

## Surface Encounters: On being Centred, Decentred and Recentred by the works of Do-Ho Suh<sup>1</sup>

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If criticism can be defined by the purpose of providing a commentary (for some a judgement, for others a discriminating point of view, for others yet a response or perhaps even a point of departure) on a cultural work – art, literature, film and architecture – then criticism always has ‘an other’ in mind. The key task of criticism might be considered then to be: how does one make a relationship with an other? In thinking about the position of the other in criticism and psychoanalysis, the work of psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche is illuminating.

For Laplanche, the message imparted to the subject by the other (for Laplanche the mother or concrete other) is an enigma both to the receiver but also to the sender of the message: he says the ‘messages are enigmatic because [...] [they] are strange to themselves.’<sup>2</sup> This first inscription, according to Laplanche, does not require a translation ‘it is a pure and simple implantation’.<sup>3</sup> These enigmatic messages are elements of perception, they do ‘make a sign’, but a sign whose signifier does not need to be transcribed, since it is already a ‘signifier to’, in other words this is a signifier *to someone* rather than a signifier *of something*.<sup>4</sup>

In Laplanche’s view, some aspects of the adult’s enigmatic message to the child are translated, while others are excluded and repressed, becoming unconscious.<sup>5</sup> In his account repression – the negative side of the translation of the enigmatic message – produces dislocation:<sup>6</sup>

For in between the primary intervention of the other and the creation of the other thing in me, there occurs a process called repression – an extremely complex process

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<sup>1</sup> I was invited to give a gallery talk about the exhibition, Do-Ho Suh (23 April – 26 May 2002) Serpentine Gallery, London and this text derives from my script for the guided tour. *Do-Ho Suh*, curated by Lisa G. Corrin and Mary Shirley, debuted at the Serpentine Gallery, London, 2002, and travelled to the Seattle Art Museum and Seattle Asian Art Museum, Seattle, 2002. The text was published in Jane Rendell, *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism* (London: IB Tauris, 2010), and the material in this chapter is taken from configuration 5 of that book. I would like to extend my thanks to IB Tauris for allowing this reproduction of the text, albeit in a new arrangement.

<sup>2</sup> Cathy Caruth, ‘An Interview with Jean Laplanche’, © 2001 Cathy Caruth. See <http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/pmc/text-only/issue.101/11.2caruth.txt> (accessed 3 May 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Jean Laplanche, ‘A Short Treatise on the Unconscious’ [1993] translated by Luke Thurston, *Essays on Otherness*, 84–116, 97.

<sup>4</sup> Laplanche, ‘A Short Treatise on the Unconscious’, 91, note 18.

<sup>5</sup> Laplanche, ‘A Short Treatise on the Unconscious’, 97.

<sup>6</sup> Laplanche, ‘A Short Treatise on the Unconscious’, 104.

comprising at least two stages in mutual interaction, and leading to a veritable dislocation/reconfiguration of (explicit and implicit-enigmatic) experiential elements.<sup>7</sup>

For Laplanche, the result of this process of translation is that the ego and id are separated, the ego integrates that which can be translated, and that which cannot constitutes the id. During the process of repression the initial Copernican relationship, where the centre of gravity is located in the other, radically alters to become a Ptolemaic one, centered on the self. According to Laplanche, once the ego is constituted as an agency, the psychic system shuts in on itself, and the external otherness of *der Andere* (the other person) undergoes primary repression to become the internal otherness of *das Andere* (the other thing).<sup>8</sup>

In this chapter I explore how Laplanche's understanding of Copernican and Ptolemaic movement allows us to consider how a critic's encounter with a work of art operates through processes of centring, decentering and recentering. I suggest that such movements suspend what we might describe as judgement or discrimination in criticism, and instead, through what I call the practice of *site-writing*, trace and construct relations between sites – visible and invisible – connecting and disconnecting critics, works, artists, essays and readers. Site-writing is a way of configuring what happens when discussions concerning situatedness and site-specificity in art practice extend to involve the processes of writing criticism, so questioning the terms of reference that relate the critic to the work positioned 'under' critique, and proposing instead alternative positions.

Site-writing is a critical spatial practice<sup>9</sup> which emphasizes the differing qualities of those sites of the critic's engagement with art – material, emotional, political and conceptual – including the artwork's construction, exhibition and documentation, as well as those remembered, dreamed

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<sup>7</sup> Laplanche, 'The Unfinished Copernican Revolution', 71, note 37. Here the reader is referred to Jean Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis* [1987] translated by David Macey (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1989), 130–3.

<sup>8</sup> Jean Laplanche, 'The Aims of the Psychoanalytic Process', translated by Joan Tambureno, *Journal of European Psychoanalysis*, 5 (Spring–Fall 1997), 69–79, 75.

<sup>9</sup> I first introduced the term 'critical spatial practice' in my article Jane Rendell, 'A Place Between Art, Architecture and Critical Theory', *Proceedings to Place and Location* (Tallinn, Estonia: 2003) pp. 221–33 and later consolidated and developed the concept in my book Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture* (London: IB Tauris, 2006). Since that time, the same term has been taken up by individuals such as Judith Rugg in her seminars at the RIBA, London, from around 2008; Eyal Weisman to describe activities as part of the 'MA: Research Architecture' at Goldsmiths College of Art, London; and most recently by Marcus Miessen to identify the 'MA: Architecture and Critical Spatial Practice' launched in 2011 at the Städelschule, Frankfurt.

and imagined by the artist, the critic and other viewers and users of the work.<sup>10</sup> The intention is to focus on how spatial concepts may be embodied through encounters with artworks and reproduced in writings that respond to these experiences. This process is perhaps particularly pertinent when considered in connection to works, such as those of Do-Ho Suh, a Korean-born artist now based in New York, which explicitly examine issues around location and dislocation with regards to personal and cultural identity, memory and home. In what follows I investigate, how through encounters with surfaces in a number of works by Do-Ho Suh, this critic, through centring, decentring and recentring devices, positions the work in relation to personal memories and situated experiences of her own.

In her essay for Do-Ho Suh's solo show at the Serpentine Gallery, London in 2002, art critic Miwon Kwon took issue with notions of authenticity that could be ascribed to the work, not just the 'original' Korean home that Suh's travelling piece *Seoul Home/L.A. Home/New York Home/Baltimore Home/London Home/Seattle Home* (1999) is a duplicate of, but the myth of the authenticity of mobility itself.<sup>11</sup> Although Kwon's critique of 'cosmopolitan homelessness' argues quite rightly that the movement experienced and described by the international art scene as a universal condition needs to be understood as an élite privilege enjoyed by very few, her own position in this context is not subject to address.

My own engagement with Suh's work (and Kwon's essay) took place just after I returned from a visit to Seoul.<sup>12</sup> In what follows I recount how my first-hand experience of South Korea operates to locate the work, to both centre and decentre it. I try to resist the use of autobiographical details of my visit to situate the work in relation to an image of an authentic Korea, nor do I argue that critics must experience the original cultures that artworks refer to and the actual sites in which they are located in order to understand the work. I do, however, seek to draw attention to the specificity of the particular sites through which we engage with works, in the case of my encounter with Suh's work – Seoul and London. I question why autobiographical and biographical details are assumed to operate as centring devices and wonder instead whether

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<sup>10</sup>For a longer discussion where I conceptualise my practice of site-writing, see Rendell, *Site-Writing*, 1–20.

<sup>11</sup> Miwon Kwon, 'The Other Otherness: The Art of Do-Ho Suh', *Do-Ho Suh* (London: Serpentine Gallery, 2002), 9–25, 23. For an extended discussion of site-specificity and dislocation see Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> I participated in an art and architecture workshop in Seoul, Korea organised by Junghee Lee in April 2002.

they have the potential to decentre the critic's position with respect to the work, as well as the reader's relation to the critical essay.

### **Biography as a Device which Centres, Decentres and Recentres.**

[insert image 1]

*On entering the first room of Suh's solo show at the Serpentine Gallery at first I am only aware of the presence of a glass floor, on which I have to step in order to continue my passage through the gallery. The walls seem to have nothing on them; they appear slightly coloured, but no more than off-white. Moving closer to inspect them more fully I discover that their surfaces are covered with thousands of tiny dots. Closer still I see that these dots are miniature faces in oval frames, all the same size, but each one different, a little like passport photographs in their ability to combine uniformity and variety.<sup>13</sup> Walking onto and looking down at the floor more carefully, I find myself standing on millions of tiny pairs of hands, which on a more detailed examination I realize belong to figurines.<sup>14</sup> Unbending, the hands disappear; moving back, the faces become invisible again. But I am left with the feeling of being silently watched, and when I move again I do so extremely lightly.*

Much of the critical conversation about Suh's work has focused on the relationship the work has to minimalism,<sup>15</sup> and the emphasis it places on the perception of an artwork as a public rather than an intimate experience. Kwon argues that Suh's work 'extends the lessons of minimalism' but also, by 'creating intimate relations with his viewer', makes 'anti-minimalist moves'.<sup>16</sup> For Kwon, *Who Am We?* (2000) and *Floor* (1997–2000) at first decentre the viewer because s/he only discovers the work once s/he is within it. Kwon asserts that the revelation of the detail brings a privileged sense of knowledge gained and with this a feeling of recentring.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Do-Ho Suh, *Who Am We? (Multi)* (2000). The 37,000 images of faces are taken from high school yearbooks of Suh and his friends. For a critical commentary, see for example, Miwon Kwon, 'The Other Otherness: The Art of Do-Ho Suh', *Do-Ho Suh* (London: Serpentine Gallery, 2002), 9–25, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Do-Ho Suh, *Floor* (1997–2000). This work consists of 180,000 figures cast from six different moulds. The figures differ from those in *Doormat: Welcome (Amber)* (2000) also exhibited at the Serpentine Gallery, and *Doormat: Welcome (Green)* (1998) described by Katie Clifford as less defined, apparently because Suh wanted them to appear as if they had been rubbed away by people stepping on them. See Katie Clifford, 'A Soldier's Story', *Art News* (January 2002), 102–5, 104.

<sup>15</sup> See for example Janet Kraynak, 'Travelling in Do-Ho Suh's World', *La Biennale di Venezia/Korean Pavilion: Do-Ho Suh* (Seoul: The Korean Culture and Arts Foundation, 2001), 41–2.

<sup>16</sup> Kwon, 'The Other Otherness', 12.

<sup>17</sup> Kwon, 'The Other Otherness', 12. In a similar vein, artist Tom Csaszar has commented that Suh's work often 'inverts or suspends expectations' but he does not argue that the inversion is then itself overturned. See Tom Csaszar, 'Social

However, I am not sure the viewing experience is constructed so sequentially – decentring followed by recentring. The discovery of the hands in *Floor*, for example, positions the viewer in a powerful location, but the realization that s/he is crushing those who continue to support him/her brings with it discomfort and confusion. Kwon recognizes this double positioning, indeed she argues that it is intentional on the part of the artist, and in her view its clear legibility produces resolution and thus pleasure, not displeasure, for the viewer. She mistrusts pleasure, because it undermines the ‘disturbing undercurrents’ of other works by Suh, such as *Some/One* (2001), a majestic military robe constructed out of thousands of army-style tags and *High School Uni-Form* (1996), a single entity composed of multiple empty uniforms.<sup>18</sup>

The view of the collective presented is ambivalent, but from whose perspective? It is not clear whether Suh’s work asks the viewer to identify with the position of the worker represented, and their resistance and/or collusion with dominant power structures,<sup>19</sup> or whether he wishes the viewer to consider whether he, the artist, is critiquing disciplinary regimes of power or affirming that individuality must be subsumed for the common good. Certainly for the viewer, the links that he or she might presume this Korean-born artist is making between what Kwon calls the Eastern virtue of ‘self-sacrifice in the name of a larger social or political entity’ and the colonization of subjects, raises questions concerning whether the discipline of order comes from outside or within. Kwon asks whether ‘we’ in contemporary society are the agents of our own oppression or liberation?<sup>20</sup> But to which ‘we’ is she referring?

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Structures and Shared Autobiographies: A Conversation with Do-Ho Suh’, *Sculpture*, 24/10 (December 2005), 34–41, 40.

<sup>18</sup> Other critics have also drawn out the more threatening aspects of *Some/One* and *High School Uni-Form*. For example, Frances Richard connects *Some/One* with ‘enigma and threat’ and *High School Uni-Form* as well as *Who Am We?* with ‘an oppressive sameness’, in distinction to what she calls the ‘collective strength’ of *Floor*. See Frances Richard, ‘The Art of Do-Ho Suh’, *Art Forum* (January 2002) 115–117, 117. *High School Uni-Form* has been described by Clifford as ‘militaristic’, a comment made in connection to an article in which she frames Suh’s work in relation to his time in military service. See Clifford, ‘A Soldier’s Story’, 104. Audrey Walon has stated that *Some/One* ‘bring[s] out the military strength of the collective’ in a more confrontational way than other pieces by Suh, an interpretation formulated in response to the installation of this work at the heart of the capitalist corporation Philip Morris. See Audrey Walen, ‘Do-Ho Suh: Whitney Museum at Philip Morris’, *Sculpture*, 20/8 (October 2001) 72–3, 72.

<sup>19</sup> Glenn Harper asks whether the figures in the Suh’s *Floor* are ‘oppressed masses’ or the ‘workers who support the world’? See Glenn Harper, ‘Do-Ho Suh: Lehmann Maupin’, *Sculpture*, 20/1 (January–February 2001), 62–3, 62.

<sup>20</sup> Kwon discusses all these ambiguities. See Kwon, ‘The Other Otherness’, 13.

Resisting the tendency to explain the ambivalence in Suh's work in relation to his biography as she argues other critics have done,<sup>21</sup> Kwon chooses to produce a more historical interpretation, by exploring Michael Hardt's and Antonio Negri's theorisation of 'the new global order of Empire', and their concept of the multitude rather than the people.<sup>22</sup> This allows her to develop her argument concerning pieces such as *Floor* with a degree of loss rather than the satisfaction of fulfilment with which she, earlier in the essay, connects the work.<sup>23</sup>

That Suh was born and educated in Korea and later moved to the United States to continue his studies as an artist, seems to me a historical as well as a biographical detail that helps to situate but does not necessarily explain or centre the ambivalence of the work.<sup>24</sup> To reject the biographical but retain the historical might well be the decision of a scholarly mode of art criticism, but does this then mean that all mention of Suh's life is to be eradicated from what is written about his work, even if his art emerges out his personal mobility.

On my visit to Seoul I learnt that Confucianism dominates Korean culture. In this ethical system, originating in China, a particular set of rules, based on respect, age, status and gender govern the construction of social relations. To someone unfamiliar with this collective ethos the predetermined nature of relationships can appear rather oppressive, but perhaps no more so than global capitalism's myth of individual freedom. In Korean art practice there is a palpable tension between eastern and western values.

That Suh's father, Se-Ok Suh, is a well-known artist working in the traditional manner – ink on rice paper, and his mother, Min-Za Chung, is active in retaining Korean cultural heritage, are biographical details often referred to in discussions of Suh's work. At Seoul National University, with its focus on traditional painting and sculpture, where Suh first studied, I met Insu Choi, Professor of Sculpture.<sup>25</sup> Although Choi studied in Germany, Karlsruhe in the early 1980s, for him the birth of modernism brought with it the death of representative painting and figurative sculpture, and in his view such western traditions should not be forced on artists in Korea, but

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<sup>21</sup> Kwon refers particularly to Clifford, 'A Soldier's Story'. See Kwon, 'The Other Otherness', 13.

<sup>22</sup> Kwon, 'The Other Otherness', 13 and 16. See also Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> Kwon, 'The Other Otherness', 17.

<sup>24</sup> Kwon, 'The Other Otherness', 13.

<sup>25</sup> My understanding of Insu Choi's views come from a conversation with him where Junghee Lee acted as an informal translator. If there are any inaccuracies in my articulation of his position, they come from my own misunderstanding.

adopted through choice.<sup>26</sup> I also had many conversations with one of Suh's teachers, Yoon Young Seok, Professor at Kyungwon University. An artist who also trained in Germany, in Stuttgart, Soon occupies a very different position from Choi. He embraced his western education and is currently engaged in the making of what he calls 'conceptual objects' located within a contemporary context that acknowledges the position of Korea in relation to the west, and vice versa.<sup>27</sup> A large number of Korean artists have studied in Germany and the United States. Some have returned to Korea, but others, like Suh, have not. For many the frictions between freedom and individuality that arise out of this particular east/west dislocation are generative impulses in their practice.

Is this information gleaned from informal conversations over dinner and my reflections upon it too autobiographical for inclusion here? Are they only valid if they do not seek to explain or centre interpretations of the work? But whose biography precisely is the problem: the artist's or the critic's – Suh's, mine or Kwon's own?

Kwon is now based in the United States, but she grew up in Seoul. I found this out by reading her earlier 1998 article on Suh's work where she refers to her Korean childhood.<sup>28</sup> In a perceptive account of *Who Am We?* and *High School Uni-Form*, she eloquently describes how the 'destablizing conditions of cultural displacement', both chosen and forced, create a sense of longing connected with leaving. Here it is out of biographical details that a complex understanding of cultural and historical context emerges which far from explaining, produces an informed exposition, subtle yet precise, of the work's ambiguities.<sup>29</sup>

I wonder then whether the so-called vacancy or absence Kwon detects at the core of Suh's work comes less from Hardt's and Negri's political theory and more from a loss of her own. Is it fear of the charge of sentimentality or nostalgia that makes Kwon remove her own history as well as Suh's in her second account of his work? It is hard to know, yet the loss she finds via a more

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<sup>26</sup> Choi places a strong emphasis on taoist tradition and meditative practice in his own work. In the winter he draws lines on paper in response to the length of his breath and in the summer he rolls clay. For Choi, the hand is a tool, which in the act of shaping integrates spirit and matter. See for example, Insu Choi, Nigel Hall, Christain Herdeg and Paul Isenrath, *Beyond the Circle* (The Moran Museum of Art, 2000).

<sup>27</sup> See for example Young Seok Yoon, *Temple of Time* (Seoul, Korea: TOTAL Museum of Contemporary Art, 1999). See also Young Seok Yoon's *Piggy Plantation* (2002) shown at PS1 and the Clock Tower Gallery, New York.

<sup>28</sup> See Miwon Kwon, 'Uniform Appearance', *frieze*, 38 (January–February 1998), 68–9.

<sup>29</sup> Kwon, 'Uniform Appearance', 68–9.

theoretical route, paradoxically serves to recentre her in the role of art critic. Likewise the knowledge I gained in Seoul that provided me with a sense of anchorage in a foreign culture also serves to recentre my understanding of the decentring devices in Suh's work.

A Replica of a Replica of a Replica ...

[insert image 2]

In 1999 when asked to exhibit at the Korean Cultural Centre in Los Angeles, Suh saw on display photographs of traditional nineteenth-century buildings in Korea. These images reminded him of his home in Seoul, based on parts of the Changdeokgung Palace.<sup>30</sup> For *Seoul Home/L.A. Home/New York Home/Baltimore Home/London Home/Seattle Home* (1999) Suh fabricated a replica of his home in green silk. Conceived originally as 'custom-made clothing for a room',<sup>31</sup> this work is a development of an earlier one, *Room 516/516-I/516-II* (1994) where Suh made a copy of his studio in muslin.<sup>32</sup>

*Seoul Home/L.A. Home/New York Home/Baltimore Home/London Home/Seattle Home* is a home, which is portable and has travelled around the world. With each new show, the work adds to its title the name of the town in which it has been exhibited, clearly marking its growing itinerary as well as Suh's increasing international recognition. Although generated through his interest in 'transportable site-specificity',<sup>33</sup> the physical substance of the work does not change; rather it transports the specific site of his Seoul home to each new location. The work is altered in the way it addresses each of its new sites or homes. In Los Angeles, placed on top of a central staircase, each viewer had to pass through the inside of the work before seeing it from the outside as an object in totality. In London, at the Serpentine Gallery, its floating position high up in the roof, produced comparisons with air balloons or parachutes, which while also inaccessible differ from *Seoul Home/L.A. Home/New York Home/Baltimore Home/London Home/Seattle Home* in concealing rather than revealing their interiors when seen from below. The tension between stasis and change is highlighted in the work's title, where the repetition of the word home, accompanied by a different town in each pair of words, can be understood either to

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<sup>30</sup> Lisa G. Corrin, 'The Perfect Home: A Conversation with Do-Ho Suh', *Do-Ho Suh* (London: Serpentine Gallery, 2002), 27–39, 27.

<sup>31</sup> Corrin, 'The Perfect Home', 27.

<sup>32</sup> Corrin, 'The Perfect Home', 28.

<sup>33</sup> Corrin, 'The Perfect Home', 27.



indicate the transformation of Suh's Seoul home into a new one in each new location, or that despite its changing geography, home continues to refer back to the same origin.

When in Seoul, I had, without knowing it, visited the parts of Suh's home, Changdeokgung Palace.<sup>34</sup> This traditional Korean building is constructed of wood and rice paper, waxed to keep out the rain. The use of paper reduces the emphasis on vision that comes with glass, but this architecture is not a sealed box: it is porous to the environment. From inside you can hear and smell what is outside. Suh has discussed how his motivation to make the work came from being disturbed at night in his flat in New York and remembering how peacefully he had slept in his childhood home.<sup>35</sup> A strange reversal then that the key characteristic of the architecture of his childhood home – its permeability to light, smell and sound – should be remembered as a protecting envelope.

As Kwon has noted, Suh's home is 'a replica of a replica of a replica'.<sup>36</sup> The artwork is a replica of a replica his father made of two nineteenth-century buildings – a library and master's house – from the palace complex. When some of these buildings were demolished to make way for new roads, Suh's father salvaged timbers to construct a house for his family, in which, as Suh describes, the original library became their family kitchen and dining room.<sup>37</sup> Interestingly it turns out that the library and master's house were themselves replicas.<sup>38</sup> Suh outlines how, in 1828, King Sunjo made copies of 'civilian-style houses' in order to experience the life of 'ordinary people'.<sup>39</sup> However, the term 'commoner' used by Kwon,<sup>40</sup> which mirrors Suh's use of the phrase 'ordinary people', and works to create an understanding of Korean royalty as wishing to learn from ordinary experience, is decentred by my reading of the guidebook to Changdeokgung Palace, which states that these houses belonged to members of the yangban class of intellectuals, who although not members of the royal family, were considered to be a 'largely hereditary aristocratic class based on scholarship and official position rather than wealth'.<sup>41</sup> This

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<sup>34</sup> See for example, the photographs and short texts describing Yeon–Gyeongdang (House) including the Husband's Quarters, the Housewife's Quarters, the Inner Servants' Quarters and Seonhyangjae (Library) in Jong-Soon Yoon, *Changdeokgung (Palace)* (Seoul: Sung Min Publishing House, 2000), 46–51.

<sup>35</sup> Corrin, 'The Perfect Home', 28.

<sup>36</sup> Kwon, 'The Other Otherness', 25, note 19.

<sup>37</sup> Clifford, 'A Soldier's Story', 105.

<sup>38</sup> Kwon, 'The Other Otherness', 17.

<sup>39</sup> Corrin, 'The Perfect Home', 29.

<sup>40</sup> This is the term Kwon uses. See Kwon, 'The Other Otherness', 25, note 19.

<sup>41</sup> Yoon, *Changdeokgung (Palace)*, 46.

left me with unanswered questions concerning how the act of reproducing certain kinds of architecture could at the same time serve to reinforce a conceptual understanding of the work with respect to references to class distinctions in Korean history while also destabilise the viewer by suggesting that they imagine a site located physically distant from the work in the gallery.

Between the Outside of the Inside and the Inside of the Outside

[insert image 3]

*For My Home is Yours, Your Home is Mine* (2000) at the Rodin Gallery in Seoul, Suh made a companion piece to *Seoul Home/L.A. Home/New York Home/Baltimore Home/London Home/Seattle Home* the first of what has become a collection of replicas of his home in New York, of the apartment itself, *348 West 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, Apt. A, New York, NY 10011 at Rodin Gallery, Seoul/Toyko Opera City Art Gallery/Serpentine Gallery, London/Biennale of Sydney/Seattle Art Museum* (2000) made in grey nylon,<sup>42</sup> and the corridor, *348 West 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, Apt. A, New York, NY 10011 at Rodin Gallery, Seoul/Toyko Opera City Art Gallery/Serpentine Gallery, London/Biennale of Sydney/Seattle Art Museum (Corridor)* (2001) fabricated in rose-pink nylon, added in subsequent exhibitions, such as the Serpentine Gallery, London in 2002.<sup>43</sup> When exhibited together these two works have also been titled first *Perfect Home I*,<sup>44</sup> and then, when accompanied by part of the staircase from Suh's apartment block formed of yellow nylon, *Perfect Home II*.<sup>45</sup>

At the Serpentine Gallery, Suh's two homes do not encounter one another directly. While *Seoul Home/L.A. Home/New York Home/Baltimore Home/London Home/Seattle Home* floats down from the ceiling, allowing us to look up and into its beautiful interior, *348 West 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, Apt. A, New York, NY 10011 at Rodin Gallery, Seoul/Toyko Opera City Art Gallery/Serpentine Gallery,*

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<sup>42</sup> The grey has been described as 'dust-coloured'. Richard, 'The Art of Do-Ho Suh', p. 116. And also as generic in contrast to the culturally specific 'celadon' green of *Seoul Home* .... See Kwon, 'The Other Otherness', 17.

<sup>43</sup> Critics have drawn attention to the colouring of the work, some argue that it articulates the functional zoning of architectural design emphasized in the colour coding of drawings. See C. K. Ho, 'Do-Ho Suh: Lehmann Maupin Gallery', *Modern Painters*, 16/3 (August 2003) 122–3, 122. Others suggest the choice of colours is emotive, with the pink of the corridor considered to be indicative of the 'rose-tinted', 'idealized' and 'fantasized connection' between the different elements of the piece. See Richard, 'The Art of Do-Ho Suh', 116.

<sup>44</sup> For example when installed in the Seattle Art Museum and Seattle Asian Art Museum, Seattle, 2002. See Anon., 'Do-Ho Suh: The Perfect Home', *Fiberarts*, 29/3 (November–December 2002), 22–3.

<sup>45</sup> For example when installed at the Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York, 2003. See [http://www.lehmannmaupin.com/#/exhibitions/2003-05-30\\_do-ho-suh/](http://www.lehmannmaupin.com/#/exhibitions/2003-05-30_do-ho-suh/) (accessed 14 June 2008).

*London/Biennale of Sydney/Seattle Art Museum* is constructed upwards from the ground up like a tent, with slightly sagging sides. In tracing an interior architecture at a scale of 1:1 and exploring the experiential qualities of absence, Suh's work raises comparisons to Rachel Whiteread's *House* (1993) her concrete cast of the interior of a Victorian house in London's East End.<sup>46</sup> But while Whiteread's casts turn inside out, Suh's linings face inwards not outwards. His stitched lines are sewn twice, from inside and outside, suggesting the structures are reversible,<sup>47</sup> however if inhabiting the work from the inside clothes the viewer in an absent architecture, occupying the work from the outside is to be faced by an impossible object, one which decentres rather than recentres the viewer.

*On the outside, trying to imagine the absent architecture to which I am being referred I find myself located behind the interior paint finish of Suh's New York apartment, inside a solid brick wall or, depending on the construction technique, among the insulation, studwork and builder's rubbish commonly packed into the cavity. As I address the impossible position in which the work places me, I realize I am right between the outside of the inside wall of Suh's apartment and the inside of the outside wall of the Serpentine Gallery.*

This is precisely how the *at* in this work's title operates – the insertion of *at* – a preposition of address points to the meeting point between the site to which the work refers and the one in which it is located. *348 West 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, Apt. A, New York, NY 10011 at Rodin Gallery, Seoul/Toyko Opera City Art Gallery/Serpentine Gallery, London/Biennale of Sydney/Seattle Art Museum* addresses itself to each gallery it visits, this is quite unlike *Seoul Home/L.A. Home/New York Home/Baltimore Home/London Home/Seattle Home* where the city in which the gallery is located becomes an adjective used to describe home, and where each city home is added to an ever growing list, separated by a forward slash, indicating a clear distinction from its predecessor. The address or *at* in *348 West 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, Apt. A, New York, NY 10011 at Rodin Gallery, Seoul/Toyko Opera City Art Gallery/Serpentine Gallery, London/Biennale of Sydney/Seattle Art Museum* opens up a gap for the critic to occupy between the space that is physically present and the space that is referred to.

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<sup>46</sup> See for example James Lingwood (ed.) *Rachel Whiteread: House* (London: Phaidon Press, 1995).

<sup>47</sup> Kwon, 'The Other Otherness', 25, note 20.

If Laplanche describes the 'signifier of' as 'a metapsychology of the trace or of representation' and a self-referential movement which, 'remains irreducibly solipsistic',<sup>48</sup> and thus operational as a centring device, then the *at* in this work by Doho Suh, might suggest instead the experience of Laplanche's concept of a 'signifier to' whose enigmatic message is decentring. This distinction between 'signifying of' and 'signifying to' is very important for Laplanche as it allows him to account for meanings that are not already pre-contained in the signified and simply transmitted via the signifier to the addressee, but rather to conceptualise those meanings which might be enigmatic, in other words, not necessarily known to the one who is addressed or the one who does the addressing; these enigmatic messages are created in the encounter of one and another. I argue that it is possible to consider the role of surface in *348 West 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, Apt. A, New York, NY 10011* at Rodin Gallery, Seoul/Toyko Opera City Art Gallery/Serpentine Gallery, London/Biennale of Sydney/Seattle Art Museum in this way: that the surface of the work is not only capable of transmitting meanings of *348 West 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, Apt. A, New York, NY 10011* but can does not need to be transcribed, it is signifying *to* the Serpentine Gallery. These meanings *to* are created through points of address – *ats* – meeting points where surfaces of the work, the backs as well as the fronts, meet surfaces of the gallery, and sites where subjects are produced when critics address and are addressed by these surface encounters.

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<sup>48</sup> Laplanche, 'Sublimation and/or Inspiration', 45.

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