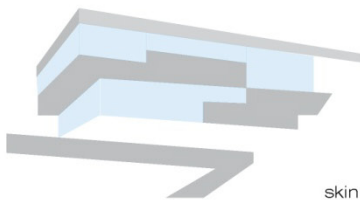
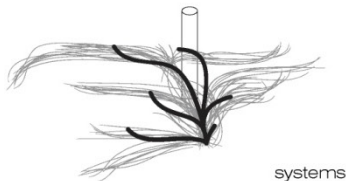
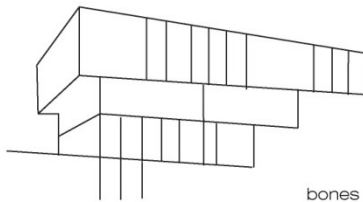


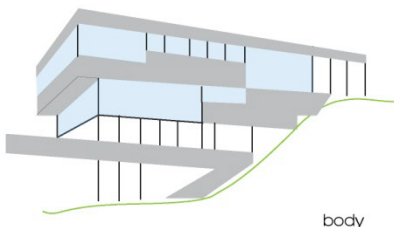
Case Study: Richard Neutra's Lovell Health House

Form

bodily components



outward expression

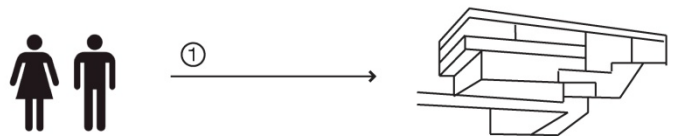


In our largely self-centred society, the human body plays an integral role in many aspects of the design process. Idealized human representation in architecture began with Vitruvius and continued throughout the Renaissance. In the modern period, an extended bodily projection emerged, one in which the building began to objectify various states of the body, both physical and mental (Vidler, n.d.). Feher (1989) argues that certain body organs have been used as models for the functioning of human societies. The same can be said for architecture. Parallels can easily be made between the systems of a building and the systems of the human body. This connection is inherent as the human body is a highly complex and efficient system which exemplifies a strong model for design.

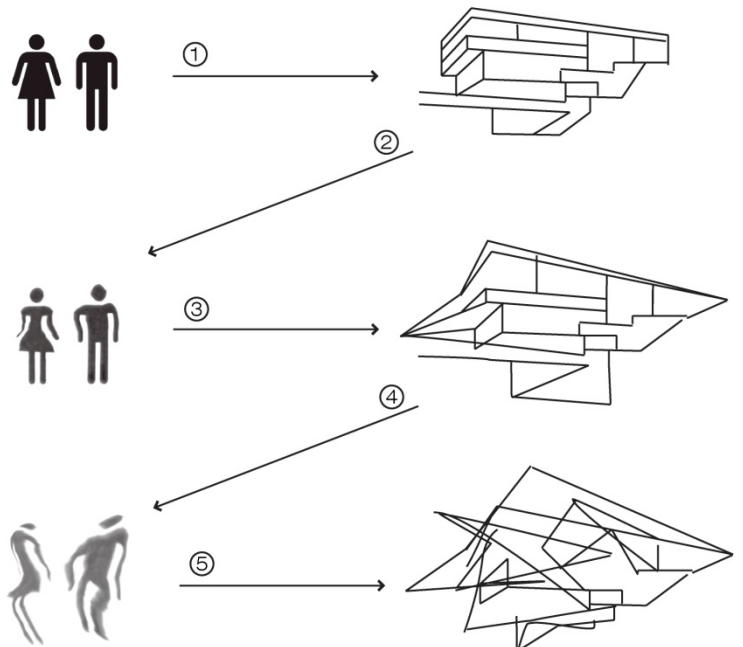
Modern architecture became concerned with medical thought, and as a result, domestic dwellings began to be understood as a kind of medical equipment, one which could protect and enhance the human body (Colomina, 1997). This type of medical design was important to Neutra as he believed that “quite simply, our habits, moods, efficiency and health are intimately related to our habitations” (Neutra, 1989, p. 5). This was especially important for the design of the Lovell Health House. The client, Phillip Lovell, had always desired a house that was able to enhance the lives of its occupants through its design. Neutra incorporated a number of “healthy” characteristics (including sunlight integration, ventilation, outdoor sleeping porches, special diet provisions, a therapeutic pool and exercise areas) in order to achieve his client’s

desires for the house (Hines, 1982). Considering the behaviour of the clients, a design was realized which enabled the bettering of their lives. This created an inherent play between the human body and the space within which it resides. When taken further, a constant feedback loop of

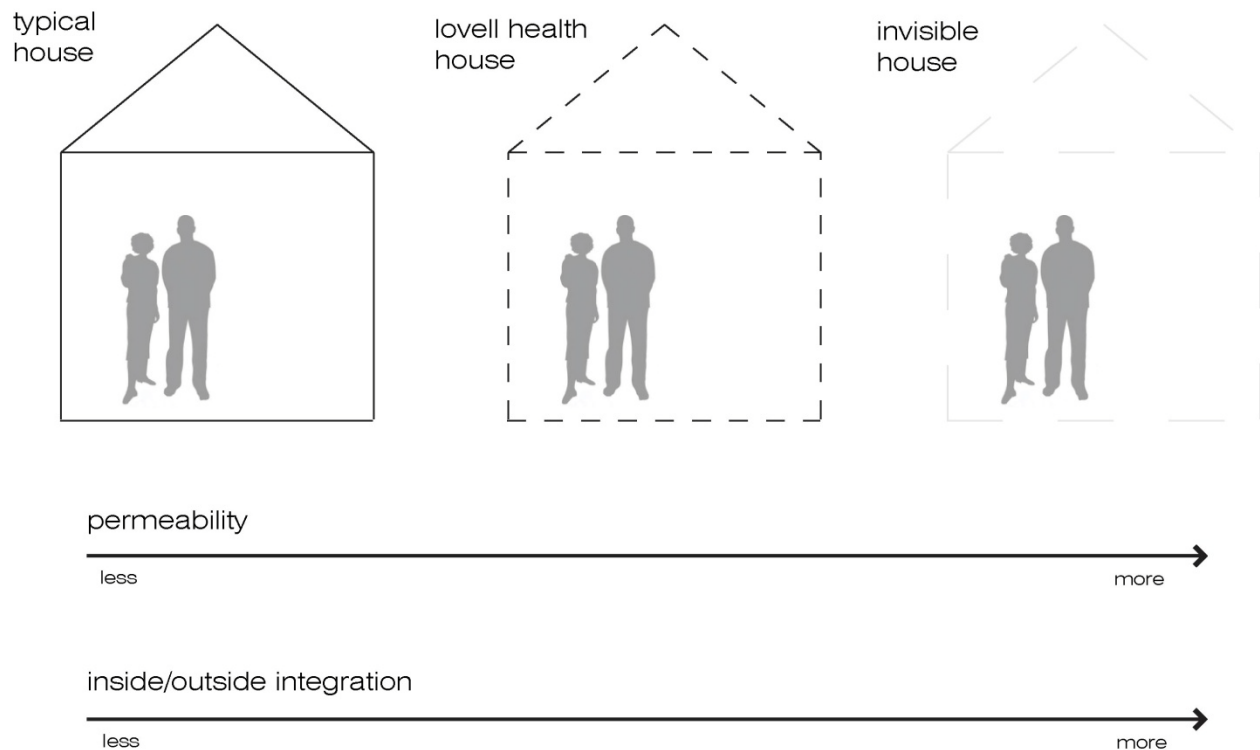
initial condition



continuous feedback condition



informed change develops, and after multiple iterations, the original state is no longer discernable. Cyborg technology would be another step forward in the design's evolution: the idea of the house as a reflection of its occupants is taken to the extreme if the architecture begins to adapt the qualities of its human residents. Such a dynamic is proposed in Bratton (2006) in his discussion of recombinant architecture, where the architecture and the bodies that inhabit them are of the same nature.



The Lovell Health House is an attempt to seamlessly integrate nature into the dwelling through the use of sunlight, open-air spaces and landscaping considerations. For Neutra, humans were inextricably linked with nature. He goes even further to imply that we are defined by our environment: "Man is always in the middle of something – this ineluctable presence, enveloping

and permeating our lives, called the environment. It ties us together. It determines who we are, how we feel, and what our outlook is” (Neutra, 1989, p. 5). As a result of Neutra’s beliefs, nature, as a body, had as much of an interest in his architecture as that of the human body. The idea of nature could ever be considered completely separate from humans is something inconceivable for Neutra: “The old dualistic notion that the interior and exterior forces of the world are segregated is perilous nonsense. There never was any dualism in nature” (Neutra, 1989, 6).

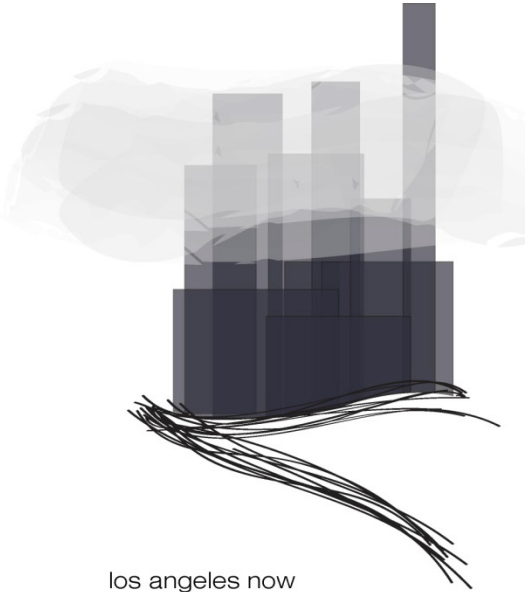
This integration of human life with the larger natural system parallels with Agrest’s (1993) discussion of the architecture from without. Similar to the conflict between equating and linking the male and female genders, it is also difficult to intrinsically combine nature and architecture. How is one to create a defined space which is not separate from its surroundings? Though the two are inherently not the same, we are attempting to equate them on the same level and from the same perspective.

Though nature as a part of the dwelling is a romantic notion, it is important to first consider what we are really incorporating as far as the quality of our surroundings. Neutra was first drawn to Los Angeles for its inherent freshness, one not yet soiled by smog and unabated sprawl (Neutra, 1989). In designing the Lovell Health House, he incorporated the surrounding environment into the dwelling for the benefit of the occupants. However, with the present levels of environmental degradation and pollution, such an idea

may be detrimental. Instead of enhancing quality of life, the building may actually be rendering the occupant unhealthy (Colomina, 1997).



los angeles then



los angeles now

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