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**NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN**

**FINE ART SCULPTURE.**

**"The Sex of Architecture!"**

**by  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

## Introduction

The structuring of society has meant that some benefit more than others. The "other" group do not take part in decision making; in the majority of cases their views are not taken into account and are therefore suppressed, deemed unimportant and subordinate to the dominant group; the dominant group being of male orientation. The creation of such a structure can only suggest that it is a description of a patriarchal system of hierarchies with the purpose to benefit its philosophies. The splitting of the built environment into the separate spheres of the public and the private was a key factor in the grounding of patriarchal ideology. This dichotomy has many implications for those categorised as, and positioned in the private sphere.

The organisation of a privatised domestic space established home as the woman's place; woman's space being the home. Man, however resided in the public sphere but had ownership of both public / private spheres. The public sphere includes places of work, public houses, the city, and so on. The established domestic space reflects cultural assumptions about family relationships. A coded system which categorises by biological anatomy inducing the sexual division of labour. This gender typing can then be applied to the types of job, activities, and actions which "man" and "woman" define. The nature of this societal coding assumes a complex and difficult language. House-work becomes associated with "woman" and the city becomes associated with man's dominance, thus for example, different types of jobs become male or female and are rendered "masculine" or "feminine" - specific jobs become that noun and consequently are also gendered.

How could it be possible to change ways of thinking and acting which are rooted in constructed codes of our past history without returning to hierarchical or binary methods for a restructuring of modern society? These societal codes are inscribed in gender, social relations and our everyday lives which are stabilised by their incorporation and positioning within architectural form. A fundamental aim of feminist theory is to analyse gender relations; how and where social relationships are situated and experienced. An understanding of these relationships within the feminist framework will serve as a focus point for a consideration as to what type of restructuring of that society could be; reflecting on the goals, logics and problematics of feminist theoretical study.

The positioning of feminist theory within the social and philosophical context of the public and private sphere could be invaluable for a redefining of gender relations in society.

The changes which these ideas posit are enormous, to grasp the full complexity in their attainment an investigation into the feminist theory versus practice debate and a case study of a practising feminist architectural group will give an insight into what kind of working method might be applied, should changes occur.



## **CHAPTER ONE**

## Chapter One

### Difficulties Within Feminism

#### 1.1 Identification of What Which Feminism.

"It has become difficult to name one's feminism by a single adjective - or even to insist in every circumstance upon the noun". (Haraway, 1995, Pg. 70). Categorising feminism by group typing is unjust. The universal description of a particular group does not sum up individual opinions within that group. The naming of groups is a broad description of what each group entails. Naming particular groups in order to clarify or define an argument could make a dissertation easier for the reader to locate or position him / herself within a particular epoch, debate or otherwise. "Feminism" is an umbrella term for many smaller groups. The identities of individuals who are labelled by group-typing are miss-informative. By identifying a group by name in order to differentiate it from other groups denies differences of opinion with that group. It denies the fact that everybody is unique, it denies a person's identity. Somebody who is described as a "feminist" a "bisexual", and so on, becomes that descriptive noun. A description which society has constructed. Positioning somebody in order to locate them is a description of a false identity.

In Donna Haraway's essay "A Manifesto for Cyborgs; Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s", she discusses the problems of "essential unity" and reiterates "the consciousness of exclusion through naming is acute".....Haraway states, that there is nothing about being "female" that actually binds women together. There is not even such a state as being female, itself a highly complex category, constructed in contested sexual scientific discourses and other social practices.<sup>(1)</sup> Gender, race or class consciousness is an achievement forced on us by the historical experience of the contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism, racism and capitalism. "Painful fragmentation among feminist (not to mention among women) along every possible fault line has made the concept of women elusive, an excuse for the matrix of women's domination of each other." (Haraway, 1985, Pg. 72)

Instead of referencing particular groups which people apparently belong to, or referencing groups and their concerns (which many theorists and critics feel the need to link) a conscious effort to reference different singular writers, authors and

editors could be made. Not to position these writers, and so on, as an example of a groups particular pathology, but to establish their uniqueness, identity, in other words to differentiate each from each other.

If there must be a chosen "type" of "feminism", radical political feminist artists shall suffice as a starting point. Feminist artists in the early 1970s broke ground by positioning their art to service feminist politics. They deliberately blurred the boundary between art and politics by shaping street and civic protest into a type of performance art that was both self-conscious and socially conscious.<sup>(2)</sup> The histories of feminist protest and feminist art intertwine at their point of origin, thus making them inseparable, challenging mainstream modernism which was a male dominated gender space.

*.....early feminist art precipitated sweeping and fundamental changes - most of all, the conscious designation of female values and experiences as a legitimate basis for the creation of "high" art; but also, an early challenge to the hegemony of modernist abstraction, which ushered in the post-modern appreciation for diversity, as well as the return of serious content - both political and personal - to mainstream art.*  
(Broude, 1994, Pg. 9)

The identification of particular practices in terms of essentialist versus anti-essentialist and feminist as opposed to feminine approaches adopted by women artists during the 1970s can be read in Judith Bary and Sandy Flitterman - Lewis "Textual Strategies: The Politics of Art Making". The feminist as opposed to the feminine argument attempted to define an avant-garde feminist art practice by privileging the development of deconstructive strategies over those regarded as essentialist.<sup>(3)</sup> The use of psychoanalytic, semiotic and Marxist theorisations of the subject over expressions of the female experience, and a critique of the latter in particular, often failed to address the political.

*Käthe Kollivitz's fellow socialists were not feminists; Paula Modersohn-Becker's band at Worpswede was not a feminist group. In nineteenth-century France, many women artists joined in promoting a "l'art féminin" that defined the feminine in art according to the principle of "separate spheres," yet these women frequently at odds with political feminists and the "feminine" art they championed was defined by societally - and self-imposed gender stereotype that turned out to be limiting, conservative rather than progressive. In the wake of the Arts and Crafts movement in England, women worked to advance the status of women identified arts, such as needlework, but advancing the social status of women was not an overt part of the movements agenda.*  
(Broude, 1994, Pg. 12)

Linda Nochlin suggested feminism would challenge art history in 1971, in her essay "Why have there Been No Great Women Artists?". She elaborates that much more remains to be done in art schools, public galleries and museums, the art market and reviewing practices before the position of women really changes. Mobilising women artists out of the isolated privatised arena and into the public galleries, art journals, and so on, is still a major concern. While the relationship of feminism to postmodernist debates was discussed, the idea of / that post-feminism surfaced due to media coverage in the mid-1980s is firmly rejected. The persistent discrimination against women, the marginalisation, or the attitude of women as token artists in gallery programmes and the absence of considered published debates on women's art practice, within the mainstream press, remains the key issue.

"Practical strategies to strategic practices" (Deepwell, 1995, Pg.1) was the phrase used to summarise the emergence of specific forms of feminist art practice coined by Resika Parker and Griselda Pollock in the mid-1980s. This development which was distinct from the initial coming together of women artists to discuss and exhibit their work in the 1970s. Feminism was thus defined by political strategies manifest in a set of practices, marked by an engagement with debates around representation and a critique of modernism, rather than by the association of women artists to exhibit their work, to support and encourage each others' activities or to protest against discrimination in the art world.

## **1.2 The Problematics of Academic Feminism**

How did this apparent split occur from a highly dominant revolutionary feminist practice to a domination of theory in academia during the 1980s which led to an increasing theorisation of feminism as philosophy, literary criticism and aesthetics as opposed to social revolution? "The impact of post-structural theories has undoubtedly had an effect on transforming feminist debate since the early 1980s" (Weedon, 1987, Pg. 17). Perhaps the impact of post-structuralist theories has made more of an impact on feminism on a larger scale (not just effecting the transformations within feminist theoretical debate, but an effect on the feminist (or what was) agenda as a whole).<sup>(4)</sup> The artist, Mary Kelly, provides a discussion of "Historia" in the last section of her project "Interim " which analyses the attitudes of women who were members of the 1968 generation involved in women's liberation and who are now between the ages of forty-five and fifty-five. In "Historia" Kelly questions what is at stake in how a feminist identifies a particular

"ideal" moment of radicalism (1968) only to be challenged by the different perspectives of a younger generation. What is interesting about Mary Kelly's findings is the harsh reality that procedure for feminist groups in attaining results for their project has changed. The change being between moment of radicalism in the late 1960s- 1970s to the dominant deconstructivist theorists of the early 1980s -1990s?

Craig Owens in his 1983 essay "The Discourse of Others: Feminism and Postmodernism"; theorised the political implications of the intersection between the "feminist critique of patriarchy and the post modernist critique of representation". Owens was not the first to link feminism and postmodernism. (Jeneks, 1992, Pg. 335). French feminist theory acknowledged the link between the feminist critique of patriarchy and post-structuralist thought (deconstruction) and even proclaimed it in its reading of "phallogocentrism" (Lacan). Owens essay placed the feminist issue at the centre of the debate on postmodernism (also a debate on post-structuralism)<sup>(5)</sup>. It seems French feminist theory simply had not been acknowledged by the dominant theorists on postmodernism at that time. The inter-relationship between feminism and post -structuralism had been made by many, although, Owens happens to articulate the connections within art practice particularly well.

Owens further suggests that if the feminist critical aspects of post-modernist work was taken into account there would result a new and more politically sharpened view of postmodernism itself; realising that amongst other definitions / descriptions feminism is a politics. It might not be, how the post-modernist debate benefits feminism but how feminism can benefit pro-post-modern theorists whose project in the modernism / postmodernism debate is to establish a clean break between the two movements. Incorporating the feminist project gives postmodernism a new characteristic separate from modernism. "Modernism marginalised women and barred possible feminist dimension" (Wolff, 1990, Pg. 86). The appropriation of feminism into postmodernism was to replace the political / radical edge it lost in rejecting modernism.

It could also be seen that postmodernism has not adopted feminism. Feminism is a characteristic of postmodernism,<sup>(6)</sup> Craig Owens also points that postmodernism and post-structuralism are inseparably intertwined. Where both discourses deal extensively with the hegemony of Western culture and our identity as a culture. He recalls that French post-structuralist Michael Foucault has taught us the

"positioning of an "other" is a necessary moment in the consideration, the incorporation of any cultural body. " (Rubin-Suleiman, 1990, Pg. 186)

Thus the positioning of the "other" presumably by the dominant cultural body is also inextricably intertwined with feminism. It is apparent that both feminism and psychoanalysis arise as part of the project of modernity and even so both have helped in exposing its contradictions and inadequacies. To this extent both can be also seen as discourses of postmodernity. . Feminism has made a political move in appropriating (a postmodern trait) psychoanalysis for its project, as well as pushing it to its theoretical limits.<sup>(7)</sup>

Feminists' main concern in the early 1980s seems to have been on a theoretical level. There is no way of comparing a theoretically charged feminism of the 1980s with a social revolutionary practice of the 1960s and 1970s without an attempt in validating theory first. Feminist practice over the last thirty years could be split into the 1960s and 1970s versus the 1980s and 1990s, or perhaps practice versus theory respectively.

### **1.3 The Pros and Cons of Theory for Feminist Practice.**

Janet Wolff's essay "The Artist, the Critic and the Academic; Feminism's Problematic Relationship with Theory" poses the question, why has feminism had an ambivalent relationship to theory? It is clear on one hand that theory is necessary if the production of a systematic understanding of gender inequality in our society (the question of which theories are most beneficial has been a contested question between Marxist- feminists, radical feminists and liberal feminism since the 1970s; the question of "theory" in contemporary debates leans towards whether or not theories of representation are employed loosely and categorically referred to as post-structuralism). The fact that theory has traditionally been "male" balances on the other side of the scale.

*Feminist philosophers and historians of science have shown that scientific theory and practice separate in masculine ways, both institutionally thorough the exclusion of women from science and in terms of subject matter, when funding and research interests have historically given priority to men's lives and have ignored, for instance the medical concerns of women. (Wolff, 1995. Pg. 16/17)*

Wolff continues "It has also been the case that feminism has found an important ally in the project of postmodernism". This alliance produces its own

ambivalence. The feminist position within post-modern theory undermines the basis of feminist critique. Also, by investing feminist theory in a project such as postmodernism reinforces a hierarchy within the feminist project concentrating on the concerns of the white - middle class female. A hierarchy which sounds much like that of the structure of patriarchy and marginalising women of colour, third world women, lesbians, and anybody else who feels left out.

A dismissal of such theory based work, on the grounds of exclusion, can only be valid unless a critique of its privilege is not stated. Furthermore theory - informed work (deconstruction, postmodernism, post -structuralism) cannot be dismissed on the grounds of elitism. It may engage with small communities, but if black-lesbian third world theory rose to the forefront of feminist philosophy that only few women and fewer men could relate to, engage in, or found relevant it could not be dismissed as an elitist group.

The academy is a privileged space for the exploration of ideas, histories and interdisciplinary projects. But it is vital that it works in conjunction with feminist practice. Both theory and practice can feed off each other to benefit the feminist project. Barbara Ehrenreich has pointed out there are certainly dangers inherent in the academisation of feminism to the extent that it becomes self sufficient and self-serving practice. There is also a crucial need for intellectual work in the academy and outside which is grounded in practice and the object. (Rubbins, (ed.) 1990, Pg. 73 - 85).

## End notes to Chapter One.

- 1 For further reading on the subject of conscious unity in the social categories of race, sex, or class see Chela Sandoval, "Disillusionment and Poetry of the Future: The making of Oppositional Consciousness; Ph.D. qualifying essay, University of California, Santa Cruz, 1984.
- 2 "Until c.1970, there had not yet existed a self-conscious and universalising female voice in art-self conscious in articulating female experience from an informed social and political position and universalising in defining one's experience as applicable to the experience of others woman; "the personal is political", in the 1970s slogan. From the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, women artists had worked in relative cultural isolation, grouped together by men's classification rather than by choice. Even in nineteenth century, though some women artists participated in social movements, feminism and art had not yet joined forces. (Broude, 1994, Pg. 12).  
  
"An assault on modernism surfaced defiantly with the feminist art movement of the 1970s; it explorations were let without serious regard for the most fundamental prerequisites of what comprised art and artistic value according to the dominant assumptions of post -World War II Euro-American aesthetics". (Broude, 1994, Pg. 277). Refuting the idea that art is natural, visual, or the property of men only. "Feminism originated, after all, from women's feelings and deserveable experience that something was "awry" with the way their lives as women were subordinated to the lives of men and children, and with the way fine art, a supposedly "enlightened" cultural arena, assisted in the ideological devaluation and material exclusion of women from political and cultural power". (Broude, 1994, Pg. 277). A more in-depth investigation of these ideas are articulated in Lucy R. Lippard, "Sweeping Exchanges: The Contribution of Feminism to the Art of the 70s, "Art Journal (Fall / Winter 1980) especially pages 339 - 65)
- 3 In Judith Barry and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis "Textual Strategies: The Politics of Art Making(Pg. 313-21 Screen 21, 2 (1980) they make similar arguments to Resika Parker and Griselda Pollock in "Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970 - 1985 (London & New York, Pandora, 1987, Pg. 3)
- 4 In Chris Weedon "Feminist Practice and Post-Structuralist Theory" 1987, 1988, 1989, Basil Blackwell Ltd., Oxford, and (JF, U.K. in the same chapter goes on to speak of the professionalisation of domestic labour.
- 5 Terry Eagleton explicitly links postmodernism and post-structuralism in his 1985 essay "Capitalism, Modernism, and Postmodernism" (New Left Review, No. 152, Pg. 60-73.
- 6 Another view:  
Feminist art and art history helped to initiate post-modernism in America. We owe to the feminist breakthrough some of the most basic tenets of post-modernism; the understanding that gender is socially and not naturally constructed; the widespread validation of non "high art" forms such as craft, video and performance art; the questioning of the cult of "genius" and "greatness" in Western art history; the awareness put behind the claim of "universality" lies on aggregate of particular standpoints and biases, leading in turn to an emphasis upon pluralist variety, rather than totalising unity. (Broude, 1994, Pg. 11)
- 7 In appropriating psychoanalysis , Feminist academics made the transition from feminist language to the appropriation of a discourse of cultural language.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

## Chapter Two

### Codes of Architecture

#### 2.1 Where the Public and the Private began in Contemporary Society.

"The one is all aggressive enterprise; the other is all genteel tradition". (Ockman, 1996, Pg. 196) In the post war period of World War II the split between work world and domestic life did not only characterise the upper class.<sup>(1)</sup> The middle classes domestic abode became, if not the place for the ritual enactment of gentility, at least the contracting embodiment of the work day routine and the safety-net of comfort the household supplied. The "male" culture of production found its complement in the "female" culture of consumption. "By the second quarter of this century mass consumption had become central to the development of American capitalism. (Ockman , 1996, Pg. 196). The post war house reflected the dominant ideology of the post war period, that of consumerism by media and government sanctioned advertising. The public's appetite for a post war horn of plenty was immense. The prospect of plenitude was well overdue in the public's eyes, contrasting the hopelessness during the years previous when consumer goods were greatly restricted because of war production needs and prewar depression. (Ockman, 1996, Pg. 196) "The suburban dream house became a form of compensation for the privations and sacrifices endured during the years of the war and economic stagnation, a realisation of the material prosperity to which Americans considered themselves at long last entitled... The private house became a machine especially for white middle-class consumption." (Ockman, 1996, Pg. 199).

After women's brief taste of equal employment opportunity in wartime work force, a campaign to redomesticate women took place in post war America.<sup>(3)</sup> This was made tangible by the seduction of the new suburban dream house, but also its traditionalism. Through intensive propaganda by government, businessmen, psychologists, religious leaders, and others on behalf of "family values" women voluntarily made room in the job market for the returning veterans. Some were not so willing. "Although 80% of women trained as shipbuilders, riveters and machinists wanted to keep their skilled jobs after the war, the were encouraged to surrender them to returning soldiers or were laid off or forced back into unskilled work." (Watkins, 1992, Pg.175).

Fundamental to the re-establishment of the traditional division of labour in the American Family, were images of the house as a nest and a haven; the nurturing mother recorded within this image as homemaker.

*The new tract divisions served in a literal way to enforce the gulf of space and time between private life and work world. Women's separation increased along the lengthening network of highways, home making became increasingly distanced from the making of history. (Ockman, 1996, Pg. 203)*

In a society that simultaneously sought to promote maximum productivity and maximum consumption, the public and private spheres had separate but complementary roles to play. In the "Feminine Mystique" Betty Friedan, demystified the seductive advertising which targeted women into believing in a rosy picture of home is where the newest gadgetry would free women from old-fashioned housework, instilling the idea the flawed logic that a streamlined kitchen was sufficient to liberate a woman from a patriarchal society's aggression. While women saved time in the kitchen with their top of the range microwaves, and so on, they could have more leisure time to shop, for themselves!

## **2.2 Is Architecture Inscribed in the Body, or is the Body Inscribed in Architecture ?**

The move to the suburbs entailed a clear separation of home and the workplace, and a firm basis for the domestic ideology of the home as haven, and of women as identified with this private sphere. Lenore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, in their essay "The Architecture of Public and Private Life", trace the similar development of Birmingham in Victorian England, in the growth of the suburb of Edgbaston. The design of the new houses themselves usually accorded well with the ideology of separate spheres...."it should provide decent quarters for servants. It should protest the womanliness of women and encourage the manliness of men".(Girouard, 1979, Pg. 16) The arrangement of rooms were extremely complex and often impractical, so that children, servants, mothers, and fathers should only coincide at approved times and in appropriate places. The Victorian house contained "an increasingly large and sacrosanct male domain", whose nucleus was the billiard room.

*The suburban dwellings of other sections of the middle-class were not, of course, built on the same scale; but the same physical separations of domains was apparent' with the increase in the number of servants, and*

*the concern to keep them separate from the family; with the nineteenth century emphasis of the distinctness of childhood, and with the underlying ideology of the appropriate sensibilities and areas of separation of men and woman. (Wolff, Janet, 1990, Pg. 15)*

It is apparent that both, the body is inscribed in architecture, and also architecture is inscribed in the body. "Houses frequently thought of as bodies sharing with them a common anatomy and common life history".(Carsten, 1995, Pg. 64) If it is possible to perceive of people constructing houses and making them in their own image, so also do they use houses and house-images to construct themselves as individuals and as groups. Using the example of the Victorian house, the placement of persons' identity in relation to a room in the house proposes that architecture has been inscribed by that bodies description, and vice versa. there houses were built in order to accommodate society's categorisation and identification of what body identity fits in where. Judged by engendered sexed body, and class.

Claude Lévi-Strauss was the first to draw attention to the potential theoretical significance of house. Lévi -Strauss saw in house societies a specific widespread social type, and who emphasised the significance of the category of house as innate in the study of systems of social organisation "Internal features of the house such as the division of space often serve as vehicles for the symbolic elaboration of systems of hierarchy which may mirror or transform those represented by the house as a whole". (Carsten, 1995, Pg. 64/65) Therefore, the house is not just a representative of unity of family life but also of various kinds of hierarchy and division.

### **2.3 Implications of the "Privatised" House as "Other!"**

As mentioned in the introduction, there are implications in the ever changing, shifting and relocation of meaning, language, symbols, and so on. Everything seems to be in a complete state of flux; there are no fixed definitions. As history is made year by year, new discoveries and ideas are uncovered, meaning adjusts and alters and it is to feminism's advantage. If language and meaning were stagnant all the theoretical leaps which have been made would stay hypothetical; their practice would not even be an issue.

In Susan Bordo's essay "Feminism, Post-modernism and Gender Scepticism the theoretical deconstruction of "locatedness" is discussed.<sup>(4)</sup> Changes

in the professional situation of academic feminists over the last ten years may be exemplary here. A decade ago (1980), the exploration and reevaluation of that which has been culturally constructed as "female" set the agenda for academic feminists of many disciplines, at a time when feminism was just entering the (white male) academy and had not yet been integrated into it or professionalised by it. We were outsiders of subject politics (most of us had been "political feminists" before or during our professional training) and inappropriate sex (a woman philosopher?). Then to be a feminist academic was to be constantly aware of one's otherness: one could not forget that one was a woman even if one tried". (Bordo, 1990, Pg. 148).

In this extract, Bordo, equates "Otherness" with the constructed womanliness, other is equal to woman. In this context and paralleling it, given my discussion on private / public spaces the home / house as a private sphere could also be termed as "Other"; Since women have been established throughout history as the homemaker, it seems logical that the private sphere be described as "Other". According to Michel Foucault in his essay "Des Espace Autres", this is not so. Foucault's model of heterotopia does not fit into feminist, or studies of cultural societies' definitions of Other. Foucault defines Heterotopias as "places which are absolutely "other" with respect to all the arrangements that they reflect and of which they speak might be described as heterotopias". (Foucault, (1967, Trans. 1984) Pg. 422).<sup>(5)</sup> Included in Foucault's list of heterotopias are: the museum; the prison; the hospital, the place of sexual initiation, the brothel, the colony, the barracks and the cemetery- which he states "is certainly an "other" place, with respect to ordinary cultural spaces" (Foucault, 1984, Pg. 423) ""Other" therefore encompasses physical and social arenas outside of or marginal to our daily life". (McLeod, 1996, Pg. 16).<sup>(6)</sup>Foucault goes on to suggest that these heterotopia environments break with the banality of the everyday.

Mary McLeod notes that one of the most striking aspects of Foucault's notion of "other", is how his definition emphasises rapture and seems to exclude the traditional groups that inhabited the description of "other" ;"women and children" two of the groups that most rightly deserve the label "other". (McLeod, 1996, Pg. 20). "Post-modernism and Gender Relations" an essay by Jane Flax, comes to the conclusion that for some theorists, our fantasy and internal worlds have expression only in symbols, not in actual social relations. For example, Iris Young claims that gender differentiation as a category refers only to "ideas, symbols and forms of consciousness". (Young, 1974, Pg. 140).<sup>(7)</sup>

*In this view, fantasy, our inner worlds, and sexuality may structure intimate relations between women and men at home, but they are rarely seen as also entering into shaping the structure of work and the state. Thus, feminist theory recreates its own version of the public / private split. (Flax, 1990, Pg. 636)*

Judging by Flax maybe its not such a logical assumption - maybe private space has never been "other" or logical to believe in a his-story which might be false.

Another aspect of Foucault's Heterotopian definition is the exclusion of the home on the basis that its "network of relations" are "the arrangement of rest". (Foucault, 1984, Pg. 421). This is to suggest that "work" does not take place in the home. There is no such thing as housework, it does not exist. The women who, traditionally, have done the house-work throughout history, do not exist. The idea that the house is not a place of work reiterates the fact that the home (defined as the private sphere) has traditionally not been perceived as a place of importance, where the nature of the labour / work that occurs in the home is insignificant, not valued as "real work". One reason that would be the cause of this attitude is that it is not a paid / waged job.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak contrasts that Marx's theory of alienation of the worker from the product of his labour is based on inadequate evidence, because it does not take into account the instance of the womb as workshop , and the different forms of alienation of product from labour represented by childbirth and by women's domestic work as unpaid, and thus unvalued labour. (Landry, 1966, Pg. 53).<sup>®</sup> Can the production of a child, the "work" or "labour" which is involved really be considered to be rewarded with money? The type of work which takes place in the workshop of the womb has no value where monetary systems are involved. Yet reproductive technologies do construct the "womb" as a site of work and of earnings when we take into account such matters as surrogacy, and so on.

*Attempts by socialist feminists to widen the concept of production instead of dislodging it or any other singularly central concept from such authoritative power? ..... This question becomes more urgent when it appears that, despite the best efforts of socialist feminists, the Marxist concepts of labour and production invariably exclude or distort many kinds of activity, including those traditionally performed by women. Pregnancy and child rearing or relations between family members more generally cannot be comprehended merely as "property relations in action. (Flax, 1990, Pg. 629)*

There could be many ways to read Foucault and Spivak in the circumstances of "heterotopia". This last section of this chapter has been an exercise in order to arrive at a conclusion. It is an example of a theory which lies far away from being put into practice as a material feminist project.

## Endnotes for Chapter 2.

1. Joan Ockman cites, George Santanyana, on Page 196, of her essay "Mirror Images: Technology consumption and the Representation of Gender in American Architecture since World War II (Pages 191-210) in "The Sex of Architecture: Diana Agrest, Patricia Convary, Leslie Kanes Weisman (eds), Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, 1996  
  
See George Santayana, "Winds of Doctrine: Studies in Contemporary Opinion (London, J.M. Dent, 1913) Pg.188.
2. Elizabeth Wilson's; "The Sphinx in the City" - Urban Life and the Control of Disorder, and Women, gives a coherent account of the importance to capitalist society (Britain), of the separation of the public / private sectors. "Under the impact of the Industrial Revolution, the cities of Europe and the United States entered a period of explosive growth. Victorian Britain became the world's first urbanised society." (Pg. 26) ... "The plan is always intended to fix the usage of space: the aim, the state regulation of urban populations. This includes the fixing of women in their rightful "place". (Pg. 20) .... "The condition of women was the touchstone of the state of civilisation and progress. Only in the modern city were the "milder sentiments natural to women .....suffered to make their first impression on man" In Vaughan's (Robert Vaughan: a defender of the new urban order against its detractors, echoed the ancient prejudice in favour of cities as against nomadic life) "great city" the cult of privacy and domesticity in the bourgeois interior permitted women's distinctive contribution its full flowering, and made possible the full development of sexual division of labour to benefit all. Thus the industrial city, which emancipated the working class, was to confine middle-class womanhood with a private enclave, and arguments in favour of "progress" were given a conservative twist. (Pg. 29)  
  
Many believed that the family in its rural, or at least suburban retreat was the ideal solution or antidote to the 18th century. Now the trend accelerated. It became undesirable even indecent for a lady to walk in the streets unless she was accompanied by a husband, father, or brother, or at least by a male servant. These rules were strictly enforced so far as young unmarried women were concerned. Once she had passed the age of thirty, the marginal, single woman might gain a small measure of freedom, but this was double-edged, as it signalled that she was "on the shelf" and had dropped out of the marriage market. Governesses, too, were granted this rather humiliating freedom - a kind of sexual invisibility, and a condition of lessened worth.(Pg. 30.)  
  
For further reading : Lenore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, "The Architecture of Public and Private Life: English middle-class society in a provincial town , 1780 - 1850", in D Fraser and A Sutcliffe (eds.) "The Pursuit of Urban History" (London, Edward Arnold 1983).
3. Further reading: Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Orion Press, New York, 1964 , XXXIII, for a discussion on the consciousness of architecture, the house as an extension of the person and also an expression of the self. See also: Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Anthropology and the Myth: Lectures 1951-82, Blackwell, Oxford, 1987, and Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The way of the Masks" S. Modelski (trans.) Jonathan Cape, (London) 1983.
4. Susan Bardo's essay "Feminism, Postmodernism and Gender Scepticism" can be found in "Feminism Postmodernism", Linda J. Nicholson (ed). Routledge, New York, London, 1990, Pg. 133-156
5. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces.: Utopias and Heterotopias: Pg. 419-426 in Joan Ockman (ed.) "Architecture Culture 1943-1968: A Documentary Anthology, New York, Rizzoli, 1993.
6. The essay "Other Spaces and Others," by Mary McLeod, in, "The Sex of Architecture; Agrest/ Conway/ Weisman (eds.) Harry N. Abrams Inc. New York, 1996. Pg. 15 - 28.
7. Iris Young's essay "Is male Gender Identity the Cause of Male Domination?" in, Joyce Trible (ed) *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory*, Totowa, N.J. Rowan & Allanheld, 1984.
8. See: "The Spivak Reader; Selected works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak." (eds) Donna Landry / Gerald McLean. Routledge, New York, London, 1996, (esp. Pages 53 - 74. Also see: Spivak, *Love me Love me Ombre, Elle* "Diacritics, 14:4 (Winter 1984) Pg.19-36



## **CHAPTER THREE**

## Chapter Three

### **The Matrix Group: A combination of theory and practice from a feminist architectural perspective: How it works.**

*Architectural works focused on the more material aspects of dwellings typically say much about environmental conditions, resources, technology, techniques of construction and types of building, and about the spatial organisation, symbolism and aesthetic values of buildings, but they often say relatively little about the social organisation of the people who live inside. (Carsten & Hugh-Jones, 1996. Pg. 64).*

How can this change ?

#### **3.1 Designing with Women's Groups.**

A new health centre was built in Stockwell, 1985, Fig 1. to combat the lack in health facilities. Through a meeting of community representatives the Stockwell Health Centre Group was formed. The group discussed what main areas of health care the community needed. They emphasised preventative medicine, community care, and self-help. Their decision to link up with Matrix was made due to the unsuitable drawings that had been made by the local authority architect for the Area Health Authority. The health centre group expressed an importance that the Matrix Group were a group of women, rather than an individual architect. They wanted a group that would understand the process of working in groups. The health care centre group needed to obtain control of the ideas for the building as it developed. In other words they needed the help of a group oriented organisation that could translate their ideas into the form of a building. After numerous discussions involving the three groups, two principles emerged; this centre should fulfil the needs of the community as a resource and that it should have a feel of openness, inviting and easy to use. "These principles were to be demonstrated clearly and simply by a building". (Matrix, 1984, Pg. 91).

Matrix worked out several different sketch designs through discussions with the health centre group. Discussions included how the building could be used, which activities could overlap, how the space would affect the way people relate to each other. The next step was for the health centre group to take the many sketches away and discuss them with other local groups and at a public meeting. The most important point here is that people who were not centrally involved working on the campaign had their say. The women in the health group explained

and discussed the various possibilities and in that process clarified and extended their own ideas. "Our job was to discover with the group how a health centre democratically run and open to the community, could be designed and to help the group convince the Area Health Authority that the community's ideas were reliable". (Matrix, 1984, Pg. 92).

The Lambeth Women's Workshop (Fig 2) in South London is another example of Matrix's alternative working practice. The Workshop teaches carpentry and joinery skills in beginners' courses, aimed at women with children, black and working-class women. It was organised, designed and converted by women and is run by women now. Matrix looked at possible spaces with the Workshop Group that would be suitable for their needs. An industrial building which was appropriate was finally decided on. Its advantages were, it was already waterproofed, good natural lighting and adequate service lifts for the transportation of materials. However, its atmosphere was inhospitable, reminiscent of working conditions, not unlike that of a factory. A friendly working atmosphere was preferred by the women on the management committee. Initially Matrix decided to round off some of the lines, to make curving walls, to contrast directly with the right angles of the factory. This seemed uneconomical in terms of space, instead, more intimate areas were created. Features such as raising the floor of the sitting and kitchen space to give low window cills and ceiling height.

Decisions about the design of the workshop entailed discussions on aesthetics, proportions of space, relationship between windows, light and columns. Matrix state that architects are trained to discuss and think about these concerns in an abstract way, which is inappropriate for this project with the Workshop Committee. Distancing the world from the project by a process of abstraction would be no help, or even benefit experience, making it part of both groups' everyday lives is obviously an intelligent and more socially aware approach. "We needed to find a language accessible to everyone involved. It means starting from feelings about spaces women know and their everyday experiences in them and using that information to gradually build up a picture of the new space." (Matrix, 1984, Pg. 94).

### **3.2 Communication: Drawings and Other Tools.**

Matrix seem to pride themselves on working with as many other groups as possible who are not linked in any way with architectural concerns previously. In

order for them to create the type of buildings they feel their clients need they feel interaction with the prospective uses is invaluable. This unique method creates problems of communication. To combat this problem they look to alternative methods of designing. While working with the Lambeth Women's Workshop their drawing proposal changed shape. Instead of producing architectural drawing plans the Matrix group cut out bits of paper for all the work benches and machinery, walls and windows for the committee to get a feel of the building to see how objects were in relation to each other. Everyone understood the problems which were involved and each person felt involved in the process. With Stockwell Health Centre they wrote on existing plans with big arrows pointing out all the criticisms different women had made. It involved different experiences from different women of health care, as "patients" and as health workers. Two examples are; using an electronic call system for the deaf or blind, to what sort of atmosphere is needed for giving family planning advice to women who are nervous. "We were trying to find ways the group could get a feel of manipulating the spaces and take an active part in the process". (Matrix, 1984, Pg.99). Other ideas such a bubble diagrams and making models which could be taken to pieces and reassembled differently were produced to help. (Fig.3)

### **3.3 How the Concerns of the Matrix Group Differ from those of Conventional Architects.**

The Lambeth Women's Workshop, Dalston Children's Centre (another project) and the Stockwell Health Centre all expressed and emphasised that the design of each space should be welcoming, comfortable and incorporate ease of mobility. It has been important that these spaces should not feel cold and institutional. A separated informality was not wanted. To Matrix it is obvious that buildings should feel friendly and to be able to accommodate different sorts of social exchange. Few public spaces, from hospitals to workplaces, could hardly be described as accommodating or friendly. They are intimidating to all except those who control them. Matrix state "making buildings where most people can feel at home involves changing who control buildings. It also involves thinking about qualities that are hard to define and would be considered sloppy on an architectural brief, but are nonetheless important. (Matrix, 1984, Pg. 7)

Matrix are not only concerned with the traditional relationship between Client and Architect, but also with the relationships between Architect and Builder, Builder and Client. They say that their relationships have always been based on a

class system. The client has the money, the architect (from an educated middle to upper-class background) is paid to design and manage the job by the client and the builder has the craft. There is a hierarchy of status. The architect and building working rarely come into contact unless the work is fairly small-scale, but when they do the status differences are obvious, even though the Builder and Architect are mutually dependent on each other. "It is our shared politics and feminist intentions that make an equal relationship possible but this can be very easily undermined when one group assesses the quality and value of the other group's work and pays them." (Matrix, 1984, Pg. 103)

Relationships between female architects and builders is even more difficult, to some extent the architects job always includes supervising the builders work, which results in authorisation of payment for work completed. Matrix go on to state, that conventional relationship between architect and builder where the builders are all men, is an uncomfortable one for most women architects.

*Whereas middle-class men are socialised to use the rational detachment required of their assigned role as adjudicator between client and builder, woman's socialised role is to sympathise with people and to understand and be supportive to the problems of others.(Matrix, 1984, Pg. 103).*

In order to erradicate some of these relationship problems, four members of the Matrix Group have learnt building skills in order to work on site. So, Matrix as a group are able to resolve time consuming problematic obstacles. The advantages of the design and build process are usually described functionally - it is more efficient to have designers and builders working closely together. Everyone knows more about what is going on, fewer mistakes are made of the kind that happen on conventional sites due to bad communications. (Matrix, 1984, Pg. 105) These are advantages. It is also important that the status differences between designing and building work are broken down. It would seem that these hierarchies are difficult to avoid but it is better than ignoring them. Matrix seem able to make possible the spaces that respond to women's needs by helping them to translate their ideas into working buildings. By working closely with their clients and forming comfortable working conditions and relationships with all concerned. "If we can become more aware of how the buildings we live and work in relate to how we live then we can create buildings that work with women's struggle for liberation rather than against it. (Matrix, 1984, Pg. 105)

## **CONCLUSION**

## Conclusion

The term "Architecture" encompasses all aspects of the built environment rather than "one-off" pieces of fine art or sculpture, and the term "architect" includes all those who produce space, users of space, as well as designers. Architecture translates knowledge into action, it combines theory and practice. The relevancy of architectural studies includes the economic status of women, the location and movement of women through the built environment, the connections between capitalist production and patriarchal relationships and also between public and domestic life. Contemporary Western feminism emerged from a particular urban form - the mid-twentieth century capitalist city, "which expressed and reinforced differentiated gender roles". (Mackenzie, 1989, Pg. 110.) The physical constraint of the modern city has become apparent as more women have become wage earners. Employment centres are rarely close to child care facilities, therefore lost time and lost wages are the result, even when these facilities are feasible. Similarly, the erratic movement of women responsible for both domestic duties and paid work are not a consideration when mass transport is scheduled, it is scheduled for rational commuters. (Pickup, 1984, Pg. 67). Thus urban planning is highly influential on women's lives. (Figs. 4 & 5)

Sociologists Judith Cook and Mary Farrow (1986) reiterate how important the research into urban planning is for feminism and its beneficial implications for every individual. Cook and Farrow place importance on continuing attention to the significance of gender and gender asymmetry as a basic feature of all social life; an acceptance of conscious raising as a central tool for establishing a way of seeing; to challenge traditional methods of objectivity that assumes the subject and object of research can be separated and that personal experiences are unscientific and therefore not valid input, and so focus on the empowerment of women and transformation of patriarchal social institutions through research. (Cook, 1986, Pg. 2-19)

The mobility of women relies on improved infrastructure in rural areas, towns and cities, both social and transportation policy are required to improve the opportunities for women. As single parents, the dominant elderly population group, residents in public housing and as the majority users of public transport, women are more likely than men to use public assistance in which they need to feel safe. These ideas are in close connection with urban geographers who have argued that space is socially constructed and produced. The work of philosopher Henri

Lebevre who has stated that socially produced space, works through three different yet interactive levels; as codified language, as material functional space and as lived everyday experience. (Lebevre, 1991) These ideas are invaluable for the feminist project. Anthropology was one of the first disciplines to suggest that there was a relation between gender and space, and that it was defined through power relations. (Rendell, 1996, Pg. 60).

Anthropologists who have worked on the "public" and "private" have been essential for feminists. The investigation of the allocation of space culturally for men and women and the connection between spaces occupied by women and their social status. It is time for architects to reconsider the production of space and the work of feminist anthropologists.

Feminists have pointed out that consumption plays a key role in women's lives. It takes them out of the home and into the city, as workers and shoppers, to buy goods for themselves and for their families. French feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray has pointed out, that women are in a patriarchal society, often "owned" by men and treated as commodities as mothers, wives and daughters, virgins and prostitutes. (Irigaray, 1985, Pg. 170-91) "During the nineteenth century the word commodity was used to describe a woman's genital organs - a modest woman was a 'private commodity' and a prostitute was a 'public commodity'." (Rendell, 1996, Pg. 61).

Gender forms of representation construct an historical knowledge of the men and women who occupied houses, cities, as well as galleries and academic spaces. We need personal insights to compile our history, insights which need to be documented from all areas to give a "true" (the concept of "true" is used with reservations) history. If it is accepted that architecture is a gendered space that is constructed through social and gendered relations it can begin to suggest ways of thinking about architecture which go beyond the intentions of designers and planners, and instead look at the ways in which buildings and urban spaces are appropriated and used as settings for everyday life. This is not to suggest that abandoning the art of architecture is an exchange for more humane designs, rather, encompassing these ideas will make the designing and planning for the future more challenging by incorporating both.



Architecture must become a more research-oriented knowledge based profession. Architects need to prepare for professional practice in a world characterised by global telecommunications, environmentally responsible lifestyles, and increasingly ageing and pluralistic societies world-wide.

To learn how better to solve problems in interdisciplinary teams with experts in natural conservation, economics, art, politics, behavioural and social sciences, engineering and so on. The knowledge and learning of working in innovative partnerships with low-income, non-profit and culturally diverse groups is imperative, how to use design as a tool to create rather than respond to public policy, legal regulations and building codes. The public's growing interest in healthy buildings and barrier-free design must be translated into architecture where both function and form are celebrated in harmony with human diversity. Feminist groups such as Matrix. pay attention to collective processes, redefining power relationships, deconstructing false dichotomies (for example between theory and practice, client and professional) and eliminating untruths and unjust assumptions in gender, race, class, disability status and sexual orientation. These practices could construct a new model of architectural education and practice for to-day's real problems and possibilities.

In keeping with these issues Matrix are a description of how it has worked by combining these essential elements. It is important that Matrix are a group of women with a feminist perspective paralleling the theory versus practice debate - a debate which has only realised the importance of architecture in the last couple of years to the contemporary feminist agenda. It should be stressed that Matrix are not just a practising feminist group but a practising architectural group working in the public sphere with clear intent to aid the mobility of women out of the privatised and into the public domain to benefit their lives, practically, educationally with as much ease as possible. The Matrix group were also specifically chosen because through their designs and buildings they are breaking the existing codes of architectural design which have traditionally been constructed by a male dominated voice. Matrix are a group of women working in the city of London, building their designs in that city thus incorporating, not their codes but, the needs of the people whom they are building for, which gives a true reflection of society.

Feminism as a political philosophy has certain aims and agendas. The Matrix group have shown their concern in sticking to the aims and carrying those

concerns through to a conclusion. they have taken the responsibility of being a feminist group and practice that responsibility by establishing that their ideas and agendas materialise. It is at feminist critical distance by which analysis can be contemplated to serve the materialisation of their agendas.

By proposing the construction of architecture from a woman's or feminist approach it does not necessarily follow that it is solely a redefining of "woman", even though it may be from a feminist perspective it is the accumulation of information from individuals of different backgrounds, class and race which will redefine codes within architecture and subsequently in society. Feminist political agenda is a catalyst for change.

**PLATES**

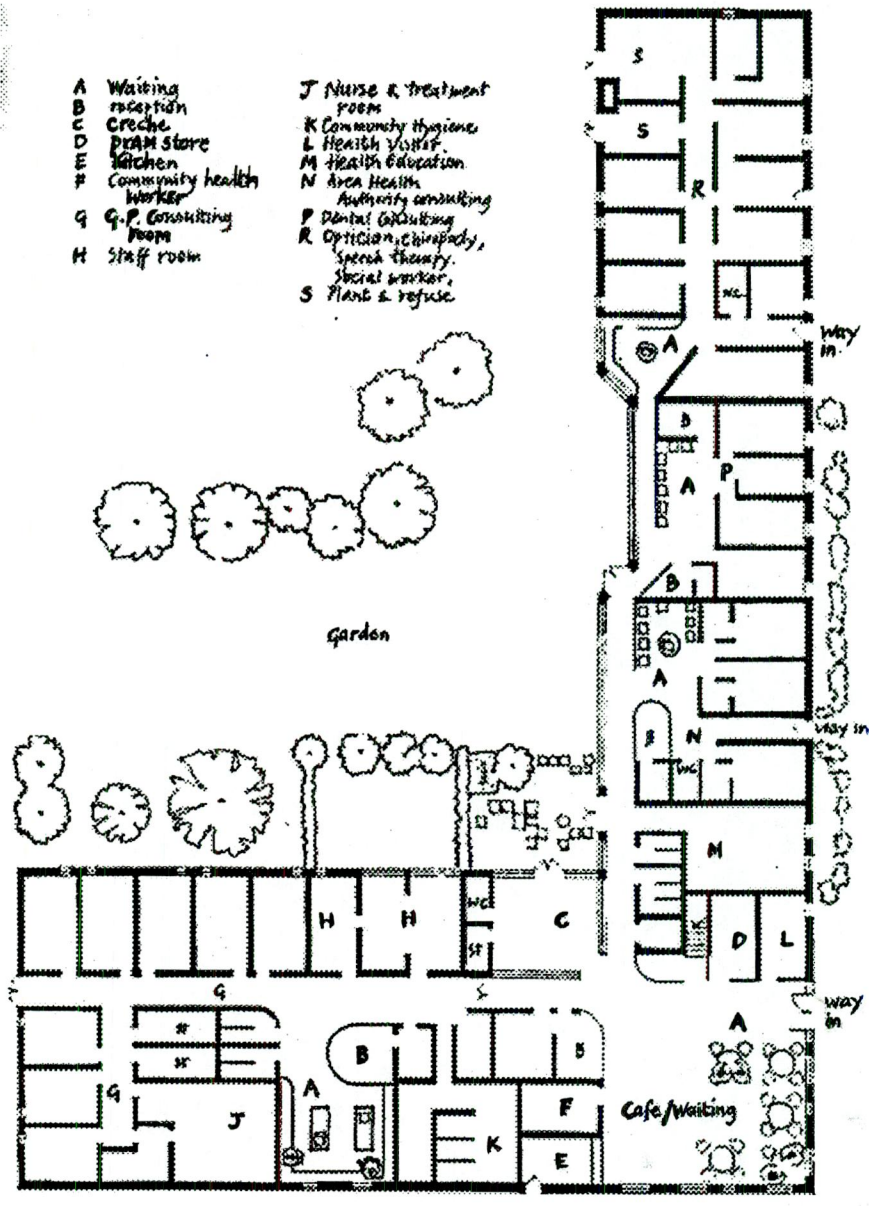


Fig 1 : plan for the Stockwell Health Centre, south London - a proposed design based on community needs.



Fig 2 : Interior of Lambeth Women's Training Workshop south London.

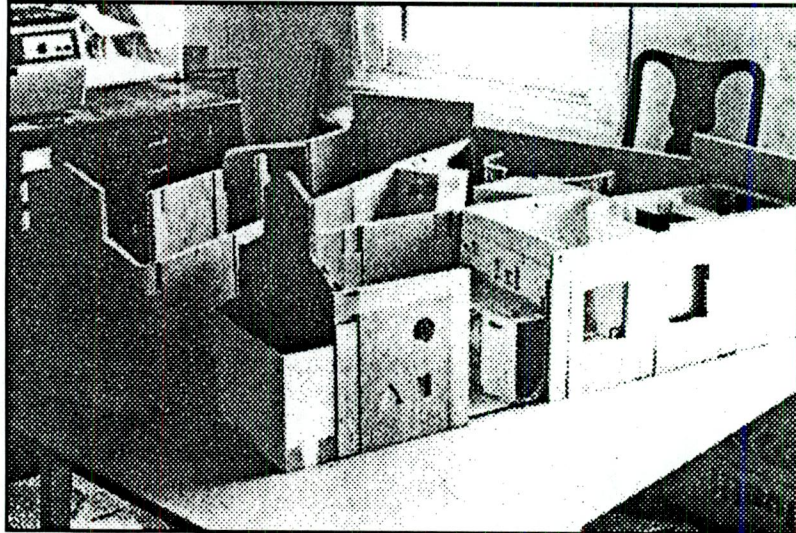


Fig 3 : A model, with moveable parts, of the Children's Centre.

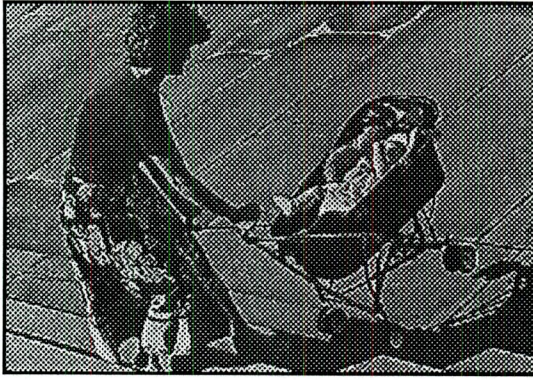


Fig 4 : Urban planners ignore the needs of the least mobile.

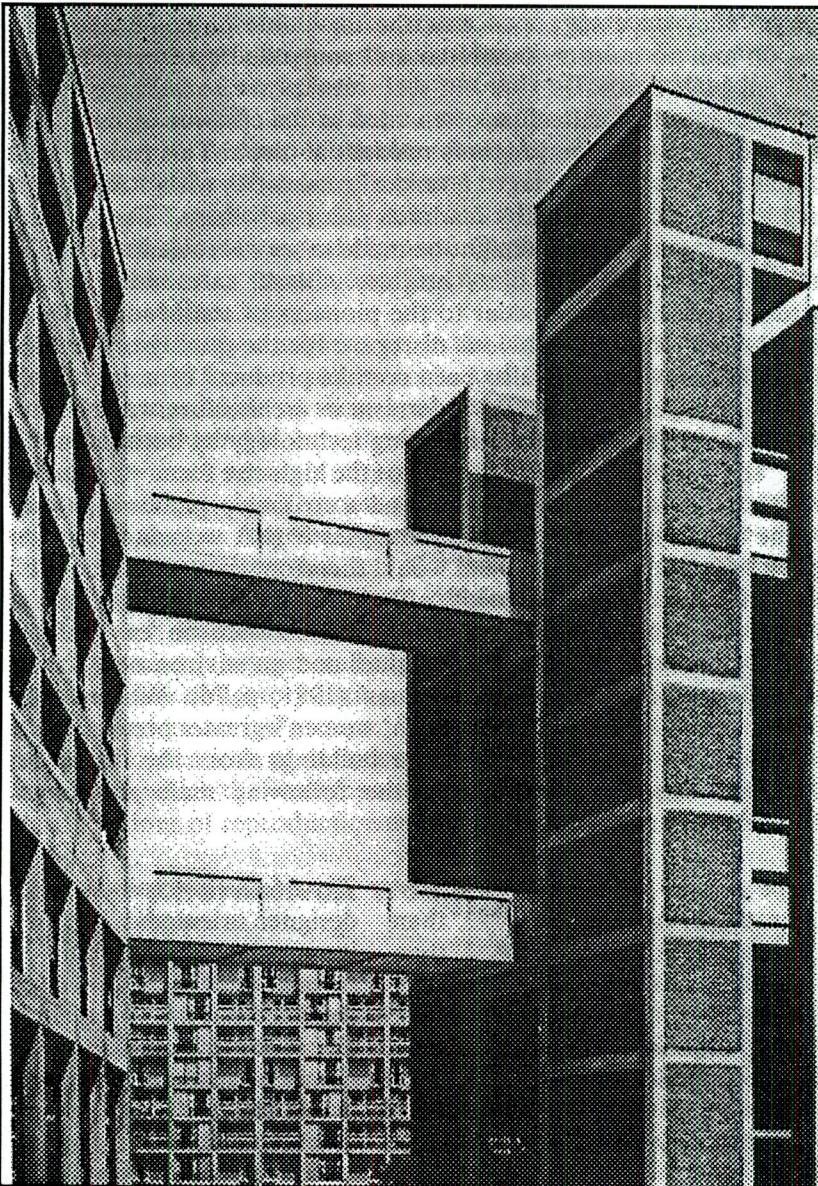


Fig 5 : Le Corbusier's theme of 'streets in the air' finds expression in Park Hill, Sheffield.

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