

diseñadora alemana Lilly Reich para la exposición de moda femenina de Berlín, y la sala de cristal creada para la famosa exposición de la vivienda de Stuttgart dirigida por el propio Mies. En el primer caso, la utilización del terciopelo para crear grandes planos colgantes y puros de tela parece anunciar sorprendentemente la morfología de la Habitación Roja. En el segundo, el concepto espacial mismo y los recorridos de entrada y salida en el espacio diseñado por Lynch se encuentran ya prefigurados. Puesto que el propio Lynch a menudo se ha declarado admirador de la estética de la Bauhaus (lo que parece una generalización), podemos preguntarnos legítimamente si había estudiado la obra de Mies y se dejó influir por ella. Pero la posibilidad de que conociera precisamente estas dos obras es francamente remota, como queda claramente de manifiesto cuando se conocen sus opiniones (existe un largo libro-entrevista con Lynch publicado por Chris Rodley).

La realidad nunca es tan sencilla, y Lynch, como antes Tati, sólo daba una respuesta intuitiva a lo que consideraba un misterio moderno. Los usuarios vivimos los espacios que los arquitectos han creado. Pero son los artistas contemporáneos quienes nos permiten entenderlos. El cine es, por antonomasia, un arte del espacio, y como tal es el medio de expresión que mejor explica y analiza la arquitectura, sobre todo si ésta plantea interrogantes difusos e insondables, que no pueden ser abordados desde el punto de vista académico.

- 1 Franz Schulze, "Mies van der Rohe in America". En *Chicago Architecture and Design 1923-1993: Reconfiguration of an American Metropolis*, ed. John Zukowsky (Munich: Prestel, 2000), 143.
- 2 Charles Jencks, *Modern Movements in Architecture* (London: Penguin, 1980), 96.



## THE MOST INCONVENIENT ELEMENT IN EISENMAN: REDEFINING DOMESTICITY AND ROMANCE IN HOUSE VI

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1095 Words

"The most inconvenient element in Eisenman's design, however, was the slot in the bedroom floor, which sliced right through the middle of our bed. This forced us to sleep in separate beds, which was not our custom. Foolishly, we lived with the twin beds for many years until the renovation in 1990."  
– Suzanne Frank (1994)

If architecture is an agent of longing, created through separation, desire is created by placing the other just out of reach. When applied to a couple within their home, architectural planes can create a romance of intimacy and strength beyond physical desire. But Peter Eisenman's House VI, designed for Suzanne and Richard Frank, vividly demonstrates the power of *separation* to create desire in domestic romance. Using tectonic devices, Eisenman's provocation of Suzanne and Richard Frank results in the representation of a specific and personal relationship between the couple, the architecture and the architect. While many regard House VI primarily as a series of compositional and formal tectonic moves (that disregard client and program), the deliberate and obtuse moves to impact the daily life of the couple

suggest a conscious intention to move from a theoretical exercise into the realm of intimate experience. Eisenman is not removed from the house's built reality; he holds it at arm's length until critical moments redefine the most necessary of daily routines.

Romance between two people manifests itself in daily, spatial rituals: dining, sleeping, bathing, cooking, storing. These acts of living in tandem play out as a choreography through space, marking the architecture physically and emotionally through repetition. They become shared rituals, a passage and marker of time between couples. Eisenman instructs this choreography through inversion: taking a space of intimate comfort and transposing it into a building whose function is to express his own geometric theory. In *Peter Eisenman's House VI: The Client's Response*, Suzanne Frank writes, "The provision of glass slots in the walls, floors and ceilings that create throughout the space a kind of virtual architecture, a kind of desiccated house."<sup>1</sup> These described tectonic interruptions result in a home "that is, the detachment of the fundamental modes of conception and perception."<sup>2</sup> This act of reversal simultaneously ridicules domesticity and exposes shared private life;



House VI interior. Drawing by Kenismael Santiago-Pagán.

making what is normally protected largely exposed.

The Franks adopt a purposeful choreography to adapt to House VI's challenges. Dining conversation and seating arrangement are tweaked to bend around columns and planes. The choreography of the marital bed now must navigate a gap providing new and delicate physical compromise. Higher kitchen benches see a new posture of daily inhabitation formed, the set of which are the objects there is no longer room to store. While they describe the house as a space somewhat laborious to live in, this transformation of a couple's daily spatial interaction into a much more conscious and purposeful set of movements has modified Eisenman's interruptions into personalised romantic choreography. Eisenman had designed the Franks out of a daily functional program, instead placing them in his perfect geometry—an architectural version of an unobtainable perfect and static state of uncomfortable domesticity. His most intimate separation, that of the marital bed, is the space in which longing is most acutely and significantly felt.

This pointed interruption of the intimate continues for all guests of the house. For instance, the use of a lavatory is no longer simple, becoming a dance through the house. Rather than passively relieving oneself, the Franks and their visitors carve a passage through the master bedroom—or reveal a hidden lavatory within a cupboard. The storage space is made to accommodate “vertical and intersecting planes.”<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the

mundane activity of unpacking and putting away becomes instead a series of bodily extensions, reaches, and twists. In the dynamics of domesticity, a family meal is no longer passive in its preparation, consumption, or conversation, as evidenced when Frank writes:

The arrangement of the kitchen facilities departs from the standard U-form, making for extra and unnecessary movement during the preparation of food. To accord with the system of horizontal planes, the counter tops are set lower than usual. [...] Easy conversation during meal times is hard to sustain because of the notational columns that for no structural reason descend into the only convenient space for a dining table.<sup>4</sup>

Habits that are normally performed without thought have been transposed into beautifully deliberate, elaborate, and intimate duets between the Franks. No longer stagnant, at a distance, or removed we see the Franks engaged in a *pas de deux* within their home, where each partner is at play with the other. Their lives, no longer solitary existences, now artfully oscillate into Eisenman's imagined choreography. Inverting the Frank's daily exchange through his deliberately antidomestic interruptions, House VI fundamentally engages with a discussion of passive or protective built form suggesting that interactive and romantic experiences should be negated. Their interaction is dynamic, everything between them is “shared and exposed.”<sup>5</sup> The longing and desire created by separation is redefined in the actions of compromise, becoming an intentional *pas de deux* rather than an automatic daily habit.

Given the ability to facilitate, encourage, and cause daily domestic choreography between lovers, it seems that architecture becomes a third-party participant in the Franks's marriage. No longer passive or banal, tectonics become necessary, participating, and intertwined romantic elements. The architecture's involvement adds complexity to its definition, function, and position within a relationship. In their rejection of habitual romance and the deliberateness of their insertion, Eisenman's columns become active elements redefining the Franks's relationship: when the column is no longer structural, it places itself in pointed participation. Eisenman's intense focus on the process of his design render House VI the product of a romance between designer and outcome. His house is, in a sense, a child of the marriage between himself and his development process, where planes become the fleshy product of a union between four lovers.

- 1 Suzanne S. Frank, *Peter Eisenman's House VI: The Client's Response* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1994), 13.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 22.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 31.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 32.
- 5 Michael Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic* (London: Tavistock, 1973), 107, in Emma Jane Cheatle, “Part-architecture: The Maison De Verre through the Large Glass” (Doctoral Thesis, University College London, 2013), 248.