Catalogue non-exhaustif d'altérations performatives

Claire Ana Logoz

"For example the «matter» from which the speaking subject draws nourishment in order to produce itself, to reproduce itself; the scenography that makes representation feasible, representation as defined in philosophy, that is, the architectonics of its theatre, its framing in space-time, its geometric organization, its props, its actors, their respective positions, their dialogues, indeed their tragic relations, without overlooking the mirror, most often hidden, that allows the logos, the subject, to reduplicate itself, to reflect itself by itself."
Luce Irigaray, "The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine", The Sex which is Not One.

Catalogue non-exhaustif d'altérations performatives is a research for a less (hetero)normative and more inclusive domestic space, focusing on the typology of the villa urbaine. The villa urbaine is a typology from the 19th century specific to the city of Lausanne. As domestic spaces hasn't really evolved since the Victorian Era, the project disrupts this normative typology with a series of performative alterations.

These alterations propose an architecture rich in literary and constructed references. They aim to include different actors, different families, different sexualities, different ways of living. They seek to include domesticity in public space, and public space in domestic interiors, by blurring the boundaries. They seek to include the city, to include the context.

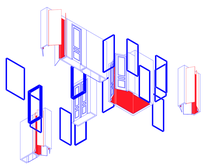
The alterations borrow the language of destruction or rather, of deconstruction. In matta-clarkian gestures, walls, closets, floors and façades are pierced. Normative space is disrupted and deconstructed, while new choreographies emerge. Domestic space, a site of constructions, is now also in transformation. The vocabulary of the stage and backstage, with its curtains and metal structures, is also used, presenting the performativity of interventions as intentional.

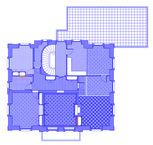
The alterations induce behaviors and choreographies, but also agency. They constitute a new subversive language. Like words, they function and make sense on their own, but can also be superimposed to create an alternative poetry.

Alteration no. 1

Walk Through Closets

As explained by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, the closet is the metaphorical space in which homosexuality is hidden. Its doors are often covered with the same texture as the walls, making what it contains even more invisible. The alteration pierces the back wall of the closets to turn them into walk through closets. Closets becomes passages, an alternative to choreographed circulation patterns.

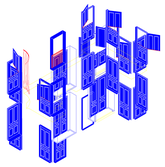


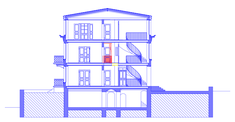


Alteration no. 2

Robin Evan's Corridor

In Figures, Doors and Passages, Evans describes the plan of interconnected rooms as a spatial device encouraging social interaction and carnality, and the emergence of the corridor in the 19th century as an element inducing a deeper division between social classes, but also genders. By erasing the corridor, this alteration disrupts standardized circulation patterns and recreates an architecture of social interaction and invites all genders and classes back into the rooms.

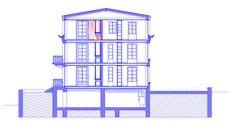




Alteration no. 3

The Living Laundry Room

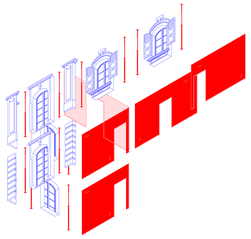
The hearth of the house, materialized by the element of the fireplace, has always represented the ideal of the nuclear family and its home and generally occupies a central position in plans, especially in Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture. The fireplace represents the home as a place of leisure and of gathering. By replacing the fireplace by a washing machine, the alteration recognizes and celebrates the reality of the home as place of work, disrupting the domestic mystique.

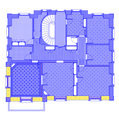


Alteration no. 4

The Dan Graham

The way Dan Graham disrupts existing public and private codes with is piece Alterations to a Suburban Villa inspired this intervention. The materiality of the façade is erased, revealing the performativity of its ornaments, and exposing domestic scenes. Dan Graham's mirror, covering the interior walls, reflects – as his did – the outside in the interior. Limits between public and private space, between the inside and the outside are blurred, queered. New scenarios can emerge.

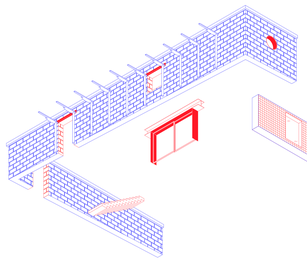


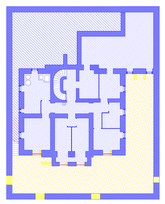


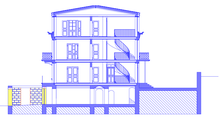
Alteration no. 5

The Plinth

Very specific to the city of Lausanne, the plinth acts as a portraying of privateness, articulating the limit between the public and the private space in a very material way, establishing a distance between the house and the street, but also between the house and the cite's natural typology and orientation. Emptying the plinth changes the relationship between the building and the city. The characteristics of the space become unclear – public space slips into the plinth, allowing new potentialities.



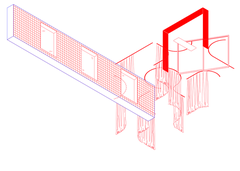


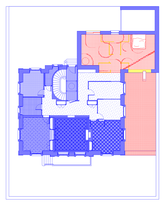


Alteration no. 6

The Subversive Swimming Pool

From Loos' work to Playboy's architecture, the Swimming Pool is often constructed to allow a voyeuristic male gaze on female bodies. This intervention reclaims the element of the swimming pool and its changing rooms as a feminist and inclusive space. As Deborah Fausch explains it, recognizing the presence of the body in a non-erotic context is a feminist statement. Blind windows covered by mirrors make reference to the swimming pool's rather sexist genealogy and redirect the swimmer's gaze to his or her own body, calling for body positivity. The changing rooms, inspired by Eileen Gray's living rooms and boudoirs, refuses to segregate genders in a binary way, including all bodies in the space.

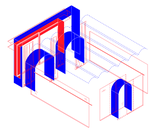


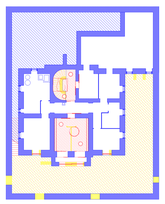


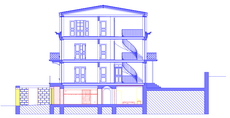
Alteration no. 7

The Queer Basement

The alteration materializes Aaron Betsky's and Katarina Bonnevier's queer architectural theories by creating a new entrance to the building, allowed by the empty plinth. Thresholds being, according to Bonnevier, a place of queer feminist awakening, the space is divided in a series of three to five successive thresholds. One of them, a lot larger than the others, becomes a room, or rather, a huge closet – a space containing the building blocks for social constructions, such as clothes.



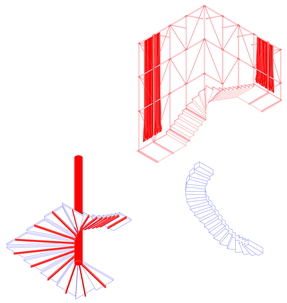


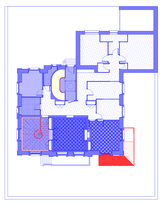


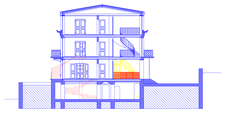
Alteration no. 8

Stairs of Interaction

Vertical circulation is very standardized in the way it divides a building into separated domestic spaces. It is a place in between, between the public outside world and the private domestic interiors. It is a performative element inducing choreographies – allowing the bodies to go up and down in a twisted trajectory, a queer architectural element according to Katarina Bonnevier. Simultaneously, it excludes bodies that are unable to walk a flight of stairs. The alteration explodes the standardized staircase, disrupting the limit between circulation space and living space. A room turns into an always queerer flight of stairs leading to the basement, while another blurs the distinction between inside and outside by making a short detour around the façade.



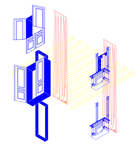


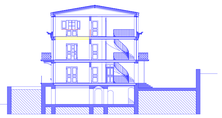


Alteration no. 8

The Living Room

The double height living room disrupts the concept of the apartment, by creating one communal core. The apartment being always designed around the ideal of the nuclear family, its disruption evokes new family patterns. New dynamics are introduced between different floors. Users can peek into the living room from above, celebrating domestic space as a stage.

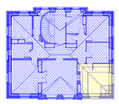




Alteration no. 10

The Bestegui

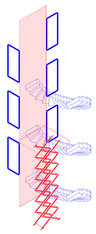
Inspired by the famous rooftop designed by Le Corbusier for Charles de Bestegui, this alterations blurs the distinction between the inside and the outside by creating another kind of chambre en plein air. This queered space calls for non-heteronormative programs.

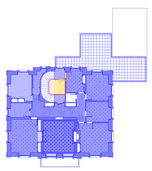


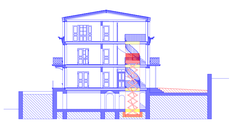
Alteration no. 11

M. Lemoine's circulation

This alteration makes the building inclusive to physically disabled people. A scissor lift disrupts the staircase, turning this alternative circulation into the main one. All choreographies are therefore affected. To go up and down, walking bodies have to go through each apartment to get around the platform. The timid maid's back door reemerges with the same importance as the front door.



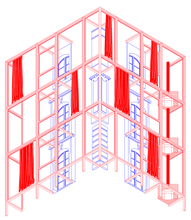


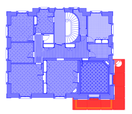


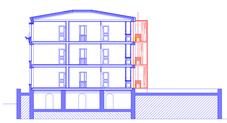
Alteration no. 12

The Split Wall

The façade is a performative element working as a mask, particularly in Loos' architecture. In the case of the villa urbaine, it aims to pretend its belonging to a higher social class. It is also the articulation between the public world on the outside and the private interior domestic space. The Split Wall alteration, named after Beatriz Colomina's essay, increases the thickness of the façade by making it habitable. Its structure evokes scaffoldings but also Jeanneret's Citeas House and its strong manifesto. The façade becomes transparent as private domestic scenes are exposed to the public eye.



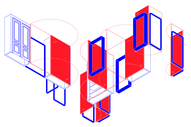




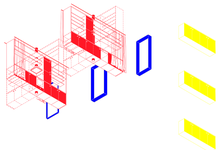
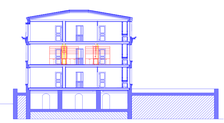
Alteration no. 13

Rooms of One's Own

Space is inclusive by welcoming all types of genders and bodies in the same place, but also by providing privacy when needed. As Virginia Woolf claims it, rooms of one's own are essential to the construction of the identity and for creativity. The alteration consists in replacing the standardized doors by large mirror panels allowing to isolate oneself from other but always by revealing another space or closet, contradicting usual expectation of privateness. One typology becomes endless configurations, adapting to every constellation of human beings.



Alteration no. 14

The Communal Kitchenless Kitchen

The concept of the communal kitchen is a materialist feminist dream. In this alteration, it makes reference to the endless discussion regarding the presence or absence of the separation wall between the kitchen and the living room by turning the element of the kitchen into a wall. Hidden behind a row of curtains, the space becomes kitchenless as in Playboy's penthouse. But when the curtain opens, the rooms become a stage for the domestic scene of cooking. The potential rotation of the kitchen allows the rooms to dissolve into one large communal kitchen.