HOTEL ARCHIPHILIA

by Thaddeus P. Jusczyk
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Author: ____________________________
Thaddeus P. Jusczyk
Department of Architecture
January 15, 2009

Certified by: ____________________________
Ana Miljacki
Assistant Professor of Architecture
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by: ____________________________
Jefian Beinart
Professor of Architectural Design
Chair, Department Committee on Graduate Students
Thesis Supervisor:

Ana Miljacki
Assistant Professor of Architecture

Thesis Reader:

Mark Jarzombek
Professor of the History and Theory of Architecture
ABSTRACT:

Jean-Francois de Bastide’s mid-eighteenth century novel, The Little House, describes an erotic encounter between a persistent man, and a reluctant woman. More remarkably, the novel introduces a third character, the estate where the seduction takes place. The house not only serves as setting, but as an active aphrodisiac, the male’s invaluable teammate in the game that unfolds. The suburban retreat helps the characters escape from their concerns in nearby Paris. It inserts itself into the narrative as an active participant.

But, in this day and age, can anyone really take this claim seriously? Is it even viable beyond the realm of literature? Can architecture really perform as a character, rather than as mere backdrop in the narratives that unfold around it?

This thesis examines architecture’s role as a participatory agent within the bounds of a multi-program escape in Boston’s Chinatown, serving as a prototype test case.

Thesis Supervisor: Ana Miljački
Title: Assistant Professor of Architecture
Jo,

HOTEL
Thank You

To my committee: Ana, and Mark.

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She loves me. I know she does. I'm sure of it. Sophie loves me. It's destiny. We're meant to be together. There's really not much more that I can tell you, and I don't really know why I'm bothering with it. Imagine one of those fairytale love stories where the two main characters overcome all odds to be together, and you have our story. Well, almost. It's not quite that simple. We have a deeper love that you probably wouldn't even understand. It's not like the kind of celebrity crap that you read about, where people fall in love and break up within a few months. It's deeper than that – much deeper. Your idea of a perfect love would probably involve a traditional dream wedding with a white dress, tuxedoes, and all that crap, but we don't need that. We have a much stronger bond than you could ever imagine, already. Don't get me wrong. I've thought about it. If we got married, I'll bet you'd hear about it, too. It would be on the cover of all the magazines. We'd sell the wedding photos to the
highest bidder, and give the proceeds to the American Cancer Society. That’s her favorite charity.

But, I’m losing track of things here.

She and I play this game. She’s keeps her distance from me, always keeping me guessing. I get it. I mean, anyone less sure in his convictions would have probably given up by now, but not me. I know it’s a test. If I gave up on us being together, she’d be heartbroken. She just wants to make sure that I really want to be with her, that I’ll never give up on her. I won’t let her down. I never will. No matter how many people try to come between us, I’ll never give up. When two people are meant to be together, like us, no one can really ever get in the way. You can’t stop destiny.

Any time that I try to explain this to anyone, they don’t understand. But, how many people really understand love? I mean, most people go through their whole lives without ever really experiencing love in the first place, without ever finding the one person who really makes them feel whole. I feel bad for them, so I try not to get upset when they doubt me, but it’s hard. They’ll never really know what it’s like to be fully committed to love another person. Who are they to judge? They just can’t understand it, and it makes them jealous.
I can see it in the way her eyes light up every time she sees me. Whether I’m across the street, or on the other side of a crowded room, or behind the row of photographers that follows her everywhere, she always notices me. In the courtroom, she looked right at me. She even said my name. I know she thinks about me when I’m not around. I can guess what you’re thinking, too, but it’s not like that. It’s not a lusty kind of love. It’s a pure, true, honest love.

I can understand why most people are jealous of us. They wish that, for once in their miserable lives, they could experience what we have, and they want to take it away from us. Take her lawyer. That bitch has been trying to separate us since I first saw her. She kept ruining the game that Sophie and I play. We have this thing where she walks around town, and I follow, about a hundred feet behind. She’ll go shopping, or out to eat, and I’ll be there, making sure she’s safe. It makes her feel good, like she’s being protected. I just want to make sure nothing bad happens to her. Sophie pretends not to acknowledge me when we do this. That way, I can watch to make sure that she’s safe, without broadcasting it. You wouldn’t believe the lengths that this lawyer went to, all in an effort to keep us apart. It was ridiculous.
Anyway, this psycho lawyer went out with Sophie one day, on Newbury Street, and kept turning around and staring at me. Then, she came up to me, and told me to stop following them. Just great, I thought. Now the whole world is going to know that I've been protecting her. My cover was blown. I pretended not to understand what she was saying. Then, I held back about a hundred more feet before following again. That damn lawyer kept looking back, though. After a while she and Sophie jumped into a cab, and sped off before I could catch up. That's what I get for dropping back that extra hundred feet. Something terrible could have happened to her. For all I knew, her crazy lawyer was abducting her. What could I do, though?

I waited outside her apartment building to see that she got home safely. It took about three hours, with me standing under my crappy umbrella in the pouring rain, but finally she got out of a cab, and walked in the building. I didn't mind waiting for her, though. As long as I knew she was safe, that was all that mattered. I waited to see the light go on in her suite, and caught the T home.

After that incident with the lawyer, the next few days were back to normal. During the day, she went out around 11:00 – just to do some quick shopping
and got back around 3:00. She didn’t go out for the rest of the day. I know she was probably up in her apartment thinking about me, about what our lives would be like together. Anyway, she wasn’t working too much then (what with the scandal and everything), so she didn’t go out much. You probably read about her in all the magazines. They would say that she had been out partying every night, getting home at 4:00 in the morning, but that’s all a load of crap. She didn’t go out at all at night. Her light was on, and every once in a while, I’d see her silhouette in the window, getting up to go to the bathroom, or walk into the kitchen. I don’t know where they get those stories, but I can guess that they pulled them out of their asses. She would get up early, and sometimes make a quick run to the store before breakfast. Mostly, she ordered in, though.

The damn photographers were always waiting when she went out. I don’t know where they came from, because they weren’t waiting with me, but anytime she went out, they would materialize. They were much worse that week than they had been in a while, since the last scandal. I guess pictures of people in pain sells magazines. I’ll bet they were tipped off by store clerks, delivery guys, or random people on the street. However they got there, they swarmed her,
asked her to pose, and pushed each other for a better shot. I mean, can’t these people just leave her alone? It’s no wonder that she gets frustrated every once in a while. You know that famous photo of her yelling at a meter maid? It was taken on the third day after the lawyer incident. Did you notice the guy standing by the mailbox, about twenty feet in the background? That’s me. I saw the whole thing. They made that whole situation look much worse than it actually was. The meter maid was being totally unreasonable. It’s not like Sophie was blocking a fire truck. She was just parked in what looked like a loading zone for about seven minutes. Of course, the magazines made it look like she had intentionally parked in a handicapped space, but there’s no way that she could have seen the sign when she pulled up because it was blocked by a tree branch. Anyway, I could understand how she got so mad. I mean, here she was, just trying to pick up some soy milk, and the stupid meter maid gives her a ticket right away, without even listening to her side of the story. Plus, she was being followed by these two guys with huge cameras, snapping her picture every second. How would you have reacted?

She was pretty upset for the rest of the day. Her stupid lawyer came over to her apartment, and I saw Sophie crying on her shoulder through the
window. At first, I thought that the meter maid and the photographers had really gotten to her, and it made me mad, too. But, when I got home, I figured out the real reason why she was so upset. Her lawyer was trying to tear us apart. I found some guy waiting by my door that night. It turned out that he was a process server, and he handed me a summons to appear in court on stalking charges in two days.

Stalking charges? I'm not some sicko stalker. I don't know why people can't understand that we love each other. We're meant to be together. I'm not stalking her. I'm making sure she's alright, I'm looking out for her. It's a mutual understanding that we have. Sure, we haven't talked about it, but we don't need words. Again, I'm sure that sounds ridiculous to you, but it's the truth. I know that lawyer must have done this. I'm sure that's why Sophie was crying on her shoulder. She must have just found out what her lawyer meant to do. I know that she didn't want this. Her lawyer must have forced her to sign the damn papers.

The next day, she was up early again, and went out around 10:00, but it seemed like she got tired, so she came back around noon. It's not easy to look out for her like I do. I spent the rest of the day huddled in the cold across the street from her apartment,
waiting to see if she'd go out again. She looked out her window a few times, looking over in my direction every now and then. I'm sure that she was trying to signal to me that everything would be alright, that she was sorry her lawyer had to come between us, that we'd be together soon enough.

Well, the next day, I had to show up for court. I watched her from across the courtroom. From where I was sitting, I had a perfect view of her. For most of the day, she didn't even glance at me. She stared down at the notebook in front of her on the desk. I wasn't really paying attention to any of the proceedings that were going on around me. I was focused on her. That psycho lawyer talked for a while, and then the public defender they gave me talked for a bit. They didn't make me get up on the witness stand, or anything, so I just sat there. Mostly, they just talked about how I ran Sophie's fan club, how I wrote a blog about how she spent her days, and ran a website with all of her pictures. What was wrong with that? She's got lots of fans, and they want to get updates about her. Plus, it gives me a chance to record everything that she does, to get my thoughts out. Is that so bad?

It was all pretty uneventful until they put her on the stand. Her lawyer put a bunch of words in her mouth, and then asked her to point me out
in the courtroom. She looked right at me, directly into my eyes, and said my name. That’s right. She said my name. I knew right then that this was all a farce. The way she looked at me, the way she slowly enunciated my name, it was obvious that she didn’t want to go through with the stupid restraining order charade. Everything else melted away, and it was as though it was just the two of us in the room. I doubt that many people have ever experienced a moment like that, when you look deeply into someone’s eyes, and experience a total sense of understanding. It was sudden, overpowering, and over in an instant. She quickly looked away.

The judge ended up giving me a 150 foot restraining order. I can’t come within a hundred fifty feet of her. Can you believe that? It won’t prevent Sophie and me from being together, though. We both knew that this was just going to be one of those obstacles that people in love have to overcome – one that will actually make our bond stronger. When you think about it, 150 feet isn’t so bad most of the time, but just think what will happen if someone attacks her, and I can’t get any closer to her to protect her. What would happen then? Anyway, I’m a pretty good judge of measurements, so the next day, I tried to follow the order, and stayed back the full distance.
I don’t want to give her lawyer any more fodder by getting busted for breaking the law.

The next day started pretty normally. I got up, posted a few comments to my blog, and made it to Sophie’s apartment building by 9:00. She wasn’t up yet. Around ten, I saw her moving around through the window. It always made me so happy to be the first one to see her in the morning. I’m sure that she liked knowing I was there, too. Her lawyer came over around 10:00, and stayed for about half an hour. I couldn’t really see what was going on inside the apartment because of the glare on the window, but every once in a while, I would see her move around. She left the apartment around eleven, and walked towards the common. I kept back the full distance, and watched her walk through the park. She seemed to be in a pretty good mood, and she stopped to watch a squirrel gathering nuts on the lawn.

Leaving the park, she made her way over towards Chinatown on Boylston Street, and then took a right on Washington Street. I hurried to get around the corner to make sure that I didn’t lose her. I’m not sure why, but it just felt like something weird was going on. She didn’t usually walk around here. In fact, I don’t think I had ever seen her go to Chinatown.
I spotted her up ahead on Washington Street, and as I was hurrying to get a little closer, she made another right turn onto LaGrange street. Where could she have been going? This wasn't like her at all. I quickly made it to the corner, just in time to see her walk through a doorway on the right side of the street, right across from the strip clubs. The door quickly slammed behind her. What the hell was going on here? I was already winded, but I raced to the door. It was locked. There was not question that something strange was happening. There was a key pad on the door, like on a calculator, with a little display that showed the numbers as you punched them in. I tried a bunch of random codes, but nothing worked to open the door.

I took a few steps back to get my bearings, and try to make sense of the door and the building it led into. The door was completely nondescript – one of those heavy metal deals, like a fire door. The letters "H" and "A" were stenciled in small red letters about three quarters of the way up. It was tucked in behind a perforated metal skin that wrapped around and up the side of the building. I had to walk back to Washington Street to get a better look at the whole thing.

The building stretched from the corner of LaGrange street to a little alley off of Washington Street.
I didn’t know what to make of it. It was pretty tall – I’d say about 150 feet. It was rectangular, and cube-like, but it had this series of overlapping perforated metal skins. From the other side of Washington Street, I could see that these skins separated at certain points on the façade, like they were getting pulled apart to show what was inside. At these openings, I could see a glassed-in area with some tiered floor slabs connected by big sets of staircases. From what I could tell, the floor slabs were being held up by huge round columns, covered in a milky, almost translucent fur. There were six of them in the whole building, and they must have been about twenty feet in diameter. Inside the openings, behind the glass, it looked like some kind of gym or spa. I could see people on exercise bikes, in aerobics classes, and just lounging around on the big staircases.

Behind the skin, I could make out the outline of some big blocks, that looked like they were about three stories tall, and took up about half the area inside. There were three of them, and they were offset and rotated as you looked up the building. I couldn’t make out what was going on inside of them because they were behind the skin, and covered in some translucent white material. From where I was standing, though, I could see that they had small
openings that looked out over the gym platforms. Through these openings, I could get a glimpse of what seemed like an amorphous interior, richly decorated in red.

It looked like the main entrance to the building was on Washington Street. The overlapping skins lifted off the ground and formed an opening towards the center of the street front. A passageway led to a set of two narrow revolving doors. They looked like they could only fit one person at a time. Above the doors, there was a sign that said “Hotel Archiphilia.” This place didn’t look like a hotel, and even if it was one, why would Sophie go into a hotel about a mile from her house, and why would she go in through the back entrance? Something was definitely not right.

I decided that I’d wait outside the building until I saw her come out again. She couldn’t have gone in there for long, and I wanted to make sure that she was safe. Thoughts raced through my head about what she could possibly be doing there. Maybe someone had threatened her, told her to meet them there, and then abducted her. Maybe she was seriously hurt in there, but I think I would have sensed that. By now, we’re so close that I think I’d know if she had been hurt – at least I thought I did. It just seemed so strange, though. I couldn’t figure out why she’d want
to go to this place. It was totally outside of her normal routine. I mean, the two of us really like routine. We're the kind of people who don't really like to switch things up. I realized that I would have to be especially diligent to make sure that she was safe. I'd need to stay there as long as necessary until she came out.

Hours passed, and she didn't emerge. I didn't understand why she wouldn't come out. I mean, I guess it's possible that she left through a different door, but I think I would have known. Like I've been trying to tell you, we have this connection. I always know where she is. I can feel it. I'm sure it's the same with her sensing me. It's a bond. Like, when she sometimes leaves restaurants through the kitchen, I always know. I'll go around to the alley and see her coming out. That's how close we are.

I waited and waited, and watched as people went in and out of the front doors, always by themselves. They'd slip into the entrance area, and work their way through the revolving doors. A lot of them were carrying gym bags. Towards 5:30, things seemed to pick up a little bit, and more people started going in. It started to get dark, and pretty cold. I looked up at the building. The lights were on, and as it got darker outside, the building started to light up like a lantern. The metal skin still obscured a lot of what was going
on inside most of the building, but I could see the elements of the building much more clearly. The big blocks that were separated by the open areas were glowing faintly. The light was coming from behind the translucent walls, which looked like they were lined with individual rooms because I could see little boxes lit up around them. The big furry columns were now glowing orange. I could still see people working out through the openings in the skin. There was now what looked like a pilates class going on in one of them, and I could see people on treadmills in another. People were still lounging on the stairs. It looked like they were on display, and liked it, and at the same time, they were observing the people working out like they were on a stage. There were blasts of steam coming from the inner parts of the building.

By nine o'clock I was starting to get really discouraged. I stood there waiting and waiting, but as far as I could tell, she never came out. The bouncers in front of the strip clubs were starting to give me dirty looks. They probably thought that I was standing around there, waiting for some dancer like a sicko. I moved around, and walked back over to the other side of Washington Street. I started thinking that maybe I was wrong. Maybe she did leave, and I had missed her. I started to doubt myself, and the feeling that I
always get when she’s nearby. I mean, maybe I was
totally off. She could be home. I just couldn’t shake
the sense that she was still in there. But, my doubt
started to get to me. I thought maybe I’d just go back
to her apartment and see if she was there. At least
she’d have to get home at some point, and I’d be there
to make sure she was alright.

I ran all the way back to her apartment, just
to be sure to know, as quickly as possible, if she was
home. I felt kind of excited as I was running. You
know that feeling that you get when you suddenly
think everything’s going to be alright? I rounded her
corner completely out of breath, and looked up at her
window. The light was off. It was too early for her
to be in bed. How could she not be there? Usually,
around this time of night, I’d see the TV on, and the
light in her window. I started to get really nervous,
and partly because I was so out of breath, my knees
gave out, and I had to sit down on the curb to gather
my strength again.

Sitting there, I tried to figure out what had
happened, and I had to decide what to do next. It
seemed to me that the best thing I could do would
be to wait there. Eventually, she’d have to get back,
right? She might have already left that building, Hotel
Archiphilia, while I was running back to her place.
She could be getting back any minute, and I didn't want to miss it. I definitely had to wait.

So, I decided to stay there until I saw that she was safely home. But, she didn't come back. I waited and waited, through the cold and rain, but she never walked into her building, and her light never went on. Around 4:00 AM the first night, I started to question my decision to wait. I was exhausted, hungry, and wet. Maybe something had happened to her in that building. Maybe she couldn't make it out. Maybe something had happened to her on her way home, when I wasn't there to protect her. These kinds of thoughts made me want to stay there even more, though, and fight through whatever pain I was feeling. This is exactly the kind of situation that I had been ready to face all along. I had to see her. I had to wait. If something really did happen to her, then she would want to know that I hadn't given up.

What could I do if she never came back, though? I couldn't go to the police. They'd see that restraining order Sophie's lawyer had put between us, and wouldn't take anything I said seriously. No, there was nobody I could talk to about it. I'd have to figure it out on my own.

I sat there waiting for two straight days. I didn't see any sign of her for all that time. The only times
that I wasn’t staring directly at her apartment, I was running into the store across the street to get coffee and pee. She couldn’t have possibly gotten home and made it up to her apartment in that time. I stayed awake the whole time, frantic with worry. At the end of the second day, I was so exhausted that I could barely see anything. My eyes kept closing, and I would drift off. I couldn’t tell anymore if I was dreaming or awake. She’d come to me and tell me not to give up – to keep fighting for her. I didn’t know what else I could do. I had to go home and sleep and eat, or I wouldn’t be any use to her at all. Even though it hurt to leave, I figured that I couldn’t be of any use to her in my current state. How could I let this happen? I struggled to stay awake long enough to catch the T home, and get off at the right stop. As soon as I got into my apartment, I collapsed on the floor, and slept for about twelve hours.

When I woke up, I had that panicky feeling you get when you know you overslept, plus that rough tingly feeling that you get in your face when you’ve been lying on carpet. What if she had gotten home? What if she was lying on the street somewhere, or worse, in the morgue? I shoved some three-day-old Chinese food in my mouth, quickly showered, and was out the door in about six minutes. When I got
to her apartment, there was no sign of her. Usually, by this time, she would have been up, and moving around. Maybe she was still asleep. She could have been exhausted from whatever had happened to her in the past few days. I waited for about two hours, with no signs of any movement through her window.

Frantic, I hurried back to Hotel Archiphilia. I had to check this place out, to investigate what was going on inside. When I was almost there, I saw Sophie's lawyer, walking on the street, towards the building. Why was she there? I had a feeling that she was behind this whole thing. Sophie really must have been somewhere in that building. I'm sure that her lawyer had forced this on her. What was with this lawyer? She must have been deranged. I was sure that this was some new ploy to keep Sophie and me apart.

I followed her down the street. I knew that she'd lead me to Sophie. She made a quick turn down the alley next to the building, off of Washington Street. I wasn't going to let her get away from me, so I made sure that I could keep up with her every move. Down at the end of the alley, I saw her take a left turn into an opening in the skin of the building. I just knew that she was behind this whole mess.

I peeked around the opening in the skin to see
what she was doing. There was some sort of loading dock back there, and those big furry columns came right down to the ground. It looked like there were elevator doors going right into them. The lawyer was standing in what looked like a little waiting area around one of them. When the doors opened, she got in.

I waited for the doors to close before I walked over to them. I didn’t want her to see me. She must have been holding Sophie somewhere in the building. In a way, it felt pretty good to know that I was right all along about where she was. I knew we were connected. Are you starting to understand what kind of a bond we have? Anyway, it turned out that the columns weren’t covered in fur, but some kind of silicone skin. It was translucent, flexible, and had weird nubs, about five inches long, and spaced about five inches apart, radiating out of it. Sure enough, there was an elevator in them. I pushed the up button, and waited. When the elevator finally came, I noticed that it didn’t stop at every floor. The numbers read 4, 7, 10, and 11. I had no idea where the lawyer had gotten off, so I decided to hit 4, and work my way up.

When the doors opened, I must have been in one of the translucent blocks that I had seen from the street, because I definitely wasn’t in the open
gym area. It was a fairly large room, covered in what looked like soft fire-engine red rubber. There were curved walls all around that made the room into a sort of amorphous shape. They were all made out of the silicone skin that was wrapping the columns. There was a little channel on the floor and ceiling that made it look like the walls continued through the floor slabs. When I got closer, I saw that they were stretched taught between the floor and ceiling, held in some kind of clamp in the channel. They weren’t quite continuous, but had openings around rounded corners. It looked like there were probably about thirty openings around the room. I couldn’t tell where these openings led from where I was standing. On one side, there was a much bigger opening, which looked out on the open areas that I had seen from the street, at sort of a half level. In the middle of the room, there were big pits in the floor, covered in the silicone skin. They made seating areas with steps down to couches which looked like they were molded out of the floor, and then covered with the stuff.

There were people lounging around all over the room. It seemed to me like they were getting pretty cozy. People were walking around, going up to other people and talking, or lying around on the couches as they looked at other people coming in. Every once
in a while, a couple or group of people would get up and walk through one of the openings in the walls, or people would walk out of them and go in separate directions. It all seemed like some strange pick-up joint, and I couldn't figure out why the lawyer would keeping Sophie here. None of it made any sense. A few people glanced up at me as I stepped out of the elevator. I circled the room, but didn't see the lawyer anywhere.

As I was walking around the room, I bumped into two men who came out through one of the openings in the wall. Losing my balance, I tried to brace myself against the wall, but fell into it. The silicone stretched as it yielded to my weight, and I felt the nubs tickle my torso as it softly bounced me back up to a standing position.

“Oh! I'm so sorry,” said one of the guys.

“Don't worry about it,” I said. I peeked into the crevice in the wall where they had just been. There was a door, with one of those hotel door handles – the kind where you have to swipe a card to get in.

One of the guys called back to me, “First time here?”

“Uh, yeah,” I said.

“Just swipe a credit card to get in,” he said. “But I'd wait a few minutes 'til it's done cleaning itself,
if you know what I mean.” He walked off. I had no idea what he meant.

Cleaning itself? What was behind these doors? I walked over to the pits, and decided to take a seat to see if the lawyer showed up again. Maybe she had gone behind one of these doors, where she was holding Sophie. Of course, she also could have been on one of the other floors, for all I knew. I stepped down into one of the pits and planted myself on the couch. I was sitting on the silicone nubs. They squished under my weight, and kind of formed around me when I leaned back. I noticed that everything in the room was covered in either this silicone stuff or the soft red rubber. There were drains at the bottom of the pits, and when I looked up, I noticed a lot of nozzles on the ceiling, almost like sprinklers. It looked like the whole place could be turned into a giant shower. Why you would want to turn a room that big into a shower was beyond me.

I looked around again at the walls. It looked like all of the openings were passageways that led to some kind of hotel rooms, but they seemed too close together to be regular rooms. On each of the three exterior walls, there was also a spot towards the middle where what looked like natural light was coming from behind the silicone. It didn’t look like there was a
room behind these walls, but I couldn’t quite figure out what was going on.

As I was sitting there, a good looking woman came over to me. Of course, she was nothing compared to Sophie. “Looking for someone?” she asked.

“Yeah, how’d you know?” I thought that maybe I had gotten lucky. Maybe she could take me to Sophie.

“Lucky guess. Why else would you be here?” I didn’t know how to answer that. She grabbed me by the hand, and led me out of the pit, pulling me towards the walls along the perimeter. I looked back, and noticed that my imprint was still registered in the couch, as the nubs gradually began to perk back up and erase it. She turned to me and asked, “Who are you looking for?”

“Uh... Sophie.” Could she really take me to her? “Do you know where to find her?”

“I think I know what you’re looking for. Let’s go upstairs.” She took me towards one of the elevators in one of the big columns. When we got in, I realized that it must have been a different elevator than the one I had taken when I first came in because the numbers were different. This one only stopped at 4 and 7. We walked out on 7 to a room that was a lot like the one on 4, except with a different orientation.
It was longer, and narrower than the lower room, but had similar pits in the middle, and the same curving walls. She pulled me into one of the openings. We brushed through the silicone walls. “Just swipe your credit card,” she said.

I didn’t hesitate, but my hand kind of fumbled to find my wallet. I was shaking. Could Sophie really be behind that door? I didn’t bother to wonder why I would need to swipe a credit card to get her out of there. I slid my card in the slot, and an LED on the card reader showed that the charge had been successful. A green light on the handle prompted me to swing the door open.

I pushed into the room. To my horror, it was completely empty. The whole room, which was smaller than a typical hotel room, was covered in the soft rubber membrane. There were two flat walls on either side. The one opposite the door had rounded rectangular seams, with little handles on it, like cabinet doors, while the other one was completely blank. The wall that I was standing next to was make from the silicone skin with the nubs, only the opposite side. Instead of the nubs, it had the hollow holes that made up the reverse. Opposite the silicone wall, the last wall was a whitish translucent flat surface. It looked like some kind of polycarbonate, the kind with the vertical
ridges. I assumed that this was the exterior wall to the box that I had seen from the street. It was speckled with little round circles of light, probably the noon sun shining through the perforated metal skin. In the center of the room, there was a fairly large shower drain. I looked up and noticed more nozzles on the ceiling. It seemed like the whole room could either be turned into a shower, or scrubbed clean. I turned to the woman and asked, “What is this? Where is she?”

“Don’t be in such a rush,” she said as she pushed past me into the room. “We have at least half an hour. What’s the matter? Are you nervous? Do you have to go?” She walked over to the flat wall with the seams, and grabbed one of the handles, pulling open a cabinet. Inside, I could see a red velvet-lined cubby, with a toilet seat and a roll of toilet paper tucked into the wall.

“What are you talking about? I want to see Sophie!” I started to get mad.

“Alright, alright. Relax. Hold your horses,” she responded. She pulled on another one of the knobs on the wall, and brought down a big Murphy bed, which practically filled the room. Just like the toilet, the inside of the cabinet was covered in soft red velvet. The whole bed had a luxurious look to it, swathed in the soft, supple fabric. She jumped up on the bed,
and started taking her clothes off. “Is this what you’ve been waiting for?” she asked in a deep tone. “You can call me Sophie. You can call me anything you want.”

“Look,” I yelled, “there’s gotta be some mistake. What the hell is this place?” I was revolted. What had these people done with my sweet Sophie? How could they keep her in this place?

“What do you mean, ‘What is this place?’ What’s the matter with you? What did you expect from a love hotel?”

I couldn’t look at her, I ran out the door, and into the main room again. What kind of a place was this? Where were they keeping Sophie? I pushed my way into the next opening in the wall, jammed my credit card in the slot, and pushed the door open. This room was even smaller than the last. It was similar, but much narrower. It had fewer and smaller cabinets. I flung the larger one open. Instead of a bed, there was just a bench that folded down. Again, the inside of the wall and the bench were covered in soft red velvet. The room and the bench looked like they were just about big enough to hold two people very closely. I pulled open another cabinet door, and found a control dial. You could turn the dial to specify normal, shower, lube, or deep clean. There was a separate dial for temperature. I resisted the urge to
turn the dial to lube, just to see what would happen, and slammed the door. I was curious, but I had to find Sophie. I'm sure that you would have turned the dial, but that's how we're different. I can resist that kind of temptation. For God's sake, Sophie's life could have been in danger.

I stormed out, and went into the next room. It was small, too. The next one was a bigger one, like the first. The next one was locked. A red LED lit up next to the word, "occupied," on the door handle. I stopped myself before going on to following room. There was no way that I could search every single room in the hotel. There must have been at least a hundred of them, and I had no idea how much my credit card was getting charged each time that I barged in. I was feeling pretty dejected, when out of the corner of my eye, I caught a glimpse of the lawyer walking through the public area in the middle of the room, and towards the elevator. I saw her press the "down" button.

I perked up, and watched her get in the elevator, and saw the doors close. I quickly walked over and hit the call button. I thought that if I could catch her, maybe I could get some kind of clue about where they were keeping Sophie. When the elevator finally took me down to the ground floor, she was gone. I ran out to the street, but couldn't find her anywhere.
I looked back up at the building. What the hell was this place where they forced her to go? Sophie would never go to a place like this. I just kept thinking of her up there, being tortured by her lawyer, or whoever else was involved.

It occurred to me that I should check her apartment again. Maybe she had somehow gotten home while I was out looking for her. Of course, there was no sign of her. Her newspapers were piling up outside her door, so I thought that maybe I should pick them up so that thieves, or people staking out her house didn't think that she was away. I also realized that I hadn't checked the news recently. Maybe someone had reported something, and the media had picked up on her disappearance.

I walked over to the front steps of her building, grabbed all of the bundled up papers, and threw all but the most recent out in the trash can. I quickly opened it up to see if there was any news. Nothing. There was no coverage of her disappearance whatsoever. I furiously tore through the pages, looking deep in the paper to see if there were any clues at all. Then, something caught my eye. It was an ad for a private detective.

The ad read, “Why worry? Why be doubtful or
confused? Why be gnawed by suspicion? Consult cool, careful, confidential, discreet investigator. Guy Phillips.” It was a stupid ad, but for some reason, I was interested. Look, I know that it was ridiculous for me to even consider it, but I got to thinking that it would make sense for me to hire a detective. I mean, I couldn't do this all on my own. I had to find her, and the longer this went on, the more likely it was that something was seriously wrong with her. The address in the ad was surprisingly close by. I decided to walk over there, just to check the guy out. Maybe he could help me.

Phillips' office was on the fourth floor of a nine story building. I took the elevator up, walked down the hall, and tried to see if I could peak into his office. The door was slightly ajar, and I put my eye up to the opening to get a look.

“Looking for me?” A voice startled me from behind my back.

“I don't know,” I said. “You Phillips?”

“Yeah, what can I do for you?” He pushed past me, and opened the door to his office. There wasn't much in there - just a cluttered desk, a computer, and two chairs, one on his side of the desk, and one on mine. He pointed me towards the one closer to the door. He had a bright, friendly manner - not really
what I expected from a private detective.

I was taken a little off guard. “I’m looking for someone,” I said.

“Alright. You’ve come to the right place. What’s the story?”

I thought of the restraining order, and tried to come up with a reasonable excuse for why I needed to find Sophie. I told him that we were dating, and that I hadn’t seen her for a few days, and got worried. I explained where I thought she was, at Hotel Archiphilia, and told him that I wanted him to check the place out, and see if he could find her anywhere.

“Got it,” he said. “Classic stalker case. I’m on it.”

“Hey,” quickly blurted out, “I’m no stalker! I just want to find out what happened to her.”

“Look,” he said, “I’m not going to turn you in. I’m not interested in why you want to find her. I just want to get paid.”

I agreed to pay his fee and expenses, and had to put down a retainer to cover a couple of days. “Don’t worry,” he said. “I’ll find her. I know the place.” He pulled out a magazine, and opened it up to a big two-page ad towards the center. It was for Hotel Archiphilia, something about a spa or gym.

I walked out of the office, and looked back
at him. He was giving me a nice warm smile, but something didn’t seem right. I took the elevator downstairs, and walked out onto the street. The guy didn’t seem concerned enough. Didn’t he understand that Sophie’s life was at stake. Why didn’t he jump into action right away? The whole thing left me with a sour taste in my stomach, and I started to think that I had made a terrible mistake in even going to see this guy.

As I was slowly walking away from his office building, I looked back towards it, and caught sight of him briskly walking out the front door. He crossed the street, and headed in the opposite direction. Where was he going? I thought at first that maybe he was going to get right on the case. Look, I’m sure it sounds stupid for a guy to hire a private detective, and then follow him around, but something just didn’t seem right. Maybe the lawyer had gotten to him first. I decided to see what he was up to.

He made his way on foot downtown, and then took a right on Washington Street. He was heading towards Hotel Archiphilia. Maybe I didn’t give him enough of a chance. It actually seemed like he was going to work on the case. Still, I decided to follow him, just to be certain.

Sure enough, he crossed Boylston Street, and
was headed right for the hotel. Instead of turning down the alley, like the lawyer had done, he went straight for the main entrance, and went through one of the revolving doors. I waited a couple of minutes, and then went in.

I entered into a foyer with a door on either side, and a grand staircase that went straight up to an opening directly in front of me. A young woman was sitting at a counter behind a window directly to my right. “Hi,” she said. “Are you a member, or would you like to purchase a guest pass?” I told her that I just wanted a guest pass. She charged me what seemed like an outrageous price, and pointed me towards the door on the left. “The locker room’s over there. You’ll find towels and robes inside. Enjoy.”

I headed through the door towards the lockers. A couple of guys were just heading out as I walked in, and I almost bumped into them coming through the door. The room was not dissimilar to other locker rooms, except that it didn’t have any showers, and there was one of the giant silicone-covered columns in the middle. What I assumed were the exterior walls were made of the same translucent plastic that had been used in the love hotel rooms. I saw the detective undressing on the far side of the room, and I took a locker nearby and tried to blend in so that he wouldn’t
notice me. He must not have been a great detective because I don’t think it even occurred to him that I might be watching him. He was too busy staring at some other guys who were changing nearby. He followed them out, wearing just a towel.

I finished changing into a robe, walked out to the foyer, and headed up the grand staircase. It brought me up onto a level that was completely open, except for the giant columns with elevator doors, and a huge staircase going up on one side. It was amazing to me how far I felt from the street. The staircase had brought me up into a world that seemed completely remote from what was going on outside, even though I wasn’t so far away. About half of the floor was covered with a ceiling that was about twelve feet above the ground. The other side, with the staircase, was open above except for tiered landings on the stairs. It looked like the side with the ceiling served as the wet area of the floor. There were dozens of shower nozzles above, and the floor had large drains. At least ten or twelve people were standing around showering, chatting, and looking at each other. Steam was billowing out from one corner, towards one of the columns, and people were lounging on benches that encircled the silicone skin, breathing in the moist air.

On the other side of the room, towards the
stairs, there was some workout equipment laid out, and what appeared to be a stretching area, with a cushy floor. There were a few people using elliptical machines, two guys on stationary bikes, and about half a dozen people on the floor, stretching, and chatting. Light was pouring in from the huge openings in the façade above. The stairs weren't just being used for going up and down in the building, but people seemed to be using them as lounging, meeting areas. More than just resting places, though, it almost seemed like people were using them as grandstands, to watch other people working out, and coming in. I watched them for a little while as they viewed the people below them, and as they ended up interacting, some of them walking off together.

All of the walls were covered in clear glass. I could clearly see the metal skin behind it, which partially obscured my view outside, but still let in dappled sunshine. Up above, near the stairs, I could see one of the big openings in the skin. It flooded the stairs with light, but also seemed to put the people on display to the street. It seemed like it might be high enough off the street, so you wouldn't actually be able to recognize anybody from below, but these people definitely enjoyed watching each other, and being on display.
I walked over to the showers, threw my robe off, and stepped under the streaming water. It was warm, and it felt good to wash the worry off of myself for a little bit. I found a soap dispenser, and got a good lather going before I spotted Phillips out of the corner of my eye. He had just stepped out of the steam area, and was heading upstairs, stopping to chat with what looked like an old friend on the stairs. He seemed to be enjoying himself, and didn’t seem to be too worried about finding Sophie. He walked up out of my sight, and I decided to follow him again.

By the time I dried off, and grabbed my robe, I had already lost him. I climbed up the stairs, around one of the columns on a landing where a couple of people were stretching, up to another open level. Halfway up the stairs, I got a glimpse into what must have been the fourth floor, where I had earlier followed the lawyer. The stairs deposited me on top of the block at the next level. This one was similar to the one down below, but in a different orientation. The floor took up the area of the top of the block with the love hotel area. It also had a covered side, underneath the block above (which I assumed to be the 7th floor), which was for wet functions, and an open side for workout equipment and group exercise. The exterior walls were covered in clear glass, like on
the level before, but here, the metal skins separated to make a huge opening that spanned almost the length of the building, and wrapped around to the side on Washington Street.

On this level, there was a fairly good-sized swimming pool on the wet side of the floor. Around the columns, there were a number of smaller pools – more like hot tubs. There was a smaller shower area off to one side, and steam was emanating from another corner. The open side contained another big staircase. On one end of it, a pilates class was going on, and on the other, towards the stair that I had just come up, there were a bunch of massage table laid out. A couple of people were getting what seemed to be pretty relaxing massages under the watchful gaze of some people hanging out on the steps. The stairs up from this level were much longer than the ones below, and they stretched around a column. People had formed little groups, and were chatting and relaxing with each other, or casually climbing the stairs up to the next level.

At first glance, I didn’t see the detective around, so I walked over to the pool to check it out. Sure enough, he was hanging out over by the edge, looking around, and mesmerized by some guys walking by. I walked over to the smaller pools to get a closer look
without being noticed. I jumped into one of the tubs that was empty, and dunked my head under water. It was freezing. I came up shivering, and quickly climbed out. No wonder it was empty. I looked over to the other tubs, and saw one where a couple of people seemed like they were relaxing, and quickly got in. Much better.

From the hot tub, I peered over towards the detective. I looked just in time to see him throw his towel off and dive into the pool. He came up and spit some water into the air. Then, he sort of bounced around in the water, looking around in every direction. He seemed to be taking in his surroundings, enjoying the view. He swam over the edge, and rested his chin on his hands as he stared at the people walking by, taking particular interest in a couple of guys that were working out on the deck. Then, he pushed off from the wall, treaded water for a bit, dunked his head, came up and gave the room another look. He seemed particularly distracted by one man, who was walking back and forth next to the pool. The detective called something out to him, but I couldn’t quite make out what he had said. The other guy smiled, laughed, and said something back to Phillips over his shoulder, then started walking away.

Phillips quickly swam back to the wall, lifted
himself out of the water in one sudden motion, and grabbed his towel. He made a frenzied effort to dry himself off, and walked over to where the other guy had gone. I couldn't really see where they were going through the steam, so I got out of the hot tub, found my towel and robe, and followed closely behind.

The other guy was on the stairs going up to the next level. He turned back, and found Phillips eyes again, and kept walking up. Phillips didn’t hesitate long in working his way up. I followed up, and around the column to the next landing, where more massage tables had been set up. When I turned to go up the next long staircase, I saw that Phillips had caught the other guy, and both had sat down on the steps to converse. They seemed to be enjoying whatever it was they were talking about.

There was no doubt in my mind that Phillips had completely forgotten about Sophie, and why I had even hired him to check this place out. Or worse, he was working with the lawyer to waste my time. I looked over to my left, and to the side of the stairs, I caught a glimpse into the love hotel layer. I saw part of the silicone walls, the ceiling, and felt the warm glow of the red light emanating from within. I turned back up the stairs, and Phillips and his friend had already gone up to the next level.
I followed them up, and reached a floor that was also split between covered and open halves. The covered portion contained a few more showers, and a much larger steam area. Unlike the other levels, the covered portion here was completely open. There were no stairs above, just a ceiling that was about forty feet in the air. In the open space, there was a large aerobics class in progress. The exterior skin opened up in this area to reveal a view over the city outside. This must have been the spot where I had seen the aerobics class at night from below. It was getting dark out again, and the lights were going on in the surrounding buildings, and the street below.

The translucent block that covered the wet space on this level looked like it was taller than the others. I hadn't been there this morning, and I assumed that it contained floors 10 and 11 that I had seen in the elevator before. The numbering system didn't really make any sense to me, though, because I hadn't counted as many floors as there were numbered in the elevator.

I caught sight of Phillips and his friend walking into the steam area. I quickly followed because I didn't want to lose them in the fog. I saw their outlines moving towards one of the columns, where they opened a door and stepped in. I waited about
thirty seconds before walking over to the column, and trying the same door. Inside, I found what must have been a fire escape for the building, a circular stair that wound its way up through the column. I heard steps, giggles, and the sound of a door closing above me, so I quickly rushed up the stairs.

I don't know why I kept following him. By this point, I knew that there was no way he'd take me to Sophie. I guess I was just kind of curious to see what he was doing. Maybe his friend was some kind of informant, or something. I don't know. I suppose that he could have been taking Phillips to see him. At least that's what I told myself.

I made it to a landing where there was a similar door to the one that I had just gone through. At about eye level, the number “9” was stenciled in red paint. The door wouldn't budge, though. It looked like the fire doors you sometimes see where you can only open from one side. I didn't linger long, and worked my way up to the next floor and door, which said “10.” This one opened with no problem.

I walked into a room that was very similar to the love hotel spaces that I had seen in the morning, but this one had two levels. There was a big cut out in the ceiling with a balcony from a similar layer above, overlooking the silicone-stuffed pits on the
floor where I was standing. It looked like everything was similar up above, just with the openings to this level instead of the couch pits. I moved along the side of room, running my hand against the silicone nubs as I surveyed the room to find the detective and his friend.

I thought that maybe they had gone into one of the side rooms, but as I rounded a column, I spied Phillips and the other guy reclined on a couch in one of the pits. They looked pretty cozy. Phillips was gently stroking the other guy’s hair as they chatted and laughed into one another’s ears. Phillips smiled and fidgeted with the silicone nubs, pushing them in and out of the couch. Then, he playfully pushed his friend over, and onto them. His friend let the nubs envelope him, and bounced back up. He grabbed Phillips by the hand and led him out of the pit, and over towards one of the openings in the wall. Deciding against the first one he tried (probably because it was occupied), he pulled Phillips to the next, and the two of them disappeared through the wall.

I stood there trying to take it all in. I had paid this guy good money to come here and get cozy, have a great time, and pick up some random other guy. I couldn’t believe it. How was he not even remotely concerned about my case, about Sophie? She could
be in serious danger, for all he knew. I walked over to the silicone wall that separated his room from the main space. I couldn't see anything through it, so I put my ear up to listen. Nothing. But as I was standing there closely, there was a sudden impact in the wall, coming from the other side. The wall stretched as a body clearly pushed on it from within. Through the wall's thin membrane, I could faintly make out the shadow of two hands pressing firmly against the flexible surface.

There was nothing that I could really do. I didn't feel like waiting outside the room anymore, waiting for some guy who clearly wasn't going to be any help in finding Sophie. I had to think fast, though. I was wasting time. Anything could have happened while I was here, following this half-ass detective around. The idea was that the two of us could cover more ground, not that we'd both do nothing. How had I let myself get distracted from really looking? The only thing that I could think to do was to go by her apartment again, and see if there was any sign that she had gotten back while I was out. I still couldn't shake the feeling that she was here, though. I knew she was, but where? How could they have kept her here?

I headed back towards the column with the fire stairs, and started walking down. Instead of stopping
at the eighth floor, and going out the way that I had come in, I kept going all the way down to the bottom. It didn't make sense to me that there were extra landings and locked doors to floors that I hadn't seen. I assumed that there would have to be some service floors to take care of all the water pumping, heating, air conditioning, drainage, and lube emitting that was taking place throughout the building, but it seemed kind of excessive. What do I know, though. I'm not a plumber. Anyway, there were landings with locked doors at floors 9, 6, and 3. The stair kept going down, past 1. I followed it down another level, and opened the door. Behind it was a parking lot. I guess it made sense for there to be underground parking below the building. I walked back up to 1, went through the door, and found myself in a hallway with a couple of doors on each side. One of them said, "Men" in red letters, and when I pushed myself through, I found myself back in the locker room.

I quickly changed back into my clothes, and headed out the front door. I glanced back up at the building, but didn't find much in the way of clues. It did seem like the love hotel blocks were much taller than they looked from inside, though. They definitely looked taller than one story. I shrugged it off, and walked over to Sophie's apartment.
On my way there, I kept thinking about how I knew she must still be in the hotel. I could feel her in there. Again, maybe my instincts were way off, but I just felt like she had to be in there. Otherwise, I wouldn't have gotten that feeling.

Of course, nothing had changed outside her building. Her lights weren't on, and I didn't see anyone moving inside. I got pretty dejected. I didn't know what else I could possibly do. The only plan that I could come up with was to go home and check the internet to see if anything had been posted anywhere about her disappearance. I could also find out everything there was to know about Hotel Archiphilia. Maybe similar disappearances had been reported in relation to it. I took the T home.

I walked in the door, and checked the fridge for anything to eat. In all this confusion, I had totally lost any sense of routine. I wasn't sure if I should be eating breakfast, dinner, or if I should just be sleeping. I hadn't gotten any new groceries since before this all happened, either, so I didn't have much to choose from. I grabbed a bag of chips from the cabinet, and went over to my computer.

I had a whole bunch of emails from people wondering why I hadn't updated the fan club or my blog in the past several days. It made me feel kind of
good to know that at least some people were concerned about Sophie, too. I didn’t have any energy to write them back, or post anything about what had happened in the past few days, though. I could always do it later, when I had slept and figured out what I could tell these people.

I decided to run a quick search of Hotel Archiphilia. There were actually a lot of websites that popped up. A bunch of review sites, relationship blogs, sex blogs, personal ads, and tourism sites. There were three separate sites that looked legit, though—like they were actually official sites for the hotel, but I couldn’t figure out why there would be three of them. I clicked on the first one, and it took me to information about the spa and health club. There was some information about how I could escape from stress at work or at home for a little while. The second one took me to a completely different looking site about the love hotel. It was all about how I could “escape boredom.” It had a link to a bunch of personal ads that were posted by people who wanted to meet other singles and groups for flings.

The last site took me to something unexpected. When I clicked on the link, the words, “escape it all,” slowly faded in and out. Next, a screen popped up that described Hotel Archiphilia as an urban oasis,
an escape pod from the pressures, and stress of the outside world:

"Want to leave it all behind? Sick of being watched? Check in to Hotel Archiphilia and shut your worries out! Tired of the scrutiny? Need to work things out? Just want to get away? Experience exile in exclusivity."

The site went on to detail how completely private rooms, "separated and insulated from the outside world," were available for discreet accommodation. No contact with any people at all was necessary. Complete isolation from staff, other guests, and any outside conflicts was possible. Once someone entered the hotel, they could shut themselves off entirely from any outside worries. Food and amenities were ordered through an automated menu system, and were delivered to the rooms through a wall compartment that eliminated contact with staff. They referred to the place as a new "urban hermitage."

The pieces were all starting to fall into place. Through three pretty easy steps, anyone could book a room at Hotel Archiphilia, and get total exile. First, you picked from a list of available rooms. They were all pretty much the same, from what I could tell, but I guess that there was some variation based on where they were in the building. Next, you entered your credit
card information. The bill for the room, and any food or other amenities would be charged to the account for the length of your stay. You could be there as long as you wanted, as long as your credit card could still be charged. Next, the site gave you a personalized code number that could be entered in the back door (the one on LaGrange Street), the garage entrance, elevators, and room doors, through which you could get to your personal enclave. It also gave you a map, which you could print out, that showed you how to get your room. It first directed you to enter from one of two places – a private door on LaGrange Street, or through the parking lot below the building. That was it. You could stay as long as you wanted, and you wouldn’t have to deal with anyone at all.

I didn’t hesitate. It didn’t take me long to book the room, and I was out the door, running to catch a cab. It was too late for the T. I had been right along. Sophie was in that hotel. I kicked myself for not checking this out sooner. This was how we were going to be together. It was a sign. She knew I’d follow her, and that I would never stop looking for her. She was waiting for me, alone in her room. She just wanted to get away from her lawyer, the photographers, reporters, and everyone else that was constantly pestering her. That’s one of the ways that
we're so similar. She can't stand dealing with the idiots that she has to confront every day.

I had the cab drop me off at the corner of Washington and Kneeland Streets, and I hopped out, and headed directly to the door on LaGrange Street. There were a couple of guys still hanging around outside the strip clubs, but for the most part, the streets were deserted. I ducked behind the metal skin, and entered my code on the door's keypad. A green light flashed, and I pushed the door open. I found myself at the top of a set of stairs, and followed them down to what must have been the first level of the parking lot. From there, signs with the letters "H" and "A" directed me to one of the big columns with elevator doors. I called the elevator by entering my code in a keypad on the left. It came quickly, and once I was inside, I saw another keypad, where I entered my code again. A little screen showed me that I was being brought up to the eighth floor.

When the elevator doors opened, I stepped out onto a pretty dark floor. At first I though that maybe I had made a mistake, because everywhere I looked, all that I could see were pipes and other mechanical equipment that snaked all over the place. There were pipes of all sizes, big pumps, ducts, dials, gauges, and switches. Throughout the space, I could hear the
general din of forced air, and rushing water, insulating me from all noises beyond. There were a couple of narrow paths that led from the elevators. The ceiling was pretty low in most of the place, but in these paths, it was fairly tall – maybe ten feet. Everywhere else, it looked like it was only about seven feet tall, but in those areas, the space was thick with plumbing and equipment.

I remembered the map that I had printed out. It highlighted my path to the room. I went to the left, around the massive column – still wrapped in the silicone skin – and under some bulging pipes. I got excited thinking about the fact that Sophie was somewhere in this maze, too. I could feel that she was close. I knew it. I followed the path around a series of larger ducts, and somehow ended up in front of a door that seemed to lead into a dense collection of pipes. There was a keypad below the handle, and I entered my code. A green light flashed, and I pushed the door open.

I stepped under some pipes and through a thick wall, into a room that, except for the wall opposite the door, was completely covered in plush red velvet. It seemed like the same velvet that had been on the inside of the cabinets in the love hotel, and it covered the walls, floor, and ceiling. The wall opposite the
door was made up of the whitish translucent plastic that I had noticed in the love hotel rooms. The rest of the surfaces seemed to be upholstered, almost like a couch, or what I imagined you'd find in a padded cell, but with velvet. It was like walking on a giant mattress. I shut the door behind me. It, too was upholstered like the rest of the room, and when it closed, it fit so snuggly into the rest of the room, that it almost disappeared into the wall.

To the right of the door, there was an expansive bed that took up most of the room. The whole thing seemed like it had been built up from the floor. It was raised about three feet in the air on a velvet-clad, amorphous frame. The plush frame also held, slightly lower, a fluid-shaped bath tub, and a toilet to the side of that. On the other side of the room, there was a small table with a chair. A red folder was placed on the table. A round light fixture hung from the center of the ceiling, and there were a few task lights that stretched from the seams in the upholstery next to the bed and table. Directly to my left, there was a cabinet door in the wall, which must have been where the food and supplies were delivered. There was a small touch screen next to it.

The ceiling was fairly tall, and I realized that the room must have fit into the wall in the love hotel...
layer above. It must have been the spot where natural light came into the central room, because the ceiling wouldn’t have taken up the whole space between the two floors. I assumed that there would have been an opening above the ceiling. Now that I looked at the place, it made sense. It was like being inside one of the walls that separated the love hotel rooms. The plush red velvet was the same stuff that had been used to line the cabinets.

I walked over to the table, and opened up the folder. On the left side, there was a welcome page, explaining how everything in the room worked. The touch screen let me control the lights, and the temperature. It also worked as the ordering device for any food, drinks, or other supplies that I might need. If I wanted to change the sheets or towels, I could just take them off the bed, and put them in the cabinet. They would quickly be exchanged with clean ones. On the right side of the folder, there was a menu for anything that I wanted to order – from bubble bath and toothpaste to a steak dinner. I dimmed the lights a little bit, and the translucent wall began to show the shadows of the perforated skins on it surface. The street lights before cast gentle, dappled light through what must have been two offset layers of perforations. I understood that the lights were coming from below,
but the outside world seems miles away from where I was. The long interior passage brought me to an entirely separate, and unexpected realm.

I took my shoes off, got comfortable on the bed, and tried to make sense of everything. Finally, I could relax. Sophie was here. I was near her. I didn't know exactly where she was in the building, but it didn't matter. That might not make sense to you, but that's how our relationship works. We need each other nearby, we need to be close to each other. We are completed when we are around the other. I knew that on the other side of these walls, through these pipes, she was probably laying on her bed, thinking the exact same thing. It was so comforting to know that I was right, too – that I could feel it when she was around. That she was in this building.

Look, I'm sure that it's hard for you to understand the comfort I felt in being in the same place as her, alone in our thoughts, but that's because you've never experienced anything like our love for each other. I don't even know why I'm bothering to explain it to you. If you don't understand it, then you probably never will. It's sad, but that's the truth. Maybe, if you're lucky, you'll meet someone who completes you like Sophie does to me, but I doubt it. It's like cutting your chances of winning the lottery in half. That's why no
one ever gets it. That’s why her lawyer, and everyone else on the outside can’t stand to let us alone. They’re jealous. That’s why they’ll call me names, like stalker, or pervert, but no matter what they say, they can’t stop the connection that we have.

Anyway, when you think about it, this is really the only place where we could actually be together – away from everyone else, insulated in this strange building. Don’t you see the romance in it? It may not be like the celebrity weddings I’m sure you read about, but we have a stronger understanding. Somehow, it seems to make sense in this place. We’re here, separated by nothing but pipes and velvet. We’re alone with our thoughts, so close to each other and far from the rest of you people.

We can be happy here. Sometimes, I get up out of the bed, walk over to the wall, and hold my face up close against it. I can feel her. She’s thinking the same thing in her room, somewhere on the other side of the building. She can feel me. That’s love. Maybe it’s not like how you would picture it, but that’s how strong our bond is. Like I told you, she loves me.
WHERE THEY WENT
(or a close approximation)
This is how Sophie, the lawyer, Phillips, and I made it through the building. From what I could make out in my trips around the place, this is how it works, and where we went.

Hotel Archiphilia is on the corner of Washington, and LaGrange Streets, right across the street from Centerfolds. It's on the border of Chinatown and the Theatre District.
The building consists of a few layers:

On the outside, there's a series of overlapping perforated metal skins that obscure some of what's going on inside. They also filter the light coming in.

Next, there's the mass of the building, which is enclosed by glass curtain walls, and layers of polycarbonate.

The whole thing is held up by a waffle slab that's supported by the bundled columns.
This is how the three programs work:

The spa (blue) occupies the main chunk of the building, and winds up to the top through a processional staircase. The wet portions of the spa are located in the more enclosed areas, and the workout spaces are in the open areas.

The hermit program (yellow) occupies the mechanical poche layers in between the other two layers. It has private access from the garage below.

The love hotel (red) is organized in a three-tiered system. Each tier has a central meeting area for casual encounters, with private rooms emanating around it.
The floor plans are each unique, but they follow a repetitive logic.

Each love hotel layer has a central meeting area with sunken lounges. The rooms are located along the perimeter, and vary in size.

On the mechanical layers, the hermit rooms fit in between the pipes, ducts, and other equipment.

The spa levels are broken up into wet and dry spaces. The wet spaces are covered with the mechanical layers above, which supply water, steam, bubbles, etc. An additional mechanical layer provides drainage from below.
3rd floor plan (typical mechanical floor)
4th floor plan (typical love hotel)
5th floor plan (typical spa level)
The locker rooms are located on the first floor, and the spa winds up to the 8th floor around the open staircase.

A two-story love hotel space with an open mezzanine is located on the 10th and 11th floors.
perforated aluminum  polycarbonate  cast silicone

skin types
interior wall types

small

medium

large
APPENDIX A: EPHEMERA
What follows is a sampling of Hotel Archiphilia’s advertisements, culled from a variety of printed sources and billboards.
ESCAPE!

HOTEL ARCHIPHILIA
CHECK IN TO CHECK OUT!
Leah,

"A husband never around? Wife boring? Feel restricted by the norms of society? Looking for a new experience? Got only a 30-minute lunch break?

What are you waiting for?

Come join us at Hotel Archiphilia where strings are never attached!

Discover others with similar desires in spacious meeting rooms, catering to a variety of interests.

Enjoy private booths and rooms for more intimate encounters.

No questions asked. Disguises and costumes welcome!

Check IN to check OUT!

617.374.3131  617.976.8000
Navigate through the public space, and make your way to the surrounding rooms.

HOTEL ARCHIPHILIA  ENCOUNTER THE UNEXPECTED

PROMOTING CASUAL ENCOUNTERS
Looking for a no-strings-attached rendezvous with similarly-minded stranger? The hotel for Casual Encounters provides a place to momentarily step out of character, and enjoy a short spree. Human contact and unexpected meetings are constantly encouraged, unless you are ready to step into one of the conveniently located booths where you can enjoy privacy by the minute.

Features
- discreet entrance from street
- interconnected public spaces so that visitors interact with each other throughout.
- easily accessible private rooms that can be rented in small time increments.
- internal isolation from the city.

The public spaces weave through the building to provide chances for display and concealment.

private rooms encircle the public lounges to provide easy access.
feeling stressed?

HOTEL ARCHI-PHILIA can help.

Join Boston’s Spa Revolution!

More and more Americans are turning to spas and health clubs to help relieve stress, improve physique, unwind, and relax, but only Hotel Archi-PHILIA can help you get the rejuvenation you need.

Enjoy our luxurious amenities, including communal steam baths, pools, exercise rooms, weight rooms, yoga and pilates rooms, lounges, and juice bars. Private massage rooms, nap pods, showers, and showers are provided for your exclusive comfort.

Come to relax and tone your body, but leave refreshed!

Call or stop by to make an appointment so that you can check in to check out.
leave work early today!

treat yourself to some relaxation
at HOTEL ARCHIPHILIA

YOU DESERVE IT!

HOTEL ARCHIPHILIA provides everything you could desire in a full service spa and health club.

As you remove yourself from your hectic day in ascending through the public zones towards the pool, take a moment to work on your abs, get in some cardio, or jump in the whirlpool. The massage rooms, napping lounges and showers provide more secluded comfort, located off of the main public spaces and circulation.

The organization of spaces allows you to gradually move through the building at your own pace, while mingling with others.

Get the relaxation you need to keep you going.
EXCLUSIVE!

WANT TO LEAVE IT ALL BEHIND?

Check in to HOTEL ARCHIPHILIA and shut your worries out!

Sick of being watched? Tired of the scrutiny?
Need to work things out? Just want to get away?

NO PROBLEM in this refuge!

Experience a new level of privacy in our urban oasis.

Exclusive private entrances by private elevator.
No need to see another person - separate service core means no annoying interactions while you help.
Stay as long as you want! - Stays proratically deducted from major credit.
Avoid all worries from f

CHECK OUT
HOTEL ARCHIPHILIA PROVIDES URBAN HERMITAGE!

Elevators moved to exterior of building!
One for each room!
Secluded enclave in middle of block!
Guests check in and drop out for as long as they want!!

AND IT'S NOT JUST FOR CELEBRITIES!

EVEN YOU CAN DO IT, IN FOUR EASY STEPS:

- GO TO WWW.ARCHIPHILIA.COM, AND SELECT YOUR ROOM.
- PAY WITH YOUR CREDIT CARD.
- RETRIEVE YOUR ELEVATOR CODE.
- INPUT THE CODE IN THE PROPER ELEVATOR, AND CHECK OUT!
concepts:
APPENDIX B: RUMINATIONS
Proposal (May 20, 2008):
Hotel Archiphilia

Introduction

Jean-Francois de Bastide's mid-eighteenth century novel, The Little House, describes an erotic encounter between a persistent man, and a reluctant woman. More remarkably, the novel introduces a third character, the estate where the seduction takes place. The house not only serves as setting, but as an active aphrodisiac, the male's invaluable teammate in the game that unfolds. As in Ledoux's designs for suburban Paris Petite maisons, and the Oikema, the

building facilitates seduction, and both outlines and hosts the fantasies of its inhabitants. Predating photography, these buildings serve as early scopophilic devices, framing themselves and the characters that interact within as erotic objects. But, beyond purely visual gratification, they introduce the concept of 
archiphilia, a pleasure derived from encounters with architecture.

Largely neglected in the modern movement, in most of the world, architecture's position in the seductive game has been reduced to a relatively minor position in seedy motels and honeymoon suites. While Loos may have focused the gaze towards the female interior, and Le Corbusier may have used openings to frame dominion over the exterior, as Anthony Vidler has put it, modern architectural eroticism has been “banished to the furtive encounter in the marginal spaces of latrine and underpass.” However, in love hotels, prevalent in Japan and

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2 Vidler, Anthony, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1990), 356.
3 Colomina, Beatriz, Privacy and Publicity (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1994), 244, 296.
Korea, the building’s role in providing an escape towards fantasy is exploited as a seductive agent. Encouraging limited or no personal contact between patrons and staff, with a focus on anonymity, these hourly hotels provide fantasy backdrops, shielded from the outside world. Providing a variety of themed rooms, the hotels allow the patrons to choose from a list of fantasies as represented in the rooms⁵. But, confined to normative hotel structure and form, on the exterior, the buildings merely distinguish themselves through painted and decorated facades. On the interior, the rooms, organized as in any other hotel, are differentiated by varying drywall and plaster-produced themes, limiting the architecture’s role as participant to surface treatment.

The building’s role as a scopophilic device has been long since replaced by the media of photography and cinema. Through their intrinsic relationship between the gaze supplied by audience, camera, and characters, these media provide an unmistakable connection between the realms of fantasy, experience, and projection. According to Laura Mulvey, “this complex interaction of looks is specific to film.”⁶ Can architecture be rescued from its supporting role as backdrop in the narrative of seduction and desire? Can it define a new bridge between fantasy, anonymity, and reality?

Mulvey’s statement overlooks architecture’s potential as a device that supplies and facilitates views, interactions, juxtapositions, and unexpected encounters. In contrast to cinema’s three layers of look, architecture is afforded the unique opportunity to serve as the frame, object, and enclosure of the gaze. But, architecture has the potential to stimulate beyond the visual. Exploiting this phenomenon further, Hotel Archiphilia will explore architecture’s role as seductive partner through the program of the love hotel. Pushing the bounds of the typology beyond current models, the project will capitalize on the tenuous relationship between urban anonymity and intimate fantasy, recognizing the essentially linked relationship between the characters of the intruders in space, and the spaces they inhabit. The love hotel provides an ideal format for studies focused on skin, enclosure, procession, view, tactility, contrast between interior and exterior, and urban seclusion—all subject to the “dialectics of inside and outside”⁷. Sited in Boston’s

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⁷ Mulvey, Laura, “Pandora: Topographies of the Mask and Curiosity.” In *Sexuality & Space*, edited by Beatriz Colomina (New York: Princeton Architectural Press,
infamous “Combat Zone”, former home to the city’s purveyors of fantasy, the love hotel will emphasize an active relationship between characters, juxtaposing the conditions of privacy, pleasure, and desire.

**Site: the ‘Combat Zone’**

In 1974, the city of Boston introduced a radical new policy in an effort to curtail the spread of ‘adult’ activity throughout its neighborhoods. Thanks to significant efforts by directors of the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), a confined district along Washington Street was given new zoning, and renamed the Boston Adult District (BAD). By regulation, no adult entertainment establishments could be located outside the district, but adult entrepreneurs had free range of BAD. Renowned for the vices the district attracted, the area was soon dubbed the “Combat Zone.”

While Boston is well known for the Puritan ideals espoused by its founders, the high-minded residents were never able to escape the draws of vice and sexual depravity. “Blue Laws” were meant to keep this activity in check, heavily regulating the sale of alcohol, and restricting business hours. Despite these laws, the city maintained an active red light district around Scollay Square until the neighborhood was demolished to make way for the new Government Center in 1960. As a result, the area’s popular establishments were forced to relocate, and many of them moved to the area that would become the Combat Zone, a neighborhood that soon flourished, drawing crowds and scandal to sex-themed shows in the gaudy-signed theatres that lined Washington Street. This move coincided with the demise of Hollywood’s studio system, making it possible for the sex shows to take over the area’s aging movie palaces. The 1960s brought an increased interest in adult entertainment, and the spread of sex shows throughout the city drew the attention of municipal officials, who moved to confine all adult-themed establishments to the Combat Zone. The area soon held all of the city’s legal vices within its boundaries. At the same time, a counterculture flourished and the neighborhood soon became the stomping grounds for musicians and “cruisers.”

Today, the neighborhood shows little resemblance to its past image as the city’s sex district.

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Replaced by computer screens, only a few sex shops remain along Kneeland Street, and the Combat Zone is now home to office buildings and hotels. The Ritz Carlton Towers now occupy the center of the district. However, the neighborhood retains its loose zoning regulations. Partly a result of increased liquor licensing enforcement, the demise of the adult industry in the neighborhood was not solely due to increased regulation, but rather to its decreased economic viability, and the burlesque show’s inability to compete with the media of video and the internet. Can this district serve as the battleground for architecture’s resurgence in the seductive game, trumping the scopophilic media, as an essential character in the narrative of seduction and fantasy?

The area’s current incarnation as an office and hotel district, combined with its history, and continued zoning as an adult district provides an opportunity to explore the Love Hotel’s potential in the urban environment. How did the neighborhood’s previous inhabitants fail in their battle against video, the internet, and the pressures of Boston’s office culture? What in this neighborhood captures the office worker’s imagination? The love hotel room, set off against the opposing office provides a fertile contrast in which to develop an understanding of architecture’s role as setting, subject, and enclosure for fantasy. A new combat zone is formed, in which architecture sets the city’s often-silenced tradition of sexual exploration against its puritan tendencies.

The Hotel Room and the City

The hotel’s role in urban life as a facilitator in the interactions between strangers has received much attention. As Rem Koolhaas remarked, “In a sense, it relieves the scriptwriter of the obligation of inventing a plot. A hotel is a plot—a cybernetic universe with its own laws generating random but fortuitous collisions between human beings who would never have met elsewhere.”11 But this analysis is confined to the hotel’s role as a social meeting ground, an intersection between diverse groups of people, and overlooks the hotel room’s role as a means of escape. Whether a vacation destination, a resting place on a business trip, or the setting of a love affair, the hotel room serves a unique function as a place shut off from the outside world. It provides a strange sense of increased privacy, where people feel free to act as they would not at home. They perhaps lounge naked with their clothes strewn about the room, neglect to clean up after themselves,

watch pornography, and masturbate. Sophie Calle’s unsettling photographs and text in L’Hotel (taken and written while she was working as a maid in a Venetian hotel), show the extents to which people leave their identities in hotel rooms. 

In the urban context, the hotel room provides a unique refuge from the anxieties and norms of the city. Removed from the streets by a ritualized circulation through lobby, elevator and corridor, the hotel guest is provided with a sense of isolation in a room dominated by a foreign bed. With the city bustling outside the window, the hotel room remains remote. In leaving the room, one is again confronted with the city—with Koolhaas’ movie plot. As Baudelaire wrote, “Almost all our woes come from not being capable of remaining in our rooms.”

In Boston, hotels serve an added function: they are the only business establishments open all night. Boston’s residual blue laws prevent bars and restaurants from remaining open past 2:00 AM. The hotel minibar remains the only place where one can find a drink after 1:00. In addition, newly proposed legislation would make it possible for hotel bars to

serve alcohol all night.\textsuperscript{14}

Exploiting the hotel room’s pre-existing mystique, the love hotel room capitalizes on the alienation inherent in the space, and applies it towards fantasy and sexual abandon. By further focusing the attention to the interior through texture, framing, imagery, and limited exterior openings, the love hotel facilitates a removal of inhibition through enclosure, and the submission to fantasy through its isolation.

Implicit in the design of the love hotel is Kahn’s notion of the separation between served and servant spaces. Since the construction of the world’s first luxury hotel, Boston’s Tremont Hotel, which included locked doors and private water closets, the separation of private and public functions has been central to hotel design. Business hotels at the turn of the twentieth century first used the “Servidor,” a wall compartment that could be opened from either side of a wall so that orders could be delivered to rooms without the need for interaction between guests and staff.\textsuperscript{15} In the love hotel, the room remains isolated from the outside world, leading to the introduction of new means of separating the interior from the exterior, including pneumatic tubes, and keyed elevators, which prevent the fantasy from being broken by interruption. Just as in the French maisons de plaisance, in which fully served “flying tables” were hidden in the floors to be revealed later, keeping the servants from knowing the identity of the guests\textsuperscript{16}, so must the love hotel preserve the anonymity of the lovers it serves.

\textbf{Program and Users}

Does Boston have a market for Hotel Arhiphilia? A random sampling of personal ads in the local papers and Craig’s list shows a fantasy-oriented population of discreet couples and individuals who would make active use of such a program.

Here is just a sampling of potential users:

\begin{quote}
“Married, Looking for Discreet Relationship: Hi I’m married, 59 years old, and looking to meet a mature woman who will not judge me harshly. Someone who is aggressive, and wants to play.”
\end{quote}


“Leather Man: Leather man looking for other men who get into leather, bondage, s+m, suspension, and breath control.”

“I Want To Watch: New at this but a willing apprentice. Don’t like to be restricted by the norms of society, so I’m ready to explore.”

“Craig’s List” has made these personal ads even more immediate, with posters often seeking encounters within the next couple of hours. Hotel Archiphilia will take advantage of these varied interests in weaving together a variety of sex programming. The programs of fantasy rooms, 1-hour self-cleaning rooms, massage parlors, weight rooms, daycare (a code requiremet), a bar, a cruising strip, a stage, and an s+m-specific area can all weave through one another, creating a continuously sex-themed experience within Boston’s Combat Zone.

**The Archiphiliac’s Cookbook**

How does the archiphiliac begin to understand the buildings that surround him or her? How can desire be articulated in built form? Perhaps Flaubert gave a fitting representation of the archiphiliac’s process of understanding in *L’Education Sentimentale*: “He experienced a graduated series of pleasures as he passed in succession through the main gate, the courtyard, the hall, and the two drawing-rooms. Finally, he reached her boudoir, which was as quiet as a tomb and as warm as an alcove. One bumped into the padded sides of pieces of furniture, among a medley of assorted objects: chests of drawers, screens, bowls and trays in lacquer, tortoiseshell, ivory, and malachite--costly trifles which were frequently replaced.”

Beginning with the chase, one insight into the archiphiliac condition begins with a study of plan, from Blondel’s *maisons de plaisance* to the Parisian flat to the Marriot Courtyard Hotel. As Robin Evans noted, “If anything is described by an architectural plan, it is the nature of human relationships, since the elements whose trace it records - walls, doors,

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windows, and stairs - are employed first to divide and then selectively to reunite inhabited space.\textsuperscript{20} Blondel's arrangement of rooms \textit{en enfilade} provides the inhabitants with clearly defined corridors of view from one side of the building to the other.\textsuperscript{21} This understanding of view also provides the characters entering the rooms with a surprisingly great amount of privacy as they step away from the enfilade into the servant passages, or the \textit{cabinets}. The more humble Parisian flat, limited in size, and thus precluding the enfilade, manages an openness in the main rooms that contrasts with the seclusion of the more private bedrooms and toilets.\textsuperscript{22} These rooms begin to make use of the corridor as a means of achieving privacy, set out of view of the open front rooms. As Evans remarked, this period brought about the introduction of the “split between an architecture to look through, \textbf{and an architecture to hide in}.”\textsuperscript{23} Using the double-
\textsuperscript{20} Evans, Robin, “Figures, Doors and Passages” in \textit{Translations from Drawing to Building}, (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1997), 56.
\textsuperscript{23} Evans, Robin, “Figures, Doors and Passages” in \textit{Translations from Drawing to Building}, (Cambridge:Mass-
loaded corridor as the organizing design strategy, the Marriot Courtyard completely isolates the view of each room, directing the guests’ gaze towards the television screen, located opposite the beds. Safely hidden in the hotel room, the guest retreats to an insular cavity, free from the entanglements that come with Interactions with others.

The progression of these three plans illustrates a continued move towards privacy achieved through the isolation of circulation, tracing the introduction and deployment of a systematized separation between served and servant spaces. At what cost is this privacy achieved? The corridor not only separates a room from its circulation, but it also separates people from one another. According to Evans, the nineteenth-century corridor plan “is appropriate to a society that finds carnality distasteful.” While making distant parts of a building more accessible to each other, it also removes the interactions with, and penetrations to the rooms in between.

The double-loaded corridor also implies a more forced
direction of chase, through long passages towards the isolated chamber. While the arrangement of rooms en enfilade encourages a perspectival view towards an end, it does not limit the gaze to this narrow passage, but provides entire rooms as intermediary spaces. The progression of rooms sets up a rhythmic foreplay of entering a room and acknowledging it, while being teased by the glimpse of the next room, and those beyond. A similar analysis can be made of penetrations to the exterior, and in this vein, the argument between Auguste Perret and Le Corbusier about the merits of the porte fenêtre, and the fenêtre en longueur is less about the amount of light that each window allows into a room, but more about defining a frame through which to view the world beyond the room. It becomes the archiphilia’s connection to the events and objects outside the room, and thus serves a vital role in the balance between the fantasy of escape, and the constructs of reality. As Colomina has observed, “any concept of the window implies a notion of the relationships between inside and outside, between private and public space.” These distinctions are essential to the understanding of

26 Colomina, Beatriz, Privacy and Publicity (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1994), 130.
27 Ibid., 134.
the love hotel. Le Corbusier's horizontal windows provide the viewer with a distant, isolated view of the surroundings, while Perret's vertical windows bring back the reality of the ground's connection to the sky.

As Flaubert's Frédéric reaches his destination, he begins to take notice of the specific details of the objects assembled in the room, taking note of texture by bumping into the soft furniture. He describes a physical encounter between the protagonist and the architecture, and more specifically, a contact between skin and the plush material of desire. De Bastide's Mélie is also absorbed by the textures, smells, and sounds of the rooms and gardens that she enters. She takes careful note of the texture of each material, from shiny lacquer to soft ottomans, but is also taken by the pleasure of the smells and sounds emanating from the building. Even the varnish used on the woodwork throughout the house, which gives off the soft fragrances of "violet, jasmine, and rose," was capable of stimulating her interests. These descriptions, characterizations of the objects of desire, have their contemporary parallel in the classification of the objects most closely associated with sexual contact, the condom. The ribbed, studded, twisted, gel-filled, flavored, colored, and smooth prophylactics provide an array of physical stimulations not unlike those of the built environment.

Once situated in the boudoir, Frédéric seats himself on a soft ottoman. Implicit in this act is the yielding deformation of the cushion to accept his body, and the impression that will be left when he rises. This permits the intruder, Frédéric, his first opportunity to alter the objects of the room with his presence, leaving a trace of his existence in the suppleness of the stool, or what Benjamin would call, "plush—the material in which traces are left especially easily." To the archiphiliac, penetrating the enclosure of space, leaving a mark of his or her presence is the intuitive goal. Each penetration into a room is an act of leaving a trace, of entering a space, and thereby altering it. By his or her presence, the archiphiliac forever violates the memory of the space. This project seeks to embrace this residual relationship between room and inhabitant, accentuating the plush-nature of the room.

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The Love Hotel provides the opportunity to explore the rift between the archiphiliac’s tendencies and betrayals. While architecture has made a gradual shift towards the hermetically sealed, it has increasingly limited the opportunities for indiscretion, danger, confrontation, and eroticism among its occupants. In their private rooms, the city’s inhabitants enjoy the freedom to do as they please without fear of exposure, but are deprived of the collisions that make this abandon worthwhile. Hotel Archiphilia presents the challenge to confront these contradictions and develop an architecture that, as Robin Evans articulate, “seeks to give full play to the things that have been so carefully masked by its anti-type; an architecture arising out of the deep fascination that draws people towards others; an architecture that recognizes passion, carnality, and sociality.”

Conclusions

A building designed to serve as an active participant in the seductive game demands an unorthodox architectural approach, beginning with a concept of the interior, and developing outward. The process must begin with thorough analyses of materials as they can be applied to the program 30

of the love hotel, and exploited for the sensation of contact, and the ability to mediate between adjacent functions. The design strategy is one that begins on the interior, stressing both the tactility of material, and the gaze that it frames. My work for the summer will begin with a detailed analysis of the program, and the relationships between adjacent intertwining functions that I hope to exploit, developing a concept of the interior, and working outward. Reversing the typical design process, this project demands that design begin with finishes.


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All images were created or collaged by the author. Characters were clipped from stills from the following films:

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*Bad Education* (2004), directed by Pedro Almadovar

*The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972), directed by Louis Buñuel.

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*Pierrot le Fou* (1965), directed by Jean-Luc Godard

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