

Drawing Parallels

Atelier Bow-Wow and the Representation of Domesticity

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Abstract

Architectural drawings are not objective representations of built architecture. This dissertation is a study of how architectural representations, specifically in the form of drawings, can influence the perception of domesticity.

In early 2009, Japanese architectural firm Atelier Bow-Wow held an exhibition at Redcat Gallery in Los Angeles, California. Entitled “Small Case Study House”, the exhibition was loosely instigated as a manifestation of their research on the landmark Case Study Houses built in the 1960s.¹ Made up of three micro-structures, the exhibition spoke of an affinity for a casual and relaxed existence in California.

The dissertation is interested in the brochure that was produced for the exhibition. With the drawings on the brochure as a primary reference, the paper seeks to cast architectural representations as capable of propagating an ideological position on domesticity.

Using Julius Shulman's photographs of the Case Study Houses as a comparison, it will argue that the drawings serve as a means for Atelier Bow-Wow to depict a lifestyle. The paper will contend that this depiction is not just the aftermath of a stylistic endeavor, but stems from an ideological

¹ Reading from Plate 1 (brochure for Small Case Study House).

reaction against excess. In the course of this paper, it will be proposed that this Spartan lifestyle is germane to living in a Japanese household, and was developed in response to the trying economic conditions after the Japanese economic bubble.

The aim of this dissertation is to put forward that architectural drawings need not be mere depictions of the physical building. Through the dissertation, it will be shown that architectural representations are capable of possessing a symbolic order; that is to critique on a social condition, informing one of the architect's ideology and influencing the perception of domesticity, in this case.

A parallel study, which allows for the practical application of Atelier Bow-Wow's drawing technique will be conducted. This study will make a documentation of domesticity on a block of flats in Queenstown, Singapore. Using a drawing technique that is similar to that of Atelier Bow-Wow's, the parallel study will survey common corridor spaces in this flat. The study is to performatively analyze the limitations of Atelier Bow-Wow drawing technique.

Key Words: Architectural Drawings, Atelier Bow-Wow, Japanese Domesticity, Subjectivity in Representation.