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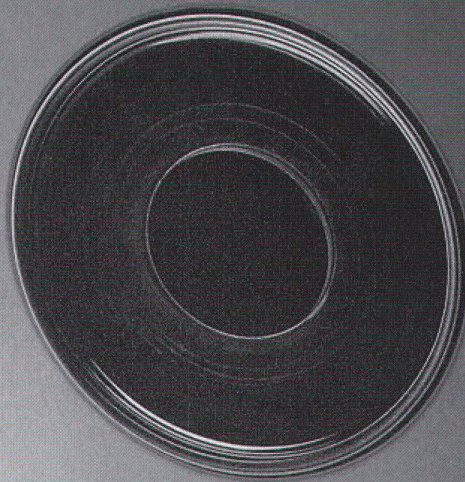
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most modernist architects, space was universal, and was intended to flood both public and private realms equally. Le Corbusier spoke of l'espace indicible, which can be roughly translated as "ineffable space" but properly denotes an idea of infinity, of interpenetration between house and city, of an ever-expanding horizon. Space in these terms, at least after Frank Lloyd Wright, was even politically charged – the Italian critic Bruno Zevi argued insistently after the War that Wrightian space was synonymous with democratic space, as against a previous and un-democratic "Fascist" inattention to space.

Space as reflex and obsession

With hindsight, the specific kinds of politics embedded in the idea of modernist space have inevitably become more ambiguous, as the trumpeted beneficence of modern architecture and its attendant "space" for contemporary living has all too clearly demonstrated its shortcomings, and as alliances between modernist architects and unsavory patrons in the Thirties have been revealed by historians.

But the notion that space is good has hardly been erased completely from our mental vocabularies. This might well be a result of what one might call space's historical pedigree. As a product of theories of psychological extension – either of projection or introjection – space naturally and at an early stage took on the characteristics of a preliminary introduction wielded

by educators opposed to the twin phobias of late-nineteenth century urbanism – agoraphobia and claustrophobia. To open up the city would, in Le Corbusier's terms, and in much post-CIAM rhetoric, rid it of all closed, dirty, dangerous, and unhealthy corners; and, in the absence of dramatic contrast between open and closed spaces, rid metropolitan populations of any spatial anxiety they might have felt in the first wave of urbanization.

Perhaps it was simply the residue of this attitude that partly accounted for the virulence of the local authority's attacks on Rachel Whiteread's House; attacks that saw it as standing in the way of slum-clearance, of blocking the planting of healthy greenery, of creating a monument to an unhealthy and claustrophobic past. On another level, that of the "house," the simple act of filling-in space, of closing what was once open would naturally counter the received wisdom of a century of planning dogma that open is better if not absolutely good. Rachel Whiteread's House was a clear enough statement on the surface, and one carefully executed with all the material attention paid by a sculptor to casting a complicated figure piece. But seldom has an event of this kind – acknowledged as temporary, and supported by the artistic community – evoked so vituperative a reaction in the popular press. It was as if we had been transported back in time to the moment when Duchamp signed the "Water Fountain." Since its

unveiling in October 1993, Whiteread's house has been portrayed in cartoons, and in the critical press, with varying degrees of allegory and irony, even its supporters resorting to punning headlines – of the order of "the house that Rachel built," "home work," "house calls," "a concrete idea," "the house that Rachel unbuilt," "home truths," "no house room to art." House looks to the always uneasy status of the monument within architecture, wavering between art and use. As Adolf Loos recognized, and Hegel had theorized, architecture's symbolic role at once constitutes its "essence" – art turned to symbolizing life in three dimensional form – while its use role entirely undermines this primal symbolism – architecture defined not in terms of idea but of function. Whiteread undermines this binary problem by deliberately confusing sculpture and architecture, and by developing a kind of mutant object that cannot be defined in terms of either, indeed that asks to be defined by this very refusal.

Modernism made palpable

Far from undermining modernism's spatial ideology, Whiteread's House reinforces it, and further, does this on its own terms. For, since the development of Gestalt psychology, space has been subject to all the intellectual and experiential reversals involved in identifying figure and ground, as well as the inevitable ambiguities between the two that were characteristic,

