that holds something within and without, on either side. Derrida continues:

[T]he *passee-partout* remains a structure with a movable base; but although it lets something appear, it does not form a frame in the strict sense, rather a frame within a frame. Without ceasing (that goes without saying) to space itself out, it plays its card or its cardboard *between* the frame, in what is properly speaking its internal edge, and the external edge of what it gives us to see, lets or makes appear in its empty enclosure: the picture, the painting, the figure, the form, the system of strokes [*traits*] and of colours. (12)

Derrida reverses the notion of the internal and external edges, so that the edge framing the central void of the *passee-partout* is named the external edge because it is external to that which appears within its frame. Within this line that draws an “empty enclosure” is the central void of the *split wall diagram* – a space that “lets something appear.” This something that appears is both interior and exterior, it both belongs and does not, it withdraws into itself and opens up to something else. The other space that opens up from this “movable base” that never settles is the possibility for a contemporary dwelling, a living space unfinished as a matter of principle.

Conclusion to “Spaces for contemporary living – The implications of the loft, Merz and rewalling”

The chapter began by summarising the three case studies as individual spatial responses to the artists' respective contemporary contexts. It did so by framing three main catalysts, one for each study, seen to make the works and their critiques of dwelling and the house possible. These catalysts were identified as Gordon Matta-Clark's loft experience, Kurt Schwitters' Merz-revaluation and Gregor Schneider's strategy of rewalling. By framing these catalysts on the basis of the wider historical settings that brought them about, the first section [5.1] unfolded the chosen works as direct responses to problems of dwelling experienced by the artists in their time. These were problems that the respective

gestures responded to, consciously or less so, while at the same time proposing novel ways of overcoming the challenge. In this process, a contemporary dwelling was made possible for and by the individual artist through his work and practice.

In the second section [5.2], the thesis unfolded a further set of propositions for dwelling beyond the works in question, yet based on the identified catalysts. These themes took outset in the loft as a new type of living space to emerge in the second half of the twentieth century. The loft was explored as a specific response to the need for a contemporary live/work environment resolved by its particular spatiality and functionality. The loft was seen to accommodate art and home in one, with the space of the artist's studio, as the mediating setting for living and working, opening this possibility for dwelling. The thesis responded by asking what it takes to make an artist's studio, and it found that the spatial transformation relied on the artistic gesture – the artist's *stroke* that *cuts* the space of the studio open. The work of art initiated by this stroke defined a space no longer simply a room for living or working, but a double room accommodating both at the same time – a double gesture then, addressing both the familiar and the alien nature of contemporary dwelling. The possibility of this gesture for the problem of dwelling was seen to rely on the ability to express the duality – both the same and the different, known and unknown. From a loft perspective, the artist's repeated tracing over of his/her stroke became the trait of the work and the living space that it opened up.

The leaving of traces as signs of inhabitation led the thesis to elaborate on the notion of the contemporary household as a construction suspended between objects in the form of personal belongings, in one hand, and the objectified house as a spatial container, in the other. With a reference to the ancient Greek concept of the household, *oikos*, a reevaluation of object belongings was proposed with significant consequences for the status of the dwelling house. The inhabitation of space through the *placing* of one's *belongings* would make this house redundant as a framework for dwelling. If the artist's stroke cut the living space open, the dweller's placing of his/her belongings would soon inhabit that space. The reevaluation of objects and spaces according to personal criteria and preferences in the wake of this practice was seen as an opportunity to take charge of one's own living domain. Rather than acknowledge the values and conventions in the interest of others, such a reevaluation would act as a kind of protest against potentially oppressive forces taking control of the dwelling domain.

The architectural section as a tool to obtain, contain or hold knowledge was proposed as a means to examine already existing conditions while at the same time project possible extensions/adaptations/reconfigurations. While the architect's section would work as an anatomical dissection, it would be analogous to the artist's stroke as a cut through the surface by means of which a space becomes accessible. This section, possibly cutting through convoluted spaces of repressions and recollections,

would open a field of vision for the architect to see and to project, to know and to forget. The latter because it would not otherwise be possible to negotiate the contemporary dwelling called for.

The extremity of Schneider's rewalling reminds us of the risk of forgetting and simply leaving behind, yet also emphasises the need to forget in order to move on. Not least concerning questions of dwelling. The notion of the central void, in the form of a gap always already existing in the fabric of the living space, comes forward as a space that lets something appear, a receptacle with no properties beyond the ones ascribed by the inhabitant. The thesis frames this space as a possibility for the contemporary dweller, if not architect whose task is left uncertain, and thereby arrives at the conclusive elaboration on this task that remains.

Conclusion to the thesis *Splitting and Doubling: Spaces for Contemporary Living in Works by Gordon Matta-Clark, Kurt Schwitters and Gregor Schneider*

– A house of repeated difference

In this final conclusive remark, the thesis returns to the questions of dwelling from where it initially set out – what does it mean to dwell in the twenty-first century? What kind of space accommodates contemporary life? What is the nature of dwelling in the first place? The conclusion summarises how through the study of the three chosen works, the texts by Adorno and Heidegger and the other literary references, a space has been opened from where to address this problem of dwelling today. It considers the framework for a dwelling beyond the notion of a house, as illustrated in the *split wall diagram* discussed across the chapters, and it elaborates on the task that remains for the architect. A task that is not straightforward when the living space foremost relies on a settlement between the individual being and his/her contextual setting.

Through the constellation of the case studies and their catalysts, strategies for this contemporary living space have emerged. While specific to the works and their respective time, these strategies resonate with the challenges facing the inhabitant of the twenty-first century. As such, the contemporary living space – proposed by the case studies beyond predefined concepts and traditions – points forwards when outlining a dwelling at the same time context-specific, generic and applicable beyond the historical moment of its formation. This suggestion that something of a general order is at work in the contemporary dwelling assumes that a kind of concept designates it prior to manifestation after all. The thesis considers the nature of this generality that applies across time and space and, eventually, ties all dwellings together, so that the term itself survives.

Considering that the contemporary signifies the here and now, contemporary dwelling implies spatial engagement with the fabric of the present moment. Through this involvement, the dweller defines his/her living domain. To formalise or otherwise prescribe the architecture of this space would not be possible, and the absence of a spatial conceptualisation is therefore a shared aspect across all contemporary dwellings. The negative denominator lies in the context-specific – two contemporary dwellings cannot be identical – the modern utopia haunting Western culture throughout recent centuries and discussed in chapter 1 [1.3.1] is a fantasy. It is represented by the image of the whole house, and because the promise of this house remains as unattainable today as it ever, its façade stands back as an empty sign – like the front of Gregor Schneider's house in Rheydt.

The negativity central to this claim is echoed by the strategies for dwelling proposed by the case studies. The relevance of these for the present age lies not least in the response to a problem essentially unchanged. This problem of dwelling identified in the twentieth century and discussed in

the first chapter of the thesis – the difficulty of inhabiting a lifeworld experienced as alien and uninhabitable – remains. Even more so, perhaps, considering the speed and intensity with which the present age moves on and takes form, endlessly reconfiguring and postponing itself with no destination in sight. The dweller is forced to follow suit, in effect, forced to dwell on the move. This rootless dwelling in flux reflects the condition approached by Lévinas, presuming a dwelling possible *because* of the wandering of humans rather than impossible because of the absence of their permanent settlement [1.3.1]. The notion of the settlement is central with its connotation of a dwelling settled in a chosen place and rooted over generations. While dwelling conventionally signifies this form of permanent and stable settlement, an overcoming of a conflict is nevertheless implicit in the term. Dwelling as an always already unsettled state of affairs that must be negotiated, dwelling as negotiation, is a proposition in line with the conditions for dwelling in the contemporary of the twenty-first century. The challenge is to accept that this settlement cannot be permanent at any point but constantly opens up for renegotiation.

Negotiation of the dwelling is inevitably the task of the dweller who through the placing of his/her belongings locates him/herself in belonging to a place. As demonstrated by the case studies, a complex weaving between the individual and the setting takes place, a complexity possibly increasing when a larger household in terms of members is involved. The particularity of any such negotiation at the same time means that had the thesis made use of other case studies, the identified catalysts and proposed strategies would have turned out differently. The set of propositions made available by the studied works is therefore not in any sense exhaustive. When the contemporary living space cannot be *given* by architects or others, but must be *taken* by the inhabitant, the question of what this dwelling leaves for the architect to do returns. The notion of *building* then not simply means the architect's building once and for all but continuously building in a never-ending process of committing oneself to the situation. Dwelling as this infinite building, and contemporary dwelling as an, in principle, incomplete process echoes Schwitters' Merz-building practiced in every new place where the artist would stay for shorter or longer time. Places where he would utilise any available material while recharging the values of these found objects according to his own sensibilities.¹⁶² So, as this engagement with the available, the contemporary dwelling signifies an immediate relation before any particular architectural planning or property. Other aspects than the spatial qualities of a given location, its aesthetic features, stylistic orientation or functional disposition govern the suitability that a prospective dweller experiences.

The notion of contemporary dwelling as a practice that largely leaves the architect redundant might be opposed by a call for the discipline to nevertheless conceive of a structure surpassing the house. The

¹⁶² Besides from the continued Merz-building in Hannover, Hjertøya, Lysaker and Elterwater, it appears that Schwitters initiated Merz-columns in various places that he visited. During the 1930s, he seemingly worked in Basle, Paris, Holland and Molde, among other locations, as well as the Isle of Man where he was interned upon arrival in the UK, 1940 (Webster 2007: 81).

requirement for a framework that does not pretend to hold what cannot be held remains acute, and the dweller cannot provide it him/herself. Such is a call for a practice under pressure to reassert itself when, as demonstrated by the case studies, the house has been cut open for scrutiny, spaced apart for inhabitation and turned inside out to reveal the void within. Through these operations, dwelling has become an open enquiry and the house itself exposed as an essentially broken structure. The notion of the whole house on solid ground has been unsettled, and for the discipline of architecture – required to repeatedly reaffirm the standing structure in service of other disciplines relying on the metaphor – the call to propose something else now sounds. It sounds from this thesis as an opportunity for a contemporary architect, freed from the obligation of recreating the illusory dwelling house, to come into being.

The *other house*, that architecture is called upon to conceive, will not be grounded in the soil on which it pretends to stand, because it will not be a standing structure. The architectural metaphor, that it provides, will not serve reason by safely spanning across an abyss gaping below its thinking, when it is not itself articulated on this absent ground. It does not offer an enclosed shelter to protect from untimely intrusions, because it cannot pretend to separate again that which has already split or doubled. The other structure, which the architect will conceive, is suspended in the unknown, it has no clear orientation, it does itself not yet know what it is, and it might not need to either. Its metaphor is the fleetingness of the moment in which the structure comes to make a difference to someone. To circle this space, the architect sets out from the margins of dwelling, yet s/he soon moves beyond the simple retracing of an outline by aligning him/herself with the artistic gesture intrinsic to his/her practice. The thesis argues that this central aspect of the architect's skill provides a particular opportunity for the conception of a framework for dwelling when the architect/artist/dweller strikes. This stroke is the placing of an *obstacle* within the fabric of a familiar domain, in the form of an alterity representing the *other* to be accommodated for dwelling to take place. While it is possible that this presence remains imperceptible and, as such, unknown, the manifestation of it will take form and architecture will provide this form. The discipline will give expression to the alien presence, and the encounter with and overcoming of this unfamiliar spatial event becomes the negotiation required to make *the dweller*.

The thesis goes further when it asks whether it is possible to conceive of a living space that in its thinking and making accommodates this *other* before the self. Such would mark an extended notion of the household as a holding of the house for the other. It would outline an alternative economy as well as ecology for the contemporary age plagued by a strained relation to both. For architecture, it would mean designing a space for the unknown, even if this outlines what architects already are expected to be doing, though most often do not. The difference would be that defining a place to live for one would have to accommodate the other first and foremost. Building a house for oneself would be to

ensure that the neighbours to all sides were accommodated before all else. Such a reversed practise of building would imply that designing the interior would be designing the exterior – there would perhaps no longer be a difference between the two?

Matta-Clark, himself both architect and artist, brought the loft space forth in a gesture that merged the traits of his two entwined practices when utilising both the artist and architect's *stroke*. He thereby demonstrated how opening a living space from the fabric of the contemporary context relied on the shared efforts of both gestures. In terms of building, he demonstrated that art as a possibility for architecture already formed part of the discipline's vocabulary when the practice of cutting a building became the creation of a work of art. When the architect cut the loft space for inhabitation, he inspired the artist (within) to cut the dwelling house in the name of art. And when the artist then cut this house, he exposed himself as an architect, essentially an *un-builder*. By means of a palette of negative gestures, this artist/architect mastered the skill of reconfiguring the archaic dwelling place and through this reconfiguration opened a living space inside what became also the artist's studio. As the site and locus for a contemporary dwelling, this studio/living space would be a resort for the artist/dweller, homeless in the modern metropolis, while the architect/dweller found his calling as the provider of this space. The convolution of these movements, influences and consequences expresses the possibility of the artist/architect that remains to be explored in the context of the contemporary – now as always.

When the architect *strikes* – like the artist repeatedly reaffirming the stroke – in a cut that sections a building, spaces it out in parts and thereby provides a framework for living, it is like the *passee-partout* with its open base that never settles and never simply is interior. The architect opens this space and holds the house for the other, like Matta-Clark held the house for the camera and by doing so for all of us (to see). The possibility of holding the house is, as such, intrinsic to the architectural discipline. The architect in the twenty-first century, acknowledging that the need to dwell prevails even if in constant flux, will, however, come to hold a different kind of house. This is not to say that sheltering structures are no longer required, yet contemporary life, unfolding across the liminal zone rather than in the depths of interiors, is lived within and without conventional buildings. Contemporary life is lived at the margins of built structures in temporary occupations of unforeseen locations and moves beyond predictable social patterns and prefabricated structural standards. Inhabitation of the broken house is a play between the central and the marginal articulated by the occupant when negotiating the liminal zone through the placing of his/her belongings.

The architect has already drawn the double lines that frame this articulation, and the discourse on architecture and dwelling in the twenty-first century inhabits this open platform – like a floor suspended between support and collapse. Like the loft perhaps, yet also other types of spaces, such as

abandoned dwelling houses – anything available because left behind as a result of the fluctuations of present economies, small and large. If the early twenty-first century comes forth as an age of such recycling and reuse, the strategies respond to the requirements for a more balanced economy/ecology that already mark the time.

For the purpose of orchestrating the required revaluation of the buildings that house the contemporary living space, the architect draws a section that brings everything together on one plane. At the same time, the section cuts this building apart. Like Kurt Schwitters' Merz-building brought everything to the level of sameness, the architect cuts for the purpose of seeing and projecting, knowing and exposing in one go. Like Matta-Clark drew a section through the dwelling house to obtain knowledge about its structure and constitution, architects will dissect the bodies of buildings for the purpose of recording these broken structures in their immediate context. While such sections in principle extend in all directions, the architect decides where to draw the line. And because all things are connected on this level of drawing, the undertaking is manifold – the section simultaneously serves to obtain and record knowledge about the premises for extending, adapting, reprogramming and/or re-contextualising a given structure. The kind of section that the architect draws works through any desired media when cutting through the structure of a building in strategic ways and by strategic means. It thereby lays out the lines of future constructions, ultimately, the problem of dwelling lays out the lines of a new structure when outlining the framework of the open platform, a common ground between walls, a shelter for dwellers and passers-by, a space to occupy and leave behind. The contemporary architect's task lines up. It lines up a task for itself while projecting a space to accommodate someone else.

Before drawing this section, the architect believes to already know the needs and desires of someone s/he might never have met – the future inhabitant. Furthermore, that these needs and desires of the stranger conform to certain prescribed standards accommodated by spatial solutions fitting one architectural agenda or other. Which is to say that architects expect others to share the values and outlook on life that the discipline endorses and to live within the perimeter of the architect's vision, even if such values and visions are themselves always already laid out by others. Yet, what can the contemporary architect do to surpass such limitations? Building for the unknown does not mean that anything will be possible, and a profound question mark is placed before the discipline asking what the scope of architecture is. What its insides and outsides, belongings and placings are. What the architect knows and might still discover. Not least how s/he acknowledges all that which perhaps cannot be known, the unknowable that also must be accommodated by the built environment, somehow.

The contemporary architect responds to the given with an open mind. From there s/he pans out and draws a line, cuts a section and records the findings, projects a building of some kind, a living space if

not a house. The practice of cutting buildings will be like cutting the stones to un-build these, which is to say a deconstruction that builds what it un-builds and vice versa. While the artist finds new spaces to occupy, the architect pursues the space of artistic creation within and without his/her own field. The contemporary architect is concerned with the location of these spaces – which part of the city (and body) will they occupy? To what extent do they coincide as spaces of critique, negative gestures, alien presences, something anti-domestic cutting through a domestic setting to remind the occupant that the dwelling is always already a shared occupation? That it has already split and doubled, and not simply because a number of household members have to share the same space, nor because something *unhomely* lurks in the darkness between rooms, but because the living space would not be so if it was not already in the process of becoming something else. Another kind of dwelling perhaps, but also another kind of house, which is to say another structure for thinking and reasoning as well as reason to dwell in thinking and beyond. This structure, gradually shifting towards its own negation from where it must repeatedly be reclaimed, is like a *house of repeated difference* relying on continued re-tracing. It takes form only when continuously reassembled, revaluated and rewalled. Ultimately, the house of repeated difference means everyday building and making in response to the changing context for architects, artists and dwellers alike.

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- Fig. 3.10:** Hjertøya, Moldefjord, Norway / Available from: Factum Arte, http://www.factum-arte.com/publications_PDF/Schwitters_presentation.pdf [Accessed 28 Oct 2009].
- Fig. 3.11:** Sketches for *Haus am Bakken*, Lysaker, Norway (1938/1947) / In: Webster, G. (2007). *Kurt Schwitters' Merzbau*. Faculty of Arts, Art History. Milton Keynes: Open University. PhD Thesis, fig. 65.
- Fig. 3.12.A:** *Merz Barn*, Elterwater, The Lake District, UK / Available from: Littoral Arts Trust, <http://www.littoral.org.uk/merzbarn.html> [Accessed 20 Jan 2012].
- Fig. 3.12.B:** *Merz Barn*, Elterwater, The Lake District, UK / Available from: Littoral Arts Trust, <http://www.merzbarn.net/merzbarnartwork.html> [Accessed 20 Jan 2012].
- Fig. 3.13:** The house on Waldhausenstrasse 5A, Hannover (1943) / In: Webster, G. (2007). *Kurt Schwitters' Merzbau*. Faculty of Arts, Art History. Milton Keynes: Open University. PhD Thesis, fig. 39.
- Fig. 3.14:** *Grosse Gruppe* [Big Group], *Merzbau*, Hannover (1933) / In: Schwitters, K. (2003). *Kurt Schwitters. Catalogue raisonné, Band 2 1923-1936*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 92, fig. 1199/19.
- Fig. 3.15:** *Treppeneingangsseite* [Stairway Entrance Side], *Merzbau*, Hannover (1933) / In: Schwitters, K. (2003). *Kurt Schwitters. Catalogue raisonné, Band 2 1923-1936*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 92, fig. 1199/20.
- Fig. 3.16:** *Kathedrale des erotischen Elends* [Cathedral of Erotic Misery], *Merzbau*, Hannover (1933) / In: Schwitters, K. (2003). *Kurt Schwitters. Catalogue raisonné, Band 2 1923-1936*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 92, fig. 1199/21.
- Fig. 3.17:** Floor plan of the main Hannover *Merzbau* room (1985) / In: Elderfield, J (1985). *Kurt Schwitters*. London: Thames & Hudson, fig. 167.
- Fig. 3.18:** Floor plan of the main Hannover *Merzbau* room (2003) / In: Schwitters, K. (2003). *Kurt Schwitters. Catalogue raisonné, Band 2 1923-1936*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 86, fig. 1199/5.
- Fig. 3.19:** Details of the Hannover *Merzbau* (c.1932) / In: Schwitters, K. (2003). *Kurt Schwitters. Catalogue raisonné, Band 2 1923-1936*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 92, fig. 1199/22, 1199/23, 1199/24.
- Fig. 3.20.A:** Detail of the Hannover *Merzbau* (c.1932) / In: Schwitters, K. (2003). *Kurt Schwitters. Catalogue raisonné, Band 2 1923-1936*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 94, fig. 1199/28.
- Fig. 3.20.B:** Detail of the Hannover *Merzbau* (c.1932) / In: Schwitters, K. (2003). *Kurt Schwitters. Catalogue raisonné, Band 2 1923-1936*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 87, fig. 1199/9.
- Fig. 3.21:** Peter Bissegger's reconstruction of the main Hannover *Merzbau* room (1981-83) / Available from: Artlies <http://www.artlies.org/article.php?id=1986&issue=67&s=1> [Accessed 9 March 2012].
- Fig. 3.22:** Detail of *Kathedrale des erotischen Elends* [Cathedral of Erotic Misery] (1928) / In: Schwitters, K. (2003). *Kurt Schwitters. Catalogue raisonné, Band 2 1923-1936*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 88, fig. 1199/12.

- Fig. 3.23:** Detail of *Kathedrale des erotischen Elends* [Cathedral of Erotic Misery] (1928) / In: Schwitters, K. (2003). *Kurt Schwitters. Catalogue raisonné, Band 2 1923-1936*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 89, fig. 1199/13.
- Fig. 3.24:** Merzsäule [Merz Column] (c.1925/26) / In: Schwitters, K. (2003). *Kurt Schwitters. Catalogue raisonné, Band 2 1923-1936*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 86, fig. 1199/6.
- Fig. 3.25:** Merz-column in the studio (1919/20) / In: Schwitters, K. (2000). *Kurt Schwitters. Catalogue raisonné, Band 1 1905-1922*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 372, fig. 769.
- Fig. 3.26:** *Heilige Bekümmernis* [The Holy Affliction] (c.1920) / In: Schwitters, K. (2000). *Kurt Schwitters. Catalogue raisonné, Band 1 1905-1922*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 371, fig. 768.

KURT SCHWITTERS DIAGRAMS:

- Dia. A:** Waldhausenstrasse 5A, basement level.
- Dia. B1:** Waldhausenstrasse 5A, ground floor level, pre 1921.
- Dia. B2:** Waldhausenstrasse 5A, ground floor level, 1921-27.
- Dia. B3:** Waldhausenstrasse 5A, ground floor level, post 1927.
- Dia. C:** Waldhausenstrasse 5A, first floor level.
- Dia. D:** Waldhausenstrasse 5A, second floor level.
- Dia. E:** Waldhausenstrasse 5A, section, pre 1921.
- Dia. F:** Waldhausenstrasse 5A, section, 1921-27.
- Dia. G:** Waldhausenstrasse 5A, section, post 1927.
- Dia. H:** Waldhausenstrasse 5A, section, post 1933.

All diagrams have been produced by Tordis Berstrand.

GREGOR SCHNEIDER:

- Fig. 4.1:** Invitation card to *Pubertäre Verstimmung* [Adolescent Depression], Galerie Kontrast, Mönchengladbach (1985) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography, <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 21 Feb 2013].
- Fig. 4.2:** Gregor Schneider, *HAUS u r*, Rheydt (1985-today) [photograph] / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography, <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 19 Dec 2009].
- Fig. 4.3:** Gregor Schneider, *HAUS u r 2000*, Rheydt (1985-today) [photograph] / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography, <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 25 April 2012].

- Fig. 4.4:** Gregor Schneider, *u 21, TOTER RAUM IN VATERS BÜRO* [Dead Room in Father's Office], Giesenkirchen (1988-89) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 23 June 2012].
- Fig. 4.5:** Gregor Schneider, *u r 8, TOTAL ISOLIERTER TOTER RAUM* [Completely Insulated Dead Room], Giesenkirchen (1989-91) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography, <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 23 June 2012].
- Fig. 4.6:** Gregor Schneider, *u 7-10, KÜCHE* [Kitchen], Rheydt (1987) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography, <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 19 Dec 2009].
- Fig. 4.7:** Gregor Schneider, *u r 11, FLUR* [Corridor], Rheydt (1993) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography, <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 19 Dec 2009].
- Fig. 4.8:** Gregor Schneider, *u r 7, ATELIER* [Studio], Rheydt (1990-93) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography, <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 19 Dec 2009].
- Fig. 4.9:** Gregor Schneider, *u r 1, SCHLAFZIMMER* [Bedroom], Rheydt (1986) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography, <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 19 Dec 2009].
- Fig. 4.10:** Gregor Schneider, *u r 18, PUFF (AUS BERLIN)* [Brothel (from Berlin)], Rheydt (1996) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography, <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 23 June 2012].
- Fig. 4.11:** Gregor Schneider, *u r 19, LIEBESLAUBE* [Love Nest], Rheydt (1995/96) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography, <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 23 June 2012].
- Fig. 4.12:** Gregor Schneider, *u r 10, KAFFEEZIMMER* [Coffee Room], Rheydt (1993) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography, <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 19 Dec 2009].
- Fig. 4.13:** Gregor Schneider, *u r 12, TOTAL ISOLIERTES GÄSTEZIMMER* [Completely Insulated Guest Room], Rheydt (1995) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography, <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 23 June 2012].
- Fig. 4.14:** Gregor Schneider, *u r 0*, Rheydt (1985) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography, <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 19 Dec 2009].
- Fig. 4.15:** Gregor Schneider, *u r 2, ABSTELLKAMMER* [Box Room], Rheydt (1988) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography, <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 23 June 2012].
- Fig. 4.16:** Gregor Schneider, *u r 2, ABSTELLKAMMER* [Box Room], Kunsthalle Bern, Bern (1996) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 2 May 2012].
- Fig. 4.17.A:** Gregor Schneider, *u r 3 A, VERDOPPELTER RAUM* [Doubled room], Rheydt (1988) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 2 May 2012].

- Fig. 4.17.B:** Gregor Schneider, *ur 3 B, VERDOPPELTER RAUM* [Doubled Room], Berlin (1994) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography, <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 2 May 2012].
- Fig. 4.18:** Gregor Schneider, *ur 2, ABSTELLKAMMER* [Box room], Los Angeles (2003) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography, <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 2 May 2012].
- Fig. 4.19:** Gregor Schneider, *ur 44, HANNELORE REUEN ALTE HAUSSCHLAMPE* [Hannelore Reuen, Old House Slut], Galeria Foksal, Warsaw (2000) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography, <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 23 June 2012].
- Fig. 4.20:** Gregor Schneider, *ur 54, N. SCHMIDT*, Kabinett für aktuelle Kunst, Bremerhaven (2001) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 23 June 2012].
- Fig. 4.21:** Screen shots from Gregor Schneider, *Nacht-Video* [Night video] (1996) / Available from: Gregor Schneider, Biography, <http://www.gregorschneider.de/biography.htm#currently> [Accessed 23 June 2012].

ILLUSTRATIONS

GORDON MATTA-CLARK:

Fig. 2.1

Gordon Matta-Clark's transcript from the Department of Architecture, Cornell University, Ithaca (1962-68). The transcript reveals that Matta-Clark gradually improved his marks and achieved a final A+ in Architectural Design. The results from modules such as Structural Principles, Advanced Sculpture and Urban Communities, however, remained surprisingly low considering the interest in such issues that will have informed Matta-Clark's subsequent work.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the transcript.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the transcript.

Fig. 2.2

Dennis Oppenheim, *Accumulation Cut*, Ithaca (1969) [online images]. Gordon Matta-Clark assisted the American artist Dennis Oppenheim with the construction of the work *Accumulation Cut* for the “Earth Art Show” at Cornell University, Ithaca, 1969. The work was a 100 feet long cut in the ice of the frozen Bebe Lake on the university’s campus. The cut was made with a chainsaw and might be seen as a precursor for Matta-Clark’s own subsequent work.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the images.

Fig. 2.3

Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*, New Jersey (1974) [photograph]. One iconic photograph of the split house that keeps returning.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 2.4

Screen shots from the *Splitting* film directed by Gordon Matta-Clark (1974) [video]. The film-version of *Splitting* is a Super 8mm film alternating between b/w and colour. It is silent, lasts 10:50 minutes and is divided into parts by text boards explaining the narrative. The film displays the process of cutting through the house from Matta-Clark's initial preparations to the final gesture of removing the four top corners. Matta-Clark's friend Liza Bear shot most of the film.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the film *Splitting*.

A. | 00:35

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the film *Splitting*.

B. | 00:28

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the film *Splitting*.

C. | 01:05

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the film *Splitting*.

D. | 03:46

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the film *Splitting*.

E. | 04:23

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the film *Splitting*.

F. | 08:04

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the film *Splitting*.

G. | 08:50

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the film *Splitting*.

H. | 09:07

Fig. 2.5

Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*, New Jersey (1974) [photographs]. Internal views of the split house captured with a camera by Gordon Matta-Clark himself. The photographs display spectacular situations with the image plane positioned perpendicular to the plane of the cut. The combination of elevation/section/perspective – such as in images B and C – is unsettled by the cleavage that splits the image itself. In image D, Matta-Clark anticipates the dynamics of the subsequent photo collage work when the cut zigzags through the framed space.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the image.

A.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the image.

B.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the image.

C.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the image.

D.

Fig. 2.6

Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*, New Jersey (1974) [photographs]. The empty interior spaces of the cut house are displayed in elevational sections framed in parallel with the cut's plane. The cut itself is included in the image, and the insides of cut floors and walls become disclosed. Parts of the house appear as if they have come loose from the overall structure.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the image.

A.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the image.

B.

Fig. 2.7

Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting, New Jersey* (1974) [collages]. Matta-Clark's collage work is based on the cutting and pasting of photographic documentation of the cut house. These reconstructions work according to a significantly different spatial order than the initial shoebox house, and it is noticeable how the line of light, shining through the gap, is used to stitch the collaged interior together.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the image.

A.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the image.

B.

Fig. 2.8

Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*. New Jersey (1974) [book]. Spreads from the original *Splitting* book published by 98 Greene Street Loft Press, New York, 1974. The book narrates the stages of cutting the house as seen through the gradual disfiguration of its four elevations from the initial whole house to the eventually split building.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the *Splitting* book.

A whole house

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the *Splitting* book.

Cut house

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the *Splitting* book.

Split house

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the *Splitting* book.

Corner cut-out

Fig. 2.9

Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*. New Jersey (1974) [book]. The *Splitting* book concludes with a fold-out page displaying the cut house reassembled in a dollhouse-style fashion. The caption on the opposite page reads, "Demolished and removed September 1974." The reader/viewer could perhaps be tempted to tear the poster-formatted page out and hang it on a wall somewhere.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the *Splitting* book.

Fig. 2.10

A: Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting: Four Corners* (1974) [installation] + B: Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting, New Jersey* (1974) [photograph]. The installation *Splitting: Four Corners* is based on the four top corners cut out of the split house. The configuration of the four original building fragments outlines the demolished house when displayed in exhibition spaces. Matta-Clark also framed views of the exterior surroundings, as these became visible from inside the house, by using the missing corner as a frame.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the image.

A.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the image.

B.

Fig. 2.11

Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting, New Jersey* (1974) [collage]. Matta-Clark reassembled the photographic documentation of the cut house in collaged work that defied notions of orientation and coherence. While collages might have been built from a particular point of view, Matta-Clark appears to have turned some of them upside down when publishing the work. This free play widens the scope of the collages further as new spatial possibilities emerge.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 2.12

Loft buildings in New York City where Gordon Matta-Clark lived and worked between 1969-1975.

- A. The house of Anne Clark on 107 West 11th Street. Matta-Clark returned to his mother's flat in this house after leaving Ithaca in 1969.
- B. 131 Chrystie Street where Matta-Clark shared a loft with the artists Charles Simonds and Harriet Korman, 1970/71 (the white house).
- C. 28 East 4th Street where Matta-Clark rented a loft from someone called Chemart, 1971-73 (the tallest building).
- D. 155 Wooster Street where Matta-Clark lived 1973-75 with his partner the artist Carol Gooden. (with the advertisement).



A.



B.



C.



D.

Fig. 2.13

Screen shots of the film *Splitting* directed by Gordon Matta-Clark (1974) [online]. The artist, and by implication architect, holds the house.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the film *Splitting*.

A. | 07:06

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.184-85) for information on where to source the film *Splitting*.

B. | 07:07

ILLUSTRATIONS

KURT SCHWITTERS:

Fig. 3.1

Ernst Schwitters (wearing a cap) and friend in front of the house on Waldhausenstrasse 5A, Hannover (1926). The front façade of the family residence shows Kurt and Helma Schwitters' second floor balcony (top left) with a protruding window from the Biedermeier-styled living room with matching curtains next door (top right).

Fig. 3.2

Helma and Kurt Schwitters seated in their Biedermeier-style living room (c.1919).

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

A.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

B.

Fig. 3.3

Kurt Schwitters. *Das Merzbild* [The Merz Picture] (1919) [assemblage]. The assemblage that gave the name to Schwitters' artistic concept and strategy, *Merz*, was made for an exhibition in Galerie Sturm, Berlin (1919/20). It was subsequently bought and held by Stadtmuseum Dresden [The City Museum of Dresden] (1920-35) until being confiscated by the Ministry of Propaganda (1935-42). The assemblage was lost during World War II.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 3.4:

Sketch drawn by Kurt Schwitters showing the extent of *Merzbau* across three rooms of his parents' ground floor flat (1935). Kurt Schwitters drew the sketch in a letter to his friend Susanna Freudenthal-Lutter on 30 March 1935. The sketch shows hatched areas along the walls of three rooms, the largest of which is labelled *Atelier* [studio]. The lower right corner designated *Bibliothek* [library] is drawn out in further detail in the sketch below. This drawing reveals a small gap in the wall between the library and the *Balkon* [balcony] labelled "Fenster zum Balkon" [window to the balcony]. Opposite is another opening labelled "Fenster zum Atelier" [window to the studio] implying that Schwitters might have regarded the central area of the studio in which *Merzbau* was built as a kind of external space. As pointed out by Gwendolen Webster (2007: fig. 37), the windows of the rooms in the top sketch appear like entrances/exits insofar as no doors are shown.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 3.5

Sketch drawn by Kurt Schwitters (1946). A small sketch drawn by Schwitters in a letter dated 25 March 1946 labels the three ground floor *Merzbau* rooms as *Vorraum* [front room], *Balkon* [balcony] and *eigentlicher Merzbau* [actual *Merzbau*].

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 3.6

Sketch drawn by Kurt Schwitters (1946). The sketch showing the location of *Merzbau* on the ground floor of the house in hatching was drawn in a letter to Christof and Luise Spengemann dated 25 April 1946.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 3.7

Ground floor plans of Waldhausenstrasse 5A.

- A. The ground floor plan of the flat accommodating Schwitters' parents was drawn up around 1921 to assess the possibility of housing homeless Hannoverians.
- B. John Elderfield produced this plan for his Schwitters monograph (1985: fig. 165).

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

A.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

B.

Fig. 3.8

First floor plan of Waldhausenstrasse 5A. The first floor of Waldhausenstrasse 5A was occupied by the Brockmann-Maack family (1918-35). The floor plan, seemingly identical to the ground floor, was drawn by Kurt Schwitters' father Eduard Schwitters (1907).

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 3.9

Second floor plan of Waldhausenstrasse 5A. The plan of the second floor was also drawn up for the rehousing plans in 1921. It shows Helma and Kurt Schwitters' flat to the front of the house (rooms 7-10), while the rear side was occupied by the Reismann family (1920/21-43, rooms 11-14). The numbering of the front rooms refers to: 7. Kurt Schwitters' bedroom (until 1934); 8. The *Bauhaus* or *De Stijl* room; 9. The *Biedermeier* room; and 10. Helma and Ernst's shared bedroom (Webster 2007: fig. 7).

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 3.10

Hjertøya hut, Moldefjord, Norway. The hut on the small Norwegian island of Hjertøya in Moldefjord developed during summer holidays between 1930-36. While image A. and B. show the contemporary state of the hut – interior and exterior – image C. and D. date back to the 1930s. After Schwitters left the hut for the last time, it was abandoned for years until discovered in the early 1970s (Webster 2007: 91). A facsimile of the hut was exhibited at Royal College of Art, London (2009).

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

A.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

B.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

C.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

D.

Fig. 3.11

Sketches for "Haus am Bakken," Lysaker, Norway. "Haus am Bakken" was conceived by Kurt Schwitters with the help from his son Ernst during the years of exile near Oslo, Norway (1937-40). The building was to house what Schwitters considered to be his second *Merzbau*, and while the interior stylistically appears to have followed along the lines of the Hannover *Merzbau* (Webster 2007: 89), the exterior had an altogether different expression. Judging from Ernst Schwitters' planning drawings from 1938 shown here, the external design was in a cubic Modernist style.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 3.12

Merz Barn, Elterwater, The Lake District, UK. Elterwater in The Lake District, UK, was Kurt Schwitters' final destination, and where the *Merz Barn* took form (1947/48). Schwitters spent the last months of his life in the cold and wet winter barn struggling to built his third *Merzbau*, yet only one wall had taken form when he died. The barn was left unfinished, and the wall removed to Newcastle University's Hatton Gallery in 1965.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 3.13

The house on Waldhausenstrasse 5A, Hannover, in ruins after allied bombing (1943). Half of Schwitters' house was destroyed during World War II with only the front of the building remaining. This part was subsequently demolished, and another house occupies the site in 2013.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 3.14

Grosse Gruppe [Big Group], *Merzbau*, Hannover (1933). The eastern wall of Schwitters' main *Merzbau* room was covered by the part named *Grosse Gruppe*. The photograph, captured by Wilhelm Redemann, is one of three remaining photographs testifying to the nature of the structure.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 3.15

Treppeneingangsseite [Stairway Entrance Side], Merzbau, Hannover (1933). The southern wall of Schwitters' main *Merzbau* room was covered by the part named *Treppeneingangsseite*. The photograph, captured by Wilhelm Redemann, reveals an opening to the left leading to a small staircase with access to a raised floor behind the structure.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 3.16

Kathedrale des erotischen Elends [Cathedral of Erotic Misery]. *Merzbau*. Hannover (1933). The western wall of Schwitters' main *Merzbau* room was covered by the part named *Kathedrale des erotischen Elends* [K d e E]. The photograph, captured by Wilhelm Redemann, shows the window to the balcony in front of which the column was built. Behind the structure, a small library was located on a raised level [Fig. 3.4].

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 3.17

Diagram showing the layout of the main Hannover *Merzbau* room produced for John Elderfield's Schwitters monograph (1985).

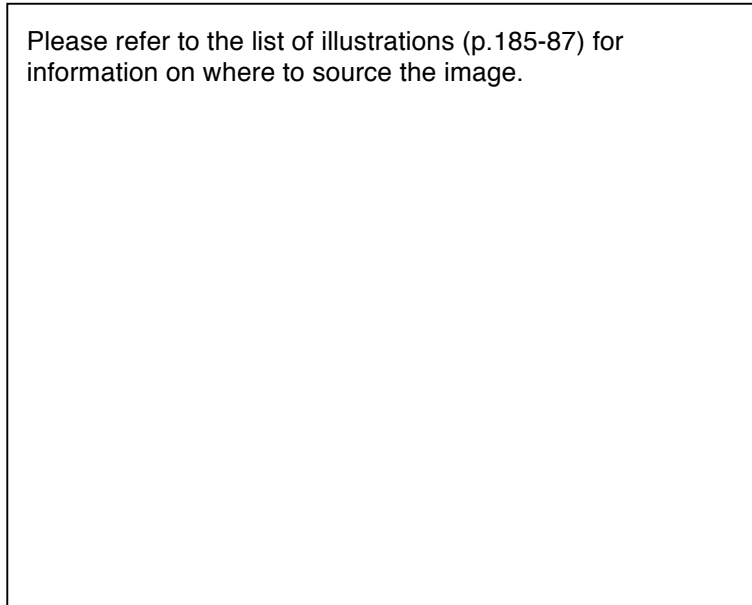


Fig. 3.18

Diagram of the main Hannover *Merzbau* room produced for Kurt Schwitters. *Catalogue raisonné* (2003).

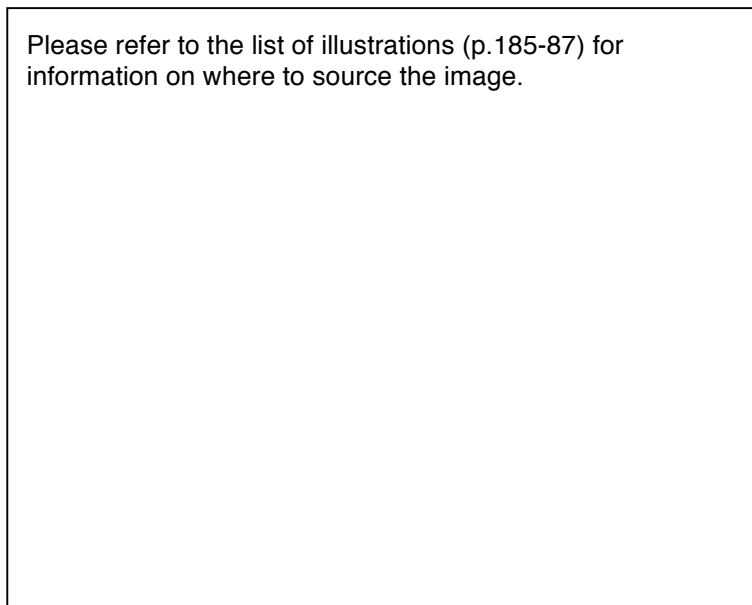


Fig. 3.19

Details of the Hannover *Merzbau* (c.1932) captured by an unidentified photographer.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 3.20

Details of the Hannover *Merzbau* showing the grotto with a doll's head and grotto with a cow's horn (c.1932). Photographed by Ernst Schwitters.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

A.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

B.

Fig. 3.21

Peter Bissegger's reconstruction of the main *Merzbau* room in Hannover (1981-83). The copy is installed in Sprengel Museum Hannover while a second transportable copy travels the world.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 3.22

Detail of *Kathedrale des erotischen Elends* [Cathedral of Erotic Misery] (1928) by an unknown photographer.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 3.23

Detail of *Kathedrale des erotischen Elends* [Cathedral of Erotic Misery] (1928) by an unknown photographer.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 3.24

Merzsäule [Merz Column] (c.1925/26) photographed by Wilhelm Hoepfner.

Please refer to the list of illustrations
(p.185-87) for information on where to
source the image.

Fig. 3.25

Merz-column in the studio (1919/20) by an unknown photographer.

Please refer to the list of illustrations
(p.185-87) for information on where to
source the image.

Fig. 3.26

Heilige Bekümmernis [The Holy Affliction] (c.1920) by an unknown photographer.

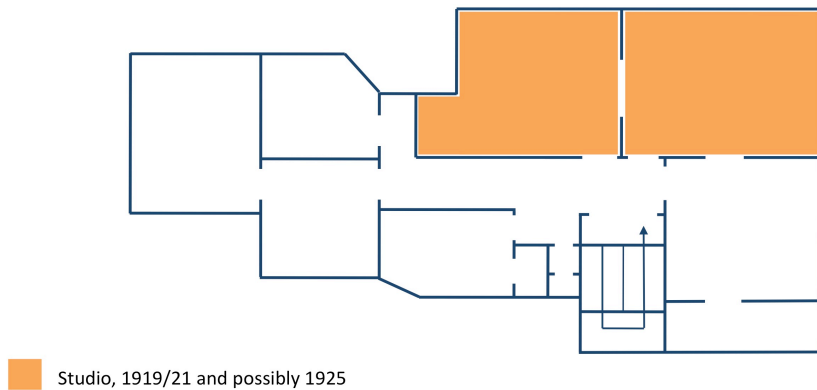
Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.185-87) for information on where to source the image.

DIAGRAMS

KURT SCHWITTERS' HOUSE:

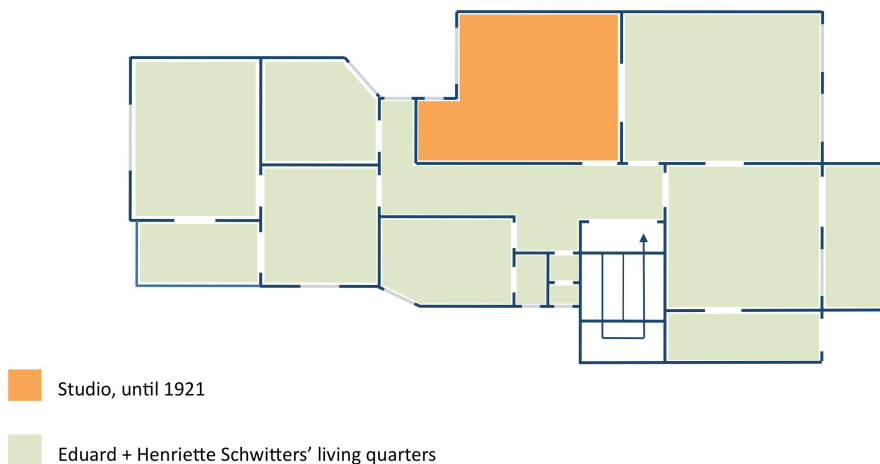
Dia. A

Waldhausenstrasse 5A, Hannover, basement level. Witness accounts suggest that rooms in the basement were used for studio purposes (see note 122, p.105). Considering that the basement plan is believed to have been similar to the ground floor plan, Schwitters might have made use of one of the two larger south-facing front rooms for studio purposes [Fig. 3.9]. These rooms were seemingly above ground and are therefore likely to have received daylight (Webster 2007: fig. 6). The central room with the L-shaped plan is possibly the studio inside which the blurry photograph of a Merz-column was taken in 1919/20 [Fig. 3.25]. This hypothesis takes into account that no window is shown in the photo, and such might not have existed on the basement level. The floor plan is a copy of the ground floor plan shown below [Dia. B1].



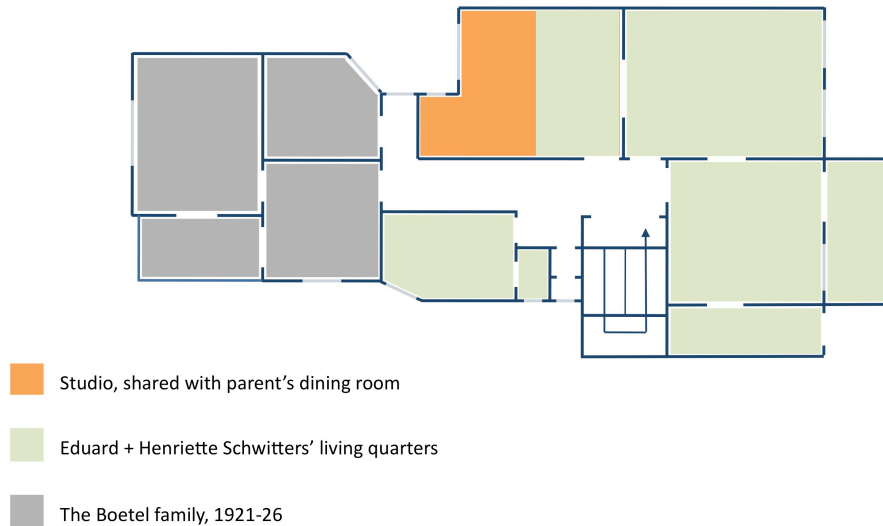
Dia. B1

Waldhausenstrasse 5A, Hannover, ground floor level, pre 1921. Schwitters occupied the central room of his parent's flat at the time of their occupation of the full apartment (Webster 2007: fig. 6).



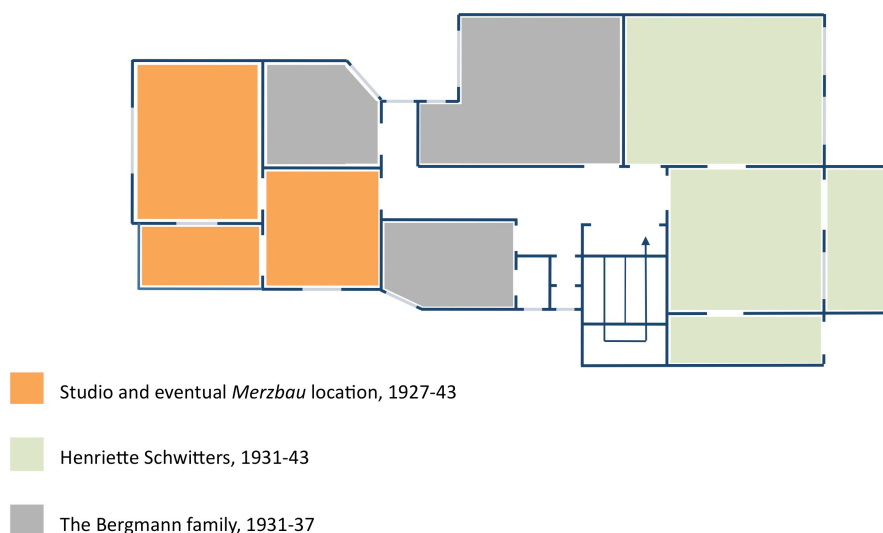
Dia. B2

Waldhausenstrasse 5A, Hannover, ground floor level, 1921-27. When the Boetel family settled into the rear part of the ground floor flat in 1921, the central studio room appears to have served the double purpose of Schwitters' studio and his parents' dining room (Webster 2007: 39). To what extent activities associated with these two functions overlapped is unknown.



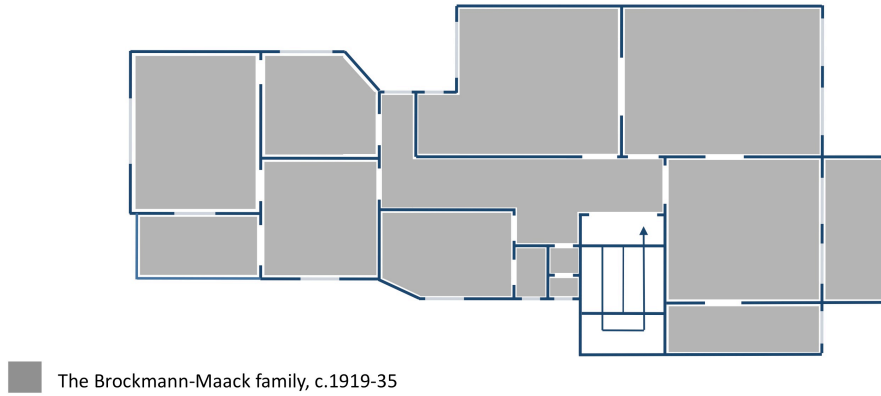
Dia. B3

Waldhausenstrasse 5A, Hannover, ground floor level, post 1927. After the Boetel family left the house in 1926, Schwitters relocated his studio and Merz-columns to the rear ground floor room overlooking the garden. *Merzbau* began to take form in this studio the following year. After Eduard Schwitters died in 1931, Henriette Schwitters resettled her living quarters to the front rooms of the house while letting the central rooms to the Bergmann family until 1937 (Webster 2007: 6).



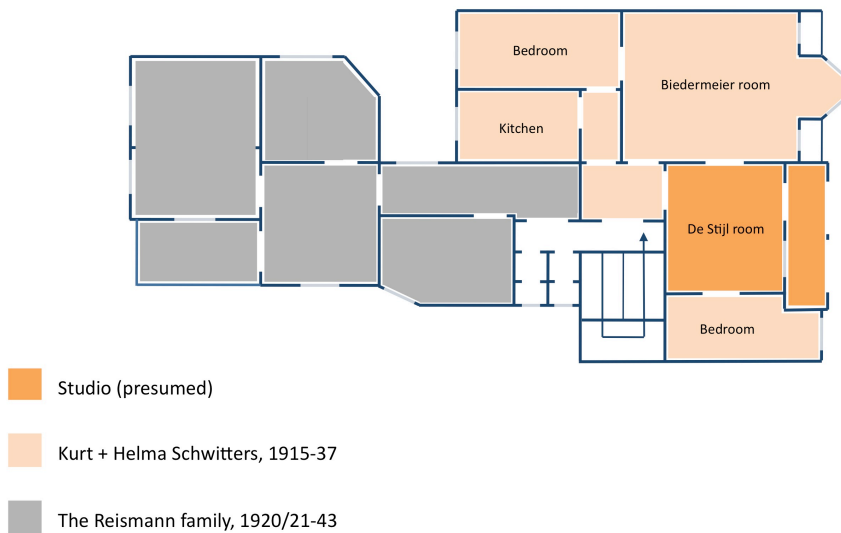
Dia. C

Waldhausenstrasse 5A, Hannover, first floor level. The first floor was occupied by the Brockmann-Maack family from around 1919-35 (Webster 2007: fig. 8).



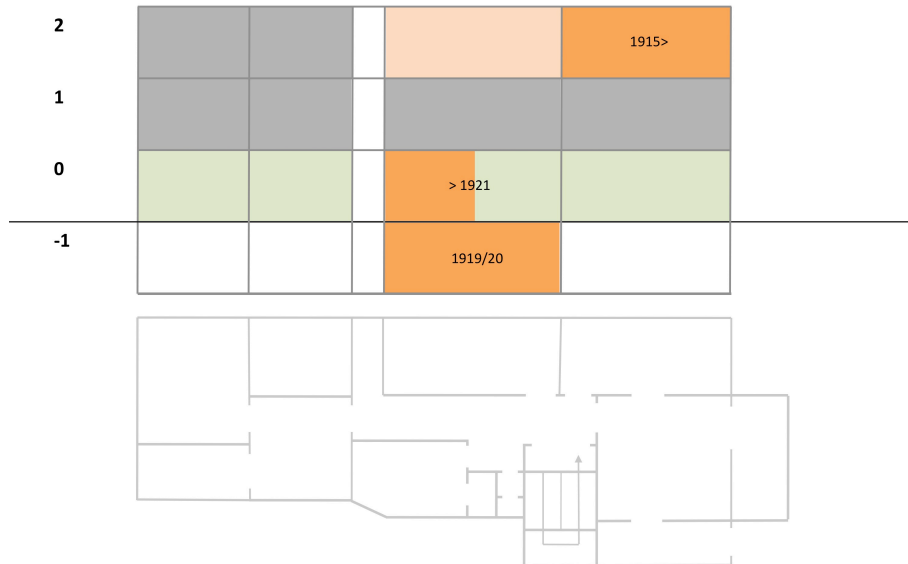
Dia. D

Waldhausenstrasse 5A, Hannover, second floor level. The second floor housed Helma and Kurt Schwitters' south-facing flat overlooking Waldhausenstrasse from the two living rooms. The rear part of the floor was occupied by the Reismann family throughout the years of Schwitters' activities in the house (Webster 2007: fig. 7).



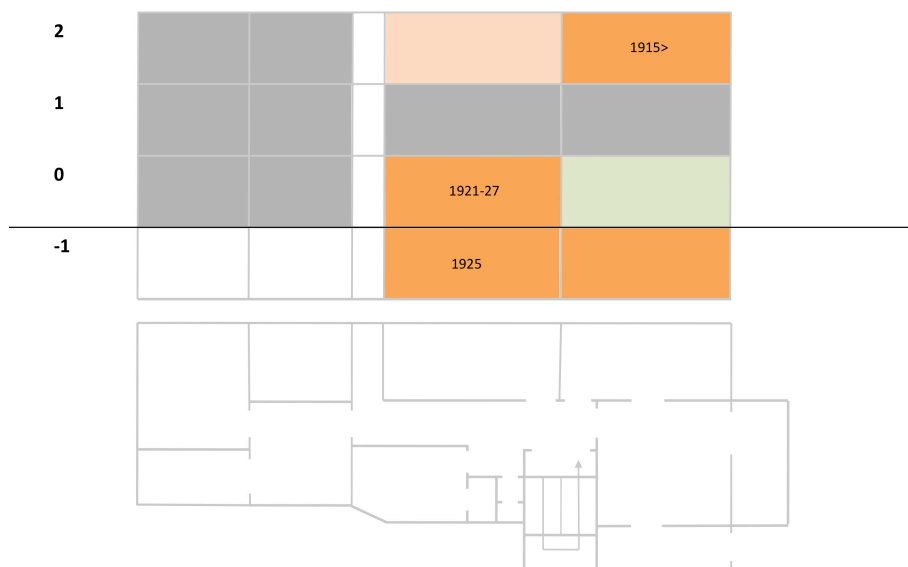
Dia. E

Waldhausenstrasse 5A, Hannover, section, pre-1921. A section through the house shows how Schwitters' studio activities in the early years spread across the levels of the southern street-facing part.



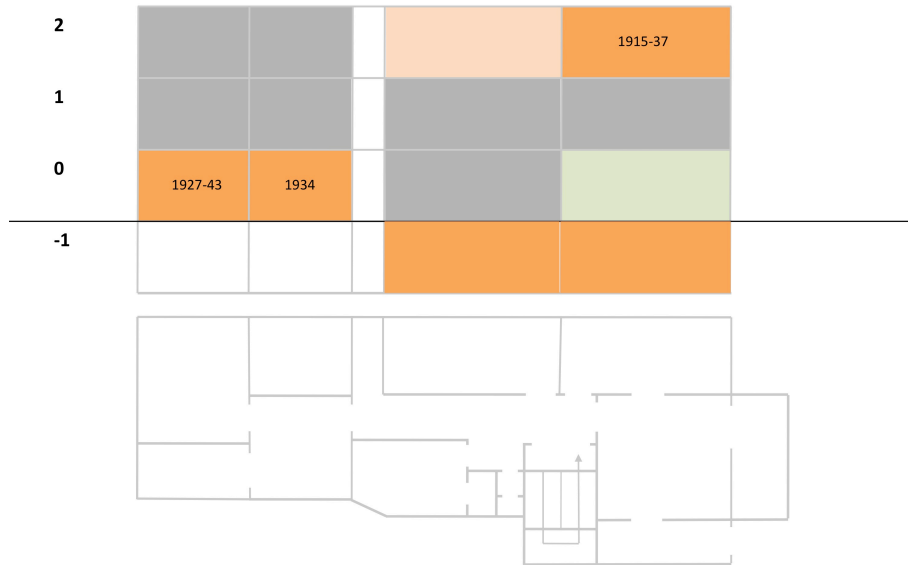
Dia. F

Waldhausenstrasse 5A, Hannover, section, 1921-27. Once the house was occupied by a larger number of households, the studio had to coexist with the dining room of Schwitters' parents on the ground floor.



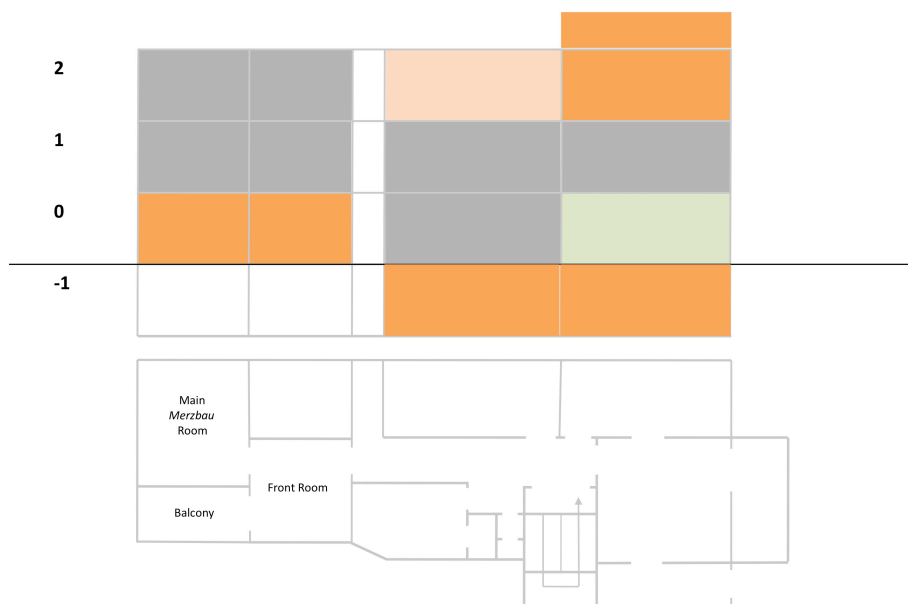
Dia. G

Waldhausenstrasse 5A, Hannover, section, post 1927. Once relocated to the rear side of the ground floor flat, the studio came to inhabit the full depth of the house across its floors .



Dia. H

Waldhausenstrasse 5A, Hannover, section, post 1933. The discontinued Merz-building eventually stretched beyond the limits of the artist's studio to occupy rooms across the floors of the house (see p.80).



ILLUSTRATIONS

GREGOR SCHNEIDER:

Fig. 4.1

Invitation card to Gregor Schneider's first solo show, *Pubertäre Verstimmung* [Adolescent Depression], Galerie Kontrast, Mönchengladbach (1985). The card states that Gregor Schneider, born in 1969, in 1985 lives in Korschenbroich and is a student at the Franz-Meyers-Gymnasium with five years of studies in painting.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 4.2

Gregor Schneider, HAUS u r, Rheydt (1985-today) [photograph]. External elevation of Gregor Schneider's house facing Unterheydener Strasse 12, Rheydt, Germany.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 4.3

Gregor Schneider, HAUS u r 2000, Rheydt (1985-today) [photograph]. The external elevation of the house at night time with lights on in some of the rooms.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 4.4

Gregor Schneider, u 21, Toter Raum in Vaters Büro [Dead Room in Father's Office]. Giesenkirchen (1988-89). Wall in front of a wall. Schneider's dead room in his father's office is a walled-in toilet leaving no trace of the room besides from its two enclosing walls.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the images.

Fig. 4.5

Gregor Schneider, u r 8, Total Isolierter Toter Raum [Completely Insulated Dead Room]. Giesenkirchen (1989-91). Soil, lead, glass wool and sound-absorbing material in a room. If entering Schneider's dead room and closing the door behind, one might disappear – ultimately, be left to die. Because the door cannot be opened from inside the room, there is no way out.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the images.

Fig. 4.6

Gregor Schneider, u 7-10, KÜCHE [Kitchen], Rheydt (1987). Wall in front of a wall, floor above of a floor, ceiling below a ceiling. Schneider's kitchen is a room within a room with a door that appears slightly too wide.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 4.7

Gregor Schneider, u r 11, FLUR [Corridor], Rheydt (1993). Wall in front of a wall. The corridor has doors leading to unknown rooms.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 4.8

Gregor Schneider, *ur 7, ATELIER* [Studio], Rheydt (1990-93). Room within a room. The studio, with its neon lights and bare white walls, complies with the conventions of an artist's studio. However, the room as photographed does not immediately reveal itself to be situated within the dwelling house.

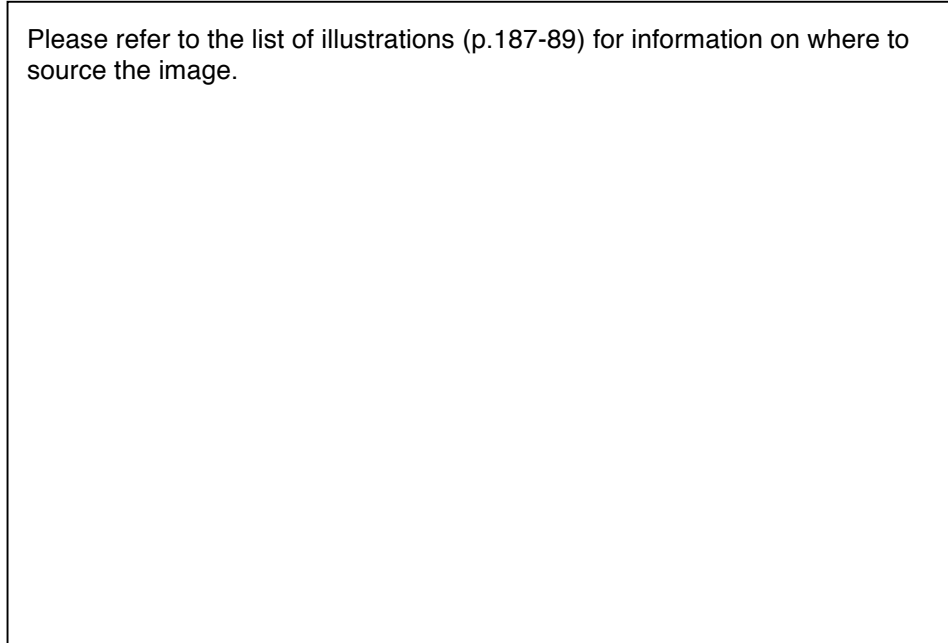
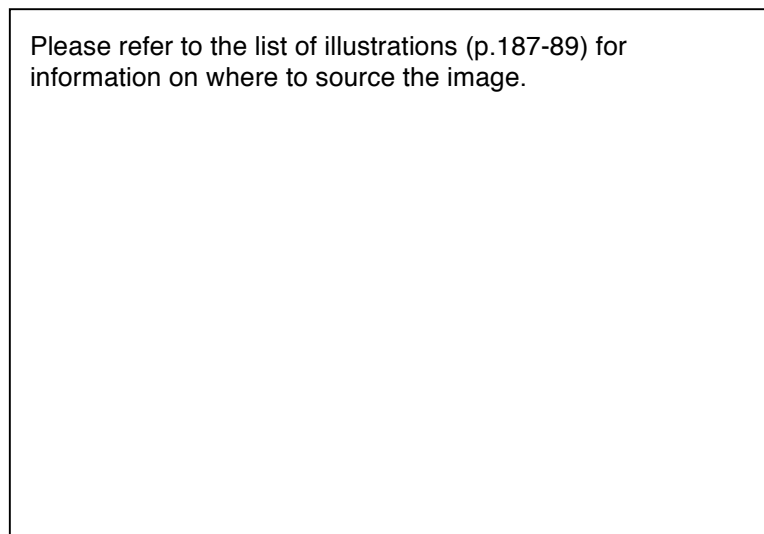
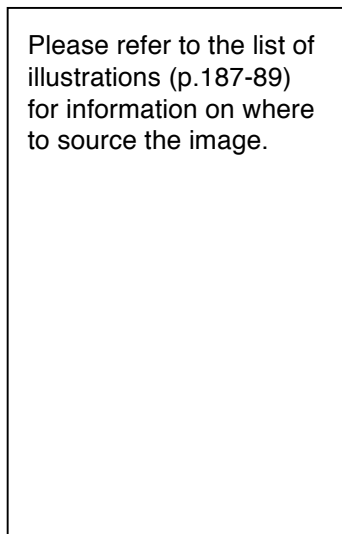


Fig. 4.9

Gregor Schneider, *ur 1, SCHLAFZIMMER* [Bedroom], Rheydt (1986). Room within a room. As one of the earliest room doublings – judging from the number of the work and the year of its making – the bedroom appears to be a passage room with its two doors. Furthermore, one of the doors when approached from outside does not appear to be as wide as the two doors seen from inside. Perhaps the bedroom has three doors? The room also appears to be located one step up (at least) from the corridor outside.



ur 1, EINGANG [Entrance]

ur 1, SCHLAFZIMMER [Bedroom]

Fig. 4.10

Gregor Schneider, *ur 18, PUFF (AUS BERLIN)* [Brothel (from Berlin)], Rheydt (1996). The brothel is a type of space not conventionally associated with the domestic setting, and Schneider's version is also presented as an import from Berlin. A room from somewhere else has settled into the house.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 4.11

Gregor Schneider, *ur 19, LIEBESLAUBE* [Love Nest], Rheydt (1995/96). Room within a room. The love nest, with its blinded window and alignment of a single-person bed and a bathtub, suggests love of a different kind than is conventionally associated with marital love.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 4.12

Gregor Schneider, *ur 10, KAFFEEZIMMER* [Coffee Room], Rheydt (1993). Rotating room within a room. Neither the exterior nor interior view of the coffee room reveals that it is a rotating room.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

ur 10, EINGANG [Entrance] *ur 10, KAFFEEZIMMER* [Coffee room]

Fig. 4.13

A: Gregor Schneider, *ur 12, TOTAL ISOLIERTES GÄSTEZIMMER* [Completely Insulated Guest Room], Rheydt (1995). The room is built as an extension to the rear side of the house.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the images.

B: Gregor Schneider, *ur 12, TOTAL ISOLIERTES GÄSTEZIMMER* [Completely Insulated Guest Room], Rheydt (1995). The guest room while it was under construction.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the images.

Fig. 4.14

Gregor Schneider, *ur 0*, Rheydt (1985). Room within a room. A photograph from Schneider's website shows three connected whitewashed brick walls forming a small spatial enclosure.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 4.15

Gregor Schneider, *ur 2*, ABSTELLKAMMER [Box Room], Rheydt (1988). Room within a room. These photographs of *ur 2* taken in Rheydt (1988) were exhibited at Konrad Fischer Galerie, Düsseldorf (1997).

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Figs. 4.16

Gregor Schneider, *ur 2, ABSTELLKAMMER* [Box Room], Kunsthalle Bern, Bern (1996). Room within a room. The box room was reconstructed outside the house for the first time in Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland (1996).

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 4.17

A: Gregor Schneider, *ur 3 A, VERDOPPELTER RAUM* [Doubled room], Rheydt (1988). Room within a room.

B: Gregor Schneider, *ur 3 B, VERDOPPELTER RAUM* [Doubled room], Berlin (1994). Room within a room.

On the invitation card to the Berlin show, a photo of the room in Rheydt (left) was labelled "Raum UR 3 1988," while a photo of the corresponding room in Berlin (right) was labelled, "X Raum UR 3A 1994."

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

ur 3 A

ur 3 B

Fig. 4.18

Gregor Schneider, *ur 2. ABSTELLKAMMER [Box Room]*, Los Angeles (2003). The catalogue from the Los Angeles show displays yet another photograph of the box room (2003a: 98).

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 4.19

Gregor Schneider, *ur 44. HANNELORE REUEN ALTE HAUSSCHLAMPE [Hannelore Reuen, Old House Slut]*, Galeria Foksal, Warsaw (2000). A life-size rag doll was lying face down in a corner of the exhibition space in Warsaw. Her name was Hannelore Reuen.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 4.20

Gregor Schneider, *ur 54, N. SCHMIDT*, Kabinett für aktuelle Kunst, Bremerhaven (2001). A man was lying on his back on the floor of the gallery.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the image.

Fig. 4.21

Screen shots from Gregor Schneider, *Nacht-Video* [Night video] (1996). The 30:00 min. video is filmed by Gregor Schneider while moving around the house and crawling through every possible opening in sight. The video reveals the external sides of doubled rooms as well as the maze of passageways and in-between spaces that have emerged as a result of the building activities.

Please refer to the list of illustrations (p.187-89) for information on where to source the film.