

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Museum of Modern Art

MAJOR EXHIBITION AT MOMA EXPLORES DEVELOPMENTS IN THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN NEW ARCHITECTURE OF THE HOME AND CONTEMPORARY LIFE

26 Innovative Dwellings by International Group of Architects Represent
New Architectural Trends

First Project in Auchincloss Series of Thematic Architecture Exhibitions

The Un-Private House
July 1-October 5, 1999

More than simply a retreat from the world, the private home is a world within itself--a literal and symbolic expression of cultural and architectural values and ideals. Beginning July 1, The Museum of Modern Art presents *The Un-Private House*, an exhibition of 26 contemporary homes by a diverse group of international architects. The selections reflect the recent transformation of the private house in response to evolving architectural theory and changing ways of living. Among the cultural conditions examined are emerging demographic patterns, shifting definitions of privacy in light of new media in the home, and changing concepts of work and leisure. The exhibition is organized by Terence Riley, Chief Curator, Department of Architecture and Design, and remains on view through October 5, 1999.

The Un-Private House is the first of five projects in The Lily Auchincloss Series of Architecture Exhibitions, named in honor of the Museum's longtime trustee and patron of its Department of Architecture and Design, who died last year. The series of biennial exhibitions will explore major issues in contemporary architecture.

Since the inception of the private house more than 400 years ago, the social conditions and structures that drove its development--privacy, the separation of living space and work space, traditional family life, and notions of domesticity--have all changed drastically. In response, a new generation of house designers is addressing not only critical architectural issues, but also the cultural parameters of the private home. "The private house has been a laboratory for architectural invention throughout the twentieth century," says Mr. Riley. "As a preview of architecture in the next century, these houses can be viewed as signs of things to come."

All 26 homes featured in the exhibition have been designed since 1988. Sixteen of the houses are already built, four are in stages of planning or construction, and six remain unbuilt. The completed homes are located in the United States, Japan, South America, and Europe. Designs range from New York-style lofts to row houses and detached suburban residences.

The Un-Private House galleries are designed to evoke domestic spaces. Rather than the more familiar pedestals, twenty-six architectural models,

representing twenty-four of the projects in the exhibition, rest on spare wooden tables, chairs, beds, and other domestic objects designed by David Schaefer, Bill Katz, and Andrée Putman of Furniture Co. Schaefer also designed the chairs that furnish a reading area in the center of the gallery, where visitors may examine books on the architects. Hundreds of photographs and drawings of the featured homes are printed in large scale directly on custom-made wallpaper hung throughout the galleries. Two video presentations in the galleries allow visitors to imagine the homes as three-dimensional structures.

The interactive environment of the exhibition is a collaboration between MoMA and the MIT Media Lab. Visitors enter the exhibition space by crossing a "welcome mat," projected in light directly on the gallery floor, that responds electronically to the visitors' presence. An interactive table in the center of the galleries takes visitors on a virtual tour of all 26 projects. Though at first sight the table appears to be bare, technology embedded in its surface may be activated by touch, prompting photos and text to be projected directly onto the tabletop. Visitors may browse through a series of diagrams and floor plans, as well as photographs of the homes, architects, and clients, simply by touching the illuminated areas on the table's surface. (See separate release for more information.)

The Influence of New Technology

The rapid growth of new media has dramatically altered concepts of privacy within the home. Today's home is a permeable structure--receiving and transmitting images, sound, text, and data--that allows us to be physically alone while still connected to the outside world. As a result, we are witnessing redefinitions of the meaning and significance of privacy, permanence, and the boundaries between the virtual and the actual.

Herzog and de Meuron's Kramlich House and Media Collection, to be completed in 2000, is designed for a California couple as a home and as a place to display their extensive collection of electronic art. In the windowless underground level of the house, walls act as screens for the projection of the owners' collection of video art, creating a unique gallery space. In the main living spaces on the floor above, the curving partitions that define the rooms are also screens, giving the appearance that the fictional and the real flow into one another.

Both the interior and exterior surfaces of Hariri & Hariri's conceptual Digital House (1998) are devised as "smart" glass skins, composed of liquid crystal display (LCD) blocks, that perform various functions to assist or enhance daily living. Images and information providing advice on food preparation appear over the kitchen counter, while digital guests appear in the living room for a virtual visit. Bedrooms are equipped with recording devices that allow sleepers to record and replay their dreams. More than just an environment characterized by the discreet pervasive presence of computers, the Digital House's surfaces and devices are interactive in themselves.

The Changing Family

The radical transformation of the family since World War II--rising numbers of couples without children, same-sex couples, people living alone, and families with children from previous marriages--has resulted in new domestic requirements that differ from those of the conventional nuclear family. Joel Sanders's unbuilt House for a Bachelor (1999) broadly addresses the many issues that face men and women who choose to live alone or in relationships that are not defined by marriage and

child-rearing. An extensive renovation of an existing 1950s house in Minneapolis, Sanders's design reinterprets the American suburban single-family residence for a single professional man. Rather than dedicating contained rooms to specific functions, Sanders removes interior walls to create a spacious area that incorporates kitchen, living, and dining spaces. The master bedroom suite features a similar open flow of spaces between the bedroom, dressing room, and bathing area. A "subterranean" backyard, out of the neighbors' sight, leads directly into the master bath, and the continuous outdoor space can be used as a private gym or patio.

Another new domestic type is the family composed of parents with children from previous marriages. Homa and Sima Farjadi's BV House (1999), designed for such a family, is conceived in three distinct components: the parents' spaces, which include a bedroom suite as well as offices; the children's spaces; and the shared social spaces. The home's design combines ideas of intimacy and separation: an indoor lily pond lies between the parents' suite and the social spaces, and the children's "house" is freestanding but connected to the main house by a covered walkway. In this way, the elements that separate also connect, affording parents and children a sense of autonomy and privacy within their newly constructed family.

Some families seek a more personalized architecture in response to specific situations. Rem Koolhaas of OMA designed the Maison à Bordeaux (1998) for a man who uses a wheelchair, and his family. The three-story home is flexible--all the major architectural elements can be manipulated for convenience, comfort, and variety. The entire 25-foot-long glass facade on the main living level can be moved to create an open-air room, allowing the client to be outside without leaving his home. In addition, sliding screens fitted into ceiling tracks can be shifted to control the quality of light. Artwork may be displayed on these screens to change the appearance of the space. Perhaps the most innovative feature of the house is a 10-foot-square elevator platform, open on all sides, that moves freely through an open space in the center of each floor. This arrangement gives mobility to the owner, and as the elevator platform travels between floors it temporarily transforms the architecture of the house.

The Home Office Redefined

Technological advancements have effected a new relationship between home and work. Rather than serving as an escape from work, today's home often merges work space with living space, as exemplified by Frank Lupo and Daniel Rowen's Lipschutz/Jones Apartment (1988) in Manhattan. With the globalization of business, the owners, both traders on Wall Street, no longer have fixed work hours. Digital screens visible throughout their loft display financial information for international currency markets. An additional seven screens situated throughout the home provide the inhabitants with the option of round-the-clock instant access to changing markets.

When completed, Winka Dubbeldam's Millbrook Residence (1997) will house a couple whose various work and living activities--like the interior and exterior of the house--are woven together, in the architect's words, "like strands of a Celtic knot." The two owners will work on different levels of the house. He, a graphic designer, will work in the ground-floor media room, while she will work on fashion-industry projects in a studio on the upper level. Though they work separately in their daily routines, the layout ensures that their paths continually cross.

Also designed for a professional couple who work from home, the Möbius House (1998), by Ben van Berkel is based on the seamless Möbius strip. The more public spaces lead to the offices and private spaces, which in turn give way to the public spaces, and so on. This architectural loop produces a continuity and integration of living and working areas. The concrete and glass exterior of the house, too, seems to fold back on itself: from one perspective the glass is a skin slipped over a concrete house; from another, the building is a glass house framed by concrete.

Convertible Living Space

As the home's identity expands to encompass multiple functions--work, leisure, entertaining, family gatherings, private time--so does its architecture become more fluid and versatile. Several of the projects address the need for a flexible, convertible living space that can be reconfigured to serve different functions.

For example, the Ost/Kuttner Apartment (1997) was designed by Sulan Kolatan and William Mac Donald to function as a pied-à-terre for a Manhattan couple and, occasionally, as a corporate apartment. To serve both purposes, the architects formed three sleeping areas with varying degrees of privacy. When arranged vertically, a series of panels serves to divide the primary space in half; when arranged horizontally, the panels may be transformed into a grand dinner table for entertaining.

Similarly, the Holley Loft (1995), a 3800-square-foot residence for a single man in Manhattan, designed by Thomas Hanrahan and Victoria Meyers, is bisected by a 48-foot-long steel-and-glass wall. This wall, which runs the length of the apartment, separates the private spaces (bedroom and bathroom) from the public spaces (living, dining, and entertaining areas). The glass partition, clear in some areas and sandblasted in others, does not so much divide these areas as define them within a fluid and continuous space. Ceiling-height panels of solid wood balance the visual lightness of the glass and provide the house's owner with the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, such as visitors or overnight guests. When the panels are open, the loft has the illusion of endless depth. When the panels are closed, they demarcate one room; when closed further, the panels clearly define two rooms.

Situated in a heavily populated area of Tokyo, Shigeru Ban's Curtain Wall House (1995) fulfills the client's wish for a house that is not merely constructed from contemporary materials, but one that explicitly embodies what the architect describes as "the 'open and free' attitude of contemporary living." As in a traditional Japanese home, the privacy and character of the house's interior spaces can be altered by lightweight partitions. In this case, a dramatic fabric curtain spans the second and third floors of the house, taking the place of solid exterior walls. This curtain can be opened and closed to manipulate the view and interior light, and the effects of sunlight, wind, or rain. When opened, it exposes the interior of the second- and third-floor living spaces, while wraparound terraces further extend the home into the surrounding city.

Mr. Riley writes, "The cultural definition of the private house is undergoing a great change, a transformation that, in itself, can generate significant architectural invention. This change is taking place at a time when architecture is being fueled by enormous new technical and material resources. The private houses discussed here, and the architects who designed them, can thus be seen as not only reconfiguring the domestic landscape but laying the groundwork for the first architectural debates of the twenty-first century."

The exhibition is made possible by The Lily Auchincloss Fund for Contemporary Architecture, and is the first in a series of five exhibitions to be supported by this program. The interactive environment of the exhibition was jointly developed by the MIT Media Lab and The Museum of Modern Art and generously supported by Max Palevsky. Generous support for the installation design is provided by Furniture Co. The accompanying publication is made possible by Elise Jaffe and Jeffrey Brown. The symposium is made possible by Philips Electronics. Additional funding was provided by an anonymous donor, NEC Technologies, the Norman and Rosita Winston Foundation, The Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art, and Nearlife, Inc.

EDUCATIONAL BROCHURE

An informative tabloid will be available to visitors at the entrance to the exhibition. The publication features images of each project and short descriptions.

PUBLIC PROGRAM

A symposium will be held on September 15 in the Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1.

PUBLICATION

The Un-Private House, by Terence Riley. 270 illustrations, 99 in color. 152 pages, 9 x 10 1/2". Paperbound \$29.95, distributed in the United States and Canada by Harry N. Abrams and available in the MoMA Book Store.

TRAVEL

A national and international tour is planned.

No. 50

[press office](#)

[menu](#)

©1998 The Museum of Modern Art, New York