

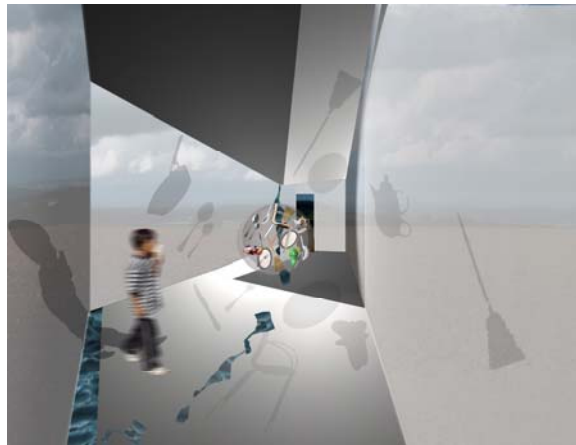
Shinkenchiu Residential Design Competition 2006_The Planless House *The Ephemeral House_Priscilla Yeung_20174028*

With increased technological developments worldwide ever since the end of World War II, we, as human beings, had all forgotten the very fundamentals of life. We no longer understand what living in this world truly means and our deeply rooted connection to this precious piece of land. As Tado Ando writes, *“the [fundamental] issue is not to discover new values in architectural elements, but to construct new relationships between architecture and nature.”* Through the Ephemeral House, we would like to bring forth a reflection upon today’s perception of houses; not only are our cars, factories and industries causing pollution to the earth, each of the house that we currently live in is also gradually eating away our only piece of habitable land.

“What the word for space, Raum, Rum, designates is said by its ancient meaning. Raum means a place cleared or freed for settlement and lodging. A space is something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary, Greek peras. A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing.” Martin Heidegger in ‘Building, Dwelling and Thinking’, 1954

In today’s society, each of us had created our own set of boundaries to gain higher level of privacy and security for ourselves. However, these boundaries that we have created no longer carry the fundamental meaning of sharable and interactive spaces among people such that a better life can be enjoyed. In contrast, they have turned themselves into barriers that disengage us from the rest of the world as well as those who surrounds us. This is especially true in the layout of today’s houses in general. Kids and parents seldom spend time together in the living room, the family room or the kitchen due to advancement in technologies and mass production. Each of the room, in most houses today, would have its own set of electronics such as a computer, a television and a Playstation. As a result, it becomes unnecessary for its inhabitants to even depart this bounded space to connect themselves to the outside world, hence forgetting what nature and interactions with others are truly about.

Why did human civilization not made any advancement in turning us into better beings but instead brought us further and further away from nature and made us incapable of physical communications with other individuals like savages? Why are tools such as telephone and computers required to communicate with others when it can simply be done with our bare mouth? When we deeply consider this issue, we would then ask ourselves, why must a house be subdivided into different rooms for different activities? Is privacy such an important element in our life? Why can't a house simply be a large open space bounded only by its outer walls in which everyone can perform all kinds of activities collectively and intimately? The Ephemeral House was in fact designed to suggest a potential solution to this current situation in the society. With its planless and wallless condition, people may conduct activities together in this space and enjoy every minute that they have with each other. There are no longer any barriers between one individual and another. All kinds of activities may be performed together to enhance physical interactions and communications that had been lost. With the absence of conventional solid walls, the Ephemeral House permits one to become increasingly aware of the natural world that surrounds them. With its semi-translucent walls, the house is totally controlled by nature. Depending on the different weathers and moments throughout the day, from sunrise to sunset, the amount of sunlight that penetrates into the space would vary accordingly. Thus, our activities within the house become totally dependent on the natural phenomena of the earth bringing us back to the fundamental ways of living and enabling us to build stronger connections to this precious piece of land.



Whenever we think of houses, we would often associate them with a defined set of rooms in which a certain set of equipments would be contained accordingly. However, are these equipments truly essential for us to perform specific tasks and activities within that particular space? Why is it essential to buy those objects for our houses? The answer to this question is quite simple. Due to mass-

production and industrialization of the world, materialistic goods are more than abundant worldwide. We, as consumers in this current technological society, had turned our habit of purchasing into a horrible psychological disease. No matter we are young or old, male or female, we all love to buy things once we see something that is favourable to us without thinking whether it essential or not. The reason we purchase constantly is to engage ourselves into the so called *New Trend* of today's society. This is especially true with electronics and furniture within our houses. In many cases, people would throw away their existing electronic equipments or furnishings not necessarily because they are no longer usable, but simply because they are no longer in style and would like to fulfill their urge of buying new things. As a matter of fact, our perception of consumption had been diverted from the fundamental meanings of survival to a disastrous disease that does not only destroy our mind but also our planet. As we purchase and produce new goods daily in the current society, we are also at the same time creating wastes and pollution to the world around us. Thus, both our houses and ourselves had turned into immense waste generating machines. Electronic equipments including computers and cellphones are great examples of such wastes products. In today's society, none of us is fully satisfied with the current technological developments. We constantly change our equipments before they actually break so that we can keep up with the trend and fulfill our desire to buy. As a result, mountains and mountains of electronic trash are being generated on a daily basis. This does not only create toxicity to our planet but will also influence our health in the long run.



If only we offer ourselves some time to think and carefully consider before we purchase, this planet would certainly become a much better place to live in. The central globe of hanging objects within the Ephemeral House was in fact carefully constructed for this sole purpose; reflection and consideration. This idea of the globe of objects was directly inspired by one of Cornelia Parker's piece of art installation known as *Cold dark matter: An exploded view*. In this specific piece of installation, salvaged objects were collected and hung in the centre of a room in the form of a sphere with an artificial light shining out from its central core. As she stated, "*I resurrect things that have been killed off... My work is all about the potential of materials - even when it looks like they've lost all possibilities.*"



It is important for all of us to truly understand the meaning and potential of everything that we purchase for both ourselves and our houses. Things should not be thrown away simply because they are no longer in style. If Parker is able to turn trash into useful objects, why are we unable to preserve our electronics and furnishings better and turn them into something new instead of throwing them away completely? There is always possibility and potential in everything in this world. All it requires is a little more thoughts and considerations for positive transformations to take place, hence helping towards the improvement and preservations of our planet.

In the case of the Ephemeral House, the central globe of household objects is also to bring forth this specific reflection in its inhabitants' minds. We must deeply consider what we do to this world since all our actions can either better the earth or cause more harm to it. During the day, natural rays of sunlight penetrating through the semi-translucent glass walls of the shelter enhances our connection with the natural world around us. However, once the night sky falls, the one and only artificial light that is installed in the core of the globe lights up allowing the outside world to come to the awareness of the happenings within this space. Not

only are these shadows on the outside become intensified at night times, they also become vulnerable to the exterior world hence suggesting that both the earth and us are vulnerable to each other.



Additionally, the location of the globe had been carefully considered. It was specifically hung down from the roof at the lowest point of the house to further bring forth reflections upon our obsession with materialistic goods and realizing the load that these objects are putting onto the earth. Hence our urge to consume and to produce should be taken into considerations to create a much better habitable environment for generations to come.



With industrialization and mass production in today's society, especially in the North American market, little thoughts were put into what is truly essential to us. More and more houses are getting built only because there are underutilized pieces of land, thus there are possibilities in making more money. Our suburbs are slowly disappearing with the birth of endless number of new town-homes, semi-detached homes, and single homes. With this rapid rate of suburban

development, sooner or later, nature will no longer be present and all we see around us would be a forest of artificial buildings. By then, where will natural resources be obtained? Will we still be able to continue our development? Will we still have oxygen to breath in order to sustain life? To this concern, the Ephemeral House acts as a suggestion of a compact, movable, and adaptable shelter for all of us. Each individual who owns this shelter may displace it to anywhere in the world, thus reducing the footprints of conventional residential houses and also saving our suburban lands. In this manner, not only are we creating less pollution to the world around us, we are also at the same time enhancing our relations with the natural environment. One of the preceding architectural projects that inspired us into this thought was the *Loft Cube* designed by Werner Aisslinger. This project's major concept was also to decrease the construction of houses yet still be able to provide a favourable shelter for individuals. Furthermore, as a mobile home, it can easily be moved and situated anywhere in the world. It does not only minimize building footprints but also permit flexibilities in this world without causing any long-term and significant harms or destructions.



Similarly, the *Virtual House* designed by Foreign Office Architects was also based on an identical mentality. The organic form of the Virtual House permits itself to blend harmoniously with its surrounding environment. Furthermore, it was designed based on sustainability such as its incorporation of a green roof system. Instead of being a house that behaves as an absolute waste generating machine, like most of our conventional houses today, it actually helps towards the restoration of the earth.



In the case of the Ephemeral House, natural rain water is used as the primary water supply through its green roof purification system. In this manner, we are both drawn closer to nature and become more aware of its natural presence. This instability of water supply further reflects on the temporal status of the earth. Similar to the shadows within the house, they may be present one day but completely vanished the next. Hence, the Ephemeral House offers all of us an opportunity to carefully observe and appreciate this ceaselessly morphing piece of land before it disappears in a glance. In order to truly restore our planet and preserve it for future generations, we must all become less materialistic and be more considerate when taking any forms of actions.

Sustainability should be the most prominent issue in today's society. Not only should all of us live in a "green" manner, our buildings should also act as means that can preserve and restore our planet. Other than the green roof system of the shelter, other aspects of this building had also been considered sustainably. Inspired by one of Kengo Kuma's projects known as the *Plastic House*, the outer walls of the Ephemeral Shelter is to be built with a material known as FPR (Fiber Reinforced Plastic). This is a very durable and long-lasting material that requires little to no maintenance throughout the years. Furthermore, it emits no toxic gas to the environment yet still able to provide sufficient sense of enclosure to the building itself. FPR is not only an unconventional material to be used for buildings, but it also offers a sense of lightness to both the building's interior and exterior.



From the machine age to present, many major and influential changes had occurred to our society worldwide. Although new developments in machineries and techniques promised everyone with not only abundant supply but also endless choices of materialistic goods, our way of consuming these objects had in fact turned into a disastrous obsession and a form of mental disease. Furthermore, due to these newly developed technologies, each of us had become less connected with not only the people around us but also with the natural world that surrounds us. Thus, the Ephemeral House comes to birth as a suggestion for these current issues that need to be solved in hope of improving both the earth and restoring each of our personal perspectives and souls.

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