



EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF  
CREATIVE PRACTICES  
IN CITIES AND LANDSCAPES

## MAIN SECTION

# Surrealist Curation: Urban Domesticity through the Surrealist Poetics of Analogy

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## ABSTRACT

The tactic of surrealist poetic analogy forms the surrealist curation that functions as an agent that occupies, engages, and ultimately transforms the city and its built environment that surrounds us. In the case of Le Corbusier's roof terrace of the Beistegui apartment in Paris, Le Corbusier uses intentional movements and visual analogical compositions to dictate a curated urban experience in a domestic space. The surrealist curation unfolds the tenacious relationship between house and city through an analogical narrative, in which the house extends its boundaries to the public realm and brings domesticity into the city. In the case of Aljys' Modern Procession in New York City, the carried art objects, the music performed during the procession, and the movements of the participants domesticate urban streets by relocating art objects from the interior of a private museum institution to the public urban space. The juxtaposed urban elements enact a poetic transformation that facilitates the surrealist curation to assemble an "oneiric house" filled with fantasy. The paper argues that the surrealist curation evokes "dream images" in the city that transcends the tangible material city into a dream entity and looks beyond the built environment to understand the city. By implementing the surrealist curation one can further challenge the perceptions of urban spatial boundaries and investigate the theoretical and historical overlaps between urban domesticity and surrealist imagination. Surrealist curation criticizes the homogenous quantitative treatments of urbanism and their analytical data-driven approaches to urban transformation, calls for the examination of poetic relationships in our cities through visual fantasies, corporeal kinesthesia, and alternative narratives of reveries.

## KEYWORDS

*Surrealist Curation; Urban Domesticity; Urban Space; Architectural Surrealism; Poetic Analogy*

## PEER REVIEWED

<https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2612-0496/10156>

ISSN 2612-0496

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## Introduction: Surrealist Curation

An individual's experience of the city is innately "fragmentary, episodic and partial," and the mind reads these moments by curating the experiences in "historical sequences" and reframing them in reminiscences.<sup>1</sup> The experience of urban space thus necessarily calls upon curated urban images from one's memory, imagination, and fantasy. The dynamic perception of urban space is framed through narrated visual images and kinesthetic bodily experiences. In the *Dialectics of Seeing*, Susan Buck-Morss argues that "dream images" demonstrate interchangeability with material "urban objects," which are "hieroglyphic clues" to the memory of urban space.<sup>2</sup> She then describes how Walter Benjamin's memory of the urban space of Berlin, resides in his unconsciousness and presides over his imagination. For Benjamin, the personal experience of the city folds into dreams through urban images, which is simultaneously assembled with individual imagination and collective memory.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, one curates the city with recourse to urban images by dissecting the physical urban fabric into fragmented memories and reconstructing them with oneiric imagination. I contend that the city acts as "a fictional starting point"<sup>4</sup> in the process of forming urban images and yields situations enacted between inhabitants, through their limitless imagination and collective consciousness, and urban architecture. The oneiric urban images operate as tools for a personal curation of urban space and function as mediators between the physical built environment and the imagined psychic world. This curation of urban space offers an alternative understanding of the city through urban images that transcends its urban space beyond palpable materiality. Through such curation, the ephemeral urban experience manifests itself within the material world.

The following theories continue the investigation of this urban curation through the lens of the complex relationship between city, imagination, and language. It then frames the curation in surrealist theory that examines poetics and analogies. For architectural historian, Dalibor Veselý, dream entails the ability to transform "conventional reality" into "fantastic reality" and is infinitely poetic.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the poetic experience channels the illuminated dream world that harbors imagination. Architectural historian Alberto Pérez-Gómez attributes the emergence of the poetic image to the seemingly "paradoxical and contradictory operation" by which all art is created and claims that the ultimate cognitive function of the

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1 Sarah Chaplin and Alexandra Stara, eds., *Curating Architecture and the City* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009), 39.

2 Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 39.

3 Ibid, 38.

4 Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 204.

5 Dalibor Veselý, "Surrealism and the Latent World of Creativity," *Umeni / Art* 59, no. 3/4 (June 2011): 267.

poetic image becomes an openness to mystery that introduces new experiences.<sup>6</sup> The association between consciousness and the poetics proves that the curated urban images can reinvent the city through a poetic linguistic horizon that connotes the meanings of individual urban experiences. For philosopher Michel Foucault, an analogy is endowed with “a universal field of application” through which all figures in the whole universe can be drawn together and the space occupied by analogies is essentially “a space of radiation.”<sup>7</sup>

Foucault’s “radiation” resonates with the surrealist “spark” of juxtaposed images discussed in André Breton’s *Manifesto of Surrealism*. Breton states that the “surrealist” emerges from “simultaneous products of the activity” (*les produits simultanés de l’activité*) that spark a “luminous phenomenon” (*le phénomène lumineux*) from distinct realities.<sup>8</sup> The curation of urban experience traces a memory path that consists of dichotomous and distinct individual urban moments. Breton’s novel *Nadja* juxtaposes texts and photographs of Paris in a curatorial narrative that connects the reader with urban images through a psychological experience. These surrealist arrangements of urban images entail a “curatorial practice” that coordinates images and texts based on their relationship to a system of meaning.<sup>9</sup> One can then discover the innate connection between the curation of urban experiences and the analogically juxtaposed urban situations that embody poetic meanings. Veselý argues that “the analogical image which illuminates partial similarities” refuses to be reduced into a simple equation; and “it moves and mediates between two different realities present in a way which is never reversible.”<sup>10</sup> He further combines the notion of poetics and the concept of the analogy of surrealist practice and theorizes it into a “surrealist poetic analogy.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the curation of experiences through urban images indicates a surrealist characteristic that intrinsically folds meanings into poetic language and reverberates imagination through analogical reading. I argue that this tactic of surrealist poetic analogy forms a surrealist curation.

This paper studies the practice of surrealist curation in both Le Corbusier’s Beistegui apartment, located at 136 Avenue des Champs-Élysée in Paris (1929 to 1931) and Francis Alÿs’s *The Modern Procession* in New York City (2002). Although the two distinct productions are from different cities and periods, both of them have intentionally curated experiences in the city through the language of poetics and analogies. The former operates

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6 Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement: Architectural Meaning After the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 174.

7 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 22-23.

8 André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 37; André Breton, *Manifestes du surréalisme* (Paris, France: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1962), 53.

9 Chaplin and Stara, *Curating Architecture and the City*, 42.

10 Veselý, “Surrealism and the Latent World of Creativity,” 268.

11 Ibid.

within the private, domestic realm while the latter takes place in the public realm. By connecting and comparing the two cases, the paper sets out to understand how the agency of poetic analogy mediates between the two realms and further explains how domesticity plays a role in the surrealist curation. It argues that the surrealist curation offers an exodus of urban transformation from tangible physical operations to a surrealist imagination.

The surrealist curation functions as an agency that occupies, engages, and ultimately transforms the city and its built environment that surrounds us. To curate urban experiences, it requires a form of inhabitation, which manifests through walking and kinesthetic bodily movements that occupy the urban environment. To engage the city, the surrealist curation elevates the corporeal movement to a perceptual field and builds oneiric urban images through one's recollections and begets an imagined city. From the imagined city, the surrealist curation uses the analogical urban images to imbue the city with transcendent meanings that change the identity of urban space. It ultimately transforms urban space through newly curated perceptions that operate in both private and public domains.

The exchange between the private, domestic sphere and the public, urban sphere divulges domesticity in surrealist curation. In the case of the rooftop terrace of the Beistegui apartment in Paris, Le Corbusier uses intentional movements and visual analogical compositions to dictate a curated urban experience in a domestic space. The co-presence and transformation between the paradoxical senses of exteriority and interiority in Le Corbusier's design of the rooftop terrace exemplify the tactic of surrealist poetic analogy. It brings intimate domesticity into the expansive city and transfers the public urban space of Paris into private domestic territories. In the case of Alÿs' Modern Procession in New York City, the carried art objects, the music performed during the procession, and the movements of the participants, domesticate urban streets by relocating art objects from the interior of a private museum institution to the public urban space. The movement of the procession brings the participants into a transcendent state between dreams and reality. It serves to transform the urban space into a mnemonic landscape of façades, objects, bodies, movements, and disparate urban objects that yield a surrealist phenomenon of *objet trouvé*, a surreal encounter initiated by the "projection of desire" into the "phantom-like image" and found objects.<sup>12</sup> In this last case, the juxtaposed urban elements enact a poetic transformation that facilitates the surrealist curation to assemble an "oneiric house" filled with fantasy. The notion of the "oneiric house" coined by Gaston Bachelard, is furthered by Veselý, who describes it as a "surrealist paradigm" that evokes "cosmic images" and excurses through the realm of dreams and fantasy.<sup>13</sup>

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12 Ibid.

13 Ibid, 271.

The Modern Procession brings institutionalized surrealist artworks, which are traditionally curated in domestic galleries, to the public “oneiric house” and curates an urban situation that encompasses surrealist analogies. This public “urban house” shelters reveries of individual participants in the public realm and thus, composes a poetic analogy of domesticity in the urban sphere. The paper examines this resultant of the transformative surrealist curation and defines it as urban domesticity.

Surrealist curation carefully reinvents the world with formal relationships through the organization of poetic language. It exceeds instances of individual reclusiveness to embrace the collective sphere of publicness. By putting into practice the analogical intervention of poetic images, in the case of Le Corbusier’s Beistegui apartment, the surrealist curation unpacks the tenacious relationship between house and city through an urban narrative, in which the house extends its boundaries to the public realm and brings domesticity into the city; and in the case of Alÿs’ Modern Procession, the surrealist curation juxtaposes the human bodies and art objects in the city to transform the public sphere into a domestic domain, constructing a metaphorical “house” in the city. Consequently, the paper argues that the surrealist curation evokes “dream images” in the city that transcends the tangible material city into a dream entity and looks beyond the built environment to understand the city. By implementing surrealist curation one can further challenge the perceptions of urban spatial boundaries and investigate the theoretical and historical overlaps between urban domesticity and surrealist imagination. Surrealist curation criticizes the homogenous quantitative treatments of urbanism and their analytical data-driven approaches to urban transformation, such as urban studies that emphasize sustainability, ecology, aesthetics, and transportation exclusively from scientific methods and technological perspective that forgo the human narratives. Surrealist curation calls for the examination of poetic relationships in our cities through visual fantasies, corporeal kinesthesia, and alternative narratives of reveries.

## **Domesticity and Surrealism: House, Dream, City**

The relationship between domesticity and surrealism builds a theoretical framework for surrealist curation. This framework comes out of the interplay between house, dream, and city. It interrogates how the surrealist imagination of house and dream induces domesticity and discovers how the surrealist “dream house” further domesticates the city.

Surrealism investigates the connection between house and dream in wider theoretical arguments. Veselý believes that the intimate space in which the realm of the surrealists is situated can be visualized as a private domain of a house.<sup>14</sup> He then argues in his discussions of surrealism

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14 Ibid.

and architecture that the house is a symbol of the “latent experience” and a metaphor for “surrealist creativity,” which represents a paradigm that offers endless imagination in the “poetics of surrealism.”<sup>15</sup> By analyzing André Breton’s poem *La Maison d’Yves*, Vesely describes the house as “a perilous domain of the unknown and dreams,” in which the finite interior confines the infinite imagination in “a structure of the unconscious world.”<sup>16</sup> Breton dreams of a house that is a “castle” not far from Paris in “a rustic setting,” (*un site agreste*) half of which is “not necessarily in ruins” where he invites surrealist intellectuals as permanent guests.<sup>17</sup> He challenges the assumption that the house he dreams of is a mere image, by arguing that the “whim of his guests” is the “luminous road” (*la route lumineuse*) that leads to it.<sup>18</sup> The “castle” is a house that incites fantasies and shelters surrealist illuminations under its domestic sphere.

In surrealist theory, the house harbors dreams and defines their interiority by containing them with physical boundaries; dreams dwell in houses and occupy the finite domestic space with infinite imagination. The relationship between house and dream operates as a surrealist agency that demarcates the domestic sphere. The connection of house and dream to domesticity is furthered by Walter Benjamin. In “One-Way Street” Benjamin describes the threshold between dreaming and waking with a metaphor of the breakfast room in the house and argues that “the one who avoids a rupture between the nocturnal and the daytime” cultivates a dream world in the house.<sup>19</sup> For Benjamin, the domestic space functions as a liminal threshold between dream and reality, in which the ritual of breaking fast ruptures the two worlds, and in order to maintain a connection with the dream world, one avoids the morning meal. The domestic sphere connects the consciousness of dreaming to the built interior of a house and brings interiority to the private ritual of dreaming. For Robert Pogue Harrison, a house humanly preserves our “vital heat” from the “insideness.”<sup>20</sup> This preservation of “insideness” also implies that a house converts exteriority to interiority by environing our memories and dreams. From the arguments above, one can infer that surrealism reduces the world to a domestic domain of house and dream through imagination and environs the dream with domesticity.

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15 Ibid, 269-72.

16 Ibid, 269.

17 Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, 16-17.

18 Ibid, 18; Breton, *Manifestes du surréalisme*, 31. Here the “*la route lumineuse*” reverberates with the surrealist “*le phénomène lumineux*” (the luminous phenomenon).

19 Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 62.

20 Robert Pogue Harrison, *The Dominion of the Dead*, (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2003), 42-44.

Benjamin argues that public spaces such as arcades and winter gardens of Paris are “dream houses” for the collective consciousness.<sup>21</sup> For Benjamin, the city of Paris is composed by “dream houses,” in which the domestic ritual of “dreaming” brings collective reveries into the urban space and induces domesticity into the public sphere. Benjamin describes Paris as the most “dreamed-about” object of the surrealist imagination, and he claims that the “surrealists’ Paris” was a “little universe,” whose true face is revealed in the surrealist dream.<sup>22</sup> He remarks that “the dream has no outside” which indicates the interiority of the urban “dream house.”<sup>23</sup> The urban “dream house” is the “dwelling place”<sup>24</sup> for *flâneurs* that retain their collective urban experiences. Therefore, dream houses reinvent the public domain with domestic places and transform the city through domestication.

In conclusion, dream functions as a mediator that exceeds the boundaries between the house and the city and divulges domesticity through the latency of surrealist imagination. This theoretical premise begets an innate surrealist craft of domesticity that folds the surrealist curation in the transformation between house and city.

## Poetic Analogies of Domesticity

Le Corbusier uses rooftop terraces in architecture to foster relationships between the interior and exterior. In Villa Stein, he instills a two-story void into the surrounding nature, framing the foliage into the interior. Architect Alexander Gorlin finds that the terrace of Villa Stein is “reminiscent of the space in surrealist painter René Magritte’s *The Childhood of Icarus* in which a gargantuan room opens to the forest.”<sup>25</sup> In another example, the Villa Savoie vertically separates and juxtaposes the interior and the exterior landscape with the roof garden wall which Gorlin compares to Magritte’s *The Voice of Silence*.<sup>26</sup> Similar to Magritte’s surrealist language of juxtaposition that renders an uncanniness, Le Corbusier brings an uncanny relationship between the interior and the exterior through the surrealist intervention of the rooftop terrace.

Le Corbusier’s affinity toward surrealist practice is deliberately manifested in the roof terrace of the Beistegui apartment. Architectural historian Rostislav Švácha argues that despite the contentious relationship between the Functionalist “dehumanized rationalism” in architecture and

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21 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 405.

22 Walter Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 2: 1927-1934*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 211.

23 Ibid, 406.

24 Ibid, 17.

25 Alexander Gorlin, “The Ghost in the Machine: Surrealism in the Work of Le Corbusier,” *Perspecta* 18 (1982): 53, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1567035>.

26 Ibid, 55.

the artistic status of Surrealism, Le Corbusier's Beistegui apartment shines a light on surrealist language.<sup>27</sup> The curation of analogical composition in a poetic language guides Le Corbusier's execution of the roof terrace where space plays with the paradoxes of interior and exterior through the juxtaposition of various architectural elements. This intentional analogy is deeply rooted in Le Corbusier's theoretical framework that "the exterior is always an interior," as he has himself stated in *Towards a New Architecture* where he asserts that the human eye is always attracted to "the center of gravity of the whole site" and is constantly moving with the beholder himself through the investigations of the place.<sup>28</sup> He emphasizes that in "architecture ensembles," the elements of the site itself come into play by their "cubic volume," and the density and materiality of the compositions of the site bring definite "sensations."<sup>29</sup> On the roof terrace of Beistegui apartment, the openness of the rooftop and the carpet of grass on the ground imply exteriority and brings a sense of publicness. Paradoxically, the domestic furniture and the fireplace on the back wall present interiority curated with analogical imagination [Fig. 1].

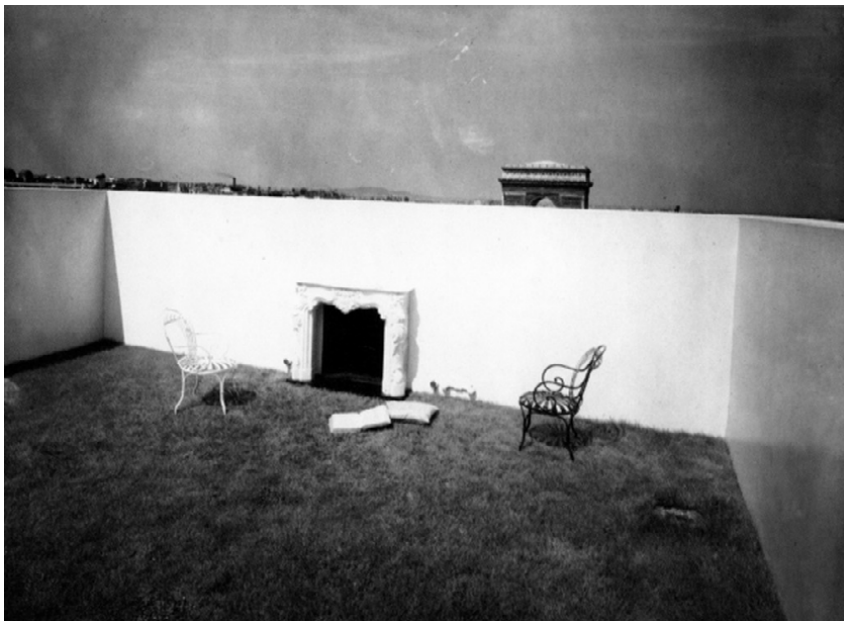


FIG. 1

Le Corbusier's Beistegui Apartment Rooftop Terrace with a Fireplace and the Arc de Triomphe in the Background. Image Credit: © F.L.C. / ADAGP, Paris / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York 2020

As Veselý's essay suggests, the terrace furnishes a series of "analogical readings" in which the individual elements play the role of metaphorical fragments, revealing an open set of "poetic analogies."<sup>30</sup> This instance of surrealist curation combines elements of the domestic realm with

27 Rostislav Švácha, "Surrealism and Czech Functionalism," trans. Jan Valeška, *Umeni / Art* 55, no. 4 (August 2007): 316.

28 Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, Reprint edition (NY: Dover Publications, 1985), 191.

29 Ibid.

30 Veselý, "Surrealism and the Latent World of Creativity," 272.



the outdoors, and in so doing brings domestic fantasies into the city. The perplexing simultaneous interiority and exteriority of the Beistegui apartment posit the house and the city in the surrealist dream world. And the distinction between the inside and outside to urban spaces is blurred. In the Beistegui apartment, the walls of the roof terrace operate as boundaries that demarcate the interior by only allowing fragments of urban monuments, such as the Arc de Triomphe and the Eiffel Tower, to be partially seen [Fig. 2]. The deliberate curation of fragmented urban images of Paris introduces the publicness into a latent surrealist world. These iconic city monuments of Paris bring monumentality into the domestic sphere, and the Beistegui apartment, in turn, domesticates urban monumentality through a curated analogical urban experience.



FIG. 2 Le Corbusier's Beistegui Apartment Rooftop Terrace with a Fireplace and the Eiffel Tower in the Background. Image Credit: © F.L.C. / ADAGP, Paris / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York 2020

Surrealist curation in Le Corbusier's Beistegui apartment engages the city of Paris through the observers who inhabit the domestic space and introduces a dream house in the city through the assembly of a latent urban fabric that alters domestic inhabitants' perceptions of the boundaries of urban space. Ross Anderson argues that, "for Le Corbusier, Paris possessed an inimitable *'esprit'* that was expressed architecturally in the distinctive profile of the horizon of the city."<sup>31</sup> In a sequence of drawings presented in Buenos Aires in 1929, Le Corbusier articulated the horizon of the city in chronological order from medieval Notre Dame, classical Louvre, and neoclassical Panthéon to modern Paris with the Arc de Triomphe, the Basilique du Sacré Coeur, and the Eiffel Tower.<sup>32</sup> By representing Paris

31 Ross Anderson, "All of Paris, Darkly: Le Corbusier's Beistegui Apartment, 1929-1931" (Le Corbusier, 50 Years Later, Valencia, Spain, 2015): 117, <https://doi.org/10.4995/LC2015.2015.928>.

32 Ibid, 118.



FIG. 3 Collage: Surrealist Curation of Paris. Image by the author

through this horizon of urban images, he curates a surrealist imagination of the city from the domestic sphere through perceptions of individual city inhabitants. To achieve this surrealist curation of Paris in the rooftop terrace of Beistegui apartment, Le Corbusier designed a series of stairs and platforms that create an ascending terrace-like topography leading to the highest walled roof garden. The first landing of the terraces offers an isolated view of Notre Dame. An electrically powered fence, electrically powered windows, and mechanical installations theatrically work together to curate the observer's views of Paris. Beatriz Colomina describes this curated urban experience from the domestic sphere as "suppress[ing] this panoramic view of Paris [...] offering (instead), at precise places, moving views (*perspectives émouvante*) of four of the things [...] the Arc de Triomphe, the Eiffel Tower, Sacre-Coeur, Notre Dame."<sup>33</sup> The ascension of the series of terraces ends with a dramatic elevation alteration at the walled roof garden. It is the climax of a dream house that celebrates the transformation of domesticity into urban space. For Le Corbusier, this visual curation is to judiciously remove from sights the "Pack-Donkey" streets of the everyday city, conferring views only of four emblems of the "imperishable heritage" of Paris.<sup>34</sup> Gorlin also claims that the Beistegui apartment is a "model apartment" for the theory of Radiant City,<sup>35</sup> which curates the city through fragmented urban monuments through the perception of the city observers.

In Le Corbusier's surrealist architecture, the house invites the publicness of the city into its domestic sphere through analogies. The curated city

33 Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 303.

34 Anderson, "All of Paris, Darkly," 118-19.

35 Gorlin, "The Ghost in the Machine," 60.

expands its boundaries into the domestic realm through poetic urban images [Fig. 3]. Le Corbusier demonstrates the provocative tensions between the palpable materiality and the latent subconsciousness of the urban space through surrealist curation. The poetic analogy instills a sense of mythical historicity in secular domesticity. Benjamin states that Le Corbusier's work ostensibly stands at the "terminus of the mythological figuration house," and then cites Sigfried Giedion's writing in *Bauen in Frankreich* to explain that the work of Le Corbusier brings an end to "a fatal and hereditary monumentality."<sup>36</sup> The practice of surrealist curation connects the house of "monumentalized domesticity" and the city of "domesticated monumentality"<sup>37</sup> through latent dreams.

## Domesticity and Urban Space

Benjamin describes urban streets as the "dwelling place" of the "collective," and he argues that the "collective," "eternally wakeful and agitated" as it is in the space between building façades, lives, experiences and understands the urban street "as much as individuals do within the privacy of their own four walls."<sup>38</sup> He further suggests that the "glossy enameled shop signs" are wall decorations, resembling "oil paintings in the drawing room," "the benches are bedroom furniture," and "the café terrace is the balcony", all of a bourgeois' house.<sup>39</sup> The above quote alludes to the metaphorical relationship between house and city. The collective dreams of Benjamin's *flâneurs* transform the urban space into a domestic "house." He states that Paris "opens up to the *flâneur* as a landscape" and simultaneously "closes around the *flâneur* as a room," entering the *flâneur's* consciousness as both "the sensory data" of the beholder's eyes and "the abstract experienced knowledge as something experienced and lived through."<sup>40</sup> This dialectical interpretation of the *flâneur's* urban experiences reveals the fluidity of domesticity in the public sphere through curated imagination. One can infer that the corporeal movement and the sensorial perception of the *flâneurs* evoke a surrealist curation that poetically assembles an oneiric house between public and private realities.

## The Oneiric

In 2002, a "pilgrimage" procession commissioned by artist Alijs in collaboration with the Public Art Fund and The Museum of Modern Art in New York City dubbed the Modern Procession, carried reproductions of three selected works of art from MOMA in Manhattan on 53rd Street to MoMA's

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36 Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 407.

37 Vesely, "Surrealism and the Latent World of Creativity," 272.

38 Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 879.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid, 880.

temporary location in Queens on 33rd Street. The procession traversed the boroughs of New York City from Manhattan to the city's peripheral Queens in a ritualized ceremonial movement. It demonstrates a curated urban experience and produces a surrealist urban situation through a choreographed journey. The procession transforms the urban space into a mnemonic landscape through montages of urban images and curates an ecstatic experience of analogical juxtapositions. And it conjures up a transcendent surreal encounter (*objet trouvé*) through these juxtapositions. As the carried art objects move through urban streets of New York City, they transform the urban space into a collection of metaphors: urban façades become public stages. Distinct urban elements through which the urban space is curated as a "phantom-like"<sup>41</sup> image makes up this surreal encounter. The displacement of institutionalized objects in the public domain makes the human body both an agent and extension of the objects that facilitate a poetic narrative of analogy. The participants of the procession experience the city through fragmented moments framed by the art objects and urban space. The movement of the procession recounts changing landscapes juxtaposed through time and space that consequently create "luminous sparks" that act as "guideposts of the minds," transforming into the "supreme reality."<sup>42</sup> The replicas—of Marcel Duchamp's Bicycle Wheel, Pablo Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger*, and Alberto Giacometti's Standing Woman #2—coincides with the surrealist. For artist Alijs, the considerable "endurance factor" needed for the participation of the long procession certainly contributes to stimulating and reinforcing "an emotional tension" from which "the strain and exertion can produce a kind of massive phenomenon of collective hallucination."<sup>43</sup> This "collective hallucination" resonates with the shocks and intoxication of modern experiences which Benjamin attributes to the urban phenomena of the nineteenth-century Paris. He compares the intoxication to "narcotic thinking" and argues that the surrealist *flâneur* practices this narcotic "profane illumination of thinking" like the opium eater, the dreamer, and the ecstatic.<sup>44</sup> Thus, one can argue that the "collective hallucination" embodies surrealist ecstasy that produces hallucinated collective urban imagination. The participants domesticate the city with dreams and the city houses the participants' imagination in the public sphere.

However, the movement of the procession encompasses subjectivity and individuality. Harper Montgomery proposes that Alijs injects the carried art objects with "subjectivity" and "agency" by weaving a story around their journey and their encounters with random elements in the urban street.<sup>45</sup> This subjectivity is revealed through relationships amongst the objects, the

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41 Veselý, "Surrealism and the Latent World of Creativity," 268.

42 Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, 43.

43 Francis Alijs, *The Modern Procession* (New York: Public Art Fund, 2004), 92-93.

44 Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin*, 216.

45 *Ibid*, 135.

participants, and the urban space. Museum curator Lynne Cooke argues that the choreographed activities and roles assumed by such participants as “the band, the palanquin bearers, and those assigned to distribute flowers and rose petals en route,” are essential to the procession, but they also offer rooms for deviations and “subjective desires” to the participants.<sup>46</sup> The “subjective desires” implies a sense of privacy within collective public movements. For artist Kiki Smith, the performance of the art “living icon” imparts her with personal rumination that curates unique urban images from the perspective of the moving palanquin she sits, the carriers that surround her, and the rhythmic movements she endures. The participants of the procession who scatter rose petals and blow soap bubbles en route cultivate their narratives with kinesthetic urban situations. The replicated artworks curate relationships with their carriers through the movement. The Peruvian brass band and the dog walkers in the procession relate their urban experiences to sounds, images, and scents. Alÿs believes that the procession “transforms” or “crystallizes” the energy that is already in the urban space by occupying the public streets.<sup>47</sup> In this case, the poetic analogies of the juxtaposed urban realities through surrealist curation restore the energy of the place and transform it into a public stage for social dramas.

## The Shell

The shell encloses a house that provides a domestic and private place for dwellers. Benjamin associates the idea of “dwell[ing]” in relation to “indwelt spaces” with “an indication of the frenetic topicality concealed in habitual behavior” which “has to do with fashioning a shell for ourselves.”<sup>48</sup> The “indwelt spaces” are the urban streets of New York City and the dwellers are the participants of the procession. The procession and the urban façade are two different shells, with the procession being the soft, moving shell, and the urban façade the static, hard shell. Colomina writes “in a city where the reality was not the place itself but its displacement, in a place that was not a place because everything was fluid, to stop was to mask oneself, to cease to be real, [...] like ‘posing for a photograph,’ by sitting in a ‘modern’ square.”<sup>49</sup> For Colomina, immobility and indecipherability equate to wearing a mask. The movement of the procession unveils the façade (mask) of the practice and reveals its interiority. The façade of the moving procession juxtaposes itself with the changing urban façades, closing upon itself with a shell against an outside reality. The shell thus demarcates a curated interiority in the public sphere. The other mask (urban façade) indicates exteriority as Colomina states that “interior” disorders

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46 Ibid, 121-22.

47 Ibid, 94.

48 Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 222.

49 Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 26.

of the modern city are veiled under the mask.<sup>50</sup> The art objects of the procession are like furniture, which also approximates how members of the bourgeoisie might dream of decorating or furnishing their urban apartments, particularly since these are reproductions (not originals). And the “furniture” further claims the interiority in the public exterior space. The procession thus inverts the exterior urban streets into domestic interiors. Benjamin writes: “it is as though the bourgeois were so sure of his prosperity that he is careless of façade, and can exclaim: my house, no matter where you choose to cut into it, is façade [...] The street becomes room and the room becomes a street. The passerby who stops to look at the house stands, as it were, in the alcove.”<sup>51</sup> The shell of the procession invites the public and opens itself up to the urban space like windows, and the shell of the urban façade curates the outside views for the participants of the procession. The surrealist curation delineates two façades of two urban realities that curate experiences for both the participants and the spectators, transcending the urban streets through time and space [Fig. 4].

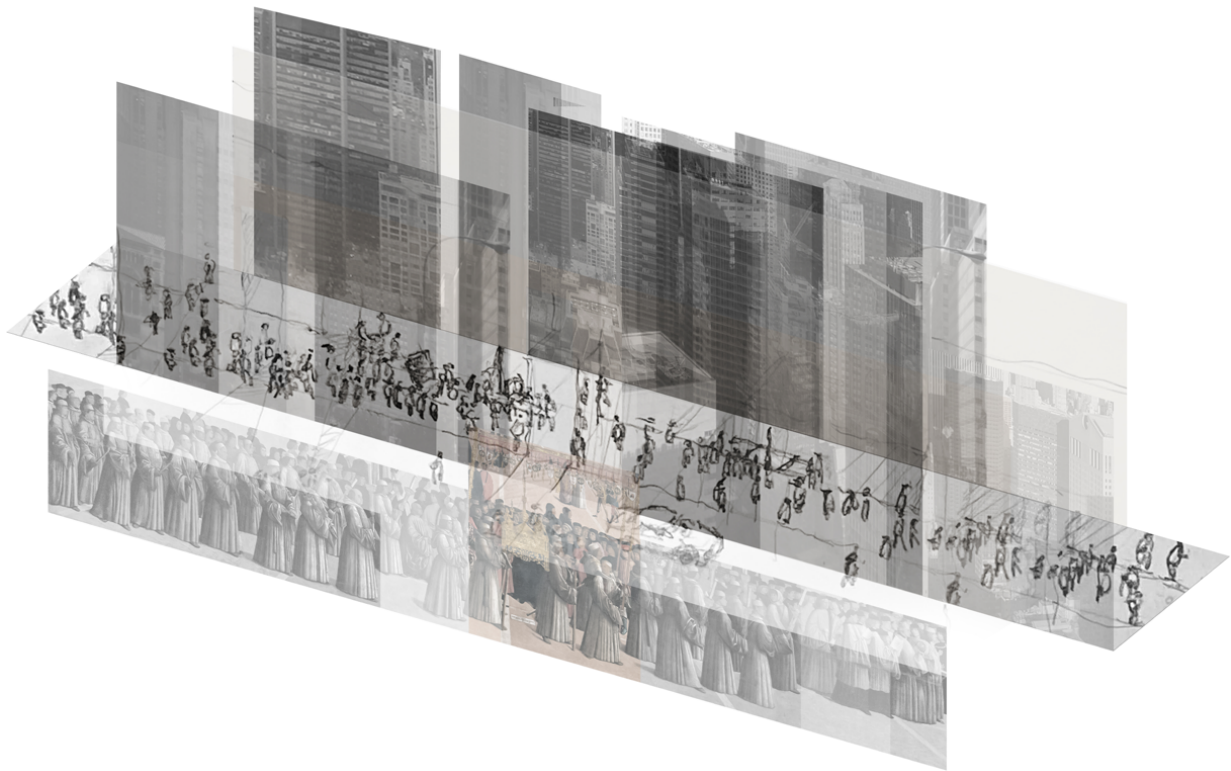


FIG. 4 Collage: Surrealist Curation of The Modern Procession. Image by the author

50 Ibid, 23.

51 Benjamin, *The Arcades Projec*, 406.

## Museum and Domestication

Benjamin argues that museums belong to the “dream houses” of the “collective,” and represent the inside as “an interior magnified on a giant scale.”<sup>52</sup> The interiority of a museum retains dreams and fantasy of the collective, curating itself into a domestic place that houses the imagination of it. Benjamin asserts that the collecting of paintings in a museum is an act of displaying paintings of pictures to “glorify” the interior of the museum and he states that the museum transforms into an interior place through the medium of the paintings.<sup>53</sup> By extension, museums represent cultural domestication, and their interiors evoke private dreams. Veselý also claims that by virtue of the formation of modern museums, the complex reality of a city is reduced to the scale of a house which illustrates a process that culminates in a general “domestication” of culture.<sup>54</sup> In the Modern Procession, the dispatch of consecrated modern art objects to urban streets “examines the edge between the private experience of making art and the public reading of its meaning.”<sup>55</sup> The act of bringing art objects to the urban streets of New York City from MoMA during the procession further blurs the edges between the private and public domains. It transports interiority and domesticity of an institutional museum into the public urban domain by removing the protective envelope of the museum and exposing it to the exterior.

The curatorial intentions of the Modern Procession are decidedly surrealist. Alÿs claims that “the clash of human body with a metropolis” calls for a “constant and immediate reaction and interaction with the urban entity,” which indicates that “the freedom in the art field” makes the Modern Procession respond to the city promptly, thus curating the urban space in an ephemeral way that is impossible in the “heavy architecture machine.”<sup>56</sup> Art historian Roselee Goldberg believes that the Modern Procession functions as a “choreographic experimentation” that serves to reexamine “a fragment of urban geography.”<sup>57</sup> The city is curated through analogical narratives of juxtaposed urban realities played by bodies, objects, and façades. The poetic urban images bring a surrealist “dream house” to the public sphere and transform both the participants and the spectators’ perceptions of urban boundaries.

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52 Ibid, 406-7.

53 Ibid, 408.

54 Veselý, “Surrealism and the Latent World of Creativity,” 269.

55 Alÿs, *The Modern Procession*, 106.

56 Ibid, 101.

57 Ibid, 106.

## Conclusion

In the case of Le Corbusier's Beistegui apartment, the surrealist curation crafts an urban experience through a poetic architectural language that engages the public with domestic architectural space through the tactic of analogy, cultivating a latent fabric of Paris. Le Corbusier meticulously composes intentional analogical collages, uses poetic images of architectural fragments to demonstrate an interplay between the interior and exterior. The urban elements respond to the domestic architectural language and stage a theatrical narrative of urban transformations in the gaze of the inhabitants of both the house and the city. The curated domesticity within urban space obscures the typical boundary between the house and the city, acting as a mediator between the finite interior and the infinite exterior. In the case of Alijs's Modern Procession, the juxtaposition between the moving and the static erects an ephemeral reality in the city that forms an event in a sequence of analogies, the kinesthetic human bodies and institutionalized art objects revise the urban situation simultaneously in a poetic horizon with a surreal encounter in vision, memory, and imagination. The surrealist curation sets up a dream house on urban streets, directing an ephemeral transformation between the public and the private spheres. The potency of the procession is established through "walking," which in turn occupies, engages, and transforms urban space through time and space and begets a continuous narrative that can be translated into a linguistic poetic reading. The poetic image from this case derives from both the collective consciousness and the individual imagination. The individual imagination folds into the choreographic urban experience and introspectively delineates a dream world between the past and the present; the collective consciousness enacts the city through metaphorical and mythical connotations and reinterprets the city from a historical horizon.

The poetic image embodied by the language of analogy restores a communicative potential for urban architecture. Pérez-Gómez writes that "we allow the means of expression in a building to envelop us in that haze of signification that derived from its particular arrangement and it may speak through a mute radiance."<sup>58</sup> The "radiant" illumination of the intentional analogy emits architectural meaning in poetic images and evokes human experiences through a surrealist curation that alludes to a different sphere of architectural understanding. It supersedes the discourse of function and program, of form and specifications, and traces architecture to the innate language of poetics. For Pérez-Gómez, this poetic language speaks universal truth and is central for the design in pluralistic societies.<sup>59</sup> He further defines "the duality of plastic human habits within a symbolic (linguistic) horizon" in architecture that "constitutes

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58 Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement*, 175.

59 *Ibid.*, 181.



the referential function of metaphor in poetry.”<sup>60</sup> The surrealist curation invests the plastic of human habits through a curatorial experience and encompasses the linguistic nature in its poetic craft of situations. Hence, it provokes a metaphorical reading of the world that surrounds us and yields new approaches to dissecting the palimpsest of culturally charged urban landscapes.

The poetic analogy exists in Benjamin’s practice of collecting, as he defines it “that the object is detached from all its original functions in order to enter into the closest conceivable relation to things of the same kind.”<sup>61</sup> The figure of the collector assembles metaphors in the world of dreams and memories. Benjamin asserts that the “dream house” arcades are “properties in the hand of a collector” that “strike” the collector in the “deepest stratum of the dream.”<sup>62</sup> The agency of surrealist curation acts as a collector who assembles urban images and interrupts the confines between the physical built world and the transcendental imagined layers of the world. Such reinvention of practice and urban tactics ground the world in the poetic nature and invest it with a surrealist fantasy, reinventing the meanings of our experiences. It challenges the mundane and the profane that has been for too long, fueled by analytical and parametrical understandings of our contemporary urban realms.

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60 Ibid, 193.

61 Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 204.

62 Ibid, 204-5.

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