

House thoughts

This is a collection of excerpts from my thoughts. Thoughts that have come to be a project I choose to call "The Idea of a House" at this moment. The collected texts try to capture the essence of acts, reflections and material resulting from work since my first meeting with a house in Denmark. The texts try to construct voids that can foster own connections and thoughts that can stand alone, or be complemented with a film and an installation.

To experience this story, I ask you to become part of it. Connect to it. By printing these documents (A3) and folding them into your own zines, with eight pages each, you will have performed the ritual of creating something out of predetermined material. Your hands in action, connected to the material. A greeting. A contract. A becoming.

It takes about 3 minutes to make a zine. I have made an instructional video that you can watch here: <https://strohkir.ch/zines>

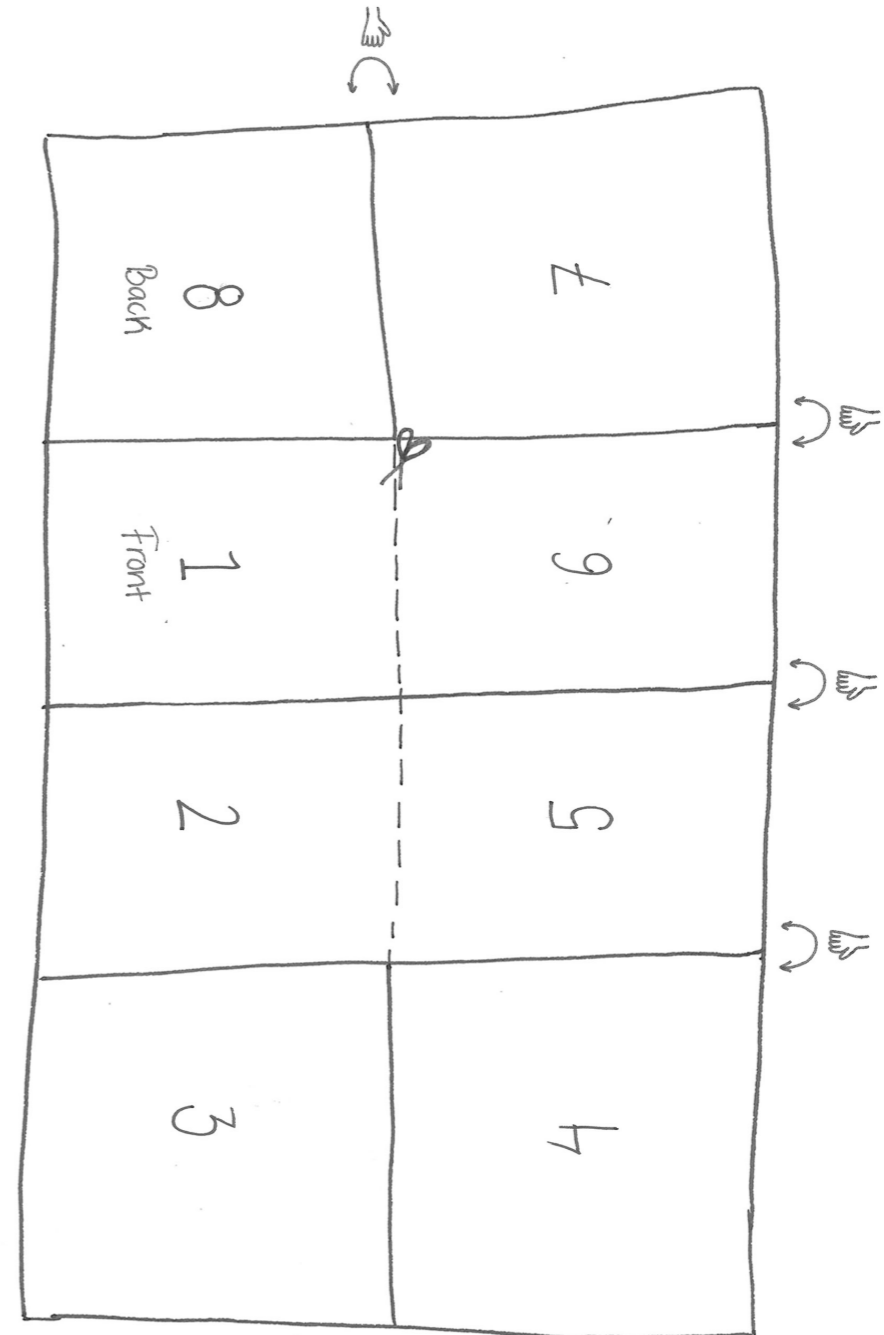
Through this act, you should now have sorted and created four zines.
Please read in this order:

the house, the ritual, the object and the archive.

Thank you for taking the time, and congratulations, you have created something!

sincerely

Valentin Strohkirch





As a result of this project, the house will not be demolished as just a house. Its timeline will not have ended with being left to rot. By working with it, it has become something, it will exist in a quantity of mediums and ideas, even after its inevitable demolition. It has created a beginning of an ending.

In search of methods for remembering.



At some point, most of them are demolished. Buildings are physically present spaces made out of collections of materials and stories. They are built to a certain image, shaped over time by so many aspects it is impossible to list. The collective understanding of their value is often lost over time where feelings of sentimentality often seem to be their greatest value, however, limited to their apparance and contriution of image, not their space, material or stories. Working with the house is an exchange. The house becomes something I can harvest. Some acts reconfigure, change and remaigne space and objects from the house, while other activities just change, merge and allow for new contexts to enter the house, or to be entered by the house.

the house



The origin of this project was my interest in investigating what would happen if I spent time with a house, having no pre-planned goal or intent beyond gathering knowledge and reflections.

What happens when a building is going to be demolished? What are the social, physical and mental processes of and around a house?

At the time of writing this I have spent 94 days with a house to be demolished. It is 7 kilometres south of Roskilde, Denmark. It is a residential house that is one and a half stories tall, it connects to a barn and an old bar/lounge area. It has stood empty for at least ten years and is nothing particular, it is nothing that crosses your mind. It just exists.

Wonderful!



During these 94 days, all my activities and thoughts have revolved around the house. Our timelines are now entangled, we work together to create new stories and investigations of space, material, and ritual. The house seems to contain all the answers for my questions. By its existence, it can tell us what it means for architecture to exist in time. I enjoy how it enters an architectural discussion that so often becomes a certain kind of space or building.

9x7 metres of existing house! Probably one of many cousins all around Denmark.



Most of my own understanding of Gordon Matta-Clark's work comes from reflections during and after the action, where the content of his work became comprehensible through the experience of actions. I measure the house, I reconstruct the house. I make cuts in the house and reveal new sights. You fold the paper. Friends play and have lunch in the house. The house becomes a structure that hosts rituals that shapes spaces, but also creates new places, discussions and meanings.

Gordon Matta-Clark is an artist-architect that made these aspects graspable within the discourse. He visualises the aspect of ritual and its effects on space, and the discussion thereof, by planning, performing and documenting the acts. Documenting resulting spaces are manipulated and reconfigured in photo-collages in order to achieve new spaces, which highlight the performative act and the spatial qualities resulting from it. By performing a ritual in a certain context, he achieves broad discussions about architectural autonomy, value and the right to manipulate space.

Rituals create anecdotes that can reveal and compare dualities, complexions. They show how broader discussions within society manifest themselves in the scale of buildings, objects and artefacts. This has been the most effectful when I refrained from fixing all the circumstances, rather just doing, and then observing and reflecting on what happens.

Ritual transforms architecture into a verb. My body in Denmark, in Lund or inbetween, creating an extension of the house.



the ritual



Between thought, drawing and house, the body acts.



Architecture is often held high and regarded for its solid and static qualities. The reality of existing is however very different when experienced in real time as a built actuality. When experienced, architecture creates theatrical qualities by constructing visions, sequences and visual layers that we experience with our moving or static body.

In this project, I have tried to understand, create and analyse these qualities by becoming an actor and an activator that performs rituals within the existing house, and a reconstruction thereof.

I had created a new spatial understanding that went beyond what I could see, by fixing points within the house and connecting them to one single point with threads. That one point became present wherever I moved or was in the house, making conscious the presence of existing space.

For me, the initial quantitative mapping in the house to explore its spatial configuration in relation to vision was also a qualitative analysis, a ritual, which forced me to put my body in the space, becoming an actor.





Within the newly constructed system I did not avoid touch and closeness because of their repellent qualities anymore;

I was instead fearful because I did not want to disturb their configuration or break them.

Ritual and place change value and judgement.



the artefact



By giving the objects this acknowledgement and attention, they become artefacts. Cutting, adding and re-locating became a conversation of matter, drawing and body. A conversation between the found and the new. The act reveals original qualities and creates new traces of ritual, adding to the artefacts narrative, and placing it in contrast to its origin, making us reflect about it.

Similarly to Smithson, I use the original site to generate a new site, place-making, materialising rituals in new contexts to make space into place. The artefact becomes part of a new system and a new totality. One artefact is the original, another is the replica, connected through the ritual, one artefact's void relates to another one's extension. Multiple layers of relations start playing into the experience, story and history make the artefacts relate between each other. The void around them allows for a mental game where the story unfolds and at the same time they also cite their origin, making us read multiple stories at the same time, fixed into physical matter.

By reconfiguring, moving and merging material with new sites, the artist, Robert Smithson creates metaphors between what he calls “non site” and their original “site”. With the non-site Smithson constructs a mental connection and understanding of the original site. He does this without forcing the displaced materials and added materials to depict an accurate image or representation of the original site.

My first encounter with the house in Roskilde was influenced by leftover objects and how they over time seemed to have become moulded into the structure of the house itself. The totality of what made the space was not necessarily the floor plan, the walls or the furniture, but the synthesis thereof. It guided the way I wanted to move, avoiding touch and closeness. There was a power in the objects and my own prejudice towards them.



I think it is very human to enjoy objects. They have an almost infinite possibility to carry stories and become new reflections. That is why I over the course of this project have brought multiple objects created by the interaction with the house in Denmark to Lund.



When work generates content from the house, it creates documentation by also changing its state. The house however keeps existing, its characteristics are not fixed to the latest state of my interactions, but to natural circumstances following some system of entropy.

This archive, though, is fluid, it lacks a system of taxonomy. Its contents oscillate and change over time, offering further interactions and iterations as time goes. The aim of this archive is to engage and inspire thoughts and reflections. It has values beyond the physical matter. Social interactions created by the material create collective memories and reflections that can happen again and again changing the original material but also adding onto the general material surrounding the house.

One could call this project an archive. The notion of the archive however offers a temporal dilemma, generally it orders and sorts material in categorised folders to be fixed in a linear time frame.



German historian Wolfgang Ernst coined the term "anarchive", a speculative alternative to the institutional archive, searching for new orders and views of what the archive is. Naturally the archive that this project has become, remembers but also proposes. It contains ideas for future acts. It contains the tools and the knowledge needed to do so. This archive is not a graveyard, rather a space for ideas. It is not as readable and diverges from the idea of explaining what everything is, and means. The gaps create room for own reflections and hopefully can inspire thoughts around the topic, the house.

If I try to categorise the parts of the project I would find it to be an impossible task, since everything is connected to a complex network of outer, changing, circumstances and also its own. One can dwell in multiple scales and multiple stories surrounding the smallest of details. Maybe we should not try to force things into categories? Let the material speak for itself. Categories offer quick explanations and understanding, this project acknowledges existence and existence takes time. The origin of this project was my interest in investigating what would happen if I spent time with a house; hence I have to spend time with the material generated by the house.

the archive



Now archive seems to become a movement where the house lives in multiple formats in multiple networks. It becomes and generates things, thanks to the archive. It becomes present and accessible in others minds. Archive becomes a way to generate, host and inspire. It is a momentum, a carrier of the story that is this house.



This body of work has amounted to a substantial amount of material. At the time of writing, the project contains about 24 hours of unedited video, over 2000 edited photographs, reflections, notes, sketches, collages, ideas, over 140 artefacts, fragments of full scale reproductions of the house.

This material is the result of spending time with a house. It is the by-product of ritual. Documentation is art-making, art-making is documentation.