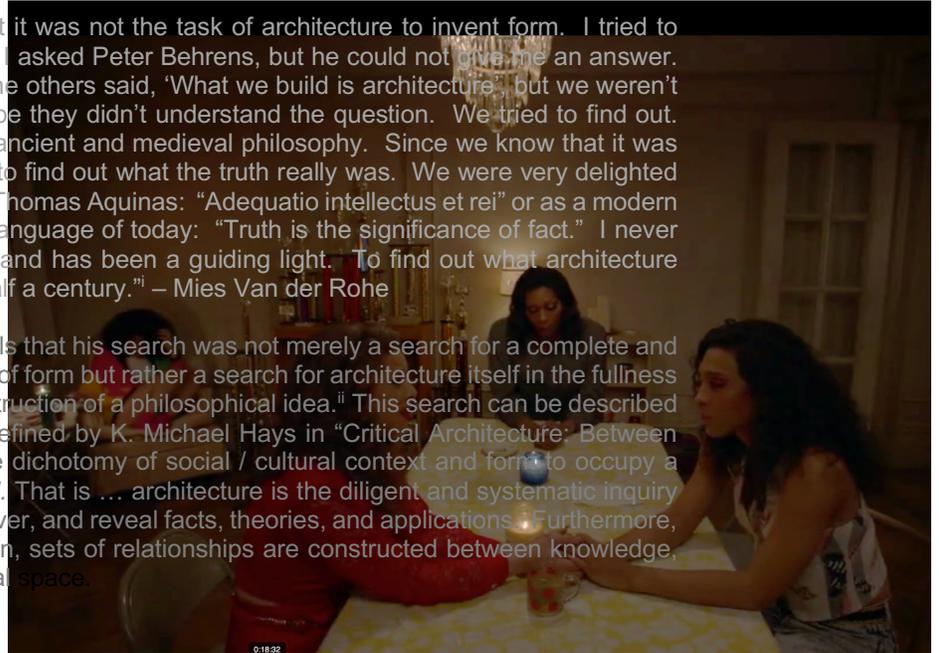


## Alter (I.) Bodies / Performing Domesticity

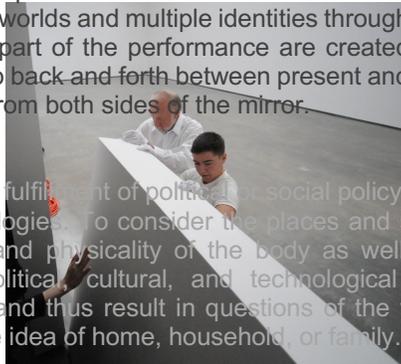
"It then became clear to me that it was not the task of architecture to invent form. I tried to understand what that task was. I asked Peter Behrens, but he could not give me an answer. He did not ask that question. The others said, 'What we build is architecture', but we weren't satisfied with this answer. Maybe they didn't understand the question. We tried to find out. We searched in the quarries of ancient and medieval philosophy. Since we know that it was a question of the truth, we tried to find out what the truth really was. We were very delighted to find a definition of truth by St. Thomas Aquinas: "Adequatio intellectus et rei" or as a modern philosopher expresses it in the language of today: "Truth is the significance of fact." I never forgot this. It was very helpful, and has been a guiding light. To find out what architecture really is took me fifty years --- half a century."<sup>i</sup> – Mies Van der Rohe

The full context of Mies' rumination reveals that his search was not merely a search for a complete and rational truth resolved in the construction of form but rather a search for architecture itself in the fullness of its complexities, ambiguities, and construction of a philosophical idea.<sup>ii</sup> This search can be described as the search for "critical architecture" defined by K. Michael Hays in "Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form," as cutting across the dichotomy of social / cultural context and form to occupy a position that is *resistant* and *oppositional*. That is ... architecture is the diligent and systematic inquiry or investigation in order to discover, uncover, and reveal facts, theories, and applications. Furthermore, in the process of inquiry and investigation, sets of relationships are constructed between knowledge, social / cultural contexts, and architectural space.



## QUESTIONS OF SPACE

Yet the current discussions regarding the re-disciplining of architecture and the need to reign in architecture from the discursive spaces of radical discourse and production leads away from critical architecture. For critical architecture is not dependent upon typology, compositional signatures, or representational quotations. The complexities of modernism reveal that within the taut glass skins are the ghosts of bodies that have been colonized, repressed, marginalized and even fetishized due to a teleology of Western humanism predicated upon an ideal subject. Modernism's desire and its ghosts reveal radical and discursive spaces of gender, sexual identity, and otherness. Such is the case of the artist Jimmy Robert's *Imitation of Lives* that transformed Philip Johnson's Glass House into a *Kammerspiel* of movement, poetry, and dance that connects two worlds and multiple identities through the play of the pavilion's reflectivity and transparency. In each part of the performance are created racialized and sexualized representations of subjectivities that slip back and forth between present and past and elicit apparitions of the named and unnamed identities from both sides of the mirror.



## QUESTIONS OF DOMESTICITY

The design of housing is much more than the fulfillment of political or social policy and equally more than the static solutions of architectural typologies. To consider the places and spaces where the body dwells is to consider the movement and physicality of the body as well as its functions, constructs, and identity within its socio-political, cultural, and technological contexts. These parameters have become increasingly fluid and thus result in questions of the very definitions of "domestic" and "domesticity" as relating to the idea of home, household, or family.

Hence, beginning with Kolbe's *Dancer* to the work of contemporary choreographers, the studio will examine contemporary issues of the body and identity, dwelling in the city including abled-bodies, dis-abled bodies, gendered and non-gender conforming bodies, and other abject and non-compliant bodies.



<sup>i</sup> Peter Carter, "Mies van der Rohe An Appreciation on the Occasion of his 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday, *Architectural Design*, v. 31 (Mar. 1961) p. 97.

<sup>ii</sup> Professor Kenneth Frampton sites this statement from Mies van der Rohe in *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* to establish the significance of fact in Mies' rational tectonic language. This rational tectonic language could be confounded, as Frampton points out, by the ambiguities and indescribable spatial and material qualities present in such works as the Barcelona Pavilion.