

Despite its grand associations, a palace is built with the intention of being a home. Using this framework, *Building the Palace* examines the definition of home through a series of objects, structures and questions.

*Building the Palace* brings together creatives of varying practices to build a contemporary cross-cultural 'palace' that references and critiques our current relationship with real estate, memory, and ways of being. Constructed through the guise of the artist's works, the exhibition balances between fiction, history, and future. An assemblage of cultural, social and personal artefacts allow us to delve into fantasy and nostalgia.

If we perceive the gallery as a public space, *Building the Palace* promotes an idea of home that can be shared. Home may become less about place and rather an attempt at creating space. Space for respite, leisure, community, and learning.

I have chosen the audio broadcast format to include the direct voices of the artists in the exhibition, to extend our voices into other homes through the digital realm, and to feature sonic studies of physical and ephemeral architecture. Across three chapters – Citizenship, (un) Real Estate, and Reverberance – we will look at the lexicon of the word 'palace', as well as the structures and lifestyles it promotes. It will help us question how architecture translates social and cultural change and if it can build, store, and hold memory.

1.

# Citizenship

## *Ways of Inhabiting*

Architecture can control our behaviour, change how we see the world, and decide who is allowed in. When we start to make a home, what are our priorities? How do we assert ownership over a space? And how does this space represent us – our lifestyles, comforts, and personality?

"My name is Anna Mould. I am a multidisciplinary artist, primarily trained in painting."<sup>1</sup>

Anna Mould's paintings, *Breeding (Matrilinical II)* and *Breeding (Patrilinical)* interrogate the privilege and power of owning a home by utilising the medium of painting in tandem with the aristocratic subject matter.

"I have a tempestuous relationship with painting, I would say. There's a lot of expectation or weight or something placed on painting. I think the hierarchy still exists that places painting at the top in the minds of many people."<sup>1</sup>

The paintings emotionally contrast each other, offering two ways of being in a home. *Breeding (Matrilinical II)* greets us upon arrival – powerful, with an eager movement across the canvas. Her confidence places her at the head of the household. In contrast, *Breeding (Patrilinical)* stoops vulnerably in the opposite corner of our palace. There is a comfortability in his melancholy, a stasis, with these emotions occurring in the safety of a home.

"The way that the patriarchal painting came about was that I did it very quickly. I didn't really do it with a whole heap of thought. It held more relevance after I'd done the matrilineal series, which were these full length life size queens. Then I had the patrilinical, which is a much smaller portrait, it's just head and shoulders, and a different state of emotion compared to the really composed queens. It's probably quite ambiguous as to what the emotional state is, but it's clearly much less controlled than the women."<sup>1</sup>

Both pieces dissect power, positioning the paintings as objects that hold dominance over space. These objects become "less concerned with perhaps the identity of those people, and more with the fact that certain people are deemed worthy of having their portrait taken and being immortalised in this way.

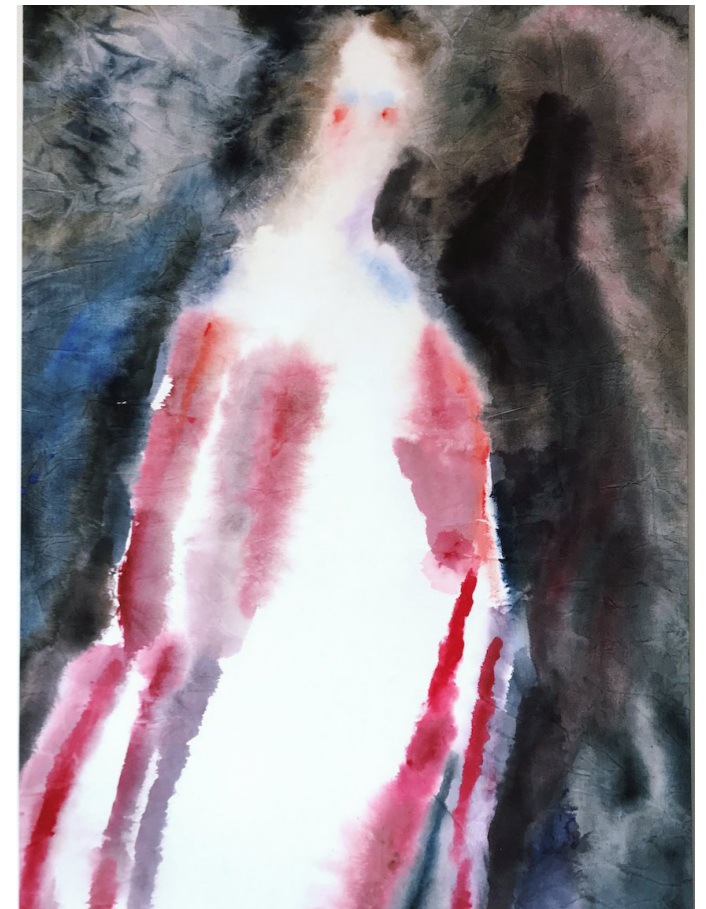
I try to be a little bit more analytical about painting and when I'm using painting, and what it is saying. I think a lot about the historical significance, in this case, aristocratic paintings and the power that that communicates.

"I used very watered down acrylic paint and I almost treated it like watercolour. Sometimes I even soaked the canvas before I applied the paint and so to me, it was kind of a subversive act or like an undermining of the rigidity of those sort of historical portraits. I wanted to wash them out. I wanted to destabilise the power that those sorts of paintings hold as well."<sup>1</sup>

Citizenship is used as an indicator of the right to own land but we are now starting to see the power of citizenship extend to "wild places and the plants and animals that live there."<sup>2</sup> Inhabiting requires cohabitation and so we must balance and uphold all "being's rights"<sup>2</sup>. This practice of shared inhabitation can be viewed at many scales. Simply, we may invite people to our homes. Though in our broader context, solving the privatisation of property and

forging reconciliation for land rights present bigger challenges.

Using scale, we can try to see the Earth as a sharehouse, encompassing and extending over climates, cultures, and lifestyles. *Building the Palace* invites you into its communal temporary home for objects and ideas.



Anna Mould, *Breeding (Matrilinical II)*, 2021

## *Active Space*

There is a difference between building a house and making a home. Intention and care are integral – to share it, to host, to gather, to collect. Form and function are in conversation with time and culture. "Design quality is too often dismissed as little more than an aesthetic veneer, but when design skills are fully engaged, they can function to enhance amenity for users, increase sustainability and safety, and reflect our cultural patterns of living."<sup>5</sup> Thus, our home's are active with the necessity of living and creativity.

Acting as a time capsule to how we may use a home, Miriam David's lino prints depict scenes of the domestic – the activities that take place, the arrangements of our furniture, and ways the imagination can run wild in these familiar spaces.

"My name is Miriam David. The works that I'm including are titled *How to Play Chess*, *Juliet*, *Pyjama Angel in my Living Room* and *Dining*. They were kind of all conceived of while I was thinking about what happens when the world goes to sleep and where minds kind of transcend to while in that dream state. It led me to thinking to these angelic figures that took over the world while we weren't present in it."<sup>4</sup>

David's styling adds naivety, fantasy, and history to these scenes that at first glance hold a familiarity.

"I really like the idea of a space that majority of us spend a really huge amount of time in and that dichotomy between kind of the fantastical and the mundane kind of everyday. It's really interesting to be both present in that space, but then also kind of not being aware of things that are potentially going on around you, and that's where the angels step in and their interaction with objects and spaces within the home that perhaps the living aren't aware of.

"The home for me has always been a space of transcendence, and it's a really personal space that I think allows the brain to kind of imagine beyond. I think that's why I'm always kind of depicting scenes within the domestic space.

"Something that I really love about the medium and the practice of lino printing is the ways in which it kind of works



Miriam David, *Pajama Angel in my Living Room*, 2020

against you as this hard surface that you're trying to carve into. What that oftentimes leads to is kind of strange lines. Something that you may have intended to be a curve ends up being a bit more of a jagged edge. I like that almost non-control element of the practice. I think that it adds to the temporality themes that I deal with on a conceptual level."<sup>4</sup>

Relieving ourselves of the permanent, static, or object centred definition of home may change how we define comfort and require real estate. Home is durational – a moment in time and memory. However, home is also a refuge and a place for stillness. "Home to me, particularly recently, has made itself known in the way that comfort and creativity is kind of presented to you. I think comfort comes from a multitude of things, but I think it comes from the familiar."<sup>4</sup>

## Embodiment

Our bodies are our most familiar homes. Can the grand palace shrink into an individual body? "We connect ourselves with walls, roofs, and objects just as we hang on to our livers, skeletons, flesh, and bloodstream."<sup>5</sup> It is a hanging on – those without homes will know that their bodies aren't enough. "What we may come to know of the body through a continual exposure and connection to an exterior"<sup>6</sup> highlights the trajectory of survival to end up surrounded by these four walls.

There is a flipping that occurs in how we come to inhabit the world. We project outwards and take inwards. "A floor plan is quite an impersonal and formal structure but then filling it with your domestic life and your very interior associations is a funny contradiction that I enjoy."<sup>7</sup>

*Unit 4/4H Johnston St According to Cormac Kirby* shows how we can place our internal conflicts, pains, desires and dreams into a constructed space. Setting emotions and thoughts onto a layout of permanent structure, Kirby has created a form of floor plan poetry.

"My name is Cormac Kirby. I've always been interested in the more visual aspects of poetry. Essentially it's an associative floorplan of my house from two different perspectives. One, that is a more literal interpretation of the house and then one that is more filled with my imagination.

"I think in a home you have both positive and negative associations with all static objects. I might not be conscious of that on a day to day basis, but I find this process of kind of making these associative floorplans a good way to become aware of the kind of emotional embodiment of static objects by actually like trying to meticulously go through a room in my mind and think about what's there. It's funny I often get a little nervous that I might get conflicted, like about a certain room and how I portray it."<sup>7</sup>

The layouts of our homes stem from cultural practices of living. It was not till the late 1800's that the living room started to evolve from the more formal parlour in Western cultures. These were "rooms in which homeowners could relax and be themselves."<sup>8</sup> A room where function was no longer a priority and comfort took precedence. It is important to note here, that this exhibition is an anthropocentric and Western look at the home.

"There's essentially really only four rooms in the house, maybe five if you include the bathroom. Two of them are usually in a state of flux. In comparison to kind of other houses I've done, which maybe I had less control over because they were warehouses or family houses, in this house, we move things around every few months. It definitely seems more fluid and that's probably something I didn't realise until I started trying to trace the house.

"I think that like an artist, putting out work is always going between those spheres of the public and the private. That's kind of the action of artistry - to take this interior thing and try and make something public out of it. So in a way,

putting on show my own home, I think is just something that kind of happens in a lot of artwork but isn't necessarily literally transcribed. I kind of view it as, like, gossipy. I've always wanted to understand other people's houses. I think it's such an intimate thing."<sup>7</sup>

The dichotomy of the public and private space brings up questions of behaviour and accessibility. How does architecture and shared social space affect how we act?

"My name is Janelle Woo."

"My name's Umi and I'm running this small space called Mori with Janelle. Mori is a space approximately 28 square metres in Lewisham, in support of critical architecture culture."

"We like to think of architecture as more of a social or an artistic discipline that can interpret space or the way that people use space as well."

"We did a lot of research as part of a thesis on cultural institutions for architecture. Through that research, we realised that we didn't want to replicate the sorts of institutions that we found on a global scale."

"When we were reading about bigger institutions it was written a lot that like you enter a museum and your body, your behaviour, the way you hold yourself immediately changes. Similarly, spaces do have that kind of soft power, I guess you call it, like the political impact of how you would carry yourself."<sup>9</sup>

## Wor(l)d

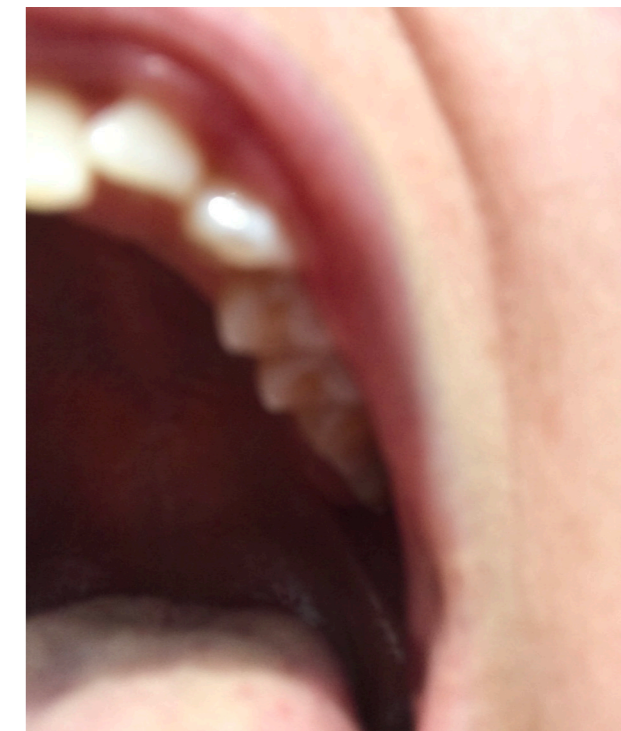
Throughout history the term palace has been used to describe cultural and social institutions. In the former Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, community centres were referred to as 'Palaces of Culture', often containing cinemas, dance halls and amateur radio.<sup>10</sup> In America, Andrew Carnegie referred to the grander libraries he helped fund as 'Palaces for the People',<sup>11</sup> and in the late 19th century in Australia, 'Coffee Palaces' provided space to socialise over a non-alcoholic beverage.<sup>12</sup>

"The space itself is created when you bring these three spatial devices – the table, the library and the garden – together. So we can always move to a different house or different four walls, but it's not Mori unless you bring these things close together."

"The point was that we saw a social relationship between the table, having this workspace, and then having the library as a resource or a knowledge holder, and then also the garden is like the thing that actually makes it kind of homely. You need those three things together to create that social relationship. It's also just pragmatic because we can't deal in buildings at the moment because we're not legally allowed to. But we can deal in objects."<sup>9</sup>

The word 'palace' was chosen for this project for its metaphorical and cultural uses, opening more points of reference and rooms to fill. Language and imagination both have the ability to become tools of construction and manipulation.

In the next chapter we will delve into un-real estate to find a vocabulary that hands back power to the inhabitant. By attaching home to smaller objects, or even to the intangible, could we find solace in the limitations of our current real estate?



Inside of my mouth, 2022



## 2. (un) Real Estate *Comfort and Materiality*

## *The Simulation*

Now that the normalised expectation of home, a house, is financially out of reach for the majority of us, I was drawn to the term un-real estate.<sup>7</sup> If we allow dreaming to be enough, or smaller possessions to make up our 'real estate', can we still find comfort? Does comfort alone define home?

For many, it seems that the possibility of owning a home or even settling into stability is unattainable. I have had glimpses through objects, day-dreams, and public spaces. Last year I began collecting items, burying them away in a drawer until I had a space of my own to lay them out.

With all of the comforts of home, it also comes with a feeling of entrapment. The body we are born into, the childhood home we grow in, the landscapes our bodies have memorised, and even the terminology of possession that commodifies it. I am grateful for my home, but I question the broader constructs of space that are being monopolised. How can we reclaim the real estate we no longer have access to? How can we look to history to construct a future of safe and affordable housing? How can we re-build this notion of home?

"My name's Livio Tobler. The way I construct and design is dictated by the methods I've learnt building houses. So, they're pretty crude, but solid, well constructed pieces. I don't have a fine furniture background, so they're kind of just made to withstand a lot of force and pressure and have that same texture and robustness as a house would."<sup>15</sup>

Livio Tobler has constructed 'thrones' for us to linger longer in this palace. You are invited to sit down and revel in this space. Experimenting with different materials, Tobler's chairs test both visual and physical comforts and aesthetics. Materiality of a home dictates mood – concrete is reverberant and cold, carpets soft and absorbent, and tiles are practical till met with a dropped glass.

"The roughness and crudeness, and also the playfulness, comes from furniture that reminds me of home, of Switzerland. You see chairs that are made outside – just like half sawn logs and the legs would just be like a stump. And then you'll have some really beautiful pieces inside the home that are just so well crafted and have beautiful curves and just really playful and exciting. It's a combination of the two – the indoor and the outdoor."<sup>15</sup>

We can understand the home in a number of ways – "attaching oneself to a particular patch of soil";<sup>14</sup> following a routine of comforts; or surrounding oneself with people or objects. There is a clear distinction between home and a house. So what defines this? The typical four walls of a house provide "privacy, prospect and refuge."<sup>15</sup> Home is a place for sustenance, comfort, leisure and solitude. "This valorization of a centre of concentrated solitude is so strong, so primitive, and so unquestioned."<sup>15</sup>

"The home is meant to be your comfort space. If you're renting and you're moving around and you don't have stability, you need something there. So, I feel like furniture kind of does that. If you own a nice table, or a nice chair, or a nice bed frame, or something like that and you can dismantle that and you can bring it to your next place, that's your home.

"This is the definition of comfort. It's sentimental, it's nostalgia. You could be anywhere and you could bring a chair with you, for instance. And you have that, like an heirloom piece or whatever, and you bring it into that space, and you go 'this is home.' Yeah, I think it's a feeling. It's not the walls that enclose you."<sup>15</sup>



Livio Tobler, *Wooyung Stump*, 2023

By manipulating or heightening our senses we can create a simulation of home. We can find comfort through routine, through materials and textures, and with people. The physical is both material and ephemeral allowing a play of our senses. For example, "sound functions as a place."<sup>16</sup> The necessity of acoustic ecology, "the study of the relationship, mediated through sound, between human beings and their environment,"<sup>17</sup> provides care to the sonic senses when constructing architecture.

Connecting to an object, may open up the freedom of home. My computer is my asset – a home for my thoughts, and a portal for dreaming of the world beyond. It is both physical and ephemeral.

Fei Gao also harnesses technology to create parallel worlds that draw on his dichotomy of home.

"My name is Fei. I'm an artist interested in digital media. I want to call it *Cosmic Quasar* - I think it's in this alternative open world, 3D landscape. It has a lot of transmission towers or electric pylons. You sort of see these made up Chinese characters going through them and then they kind of just duplicate themselves, but then they also slowly scatter around the landscape. I wanted to make it more space themed as well, just to add the intensity of the imaginative landscape."<sup>18</sup>

*Cosmic Quasar* shows a fragility of a past home with 3D rendered Chinese characters hanging precariously off telephone lines.

"They don't really have a translation. I think part of the reason I started to use more made up characters is because I feel like I'm not back in my home country anymore so I kind of don't really specifically speak that language. I combined some of the characters that are familiar in my hometown district because I think this work is mostly about nostalgia."<sup>18</sup>

A simulation can teach us how to live in a real space through metaphor and practice. Gao's work is our palace garden in this simulation (exhibition). The barren, vast landscape depicted connects the two continents that the artist may refer to as home and places our palace into the digital realm.

"The initial inspiration was when I was living in Merrylands. I feel like I can see a lot of parallels between that place and my hometown, and specifically the electric pole lines and the transmission towers really make me connected to that. After a bit of research I realised these architectural structures only happen because these places are not as rich as the main CBD area and I feel like that's a bit of a parallel to my hometown growing up. I guess these objects sort of become a symbol of that socioeconomic status."<sup>18</sup>

As real estate becomes more in demand, green spaces become less prioritised. "Today many of us find ourselves living out our lives in sealed, climate-controlled, internalised environments... We seek our connection to the natural world through even more elaborate holidays, but struggle to find it close to home."<sup>19</sup> *Cosmic Quasar* uses the vastness of the outside world to claim memories and cultural landmarks back into a digital green space to explore.

"Transmission towers, they are such like bare bones structures. They're sort of in very faraway places but they're sort of holding on to that very thin line to connect in a literal sense.

"I just read about waste colonisation where it's like a lot of developing countries sort of recycled alot of that waste, for the Western countries to have that more beautiful landscape. So I felt like in some way I kind of have that pride to grow up in the more constructed, changing landscapes.

"As a migrant, I feel like I'm always in one place, but when I see things that remind me of my hometown, I feel like I'm in another place. So I really want to highlight that through removing everything else and make it very ambiguous. In this specific work, it really is the pole line that sort of connects that to place for me.

"Games in themselves contain a lot of storytelling and fantasy. It's definitely like escapism for a lot of people. It's almost that we're sort of trying to become a bit more real in these places. It's not just purely made up. We take the integral things and sort of simplify it, or isolate it and zoom it out and discuss it in that space. Fantasy can really enhance that to sort of just pause for a moment."<sup>18</sup>



Hedwig Crombie, *Collection (WIP)*, 2023

Hedwig Crombie's modern, fantastical artefacts orientate us to why this place exists. It anchors our shared speculative narrative that is formed for the three weeks of this exhibition.

"I'm Hedwig Crombie. I'm a jeweller. This group of works is based on family heirlooms and looking into people's collections of jewellery. Like a few things that might be passed down or have been in your jewellery box forever and you don't really know where you've got them and all of those sort of little bits that you don't necessarily wear all the time, but are actually precious for those different sorts of reasons.

"I was reading about heirlooms the other day and someone was saying you've got four rules if you want to start collecting jewellery to be heirlooms. And it was like, long lasting, obviously because it's going to be passed down, and then simple enough that it is always wearable.

"I sort of looked into generally what would be an heirloom. So like, there's usually a necklace or a bracelet or sort of all those different traditional jewellery pieces. And looking into hoards of jewellery that were found, there's so many different pieces, like single earrings, broken bits and pins."<sup>20</sup>

'Family' heirlooms act as symbols of our (future) history within our speculative palace. These objects are "annexed by inheritance"<sup>21</sup> and provide souvenirs of home.

"Personally I haven't got that much heirloom jewellery. So I've just sort of decided on a group of objects I sort of wish I had or obviously could then be passed down from here. I feel like there are some objects that just once you decide they're your thing, they become a lot more special than, say, other things that maybe have that meaning already in them."<sup>20</sup>

Crombie's objects are both wearable (active and functional) and decorative (static and historical). As heirlooms they represent values, success, and ideals, orienting us in time to both respect those past and provide stability and direction for the future.

"The fantasy has always been fun to bring it into wearable objects, and day to day having those little things around. And I think it's fun being able to bring it into the gallery setting and the palace because it could be like the crest or the sort of symbol that maybe a lot of families wouldn't of had. There's not many crests with devils and little frog creatures and stuff. So it's sort of fun to be able to make this semi-serious work of like, oh, it's heirlooms, but also have this sort entertaining element of weird little lumpy creatures and it's sort of like an alternate world where this would be the heirloom."<sup>20</sup>

We hold onto these objects as proof of prosperity and wealth. Key to many people's understanding of home is ownership, both as private property and in the sense of having agency over a space. Family crests were once only for royals, but just as citizenship has extended to landscapes, the act of claiming a family symbol extends beyond the

## Orientation

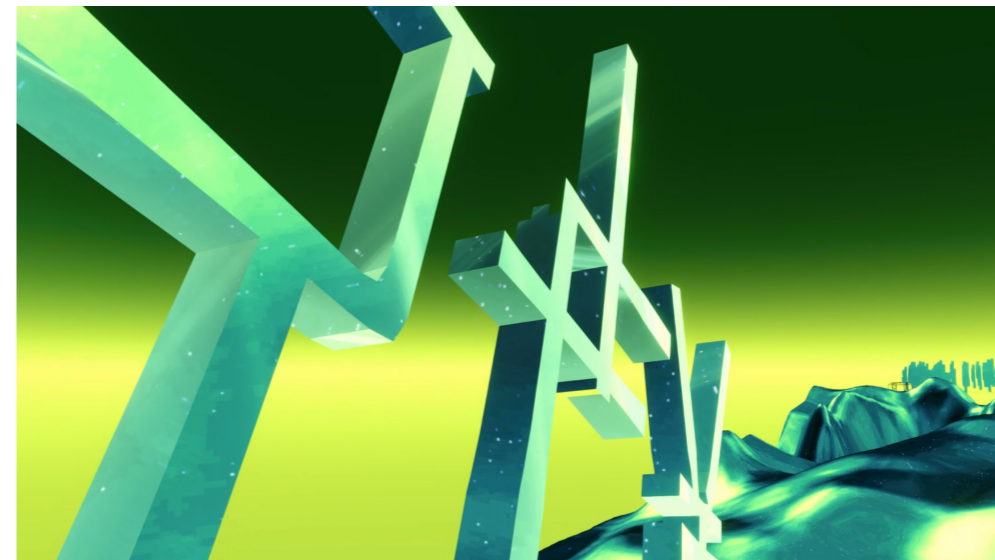
Reflecting on the reality of palaces, we are geographically stretching. They are part of a history that did not occur on this land. It is a Western construct that I hope to re-interpret by placing weight and importance on layers of real estate we do and should have access to. Where we live changes our understanding of the world, but the lack of choice requires many of us to find innovative solutions to get by. *Building the Palace* is re-orientating history for a future that reclaims the concept of palaces and their associations.

typical, biological family. We use symbols and stories to find home, with the permanence of home contained in the land.

## Reclamation

I've always felt the guilt that this land isn't mine. How can you make a permanent home on a land you don't belong to? It is here that this concept of citizenship becomes ambivalent. Other places are foreign to me, even if I am a citizen. I recently became a citizen of Latvia despite never setting foot there. Can you even be a citizen of land you have never been on?

Back home, here in Australia, land rights have become wrapped up in legalities and vocabulary. The reclamation of real estate that *Building the Palace* explores is treading on stolen land. Going forward, reparative architecture to both First Nations' communities and Country must be a priority. A shift of perspective is needed, "not to change their appearance to suit expectations of importance, but to suggest importance while respecting the character of these places as they are."<sup>22</sup>



Fei Gao, Still from *Cosmic Quasar*, 2023

"I think it's also a really fraught thing living in Australia – living in any colonised or colonising society. Even if I was to think about the way I was sort of brought up to think about land, property, home, that sort of thing, even if it wasn't that land was so unaffordable now, I think I would already be having questions about whose land is this for me to buy. It's not a comfortable question to ask or to try to answer."<sup>1</sup>

For many city dwellers the garden is an entry point to understand our broader natural landscapes. "Landscape seems

to be a link between the built form or 'managed' places – which does need us – and the natural world; and plants may be an entry point."<sup>2</sup> Songlines traverse this continent and create reverberations that link us to place. In the next chapter memory and acoustics will help survey the atmospheres we exist in.



### 3.

# Reverberance

## *The Echo*

The metaphorical 'palace' acts as a framework. The memory palace is a common alternative term for the method of loci, where geographical landmarks are used to remember certain narratives of information. Both Cormac Kirby and Miriam David's works have shown how the 'palace' can store mnemonic images mapped into architectural features. "Thanks to the house, a great many of our memories are housed, and if the house is a bit elaborate, if it has a cellar and a garret, nooks and corridors, our memories have refuges that are all the more clearly delineated."<sup>13</sup>

"Since arriving in this space in Lewisham, we've been documenting the various hooks and objects and things that poke out of the wall, kind of the residue of the previous tenants. We are really interested in the mystery of each individual item and what kinds of stories they told. Even if they were quite banal. Each one begged a question of like what did it use to support? Why is it here? Who put it there? And then what can it hold now?"<sup>9</sup>

"The work of memory collapses time"<sup>25</sup> and thus our orientation can constantly be questioned to use the past to imagine futures.

## *Atmosphere (Fantasy and Dream)*

History and fantasy can often be confused. It can be hard to comprehend what has really happened and what could really happen.

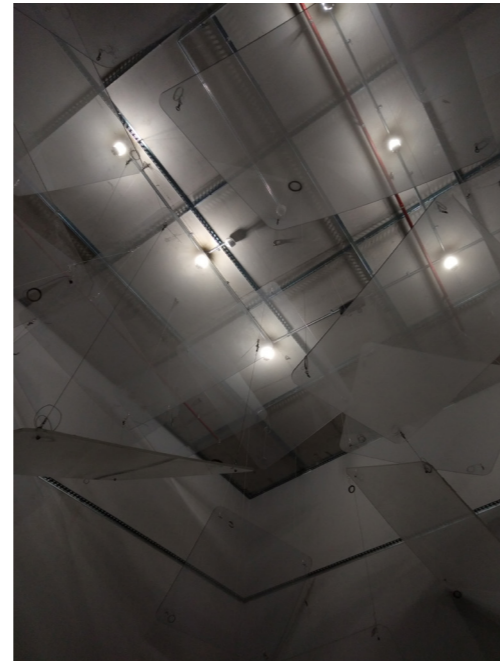
Ambience can create consistency, familiarity and bridge the outside to the inside. "Ambient temperature reduces the distinction between inside and outside spaces"<sup>19</sup> sounds orientate us as walls create barriers and reflections, and we control light with electricity and curtains changing day to night.

Mori have created a threshold for our palace. It uses flowing material to change space, orientation and scale in collaboration with transparency and height.

"We're making a curtain."

"That I also think is a shroud as well, or a coat. The starting point was our work with Mori, like the physical things that we made to fit it out. That work kind of began with those thoughts of impermanence, like that things are impermanent or that collective projects like this are impermanent."<sup>9</sup>

The fluidity of space allows for dreaming. "Architecture should embody the invisible, the hopes and dreams in something we live in, we die in and we remember."<sup>24</sup>



UTS Reverb Room, 2022



Odysseus' Palace, 2022

"Something that doesn't actually get talked about when you think about 'capital A architecture', is that buildings themselves are pretty objective. Then you have the subjective layer of experience of them that adds on top that I think everyone brings a different subjective experience with them. You still have memories of past houses when you start living in a new house, and I think that that is just the nature of architecture. That it is fluid because its meaning is still created concurrently by your subjective experience.

"It's also fluid in the instance of a space changes also by the particular people or the way that it's being used. When we were thinking about cultural institutions, one thing that we're thinking about a lot is that the physical presence of it has an impact on the way that you yourself behave in that space."

"It has had so many lives before you. And what we're interested in is how do you approach the questions around what has been, what has slipped through the many layers of paint or the concrete that was relayed over the floor? What changes when you make such a physical contribution to a space?"

"The hooks basically were the metaphorical object that we were really interested in. It's the invitation to use it. So that spirit of the hook kind of transfers then to the curtain. Also just pragmatically, because of rentership that happens in our city, it's an object that doesn't have solidity. You can just use the hook. The curtain we thought of as the expression of that desire to actually change something, or to make a space your own."

"I think curtains also absorb a lot in terms of changing colour over time, following motions of the body or following the wind, absorbing smells. So in a way, they also have a ghostly nature to them and to us that is related to the hooks that we found in this space."<sup>9</sup>

The garden may be our most grounding space – it holds growth, reconnection and possibility. The seasons invite reinterpretation just as dreaming and desire do too. We can do this inside with re-novation, re-design, and re-placing. I've been attached to this prefix 're'. It removes fixation, concreteness, instead allowing for malleability.

## *Hums*

The humming home and city remind us that the home is alive. Perhaps accidentally we have filled it with conflicting ambience. In 2021, when the city was in lock-down, hums chorused as the silence of the streets made them more present. "We all know that the big city is a clamorous sea, and it has been said countless times that, in the heart of night, one hears the ceaseless murmur of flood and tide."<sup>15</sup> We live in a drone, and that drone has entered our homes.

These noises have a physiological effect on us. However there are methods to counter them – remember the soft materials we need for comfort. We are lulled by white noise, imitating those first sounds we heard in the womb. It is a "combination of all of the frequencies that we can hear."<sup>25</sup> White noise helps cover the harsh sounds that echo around the surfaces of our homes, but by masking "disturbing noise and unsupportive acoustics"<sup>26</sup> are we numbing our "ability of sensing and connecting with the environment through the ears and the body even more"?<sup>26</sup> Every sense needs comfort, to be cushioned. "It is also a salutary thing to naturalise sound in order to make it less hostile."<sup>15</sup> So we land again at the home as a space for respite, comfort, and resilience.

"I think at the end of the day, it's more of a political question than something that architects can actually solve."

"I feel that it would be really great if architects had more of a voice and could advocate for change with more impact. I think that a lot of architects have genuine aspirations or values to improve how people live."

"Many of us actually do have these aspirations to make space more democratic or more enjoyable for more people and more fair for more people."<sup>9</sup>

"I would hope in the future that that kind of stability returns. I think envisioning new ways of structuring tenancies and structuring property ownership and forms of collective property ownership, collective tenancy really interest me going forwards. I think that we're kind of due for a bit of a revolution in how we house ourselves."<sup>7</sup>

"I think I would always have a conception of home as being the place that I grew up. It's that deep, deep memory. It's hard to articulate exactly what is important about a memory."<sup>1</sup>



In the end we are bound to our homes, rooted in the land. This containment is also a freedom offering safety, choice and desire. Through the guise of art objects, design, and words, *Building the Palace* has built a home pulling together these abstract elements of architecture and interiors to be on display as a template of desire, a speculative wondering, or a place for enquiry. My act of curating is a process of harmonising and recontextualising to translate words into object and experience.<sup>27</sup> Through art, we can provide a simulation that may result in a truth<sup>28</sup> as we reconfigure our ways of living into the future.

Mara Schwerdtfeger, *Building the Palace*, 2023



Mori, *Curtains* (WIP), 2023

## Audio

1. *Vocal Architecture*, Thinking of the voice as the inhabitant of my body with four part harmony.
2. *Oratorio*, Chamber music for my computer.
3. Sonic sweep heard from my bedroom.
4. *Improvising with Memory*, Duet for one performer, improvising part one in the morning and the part two in the evening.
5. *Odysseus' Palace*, Ithaca. Recorded 26 August 2022.
6. White noise.
7. *Humming*, Drone music for softening.

Mara tracing Odysseus' Palace, 2022  
Photo: Zoe Baumgartner



## References

1. Anna Mould. Interviewed by Mara Schwerdtfeger. April 2023
2. Donse, S. 2019. Letting Go and a Deep Attachment, Landscape as Protagonist. Molonglo, Melbourne.
3. London, G; Goad, P; Hermann, C. 2017. An Unfinished Experiment in Living: Australian Houses 1950-65. University of Western Australia Press, Perth.
4. Miriam David, Interviewed by Mara Schwerdtfeger, March 2023
5. Levy, D. 2021. Real Estate: A Living Autobiography. Penguin UK, London.
6. La Belle, B. 2023. Poetics of Listening. CTM Festival.
7. Cormac Kirby, Interviewed by Mara Schwerdtfeger, March 2023
8. Gancey, J. 2017. The evolution of the modern living room. BBC.
9. Janelle Woo and Umi Graham, Mori, Interviewed by Mara Schwerdtfeger, March 2023
10. 2023. Palace of Culture, Wikipedia.
11. FitzGerald, E. 2019. Episode 346: Palaces for the People, 99% Invisible.
12. Van Reyk, P. 2021. True to the Land: A History of Food in Australia. Reaktion Books, London.
13. Livio Tobler, Interviewed by Mara Schwerdtfeger, March 2023
14. Latour, B. 2018. Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime.
15. Bachelard, G. 1992. The Poetics of Space. Beacon Press, Boston.
16. Cunningham, J. 2022. Can You Feel the Landscape with Your Tongue?, Moving Mountains.
17. Listening to Country: Exploring the value of acoustic ecology with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in prison. Listening to Country, Griffith University.
18. Fei Gao, Interviewed by Mara Schwerdtfeger, April 2023
19. Sundermann, K; Reynolds, A. 2020. Re-naturalising Cities, Landscape as Protagonist. Molonglo, Melbourne.
20. Hedwig Crombie, Interviewed by Mara Schwerdtfeger, March 2023
21. 2023. Heirloom, Wikipedia.
22. Doxiadis, T. 2020. Three Thoughts, Landscape as Protagonist. Molonglo, Melbourne.
23. Walter Benjamin
24. Libeskind, D. 2005. Utopias and Architecture. Routledge, New York.
25. Anderson, A. 2022. Handbook for Sonic Happiness. Twenty Thousand Hertz, Defacto Sound.
26. 2023. Sonic Architecture. Spatial Sound Institute, Budapest.
27. Carson, A. 2008. Variations on the Right to Remain Silent. A Public Space, New York.
28. Abu Hamden, L. 2021. Meet the Artists \ Lawrence Abu Hamdan. Art Basel.