5-7-2016

Residual Residence

Krista Clark

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ABSTRACT

Residual Residence is an account of my process and how it is shaped and informed by the language of architecture and abstraction. It pinpoints shifts from a predominately drawing-based practice to one sensitive to the possibilities of drawing within physical space. Formal gestures of erasing, overlapping, layering and stacking are employed to play with relationships of space. For my thesis work, Residual Residence, I use the visual language of architecture and the literal physicality of building materials to create collaged drawings and site-specific installations.

INDEX WORDS: architecture, abstraction, drawing, installation, space, process
RESIDUAL RESIDENCE

by

KRISTA CLARK

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2016
RESIDUAL RESIDENCE

by

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Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
May 2016
DEDICATION

To the Westview Community
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members, Pam Longobardi, Craig Drennen, Dr. Maria Gindhart and Katherine Taylor for their invaluable feedback and support.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .................................................................................................................. v

LIST OF FIGURES ............................................................................................................................ vii

1 INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................. 1

2 EARLIER WORK ............................................................................................................................... 2

3 ARCHITECTURAL SPACE ............................................................................................................... 4

4 RESIDUAL RESIDENCE ................................................................................................................. 13

5 RESIDUAL RESIDENCE III ............................................................................................................. 21

6 CONCLUSION ................................................................................................................................. 29

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................................................................................... 30
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Clark, Krista, *Encounter*, 2013. Mixed media, 44 inches x 142 inches .......................... 3
Figure 2.2 Clark, Krista, *Passover*, 2013. Graphite, pen and ink, 44 inches x 60 inches............. 3
Figure 3.1 Clark, Krista, *Territory W 84 25.052076*’, 2015. Mixed media, 52 inches x 26 inches 8
Figure 3.2 Clark, Krista, *After Mies*, 2015. Mixed media, 38 inches x 50 inches ....................... 8
Figure 3.4 Shah, Seher, *Unite de Habitat*, 2011 ............................................................................. 9
Figure 3.3 van der Rohe, Mies, *Envisioning Architecture*, 1928. (MOMA, New York) ............ 9
Figure 3.5 Clark, Krista, *Corner Sails*, 2015. Pastel and graphite, 38 inches x 50 inches .......... 10
Figure 3.6 Clark, Krista, *English Pavement*, 2015. Pastel and graphite, 38 inches x 50 inches.. 10
Figure 3.7 Clark, Krista, *In a Manor of Views*, 2015. Pastel and graphite, 38 inches x 50 inches11
Figure 3.8 Clark, Krista, *Greener*, 2015. Mixed media, 40 inches x 26 inches ....................... 11
Figure 3.9 Clark, Krista, *Plans*, 2015. Mixed media, 40 inches x 26 inches.............................. 12
Figure 4.1 Matta-Clark, Gordon, *Cut*, 2015 (1976-77) (MOMA, New York) .......................... 17
Figure 4.2 Clark, Krista, *Plan2-1669A Interruption*, 2015. Mixed media, 38 inches x 50 inches17
Figure 4.3 English, Simon, *Emoi and moi*, 2013 ................................................................. 18
Figure 4.4 Edgar, Arceneaux, Drawings of Removal, 1999-Present........................................... 18
Figure 4.5 Clark, Krista, *Residual Residence I*, 2016. Mixed media, Dimensions variable....... 19
Figure 4.6 Sigal, Lisa, *On the Rooftop*, 2002........................................................................... 19
Figure 4.7 Clark, Krista, *Residual Residence II*, 2016. Mixed media, Dimensions variable ...... 20
Figure 5.1 Clark, Krista, Residual Residence III install, 2016 ....................................................... 25
Figure 5.2 Clark, Krista, *Residual Residence III* install 2016 .................................................... 25
Figure 5.3 Clark, Krista, *Residual Residence III* detail, 2016 .................................................... 26
Figure 5.4 Clark, Krista, *Residual Residence III* detail, 2016 .................................................. 27

Figure 5.5 Clark, Krista, *Residual Residence III*, 2016 ................................................................. 27
1 INTRODUCTION

“Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other.”¹

Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place The Perspective of Experience*

*Residual Residence* is the summation of my work originating from intuitive abstract drawings on paper to its current state of architectural investigations. Throughout my studio practice, my understanding of and relationship to space has transformed from a nebulous attachment into a tangible conversation based on observations of our built environment. For my thesis work, *Residual Residence*, I use the visual language of architecture and the literal physicality of building materials to create collaged drawings and site-specific installations. I have used formal gestures of erasing, overlapping, layering and stacking and saddled them with the task of depicting our individual exploitations of our urban landscape.

¹ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, Regents of the University of Minnesota, 1977), Pg 26.
2 EARLIER WORK

The trajectory of this body of work begins with my interest in exploring compositional space and is best described through two works: Encounter (2013) and Passover (2014).

Encounter (fig 2.1), a scroll-like drawing, is my first attempt in working with both implied and physical space. Due to the nature of the length of the drawing it requires the viewer to traverse it in stages, rather than viewing it in its entirety from a single point, thus introducing an aspect of time to the work. In addition to time, there is a spatial illusion in this piece created from the overlap of collage and watercolor that eventually dissipates in later work. Another characteristic is its unintended yet welcomed reference to the body in the inclusion of organic shapes and skin tones. My vocabulary of mark making in this piece expanded from past works: heavier, bolder graphite scrawls appear alongside more tenuous penned lines. Additionally, the process was intuitive, informed primarily by the search within the space of the paper.

In Passover (fig 2.2), a pen and graphite drawing, I eliminate all color and begin to suggest a landscape through topographic elements of pattern and textures. In this piece, the conveyed sense of space and perspective begins to shift quietly between aerial and elevated viewpoints. In both these works and other drawings at this time, I was concerned with the general idea of “space” and approached it with my own language of mark making. I desired to convey a sense of exploration and the act of expedition. The compositions were primarily suspended within the space of the paper and rarely if ever interacted with the edges. Often these drawings began from small details gleaned from photographs of aerial views of landscapes.
Figure 2.1 Clark, Krista, *Encounter*, 2013. Mixed media, 44 inches x 142 inches

Figure 2.2 Clark, Krista, *Passover*, 2013. Graphite, pen and ink, 44 inches x 60 inches
3 ARCHITECTURAL SPACE

“... while I think about images and I look at images and have them all over the studio, I’m using abstraction to make the work. The development of that abstract language is a very subconscious, intuitive thing. That doesn’t mean I don’t ever try to take apart the pieces of that language and look at them, but I’m struggling with how you find the in-between. How can abstraction really articulate something that’s happening? When you make a picture of a condition, how can it make sense of that condition? And why abstraction? There are so many other ways to make paintings about these conditions that I’m drawn to. But there’s something that’s hard to speak about that abstraction gives me access to.”

-Julie Mehretu

Julie Mehretu’s reflections on her use of abstraction echoes my own desire to understand and ultimately accept the role of abstraction in my work. Admittedly this need for self-interpretation guided me towards the familiar symbolism of architecture. The shift between my earlier drawings discussed above and my current work is primarily one of language. However, in all my work, my affinity for and attention to space has remained. The first pivot towards architectural space occurred in the drawing Territory W 84° 25.052076(2015) (fig 3.1), also the first drawing to reintroduce color. This piece alludes to the breakdown of space through the inclusion of residential lots or parcels of land. However, the transition from a personal to an architectural language appeared with the first Iteration of After Mies (2015), a response to the collage drawings of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. As I revisited the work of Mies, I found the candor in the perspective and the simplicity of the compositions refreshing. Moreover, while the drawings are representative of abstraction, they simultaneously communicate and convey very specific ideas.

2 Bomb-Artists in Conversation-Julie Mehretu by Lawrence Chua (Spring 2005)

http://bombmagazine.org/article/2714/julie-mehretu
This ability to straddle both representational and nonrepresentational space, to be able to have both, was a prominent and festering need in the search and development of my work.

The decision to appropriate the language of architecture was further prompted by my interest in the work and process of artist Seher Shah. In Shah’s words, “I considered how brutalism affects the relationship between the landscape and the object. I find that drawing always allows for a visceral way to construct these landscapes.” Much of her work is in dialogue with the architectural projects of Le Corbusier, specifically his Unite d’Habitation in Marseilles, France and the Capitol Complex in Chandigarh, India. Shah’s reply to Corbusier’s projects was to alter the perspective of the space and the architecture by flattening the structures and often turning walls back in on themselves (fig 3.4). She added her iconic flat black geometric shapes that jut across and over the space blocking out architectural details of the drawings.

It was important for me to note Shah’s process, which cultivates an ongoing dialogue and critique not only with the historical figure, Le Corbusier, but also the practice, and thus, consequences of architecture. Her denial and questioning of existing architectural spaces through the use of solid geometric shapes that block a structure and thus its authority resonated with me in emphasizing the significance and power of a simple gesture. This speaks to and confirms Mehretu’s statement, “there’s something that’s hard to speak about that abstraction gives me access to.”

At the time that I revisited Mies’ work, this language of construction was admittedly still novel to me in ways as something other than a teaching aid; instructing one how “to see” and to “create the illusion of depth”. I hoped for my work to speak about the construction and utilization of space; however, I knew my own vocabulary of mark making alone was not efficiently conveying this. Adding the established system and symbols of architecture to my own language of drawing provided me infinite possibilities of accessing this conversation. In After Mies (fig 3.2), I was more

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3 Rachel Adams and Seher Shah, “Seher Shah’s Constructed Landscapes”, Texas Society of Architects, No. 12, (July/August 2013)
or less illustrating the conventions of perspective and reacquainting myself with the system. I completed two other drawings at this time *English Pavement* (2015) and *Corner Sails* (2015). In addition to the move towards architecture, with these three drawings came a transition in my use of color and pastels. The introduction of color and its role is possibly just as important to the progression of my work as is the explicit use of perspective. The forgiving nature of the pastels allowed me to commit to color in ways I had feared to implement in the past. I was able to put down a color and if it was too intense I could erase it. This process became rewarding for several reasons. It removed the color, but still left a stain, adding depth to the drawing, and the visible signifier of the erased shape carried conceptual weight. I also valued the playfulness the colors provided to the work and the softer contrast to the mostly geometric shapes.

In the drawing *Corner Sails* (fig 3.5), there is some suggestion of an interior and exterior space, which had not occurred in earlier work. Additionally, there are recognizable aspects in the drawing, such as a doorframe, corner of a room and entrance into another space. All of this sits beneath an unknown green and black strip jutting out of the room connecting both the interior and exterior spaces. Whereas *Corner Sails* sidles more to a representational space, *English Pavement* (fig 3.6) is more akin to architectural plans. There is a sense of a built, elevated structure, but this same structure morphs into floor plans altering the perspective throughout the drawing.

The three works above became the basis for a series of drawings that culminated in the exhibit *At the Corner of the Sublime, Heights, Views and Manors* at Callanwolde Fine Arts Center. Several of the pieces in this show retained direct architectural conventions. For example, in *A Manor of Views* (2015) (fig 3.7), pink, black and blue planes interrupt and pierce one another, attempting to break the established horizon line. Other drawings included could now be considered crossover work between the Mies-inspired compositions and my thesis work, *Residual Residence*. In particular two of the drawings, *Plans* (2015) and *Greener* (2015), break from the Mies influence. Most noticeably they are both oriented vertically, a variance from all of my drawings.
mentioned thus far. The difference between the two echoes the difference described earlier between Corner Sails and English Pavement. Greener (fig 3.8) references a map or floor plan, whereas Plans (fig 3.9) represents the profile of a building. In both drawings, I incorporated collage, pastel and graphite with areas that I cut away from the paper. Unlike the previous drawings, these pieces utilize layered paper to both evoke a sense of perspective and cover up or interrupt other parts of the drawing. The maroon paper in Plans begins to operate in the same ways as Shah's overlaid black geometric shapes, interrupting and/or deleting the architectural space.
Figure 3.1 Clark, Krista, *Territory W 84 25.052076°*, 2015. Mixed media, 52 inches x 26 inches

Figure 3.2 Clark, Krista, *After Mies*, 2015. Mixed media, 38 inches x 50 inches
Figure 3.3 van der Rohe, Mies, *Envisioning Architecture*, 1928. (MOMA, New York)

Figure 3.4 Shah, Seher, *Unite de Habitat*, 2011
Figure 3.5 Clark, Krista, *Corner Sails*, 2015. Pastel and graphite, 38 inches x 50 inches

Figure 3.6 Clark, Krista, *English Pavement*, 2015. Pastel and graphite, 38 inches x 50 inches
Figure 3.7 Clark, Krista, *In a Manor of Views*, 2015. Pastel and graphite, 38 inches x 50 inches

Figure 3.8 Clark, Krista, *Greener*, 2015. Mixed media, 40 inches x 26 inches
Figure 3.9 Clark, Krista, *Plans*, 2015. Mixed media, 40 inches x 26 inches
4 RESIDUAL RESIDENCE

For my thesis work Residual Residence, I extended the gestures of the collage drawings on paper and developed a wall installation inspired by architectural observations within my community. The direct reference to the horizon line at this point felt confining and static and I found new inspiration in the work of artists Gordon Matta-Clark, Lisa Sigal and Edgar Arceneaux. It is through the work of these artists that I again expanded my visual vocabulary in order to move beyond the borders of the paper.

“Matta-Clark’s actions were formal and aesthetic investigations on a tangible architectural vocabulary that targeted the symbolic and cultural status of architecture.”4 It is important to note Matta-Clark’s work, specifically his Cut Drawings (fig 4.1) and the shift they generated in my own approach to drawing and ultimately the making of Residual Residence. This influence of cutting into and removing the paper can be seen in the two previous works mentioned: Greener and Plans. The Cut Drawings also inspired Plan2-1669A Interruption (fig 4.2). In this piece, I removed thin rectangular, linear cutouts and then continued with the addition of shapes removed from other drawings. The under layer of butcher paper, initially a throw away sheet, became a permanent part of the piece. Transplant pieces from other areas within the drawing serve as interruptions, and at the same time, reconfigure drawn blocks of color on the main paper. The desire to cut into paper always existed for me with my work, however it did not feel relevant until I was able to think of the cuts in relation to architectural space.

Earlier on in my studio practice, I noticed the marks that were left behind once I removed my paper from the wall. The marks resembled simple cartography, traces left behind from the borders of the paper. I did not realize then, but with hindsight it was at this point I began to consider the surface of the wall as material for my work. I did not venture off the paper, but instead

added the information I saw on the wall onto the paper, as this felt more genuine to my practice. For some time, I observed what has happening on the wall around and behind my work and I continued to transfer that information onto the paper. I was introduced to the work of Simon English, and I was consequently prompted to make a drawing to the scale of the wall. I was still thinking of the paper as separate from the wall, the wall merely being a support for the work. My plan at this point was to increase the size of the drawing by connecting multiple sheets of paper together, again maintaining the rectangular character of the paper. I hoped to achieve something in the vein of English’s *Emoi and moi* piece (fig 4.3), a large-scale work made up of numerous small drawings. However, although I knew I wanted to make something to this scale, the multiple small drawings still did not adequately fit my method of working.

It was not until I saw Edgar Arceneaux’s *Drawings of Removal* (1999-present) that I understood how an installation could operate, and more importantly, augment my work. *Drawings of Removal* (fig 4.4) is an ongoing performance piece, which Arceneaux began in 1999. Initially the project was Arceneaux’s response to a trip he took with his father back to his father’s birthplace, a place that he no longer recognized. Each time he continues the performance, he removes parts of the older drawings in an “attempt to trace these encapsulated movements of approach, destruction and reconstruction.”

Arceneaux sets the performance space up like a studio with layers of white paper unrolled from floor to ceiling filling one wall from one end to the other. All of his tools and materials used to make the drawing remain in the space, activating it and placing it into a state of perpetual change. For me, the layers of paper reference architectural plans, which in and of themselves refer to a constant state of construction and deconstruction within and to the space.

I began *Residual Residence I* (fig 4.5) in my studio with this in mind and added rolls of material that fell from the ceiling to the floor. I deviated from Arceneaux in that I used various rolls

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of construction material, tarpaper, tarps, and Ram-board in addition to traditional drawing paper. Although it was my intention to add several layers of unrolled materials and paper in a similar fashion to Arceneaux, I found that once I began, the layers of construction material hanging from floor to ceiling made the composition too dense. I decided to mix up the orientation from strictly vertical to horizontal to eventually attempting to break from the rectangular format entirely.

In preparation for making and installing the piece in the actual gallery space within the timespan of twenty-four hours, I planned to create the entire work in stages in my studio and then recreate it in the gallery. However, these plans were amended as a result of a studio visit with artist Avantika Bawa. Through my discussion with Bawa, I decided not only would the installation in the gallery be a new and separate piece from that in my studio, but in addition, I would make a new work prior to the final piece. Armed with Bawa’s invaluable feedback, I began Residual Residence II.

“It was a forty-foot long wall painting; and it was the first time that I ever worked directly on the wall. And for me, it seemed like... It was almost like a gift, it provided an entry into the painting that I had never anticipated. That the frame of the painting now became the entire room, and the viewer had to walk down the painting using the body. And somehow the language or the body sort of has a kind of honesty that allows the viewer—as you’re experiencing the painting with your body to take it in—take in the visuals, I think creates less of a barrier in a way.” —Lisa Sigal

As I began Residual Residence II, this process, still new to me, was fortified with Bawa’s advice along with the influence of the work of Lisa Sigal. As my process develops so does my appreciation for Sigal’s bold, yet poetic work that successfully blurs the line between painting, sculpture and installation (fig 4.6). She arranges the elements in her work from paint to screens to

6 Lisa Sigal. “Lecture by Lisa Sigal”. Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, Maine. 2006
drywall and manages to retain a sense of lightness no matter the material, always allowing air to circulate through the work. This is the space I hoped to cultivate in *Residual Residence II*. The wall in this rendition was an active component as I left more of it exposed, displaying marks from the previous installation and drawings (fig 4.7). In this way, there is a connection back to Arceneaux’s *Removal Drawing* and his inclusion of older material each time he performs the work. I opened up the composition allowing more space to rest between the materials and ultimately more movement within the entire installation. I also included a lengthy piece of tarp, which performed several roles. On one end, it functioned two dimensionally as a drawn element, defining the top and side of a structure. The other end activated the physical space and reached from the wall to the ceiling and back to the wall. Additionally, I incorporated more transparent papers, glassine and tracing paper that allowed for surprising moments of depth, which did not occur in *Residual Residence I*. 
Figure 4.1 Matta-Clark, Gordon, *Cut*, 2015 (1976-77) (MOMA, New York)

Figure 4.2 Clark, Krista, *Plan2-1669A Interruption*, 2015. Mixed media, 38 inches x 50 inches
Figure 4.3 English, Simon, *Emoi and moi*, 2013

Figure 4.4 Edgar, Arceneaux, *Drawings of Removal*, 1999-Present
Figure 4.5 Clark, Krista, *Residual Residence I*, 2016. Mixed media, Dimensions variable

Figure 4.6 Sigal, Lisa, *On the Rooftop*, 2002
Figure 4.7 Clark, Krista, *Residual Residence II*, 2016. Mixed media, Dimensions variable
5 RESIDUAL RESIDENCE III

While planning the installation of Residual Residence III, I decided to record both the installation and de-installation of the piece in the gallery. During the production of Residual Residence I and II, I recognized the physical difference in making the wall drawing in comparison to my works on paper. The physical difference also contributed to the mental difference regarding preparation for each of the works. Making a drawing on paper can produce a meditative state, while an installation involves the entire body and requires a different mindset. This points back to Sigal’s statement referring to the experience of the body of the viewer. In both the making and the viewing of the wall installation, the body is required to move alongside the work, inserting a performance aspect that does not exist in the same way in viewing two-dimensional works smaller than the body.

“One of the qualities of the performative artwork is presumably its unrepeatability; Matta-Clark’s cuts, that is, were individual and historical acts, We may see their traces and look at their documentation, but the cuts themselves remained resolutely ephemeral, one-time experiences”7 Residual Residence III employed fragments from both earlier installations in addition to new pieces added in the gallery. Unlike Matta-Clark’s building cuts, I can take the pieces and repeat the composition on a different site. However, the drawn marks added directly to the wall of the gallery, in a sense, are not repeatable. For these reasons, the performance aspect of making the work, as well as the unrepeatability of some of the marks, it was important for me to record the installation and de-installation of the work (fig 5.1, fig 5.2).

I began the installation by adding marks directly to the wall similar to the marks left behind from the drawing papers in my studio. As I learned from my studio visit with Bawa, I was conscious of including linear marks that referenced proportions of the gallery space in addition

7 Tom McDonough, How to do Things With Buildings, Art in America, pg 168 (November 2007)
to those that signified the body. Although the installation was site specific, there were a few combinations and gestures I enjoyed in the first stages that I repeated to some extent in the gallery installation. An example of this is the string of tarp that extended from the wall to the ceiling with the intention again of activating two-dimensional space as well as the actual space. Though I recycled the materials from the first installations, I often changed their orientation and/or removed sections from them and played with new relationships between the materials that had not occurred previously.

In addition to the wall installation, two framed drawings make up the entirety of *Residual Residence III*. In the early planning stages, I intended to have only the installation in the space, leaving the remaining three walls bare. I then decided to include a small, framed drawing on the opposing wall to the installation, hung off center far to the right. The final change included a second small, framed drawing on the wall adjacent to the installation. Beneath the second drawing was a painted green strip, meant to indicate molding. The strip extended beyond both sides of the drawing and turned the corner, running about two feet in length at the bottom of the installation. The purpose of the green strip was to create a shift in interior and exterior, as well as create a sense of a domestic space. The drawing adjacent to the installation and above the green strip functioned on a different level than the drawing on the opposing wall. The latter, through its placement opposite the installation could be read as mirroring the installation (fig 5.3). However, on its own wall and in its own space, it remained a drawing. The drawing adjacent to the installation operated as a drawing as well as possibly a sculptural element within the installation (fig 5.4).

By combining drawing and building materials, I was able to reference both the language of drawing and that of architecture. I chose the building materials based on one of two criteria, either their similarity to a roll of paper and/or on my observation of their placement on abandoned or neglected properties in my neighborhood. I layered and wove the materials
through each other, and in a few instances, allowed them to drape and fall away from the wall. Although I chose some of the materials based on their signification within my community, once in the studio space or the gallery, my decisions were largely formal. However, these formalities were meant to evoke a larger discussion (fig 5.5).
Figure 5.1 Clark, Krista, Residual Residence III install, 2016

Figure 5.2 Clark, Krista, *Residual Residence III* install 2016
Figure 5.3 Clark, Krista, *Residual Residence III* detail, 2016
Figure 5.4 Clark, Krista, *Residual Residence III* detail, 2016

Figure 5.5 Clark, Krista, *Residual Residence III*, 2016
6 CONCLUSION

Residual Residence, and the drawings I produced prior to this work, all utilize the language of architecture and abstraction to explore formal constructions within representational and actual space. Through the process of developing the wall installations, a shift occurred in how I hope to situate and contextualize my work within a larger framework. I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to create two separate, yet related, bodies of work for display in a relatively short amount of time. As a result, I was able to observe how each body of work operated within its given space. I responded unexpectedly, seeing my larger works on paper framed for the first time at Callanwolde. Surprisingly, it did not provide the satisfaction I anticipated. Until this point, I always displayed the drawings directly on the wall with pushpins, creating space between them and the wall. For me, this allowed the drawings to remain active - referential of plans, finished or otherwise. In their framed state they became static, as well as removed from the space of the room and separate from the wall.

The process of making Residual Residence opened up my way of thinking about my work, and has presented me with infinite possibilities that are no longer limited to the dimensions of a single sheet of paper. I now have things to consider that I found to be irrelevant in my earlier work. Making the installation highlighted the possibilities in the play of light, shadow and movement between different materials. More importantly, the list of materials now includes the floor, ceiling and walls of the space.


Tuan, Yi-Fu. Space and Place The Perspective of Experience. Minneapolis: Regents of the University of Minnesota, 1977.