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Drawing the female nude

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Introduction

Taking the theme of this special edition quite literally, I am going to look at a painting and a building, which share as a common trait the drawing of a female nude: Euan Uglow's *Nude, from Twelve Regular Vertical Positions from the Eye*, 1967 and Adolf Loos's design of a house for the performer Josephine Baker, 1928. In the painting the nude is meticulously drawn as a figure, but absent as an erotic object, whereas in the building the figuratively absent nude is drawn forth in the imagination through a reading of the erotically charged architectural design. However, by bringing the two works together, it is not the aim of the essay to force a link between them. Apart from deriving from distinct practices, they clearly belong to different historical and cultural backgrounds. Rather, their dialectical presentation will help focus on a discussion about drawing spaces and bodies, which pertains to the two works analysed here — but also to painting and building in general.

In 1972, one of the most extraordinary paintings by Euan Uglow, *Nude, from Twelve Regular Vertical Positions from the Eye*, 1967, won the prestigious John Moores prize with mixed critical response. The model is Daphne Todd, a portrait painter and ex-President of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters, who at the time of the sittings was a student at the Slade. The painting shows a female nude figure in a classical pose, with her arms behind her back and her left leg forward, standing in front of a wall (Fig. 1). The wall is divided into twelve segments

by dark coloured horizontal bands and the body is strangely elongated and separated by dagger-shaped bands of lighter colour. Uglow's aim was to represent the female body devoid of the perspectival distortions that the single fixed viewing point creates. To overcome these distortions he devised a way of sliding up the model's body and scanning it in sections from twelve vertical positions. According to Richard Kendall the picture brings to the forefront Uglow's merging of mathematics and geometry with the representation of the female nude 'in an unforgettable and — for many — disconcerting fashion'.¹

Mieke Bal in *Looking In: The Art of Viewing* suggests that the main viewing tradition in Western culture 'has the female nude as its favoured subject, [and] voyeurism as its dominant semiotic mode'.² Although most of Uglow's other nude paintings could be seen to fit comfortably within a voyeuristic viewing tradition, *Nude, from Twelve Regular Vertical Positions* is surprisingly un-erotic. The desire that fuels its construction is a desire to see, a desire accurately to record the ideal female form. 'Visually engrossing and technically spectacular' for some, or 'over-cerebral' and even 'masochistic', for others, the resulting image turns the depiction of flesh into a geometric design.³ The incisions of the analytic gaze and coded rendering of depth make *Nude, from Twelve Regular Vertical Positions* a geometric construction, akin to the conventions of architectural drawing, which is rarely connected with eroticism.

Figure 1. Euan Uglow, *Nude from Twelve Regular Vertical Positions from the Eye*, 1967. (University of Liverpool Art Gallery and Collections.)



Figure 2. Josephine Baker, 1927. (Postcard, private collection.)



One of these rare occasions, when architectural drawing fits comfortably within a voyeuristic viewing tradition with the female nude as its favoured subject, is an unrealised design for a house in Paris by the Viennese architect Adolf Loos. Loos designed the house in 1928 for the performer Josephine Baker, famous for her erotic dancing and for appearing practically naked on stage (Fig. 2). Although there is little evidence of how and when Loos met Baker,

and even of whether Baker was aware of the design's existence, the architect considered it one of his best.⁴ Loos's design depicts an extravagant domestic interior, full of voyeuristic contraptions that long for the appearance of Baker's nude figure. Farès el-Dahdah in his 'The Josephine Baker House: For Loos's Pleasure' has seen the *Baker House* as a 'bachelor machine' and a love letter that was never sent. This essay argues that rather than a love letter, as el-Dahdah suggests, the design for the *Baker House* can be compared to a drawing of a female nude. Similar to the Renaissance practitioners' construction of pictorial architectures in perspective where bodies are framed, Loos draws this imaginary architectural structure to hold the image of Baker.

Lynda Nead in *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* claims that the female nude 'symbolises the transformation of the base matter of nature into the elevated forms of culture and the spirit'.⁵ Nead discusses the female nude in terms of 'containment' aimed to define femininity and female sexuality: 'outlines, margins and frames — procedures and forms that regulate both the ways in which the female body is shown and the proper conduct of the prospective viewer'.⁶ As we will see, Loos's design clearly aims to contain the exotic femininity of Baker in a theatrical domesticity for his voyeuristic pleasure, and Uglow's painting dictates a way of looking at the female body beyond perspective distortion.

Additionally, in response to Nead's central argument of the role of the female nude as containment of femininity, the main voice of this essay will be 'interrupted' by short fragments of another account.⁷ This secondary voice — by a female architect posing for a nude painting — will attempt

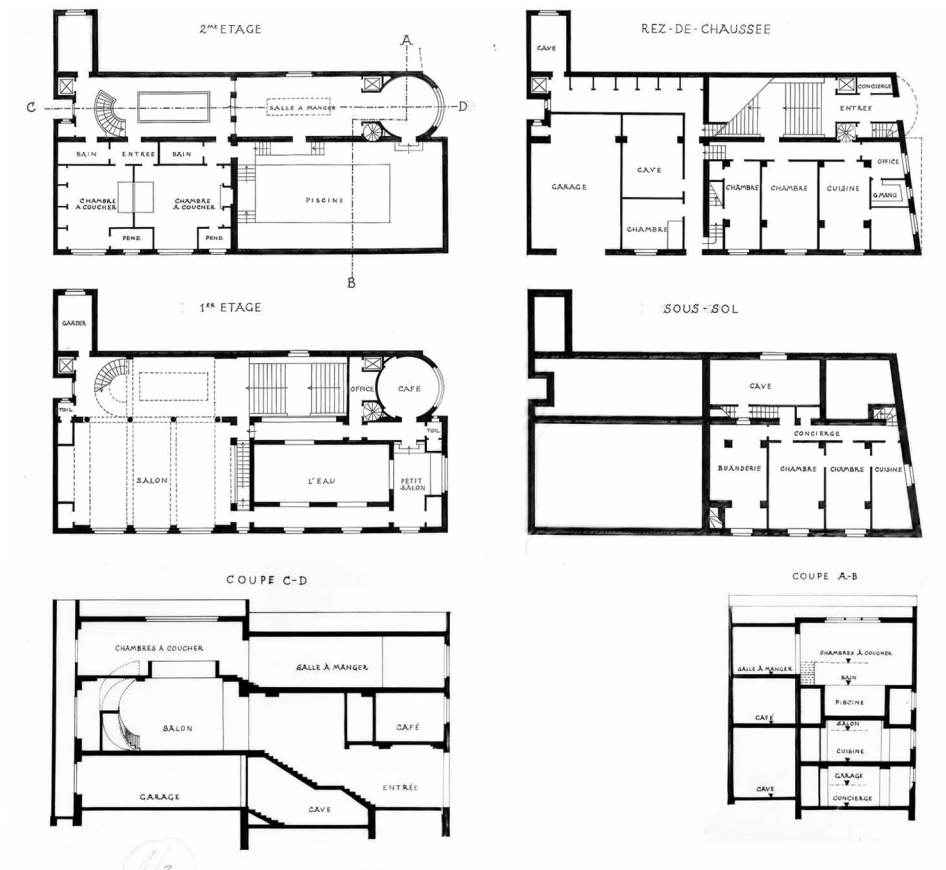
to present the experience of drawing the nude from the point of view of the model. Furthermore, this account puts forward the idea that drawing — before its traditional definitions in art and architecture, and even before any physical act or trace — is a way of looking and a desire to understand and measure the fleeting nature of visual space.

The Baker House

The house that Loos designed for Baker, when he was fifty eight and she was twenty two, was to be sited in Paris, where she had moved three years earlier, in 1925, to join *La Revue Nègre* at the *Théâtre des Champs-Élysées*. According to el-Dahdah the house may have been intended to replace two adjacent houses she owned on Avenue Bugeaud.⁸ Loos's design consists of four floor plans, two sections and a detailed model, currently held in the Loos Archive, at the Albertina Museum in Vienna (Fig. 3). It describes a corner building composed by simple geometric volumes. The plain white volume of the ground floor follows the outline of the site, while the top floors are contained within a large parallelepiped and a tall cylindrical tower above the main entrance, both wrapped in a dramatic, striped, black and white skin.

The surviving drawings of the *Baker House* are not spectacular as images.⁹ They are typical examples of simple architectural plans and sections, which do not always have an immediate visual impact, especially for an audience not trained in architectural design. Loos himself insisted that 'a true building makes no impression as a picture, reduced to two dimensions'.¹⁰ Embedded in the manner in which architectural drawings communicate, is a form of

Figure 3. Adolf Loos, architectural plans and sections of the Baker House, Paris, 1927. (Albertina, Vienna.)



reading, a journey guided by the lines on the paper. This imaginary journey and a comparative evaluation of both plans and sections slowly unfold the represented spaces in the mind. Similar to a narrative hidden in the unread words on a page, the drawings' lines can be silent; the meaning and essence of the

space does not become apparent until the story of the building has been interpreted into a three-dimensional imagined experience. Furthermore, in architectural drawing the human body is absent. The drawing weaves a narrative of occupation around an imagined inhabitant but the figure is hardly ever there.

The *Baker House* project, however, only exists through a series of drawings. Although never built it has an enduring allure and has inspired and influenced many architects, architectural theorists and students, not as a space that can be visited and photographed, but as a spectre created in the mind through a careful reading of the architectural drawings. It is perhaps the lack of any subsequent development of the scheme, of fleshing it out in the material construction of a building, that frees its existence as a narrative structure inviting a spontaneous imaginary occupation and the possibility of alternative interpretations.

By reading Loos's drawings for the *Baker House* and following a journey within the space they describe, a spectacular setting full of surprises is revealed. A large theatrical staircase greets the visitor and marks the start of the public realm of the house. It leads to the grand salon on the first floor, where a second dramatic semi-circular staircase connects to the second floor, where the dining room is found. Beyond this main public journey an ingenious weaving of spaces of different sizes and heights creates secret pockets and passages: spaces for services, two master bedrooms, but also a cylindrical café and a large internal top-lit swimming pool surrounded by a dark corridor.

Although Baker never mentions the project in her memoirs, apparently Loos considered it one of his favourite designs. But what made this design so special for Loos? Perhaps in this 'theoretical' project he was uninhibited in exploring the full potential of a complex internal spatial arrangement, often known as the *Raumplan*. The term *Raumplan* — the resolution of the plan in space — was intro-

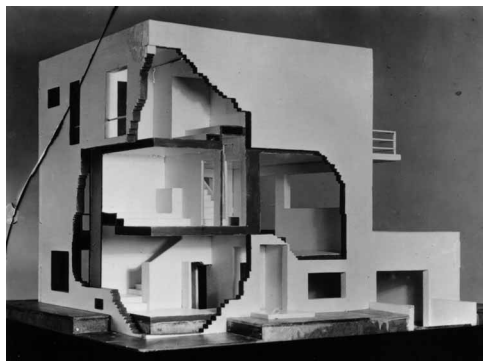


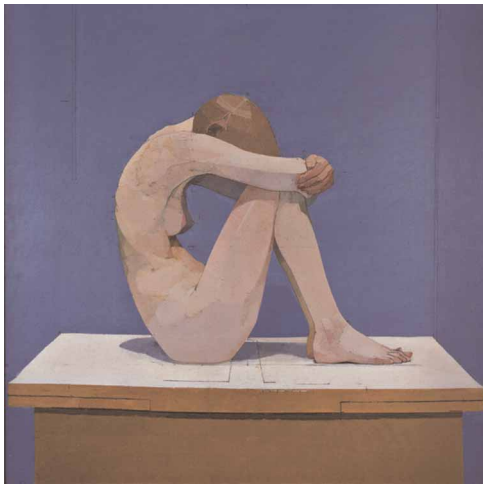
Figure 4. Adolf Loos, model of the Dice House showing internal distribution of spaces, 1928–29. (Albertina, Vienna.)

duced by Heinrich Kulka to describe Loos's 'new and more elaborate conception of space' (Fig. 4).¹¹ Loos's invention was an ingenious spatial distribution of rooms that would vary in height, as well as size. Loos's use of the *Raumplan* derived from treating the section of the building in a way analogous to how another architect might treat a plan, leading to a greater complexity and 'quantity of habitable space'. Efficiency and economy, more space within the same volume, seems to be the main value of Loos's spatial organisation of the section, according to Kulka. However, as we will see, in the extravagant and scopophilic allocation of spaces in the *Baker House*, it is clear that the primary gain of the *Raumplan* is not economy, but pleasure.

It is a sunny morning and I am lying in the bath. Patterns of light, from the window immediately above the bath, merge with the warped shapes of my legs and feet. The image of the rest of the room, mirrored in the flat surface of the water, is deep. I enter it visually and flicker my focus

Figure 5. Euan Uglow,
Summer Picture, 1971–
72. (Private collection.)

Figure 6. Euan Uglow,
*Still Life with Model
Marks*, 1971–72.
(Uglow estate.) (Drawn
by the Author: the
white lines linking the
edges of the table with
the vanishing point
reveal its inverted
trapezoid shape.)



*between two illusions: the window reflected and my
feet refracted.*

Nude, from Twelve Regular Vertical Positions from the Eye

According to Martin Golding, Uglow's work 'takes the most sensual and immediately interesting object, the human body, and puts it out of reach of time and desire; it takes the most purely rational concept of which mankind is capable, mathematical order, and makes it a delight to the senses'.¹² What works is 'right' not 'like', Uglow insisted.¹³ Correctness is not a matter of representing the appearance faithfully but of the whole image becoming harmonious and readable. So he arranges his poses to convey the image he has in mind. A battle between appearances and idea finds an extreme in *Summer Picture*, 1972 and is manifest in both the nude

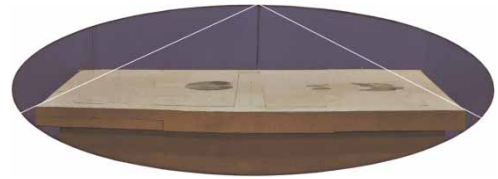


figure and the table on which she sat (figs 5, 6). Uglow had to wait 45 minutes in every hour for the model to relax her back into the 'unnatural' pose, matching his idea of the perfect curve of her back. Furthermore, he changed the shape of the table, the simple frame staging her pose, because he found the observed perspective too 'violent'.¹⁴

His 'correction' of the physical form of the table makes it appear closer to the ideal, the 'right' one. The tactile idea of the solid shape of the table, as a rectangle with parallel sides, is more resilient than the trapezoid that foreshortening renders visually. The natural binocular perception of the table from the position of the painter would also be less violent. Therefore, Uglow physically cut the table into an inverted trapezoid that would render a straighter appearance from his observing position, to fit into the mould of the right image: the perceptual residue of the table in the mind, which is both visual and tactile. Uglow's acute sense of the ideal as expressed through geometry, proportion and harmony negotiates an excessive scrutiny of perception.

According to Golding, Uglow's most single-minded investigation is the *Nude, from Twelve Regular Positions from the Eye*. Making this painting involved building an apparatus, a throne-like structure of variable height which allowed Uglow to view the model from twelve different levels (Fig. 7):



My painting of a girl standing against a wall was painted in an effort to cancel the distortion (that of an elongated lemon) which had occurred in a previous painting. . . To overcome this distortion, I painted from twelve equal vertical positions of the eye and at a constant distance from the flat vertical wall surface. I also wanted to explain the three dimensional relationship between the wall the girl and my eye as I moved from one regular position to another. These relationships I tried to

interpret onto the flat surface of the painting. In trying to do this, a completely different form of distortion took place — not unlike some of the interpretations of the globe we see in an atlas.¹⁵ Uglow's representation of the nude departs from the normal visual perception of it: he splits the view into twelve segments which correspond to his changing position on a vertical axis. By 'dissecting' vision, the resulting painting, a two-dimensional image, becomes a composite drawing offering precise geometric information about the spatiality of the nude. Uglow asserted that one should be able to work out the form just by studying the dagger-shaped triangles that separate the painted areas. Indeed, these triangular shapes describe depth and accurately render the three-dimensional volume of the nude in two dimensions, similar to the effect of combining the information of plan and section in architectural drawing.

Uglow's gaze measures the body as the vertical movement of his single eye, on the relocating contraption, scans its form. The picture describes the contours of the figure, but also the painter's presence as a body looking from regulated positions in space like a surveying tool. The machine reduces the distortions of one-point perspective by placing the eye nearer to each segment and attempts to grasp the fleeting purity of a body as it exists theoretically, without these distortions. Consequently, the view is closer to a tactile than a visual evaluation. His depiction pins down the nude like a captured butterfly, but bestows on her the coded blossoming of volume.

The artist explained that the distance of the projection of the body from the back plane is expressed by the ochre bands, the wider the band the further the

Figure 7. Uglow on his repositioning device surveying the model for *Nude from Twelve Regular Vertical Positions from the Eye*, 1967. (Uglow archive.)

Figure 8. Bedroom of Loos's wife, Lina, Loos flat, 1903. (Albertina, Vienna.)

body projects at that point. Consequently, the dagger-shaped bands are the gaps resulting from the repositioning of the gaze and rendering the image on a flat surface. The body appears severed by the observing eye in a similar way to that in which architectural drawing conventions sever the body of the imagined architectural building. According to Golding: [Although] the whole enterprise might be described as an experiment in a rigidly literal monocular vision, the upshot is in effect a conceit, which gives the model a majestic presence which reverberates. The arrow-headed interventions — the gaps occasioned by the apparatus — become her properties; armed with which she remains separate and whole, unaffected by the lesions the analytic vision opens. The scrutiny of that analytic eye, with its deliberate separation of the familiar whole into unfamiliar parts, creates an image which is barbarically strange...¹⁶

I close one eye. Then I open it again, and close the other. I observe the lines of the tiles shifting with a jolt behind the two taps. Both eyes open again cast the single view. Apart from a lime-scale mark on the rim of the left, and a white spot of paint on the top of the right, the images of the two taps are identical. Hot water on the right, cold on the left. I decide to mix them: focus on the image of the right tap with the left eye, and the image of the left tap with the right eye. A monstrous single tap appears devoid of acceptable perspective distortion. I close both eyes and watch the impossible image fade.

Bachelor machine

Susan R. Henderson discusses the importance of 'bachelor culture' in Loos's work, which emerged



as a reaction to the more fluid gendered identities embedded in Jugendstil.¹⁷ According to Henderson 'Loos maintained that strict gender distinctions were basic to the ordered logic of modern society, and he decried the ambiguous gender roles that had invaded art and culture.'¹⁸ The two orders of the feminine and masculine are clearly defined in the design of the flat he shared with his first wife Lina. The outer room, the public realm occupied by Loos, is furnished in an architectural language reflecting the scarce 'medieval and Germanic notions of comfort', with solid surfaces and sharp edges formed by heavy beams, and a brick fireplace.¹⁹ Conversely in his wife's bedroom, which he called Lina's Room, the feminine prevails in the form of soft covers, flowing silk curtains for the walls and a massive stretch of angora sheepskin rugs that hide the edge of the bed and cover the whole of the floor creating a sea of sensuous furriness (Fig. 8).

Loos maintained that woman belonged solely to the private realm; the family house, therefore,

was the perfect frame of femininity.²⁰ The *Baker House*, however, is far from familial. Farès el-Dahdah uses Marcel Duchamp's term 'bachelor machine' to describe an architecture of pleasure connoting a kind of trap that orchestrates reversible roles akin to those played in seduction.²¹ According to el-Dahdah the house is:

an epistolary attempt to detail her image in 'various points' through a kind of writing that stretches a third skin between the body of the architect and that of the dancer. The house is an apparatus (like the note) through which one can somehow rub against, or trap, a dancer's exotised body. It is a building designed as a tactile enterprise, as the imaginary 'prose' of an amorous conquest in between whose lines (in between the stripes of its façades and the distribution of its rooms) one is to decode a longing to signify desire.²²

Hidden in the heart of the building is a volume of water, a *piscine* (swimming pool). The presence of this feature in the design implies a sense of fantasy. If not unfeasible, the construction of a container able to support such a large, suspended volume of water would be at least challenging, especially in a relatively moderate residential project, such as this. The swimming pool occupies the space of a normal room, but is full of water and therefore, uninhabitable. This fantastical dimension of the design is not without a hint of danger. What if the building were to give way under the weight of the water? The house's very safety is put at risk by the compulsive urge to include in its core a watery vessel, a frame awaiting a reverie of Baker's naked swimming body.²³

A secret passage wraps around the volume of water, which is suspended in the heart of the house. Accessible from the *salon*, it seems to derive from a splitting of the surrounding walls allowing an inhabitation of the inner flesh of the building. Although relatively inconspicuous from the interior, the passage is marked with windows on either side, looking out, towards the street, and looking in, towards the water. The ingenious application of the *Raumplan*, far from being economical, creates uninhabitable spaces and hidden passages, only useful to a voyeur.

He is looking at me. I am looking back, but he does not see me. His focus moves from the canvas towards me and back again. His eyes — following the contour of my shoulder, the edge of water around my left arm and the submerged forearm leading to my fingers on my thigh — are empty.

Architectural painting

Although clearly painterly, Uglow's work is also dependent on drawing, a logical, single-minded and precise description of form. More specifically, I see *Nude, from Twelve Regular Positions from the Eye* as a drawing rather than painting; a drawing that as we have seen can also be described as architectural.

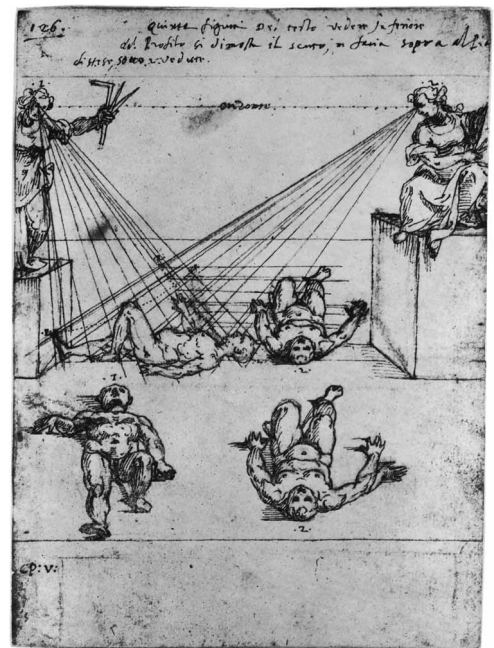
Uglow used to often repeat to friends and students a quotation from Henri Matisse: 'Making a picture would seem as logical as building a house, if one proceeded on sound principles. One should not bother with the *human* side. Either one has it or one hasn't. If one has, it colours the work in spite of everything.'²⁴ So for Matisse and also Uglow the

Figure 9. Unknown
artist, *Codex Huygens*,
fol. 126, c. 1570.

process of making a painting is similar to building a house. Implied in this suggestion is the lack of an intentional attempt to infuse the painting with emotional or intellectual values, but to follow a seemingly neutral procedure based on 'sound principles'. However, according to Golding, Matisse's metaphor has a further relevance in regards to Uglow's paintings. Architectural is a term one might apply to his work, and the artist's discerning eye resembles the architect's desire to shape spatial configurations.

Uglow's fascination with the mathematical framing of bodies in space was influenced by his interest in the painters of the Italian Renaissance, especially Piero della Francesca, whose painstaking method of measuring the human form has been unparalleled since.²⁵ During the Renaissance, art and architecture, painting and building, merged under a common novel understanding of visual space: perspective construction, which was 'invented' as a true representation of natural vision. For the first time, pictorial space lost the floating quality of previous two-dimensional depictions and derived from mathematical observation combined with careful use of projective geometry. This structural background was disguised as architecture, turning the horizontal and vertical grids of the perspectivists to squared floor patterns and colonnades. So in painting, perspective construction became synonymous with architecture, organising the placement of the portrayed human figures like puppets suspended within pictorial depth by invisible strings, the projection lines.

A few highly conscientious theorists had the patience to apply perspective construction rules to the depiction of human figures (Fig. 9). One of the most determined accurately to represent the



human body with the new technique was Piero. Robin Evans suggests: 'Painters like Botticelli and Raphael found a different type of liberty in Alberti's central perspective. Architecture (plotted) is marshalled by the system of projection, while figures (intuited) move freely in its measured space. In Piero's art people and things seem to be more alike' (Fig. 10).²⁶ Piero's method depends on orthographic projection and the dissolution of surfaces into constellations of dots (Fig. 11). According to Evans, the perspective result was achieved entirely by orthographic means, just like architecture: 'Piero's other method makes pictures of light paths



Figure 10. Piero della Francesca, *Flagellation of Christ*, 1455–60. (Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino.)

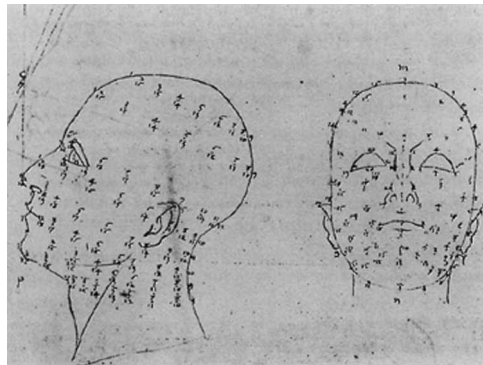
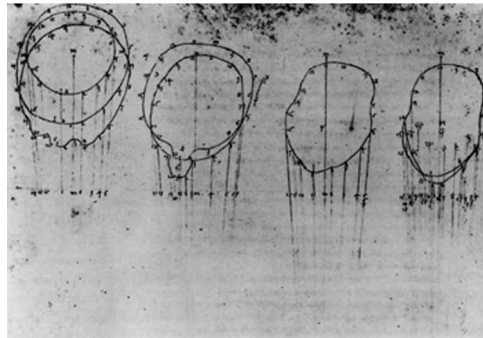


Figure 11. Piero della Francesca, orthographic projections, elevations and plans, of a tilted head, from *De prospectiva pingendi*, c. 1474–82.



between points in exactly the same way that architects make pictures of buildings'.²⁷

Similarly, space and body are interdependent in the structure of Uglow's paintings. Geometry regulates their conception and execution. The proportions of the rectangle of the canvas, the figure and the dimensions of the real space it occupies, all contribute to the design of a precise geometrical construct that Uglow often called the 'idea' of the painting. For instance, *Double Square, Double Square*, 1980–82 is a double square rectangle, and double square in space (Fig. 12).

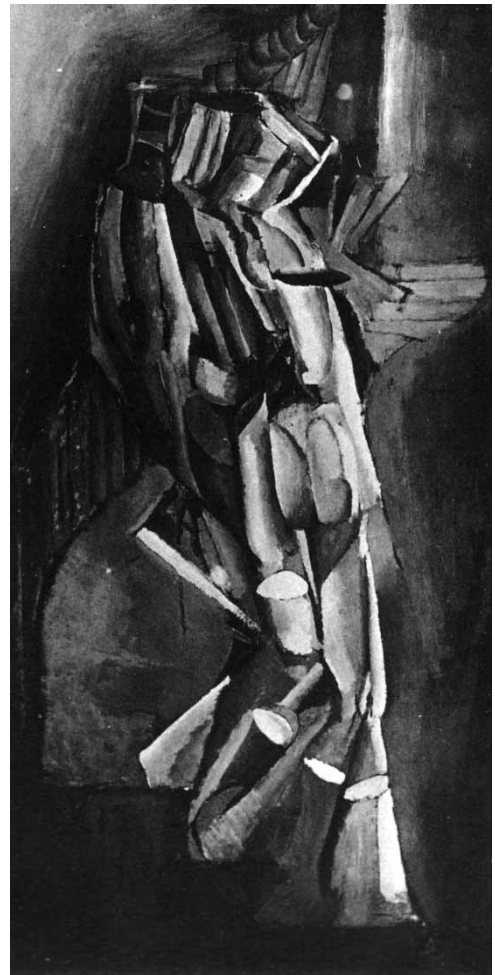
Uglow maintained that he was trying to paint 'a structured painting full of controlled, and therefore, potent, emotion'.²⁸ Uglow's painstaking process of rendering the image of the body, through accurate measuring and precise colour matching, results in a picture that at first encounter, although spectacular, is impenetrable. The transfer from observation to marks on the canvas involves the creation of a cipher that the viewer's astounded eye cannot immediately decode. In the same way that an architectural

drawing needs to be read before the space it depicts acquires volume in the imagination, Uglow's paintings demand time. A longer physical presence in front of the picture initiates a slow unfolding of the true dimensions of the image, and the body flowers in the viewer's mind at a space between them and the canvas. Delayed and trapped, caught within Uglow's painstaking transcription of the veil of appearance, the female figure is there fully blossomed; she is brought to life bathed in luminous colour.

Figure 12. Euan Uglow, *Double Square, Double Square*, 1980–82. (Private collection.)



Figure 13. Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 1*, 1911. (Photograph from Uglow's studio.)



The water holds me and keeps me warm. Parts of the body emerge from the surface of the water like islands. I can see three: a curve around my right breast and arm forms the coast of the first, my knees are the mountaintops of the second, and the third, the smallest one, consists of the caves between my toes. The skin above the coastline is cold.

Nude Descending a Staircase

Uglow had an enduring attraction to Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 1*, 1911, of which he kept a photograph in his studio (Fig. 13). In an interview with Andrew Lambirth, Uglow explains his interest in Duchamp's painting. To Lambirth's question 'What about movement?' he responds that many of his pictures are concerned with movement. Yet, he suggests that his work is more about implied movement and he dismisses the Futurist's depiction of movement as too conceptual: 'I have more sympathy for Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*, because it is more analytical, it's more to do with trapping movement.'²⁹

Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* is an aggregate of superimposed images of a body in motion observed from a static position. The

images of the nude succeed each other according to the intervals defined by the staircase. *Nude, from Twelve Regular Positions from the Eye* is also

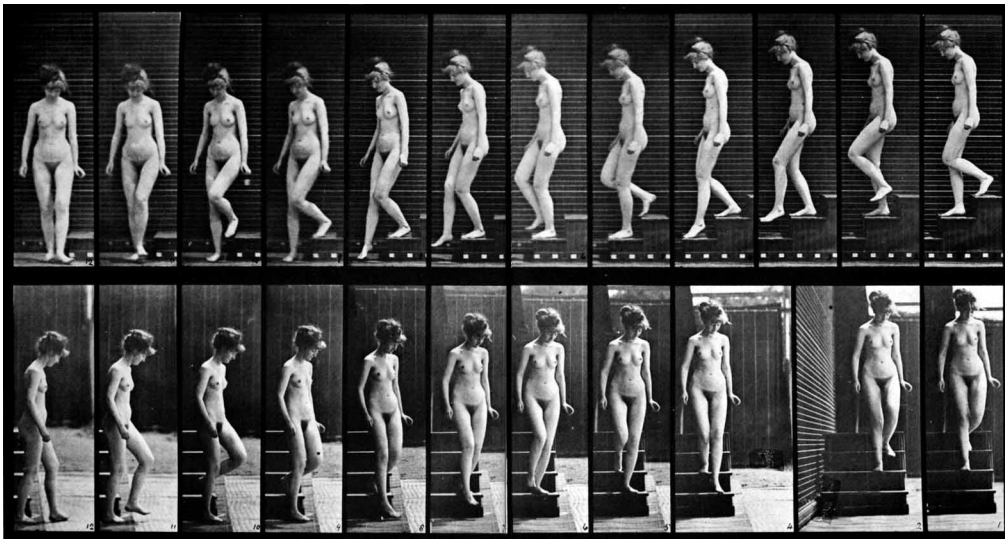
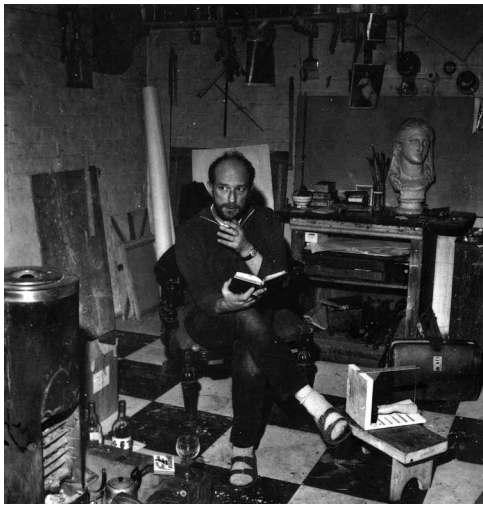


Figure 14. Eadweard Muybridge, *Woman Descending a Stairway and Turning Around*, c. 1887. (From the book *Animal Locomotion*.)

a composite image, an aggregate of twelve different views of the nude that succeed each other according to the intervals defined by the painter's viewing armature. Here the nude is static and the painter's eye ascends and relocates itself in twelve steps. Both works use an ordered succession of images to describe in a composite coded picture the geometric spatiality of the naked female body. Furthermore, both could be seen as tributes to Eadweard Muybridge's *Woman Descending a Stairway*, 1887, one of his photographic experiments capturing the human figure in motion (Fig. 14). Muybridge's nude was photographed by a series of cameras positioned in a row — parallel to the backdrop and the model's course of travel — at regular horizontal intervals.

As a consequence and similarly to the repositioning of the painter's eye in Uglow's set-up, there is no shift in perspective as expected from a single vantage point. Further than the measured description of the nude's descent, implied in the photographs is the movement of the viewer. Accordingly, the implied movement in Uglow's *Nude, from Twelve Regular Positions from the Eye* is twofold. On the one hand, the stillness of the figure's pose standing solidly against the wall is accompanied by a compelling sensation that she might suddenly start moving, exaggerated by her forward left leg. More significantly though, on the other hand, implicit in the viewing of the work is the original movement of the painter's eye that scans the female body incrementally.

Figure 15. Uglow in his studio at Turnchapel Mews, London, 1986, during the course of being filmed by the *Aquarius* television programme team.



The water contains me. His gaze contains me. I can feel the boundaries of the rectangular canvas, the limits of his gaze, cutting the space around the bath: the lower edge of the window, the tiles behind my head, the lino on the bathroom floor and back to the upper part of the taps. This room contains us both.

Striped optical models

The frontispiece of Catherine Lambert's catalogue raisonné shows a seated Uglow in his studio at Turnchapel Mews (Fig. 15). The photograph was taken during filming for a television programme in 1986.³⁰ On a stool by Uglow's feet, a peculiar object lies inconspicuously. At closer inspection, the object, an L-shaped base to which a scaled dummy of a female figure has been attached, reveals itself to be a three-dimensional scaled

model of the spatial arrangement of *Nude, from Twelve Regular Positions from the Eye* (Fig. 16). Five holes drilled through a metal bar at the front of the model allow the viewer to study different sections of the figure straight on, while the backing is striped, marked with dark- and light-coloured bands at regular intervals, like a ruler. Lambert reveals that Uglow considered the idea behind this particular painting to be complicated and suggested that the best way of 'getting it' was looking at the little model he made depicting the studio set up.³¹

So, similarly to traditional architectural practice, Uglow built a model of the three-dimensional arrangement of the painting. The original purpose of the model is unclear, as well as whether it was built before, during or after the completion of the painting. Nevertheless, the model accentuates the voyeuristic aspect of the act of painting, and the metal bar with the five drilled holes makes it similar to a peep show. The wooden model's peep-holes bring to mind another unmistakably voyeuristic work of art: Duchamp's pornographic assemblage *Given, 1st the waterfall, 2nd the illuminating gas...*, 1946–1966, which also features a dummy of a female nude viewed from two peepholes in a door, scanning the nude from 'two regular horizontal positions': the left and right eye.³²

The spatial organisation of *Given* can also be compared to Loos's scopophilic treatment of the pool. In the case of *Given*, the bachelor machine consists of an everyday architectural element, a door, while in the *Baker House* we find a hidden corridor with windows overlooking an internal pool suspended in the heart of the house that refracts the fleeting image of a body through

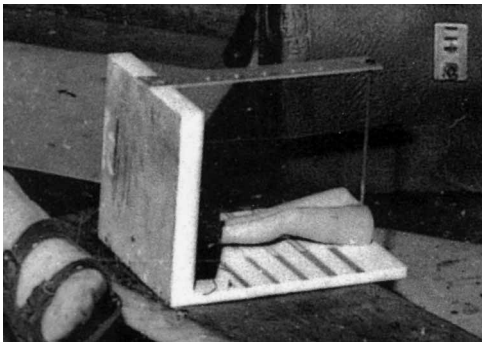


Figure 16. Detail of
Fig. 17.

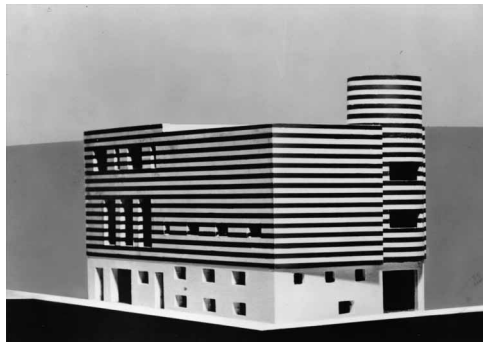


Figure 17. Adolf Loos,
model of the Baker
House, Paris, 1927.
(Albertina, Vienna.)

water. In both layouts the voyeur/bachelor occupies a domain hidden from the nude — behind the door in *Given* and in the clandestine low passage surrounding the swimming pool in the *Baker House* — but exposed to the public: the gallery in *Given* and the street through windows in the house.

Emblematic of the *Baker House* is the model featuring the design's striking striped façade (Fig. 17). Photographs of the model do not reveal whether this is an empty box or whether the internal distribution of space is constructed within. However, if a truthful scaled version of the interior existed, then, the holes of the model's windows would allow a view of the swimming pool brightly lit from a skylight on the roof. The act of looking through the model's scaled windows would transform the model into yet another voyeuristic device: the stereoscope, infamous for its association with pornography.³³ Accordingly, the swimming pool would be the equivalent of a watery three-dimensional stereoscopic slide, and peeping into the model would render a fantasy image of a naked Baker swimming.

So both models — Uglow's for a painting, and Loos's for a building — frame the female nude with a striated surface. The bands in Uglow's model are clearly a measuring device, they form a ruler organizing the vertical repositioning of the male gaze attempting to capture a composite pure image of the female body. Muybridge's photographic experiments of capturing the human body in motion feature a similar ruled background, this time in the form of a grid. Such a grid offers a scientific status to representing the movement of the naked human body. The smooth shifting of the female flesh is gauged against a lined background. There have been many interpretations of the significance of the striking striped façade of the *Baker House*.³⁴ Were the façade a measuring device, Baker's spectre of nudity would be projected and accessed against the sharp contrast of the black and white bands, framing her wild, exotic femininity.

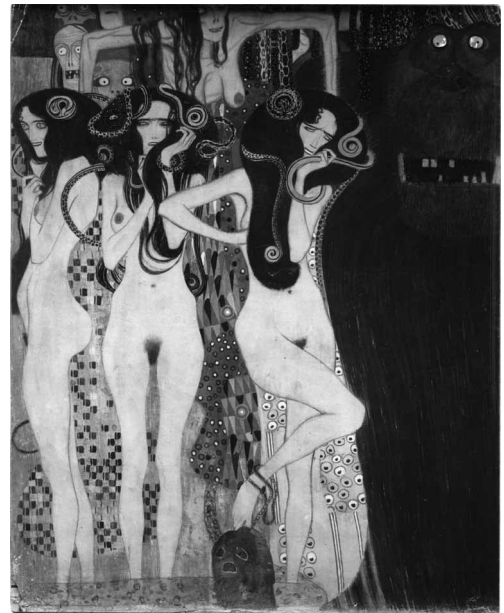
It is a sunny morning and I am lying in the bath, in the same position, for the seventh time. Everything

Figure 18. Gustav Klimt, detail of *The Beethoven Freeze*, 1901–02: The Hostile Powers; The Three Gorgons. (Albertina, Vienna.)

is the same, the taps, the tiles, the reflected patterns of light. Everything, apart from my body, which is changing; the measure is evident in the different curvature of the waterline. Within the same room, the same absent gaze, delineated by the rectangle of the canvas, I carry her nebular image swimming inside me in black and white.

Embodied drawing

Loos was very suspicious of architectural drawing. In his essay 'Architecture', 1910, he accuses the contemporary architect of reducing 'the noble art of building to a graphic art'.³⁵ He believed that draftsmanship and what he called the 'fluent hand' had alienated the architect from the honest craftsman. He was disappointed that architectural forms were no longer dictated by the craftsman's tools but by the architect's pencil.³⁶ Loos's reaction has to be viewed relative to the contemporary prevailing architectural style, the Jugendstil and the Viennese Secession. The name Jugendstil ('Jugendstyle') derives from the magazine *Jugend* ('Youth'), which was an illustrated weekly magazine, established in 1896 and instrumental in promoting Art Nouveau in Germany, especially the forms of organic typography and graphic design. Indeed, Secessionist architecture was often dependant on graphics, which found their way into not only architectural drawing, but even into the final building itself. One of the most celebrated examples is Gustav Klimt's *Beethoven Frieze* for the 14th Vienna Secessionist Exhibition in 1902 (Fig. 18).³⁷ The form of the nude human body, consistently absent from architectural representations, here



appears etched into the internal skin of the Secession building (Fig. 19).

Although Loos was against the graphic quality of architectural drawing, he depended on the structure of architectural drawing conventions to conceive his designs' distribution of space. I would like to argue that without the use of the architectural convention of the section, as 'invented' during the Renaissance, Loos would not have been able to formulate his own 'invention' of internal volumetric manipulation, the *Raumplan*.

Furthermore, Loos was against the practice of indicating dimensions graphically on measured drawings. He believed the process of doing so

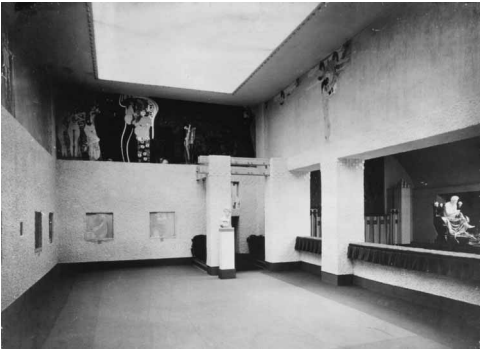


Figure 19. View of Klimt Room at the Fourteenth Secession Exhibition, 1902. (Albertina, Vienna.)

dehumanised design and preferred to decide on interior details, magnitudes and proportions in situ: 'I stand there, hold my hand at that certain height, and the carpenter makes his pencil mark'.³⁸ Then Loos would step back and look at a detail from different angles to try to visualise the finished result: 'this is the only human way to decide on the height of a wainscot, or the width of a window'. Loos's 'drawing from life', far from being Modern, is similar to mediaeval drawing techniques.³⁹ Loos put forward architectural design as an embodied experience that cannot be sufficiently described in drawing, but ironically the *Baker House*, one of his most iconic projects, only exists in drawn form.

Loos's need physically to enter the space of representation resonates with Uglow's commitment to painting from life. Uglow's practice involves marking both on canvas but also on the setting. The act of looking is not a merely removed performance from a distance. Before marking the flat surface of the canvas, the painter enters the deep space of the depicted scene and touches it with

his brush leaving a trace. However, not only the setting but also the model's body is physically registered. Todd, the model for *Nude, from Twelve Regular Positions from the Eye*, recalls being marked with indelible ink and ordered into shallow baths for the duration of the pose.⁴⁰

This practice of marking is reminiscent of the fields of marks on Piero's drawing of a head; an abstract geometric armature anchoring the relationship between the real and its image, on which he erected the architecture of the painted flesh. In Uglow's case, the setting and the body are infested with a multitude of marks, thus dividing the act of drawing into two domains: the three-dimensional setting at the studio and its image on the canvas (Figs. 20). Uglow performs a transcription of this three-dimensional net of points touching the depicted scene into its correspondent limits and coordinates on the flat canvas.

Although deriving from distinct practices — painting and building — the two works presented in this essay are similar in that they both stage the male gaze and set up spatial apparatuses, or 'bachelor machines', to capture an apparition of female nudity. More specifically, rather than belonging to traditional definitions of painting or building, I have analysed *Nude, From Twelve Regular Vertical Positions from the Eye* and the *Baker House* as drawings, which — beyond the obvious figuration of the female nude — describe a space of desire, whether erotic desire, or the desire to measure and to tame the fleeting nature of vision. Indeed the aim of the essay has been to discuss the rôle of drawing in the production of architecture and art, and more specifically, drawing as an underlying structure interlinking the

Figure 20. Set-up for *Double Square, Double Square* with the painting in the foreground, Uglow's studio, Turnchapel Mews. (Photograph by Steve Pocklington, 2000.)



figure of the body with the space it occupies. We have seen how in Uglow's paintings, the nude's pose orders, and is ordered by, the specifically designed 'stage' on which it is displayed, as well as, the rectangle of the canvas. Equally, Loos's use of the *Raumplan* allows each room to acquire the right volume around the occupant in relation to use and significance. The rooms become an extension

of the body, spatial frames of different sizes deriving from, and matching, the occupant's activities.

Nevertheless, space in both works is not only commanded by the female body as subject matter, but perhaps more so, by the body of the author. In *Nude, From Twelve Regular Vertical Positions from the Eye*, we have seen how, in transcribing the image of the model, the painter portrays his gaze

codifying depth by the incremental repositioning of his own body. Accordingly, in the *Baker House* the client is seemingly Baker, but it can be argued that in fact the architect designs a house for himself, his own body looking at her imaginary apparition, fulfilling a voyeuristic daydream. Therefore, both works presented in this essay endeavour to capture an image of the female body, but what they primarily communicate is an embodied act of drawing. The trace of the painter's observation, and the architect's imaginary occupation, is etched on the surface of their drawings. Their embodied act of drawing conduces a similar observation and imaginary occupation to the viewer. We are drawn into the space of the representation, and we are suddenly there, looking at them looking.

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Notes and references

1. Richard Kendall, 'Uglow at Work: The Formative Years', in *Euan Uglow, The Complete Paintings*, catalogue raisonné by Catherine Lampert (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2007), p.xii.
2. Mieke Bal, *Looking In: The Art of Viewing* (London, Routledge, 2001), pp.79–80. According to Bal: 'the way we perceive and interpret images is based on fantasy, and fantasy is socially based. Thus there is a dissymmetry between men and women when they

look at male and female figures. This dissymmetry is also unstable, varying according to which aspects of the unconscious are more or less strongly implicated in the act of looking’.

3. Kendall, *op. cit.*, p. xii.
4. Based on an account by Claire Loos, *Adolf Loos Privat* (Vienna, Herman Böhlau, 1985): quoted in Farès el-Dahdah, ‘The Josephine Baker House: For Loos’s Pleasure’, *Assemblage*, no. 26 (April, 1995), p.76.
5. Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (London and New York, Routledge, 1992), p.2: Nead’s book is a feminist response to Kenneth Clark’s classic survey of the subject in *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1956).
6. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
7. The fragmented description is a partly remembered, partly constructed, account of my experience posing for a nude painting by my husband, the painter James Lloyd, in 2004. James was a student under Uglow’s tutelage at the Slade School of Art, University College London, 1994–95. The painting, entitled *Penelope in the Bath*, was shown at ‘Being Present’, a group exhibition at Jerwood Space in 2004. At the time of the pose I was in the first stages of pregnancy with our first daughter Iris.
8. El-Dahdah, ‘For Loos’s Pleasure’, *op. cit.*, p.76.
9. Small inconsistencies between the plans, sections and the model, reveal that the design must have been at a preliminary stage when abandoned.
10. Adolf Loos, *On Architecture*, eds, Adolf and Daniel Opel, trs., Michael Mitchell (Riverside, CA., Ariadne, 2002), p.78.
11. Panayotis Tournikiotis, *Adolf Loos* (New Jersey, Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), p.180.
12. Martin Golding, ‘Euan Uglow’s Nudes’, in *Euan Uglow* (London, Whitechapel, 1989), p.9.
13. *Ibid.*, p.17.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Competition brochure (anon.), John Moores 8, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, 27th April–2nd July, 1972.
16. Golding, ‘Euan Uglow’s Nudes’, *op. cit.*, p.19.
17. Susan R. Henderson, ‘Bachelor Culture in the Work of Adolf Loos’, in *Journal of Architectural Education*, v.55, n. 3 (February, 2002), p.125.
18. *Ibid.*, p.125.
19. *Ibid.*, p.130.
20. *Ibid.*, p.130.
21. El-Dahdah, ‘For Loos’s Pleasure’, *op. cit.*, p. 74. For more on the notion of the ‘bachelor machine’ see: Hilary Robinson, *Feminism-art-theory: An Anthology, 1968–2000* (London, Blackwell, 2001), p.379.
22. El-Dahdah, ‘For Loos’s Pleasure’, *op. cit.*, p.75.
23. In a note, Henderson mentions what was publicised as the ‘Loos-Skandal’ in 1928, when he was arrested for the seduction of three minor-aged girls. He was found guilty of a lesser charge and paroled. See Burkhardt Rukschcio and Roland Schachel, *Adolf Loos: Leben und Werk* (Vienna, Resindenz Verlag, 1982), pp.339–342. Disturbingly, 1928 is when he designed the *Baker House*, which might explain why the house was never completed and was never mentioned by Baker in her memoirs.
24. Henri Matisse, *Matisse on Art*, ed., Jack D. Flam (Berkeley, University of California, 1995), p.132.
25. Uglow was greatly influenced by Bernard Berenson’s *Piero della Francesca or: The Ineloquent in Art*, 1954: ‘There’s something in that title — the fact that there’s more force in controlled passion than in exuberant passion. That’s the idea I like. I like it slowly to creep out on you.’: quoted in Catherine Lampert, ‘Uglow in His Earthly Observatory’, in *Euan Uglow, The Complete Paintings*, catalogue raisonné by Catherine Lampert

- (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2007), p.i.
26. Robin Evans, *The Projective Cast: Architecture and its Three Geometries* (Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press, 1995), pp.151–152.
 27. *Ibid.*, p.151.
 28. Andrew Lambirth, 'Snatches of Conversation', in *Euan Uglow* (London, Whitechapel, 1989), p.57.
 29. *Ibid.*
 30. The programme was filmed by the *Aquarius* television team.
 31. Lampert, *Euan Uglow*, *op. cit.*, p.96.
 32. For more on my analysis of *Given* see: Penelope Haralambidou, *The Blossoming of Perspective: A Study* (London, Domobaal Editions, 2006) and <http://www.domobaal.com/exhibitions.html> (accessed 16th March, 2009).
 33. See Jonathan Crary's analysis in Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press, 1996). For more on my analysis of *Given* as a stereoscope, see: Penelope Haralambidou: 'The Stereoscopic Veil', *Architectural Research Quarterly*, v.11, n.1 (March, 2007), pp.118–129.
 34. For instance, see el-Dahdah, 'For Loos's Pleasure', *op. cit.*, pp.75, 77.
 35. Loos, *On Architecture*, *op. cit.*, p.76.
 36. *Ibid.*, p.78.
 37. Colomina wonders why Loos's objections to ornament in architecture were never directly focused on Klimt: Beatriz Colomina, 'Sex, Lies and Decoration: Adolf Loos and Gustav Klimt', in, Gustav Klimt, *Painting, Design and Modern Life*, eds, Tobias G. Natter and Cristoph Grunenberg (London, Tate Publishing, 2008), p.42.
 38. Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press, 1994), p.269.
 39. Jan Svanberg, *Master Masons* (Stockholm, Carmina, 1983), p.124. During the Middle Ages, in addition to scaled drawings of façades and details on parchment, the master builder had also to make full-scale drawings of individual parts of the building like traceries of windows or ribs vaults. These were drawn with a large pair of compasses onto a layer of plaster of Paris on the floor of the lodge's 'tracing house'. Instead of an abstract projection plane, later consolidated on paper, the drawing is inhabited. The act of design is not a removed intellectual procedure but a physical act, a performance involving the whole body, linked with the etymology of geometry: the measuring of the earth, the marking of ground.
 40. Todd's recollection described in Lampert, *Euan Uglow*, *op. cit.*, p.96.