

## Patterns of Occupation

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### Abstract:

'Home is represented not by a house, but by a practice or set of practices.  
Everyone has his own'.<sup>1</sup>

This paper proposes that interior space is not a series of still lives but rather it gains meaning and significance through its occupation. This shifts the focus from the 'object', the architecture, to the 'subject', the occupant and places emphasis on what we have termed 'patterns of occupation', constructed through acts of ritual, arrangement, order and repetition. Suggesting that occupation precedes the physical enclosure, the paper will go on to argue that interior space is defined by the user's impulse to arrange and order their space, rather than by the conscious actions of the designer. This impulse for order can, however, be at odds with the inevitable disorder created through the act of occupation, thereby establishing a cyclical, dialectical logic. We claim this dialectic or tension is a creative drive in terms of how we occupy and construct space as it intriguingly echoes the workings of the human psyche.

The paper begins by examining the notions of ritual, arrangement, order and repetition and then considers how these might be applied as analytical tools to the definition of an interior space. Then, looking in particular at how Sigmund Freud organized his own rooms, we suggest that his psychoanalytical enterprise is entwined with the ordering and arrangement of interiority, physical as well as psychological, and that this ordering and arrangement are inherent to the practice of occupation. In sum, through ritual, arrangement, order and repetition, Freud's interior came to delineate a topology of the inner self, and as such it may be read as a paradigm both for psychoanalysis and for interior design disciplines.

### Ritual



Fig. 1. Dancing Space, *Sion Manning School*, by Curl la Tourelle.

'Before Daedalus made Ariadne's dancing floor ... there was no thought given to the place for the dance ... the measure of the dancing floor was the measure of the dance itself. The place appeared with the dance and disappeared when the dance was over.'

Its independent status was not even an issue. When *choros* first becomes dancing place, it does not cease to be dance, however ... Homer says that on Achilles' shield Hephaestus *poikille* (wove) a dancing floor like the one Daedalus made for Ariadne, but he does not say that the dancing floor was made first and that only then did the dance take place. In fact, he says nothing about the dancing floor at all; the description is devoted entirely to the dance. The dancing floor seems to emerge with the dancing of the youths and maidens ...'.<sup>2</sup>

The quote above describes an interior space that is created by occupation rather than physical enclosure. In the *choros*, interiority is produced by the rhythm of the dance, which both precedes and defines the physical construction of the dancing floor. *Choros* is the masculine of *chora*, both having been in Greek culture conventionally used to designate what we today define as interior space. As McEwen explains, the masculine *choros* generally denoted 'a space that is somewhat more defined', either in terms of dimension, or in terms of use, while the feminine *chora* usually defined a 'territory made to appear through a continual remaking ... of its encompassing surface'.<sup>3</sup>

Central to the notions of both *choros* and *chora* is the idea of ritual, of a pattern of occupation that is culturally defined and that depends upon a logic of reiteration – repetition, remaking. If the creation of interior space is determined by ritual, then it is the user, rather than the designer, that produces it. This production, rather than being the result of a definitive act (of construction), is reliant on an ever-recurring pattern of occupation. As stated in McEwen's quote, where there is no dance, there is no dancing floor either: the space of the dance relies on the *choreographic* workings of the dancers to emerge and reemerge. In a similar guise, we want to argue that where there is no occupation there is no interior space as such.

### Arrangement and Order



Fig. 2. *Drawer Sort*, by Lucy Leonard.

As already suggested, *choros* and *chora* relate to the word choreography, which means 'the art of arranging how dancers should move during a performance'.<sup>4</sup> Inherent to every

choreography is the notion of arrangement and order. Order in Greek translates as *kosmos*, which, as McEwen explains, can be thought of as 'a mutable rhythm governing a pattern of movement', as a 'template to be traced or copied' or as a standard of rightness.<sup>5</sup> *Kosmos* is also the origin of the word 'cosmetic', meaning adornment – feminine adornment, especially. In the book *Kosmos: Essays in Order, Conflict and Community in Classical Athens*, Paul Cartledge addresses this multiple signification of *kosmos*, explaining that, in ancient Greece, because 'order was considered beautiful, *kosmos* came next to mean adornment, as in our cosmetic'.<sup>6</sup> *Kosmos* was a far-ranging concept. It related to functions as diverse as that of embellishing the body, that of integrating a graceful dance ritual, and that of morally ruling the city.

A similar understanding of the notion of order is conveyed in the text 'Archive Fever in Patterns of Domestic Order', by Lucy Leonard. In this text, Leonard refers to our perpetual quest for ordering the home, which is, according to her, motivated by desire more than by need. In Leonard's understanding, the term that best describes our quest for domestic order comes from the French '*en mal de*', which 'can mean something else than to suffer from a sickness, from a trouble or from what the noun *mal* might name. It is to burn with a passion'.<sup>7</sup> For the psychological satisfaction it promotes, Leonard suggests, the act of ordering is in itself embellishing, and, in this sense, *kosmetic*. As Leonard writes, 'tidying operates in a state of perpetual promise, a promise to ourselves of an efficient and emancipated future'.<sup>8</sup> An emblem of this promise is the storage wall, which reveals 'empty, clean, tailored compartments and the promise of order to come'.<sup>9</sup> A similar promise applies to other domestic routines; cleaning, washing, laundering, cooking, sorting, etc. As in the Greek *choros*, domestic order relies on a set of choreographic actions. These actions need to be performed regularly, repeatedly – more or less like in a dance ritual, as indicated in the following description of a nineteenth-century domestic routine:

'The housewife (or the servant) used soap and water to scrub down the stairs leading to the front door. She then applied a layer of white, chalky, paste-like substance and buffed it up. This was not a weekly task, but one that had to be performed daily. When it was finished, the steps were spotless, gleaming – but only until someone walked up them. Then they were retrievably marked. By lunchtime each day the whiteness was scuffed to nothingness, stepped into the surrounding dust. Yet it is important to remember that the whiteness was only a symbol: it was soap and water that actually made the steps clean, and that was invisible. The whiteness was a way of indicating that the soap and water had been used, a marker or sign of cleanliness: it was not cleanliness itself'.<sup>10</sup>

Although ultimately invisible, it is the repeated choreography of cleaning that brings *kosmos* – order and beauty – to the domestic environment. And albeit some of us might find such domestic choreographies rather daunting, Leonard claims they play a fundamental role in the physical and symbolic construction of the (domestic) interior.

In the stop-frame animation *Drawer Sort* (2006), Leonard focuses on an action of domestic ordering as she shows the internal space of a drawer in the process of being organized. Although we know that the satisfying final image of a perfectly organized system can only be provisional – for use and occupation will inevitably bring disorder back – we can still take pleasure in it. A cyclical dynamic between ordering and occupying gives shape to lived space. That these two actions are potentially self-annulling doesn't imply that they should be

understood in simple antagonism. Rather the opposite: because occupation disturbs the order and the quest for order goes partially against the dynamic of occupation, these actions complement each other, defining a complex and multi-layered choreography of inhabitation.

### **Repetition and Desire**

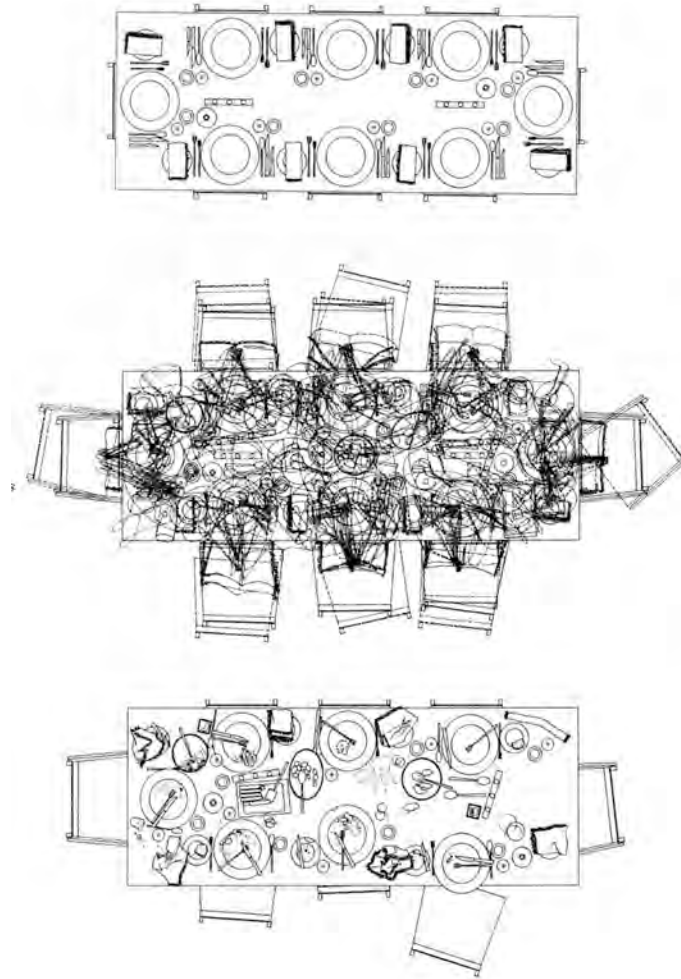


Fig. 3. *Table Manners*, by Sarah Wigglesworth Architects. The image portrays the cyclical routines taking place on a dining table.

Cyclical and self-annulling mechanisms are hardly new to the economy of inhabitation. There is the Greek legend of Penelope, who twisted and untwisted her father-in-law's shroud as a means to gain time from her harassing suitors and maintain the stability of her household, there is the endless cycle of domestic tasks described in the previous section (cleaning, sorting, washing, laundering, child-watching, etc.), and there are the repetitive routines that govern our everyday lives (waking up, eating, going to work, etc.). All these ever-recurring, unending rituals are, according to the psychoanalytical theory of Sigmund Freud, fundamentally rooted in the very first ritual with which human beings are ever engaged: the mechanism of breast-feeding.

Like ordering, breast-feeding is, Freud argues, only partially satisfying. It is the inherent frustration implied in the feed that makes the baby wish to repeat the experience, always

aspiring for a condition of fulfilment that is ultimately unachievable As Rosalind Krauss explains:

'The baby sucks out of a need of sustenance, and in the course of gratifying that need receives pleasure as well. And desire occurs at this second moment, as the longing to repeat the first one understood not as milk but as pleasure, understood, that is, as the satisfaction of desire. Thus it searches for an object of original satisfaction where there is none. There is only milk, which can satisfy the need, but cannot satisfy the desire, since it has become something that the little hiccup of substitution will always produce as insufficient'.<sup>11</sup>

Breast-sucking, like other forms of repetition, is partially motivated by a deceptive search. For the pleasure for which it longs is, by its very nature, unachievable. Total satisfaction would provoke an interruption of the repetitive cycles of maintenance (of order, of nourishment). Only frustration can keep repetition at work. Alluding to this disconcerting mechanism, Griselda Pollock defines desire as a 'psychic engine of repetition'. What it searches for, she says, 'only exists within the psyche in its aching lostness, like a shadow without its cause, that then generates as its effect an impulse to refind it, an impulse that is paradoxically an originating repetition'.<sup>12</sup> The movements of this 'psychic engine of repetition' resonate with the choreographies of occupation described in *Drawer Sort* and in Flanders's allusion to nineteenth-century cleaning routines, aligning what happens within our psyche to the way we relate to the environment we live in. A particularly illustrative case of such alignment is given by Freud's study and consulting room in Vienna, as analysed in the lines that follow.

#### Case Study: Sigmund Freud's Patterns of Occupation

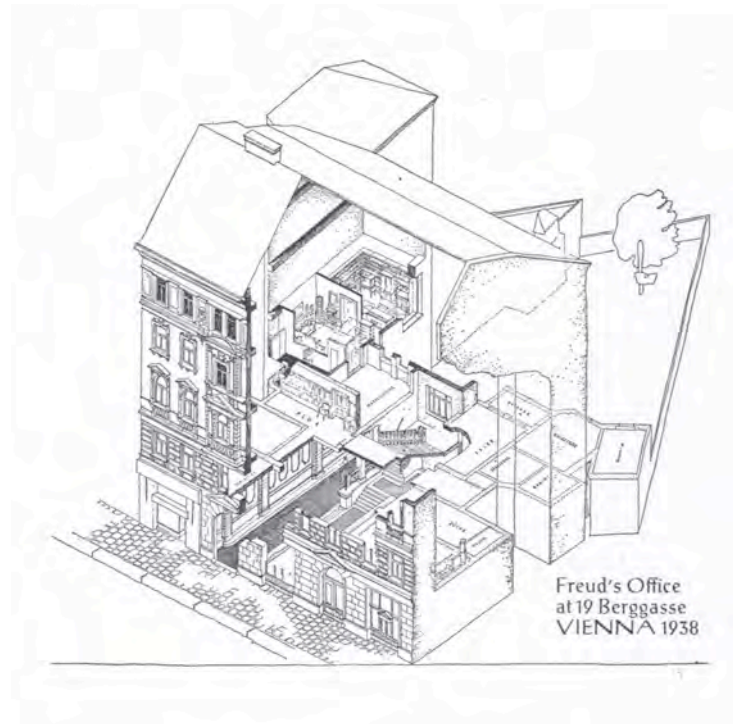


Fig. 4. Axonometric showing Freud's study and consulting room within the family apartment at Berggasse 19, Vienna.

'In the action of changing and creating an environment the individual confers meaning on the environment'.<sup>13</sup>

Sigmund Freud is well known for having created a theory, a method of investigation and a treatment for psychological disorders. What he is perhaps less well credited for is the construction of the psychoanalytical setting, which arguably features as an essential ingredient in his therapeutic process. Like Adriane's dance, Freud's practice both preceded and defined the various spaces he occupied. As Charles Rice writes, the 'interior was thus not simply a passive context for analysis. It actively participated in analysis, and became implicated in the discourse of psychoanalysis produced through Freud's practice'.<sup>14</sup>

The rituals and routines that Freud created around the 'scene of psychoanalysis' are not specific to one location and can be understood to exist both physically and in people's minds: as a memory, a method and as a metaphor. Clues can be found in Edmund Engelman's black and white photographs of Freud's study and consulting rooms in Vienna, in written descriptions by his patients and in the museum context of his final home at Maresfield Gardens, London. Any one of these locations represents just a snapshot in time. By layering these descriptions we begin to see how each of these locations has a slightly different layout, but specific themes recur, suggesting a topological arrangement rather than a spatial one, created through occupation rather than design. This topological arrangement conforms to Freud's *kosmos* – his point of reference, as it were, against which the choreographies of psychoanalytical practice could be staged.

Freud worked at home, treating patients and writing his case histories and papers. In doing so he moved what was originally understood as a clinical practice out of the surgery and into a domestic setting.

'I can remember as though I saw them today, his two adjoining studies, with the door open between them and with their windows opening on a little courtyard. There was always a feeling of sacred peace and quiet here. The rooms themselves must have been a surprise to any patient, for they in no way reminded one of a doctor's office ... A few potted plants added life to the rooms, and the warm carpet and curtains gave them a homelike note. Everything here contributed to one's feeling of leaving the haste of modern life behind, of being sheltered from one's daily cares'.<sup>15</sup>

Freud was punctilious and regular in his routines: 'Each patient was given fifty-five minutes precisely, so that there was an interval of five minutes between each to clear his mind for fresh impressions or to dash in and hear the latest news of the household'.<sup>16</sup> Starting at eight in the morning he would work until one when he would join the family for lunch. Following his constitutional walk he would return to work from three until nine, when the family had supper. After this he would retire to his study to concentrate on correspondence and his writing. Carefully choreographing a routine between family and work, he 'made his revolution in the most unrevolutionary surroundings'.<sup>17</sup> Both the theory and the practice of psychoanalysis were constructed over time by a daily recurring pattern of occupation, a fact Marina Warner has suggested 'reveals in psychoanalytic fashion how interwoven the mind is, how fantasy flickers through the ordinary fabric of daily life and its mundane routine'.<sup>18</sup>

In Vienna Freud worked in two rooms. The first contained 'the therapist's couch' and Freud's armchair at its head. Perhaps the most famous element of the arrangement, the couch alone could be said to represent the practice of psychoanalysis. Given to him by a grateful patient in 1891, the couch is both a piece of domestic furniture and refers back to the days when Freud



was still only a medical doctor and used techniques such as hypnosis that required the patient to lie down. Even though his treatment soon shifted from the physical to the psychogenic, Freud continued to use the couch and established his own position at its head out of the patient's view. This arrangement was partly generated by Freud's desire not to 'be stared at for eight hours daily', and was partly an attempt to create an atmosphere conducive to free association. The patient would lie with their feet warmed by the stove, in a 'perfusion of sensuous oriental rugs and throw pillows ... draped in that flying carpet for unconscious voyaging', as Marina Warner has described it.<sup>19</sup> Freud himself was reduced to a disembodied voice or a listening ear, and made his presence apparent in the 'fumes of the aromatic cigar' as the patient's unconscious mind revealed itself through memories, dreams and everyday events. That Freud considered this arrangement vital to his practice can be seen in a photo from 1932, where he has had the couch and its rugs moved to his summer residence at Hohewarte just outside Vienna, so that he can continue to treat patients during the summer months. One can only imagine the ritualistic plumping of pillows between patients.

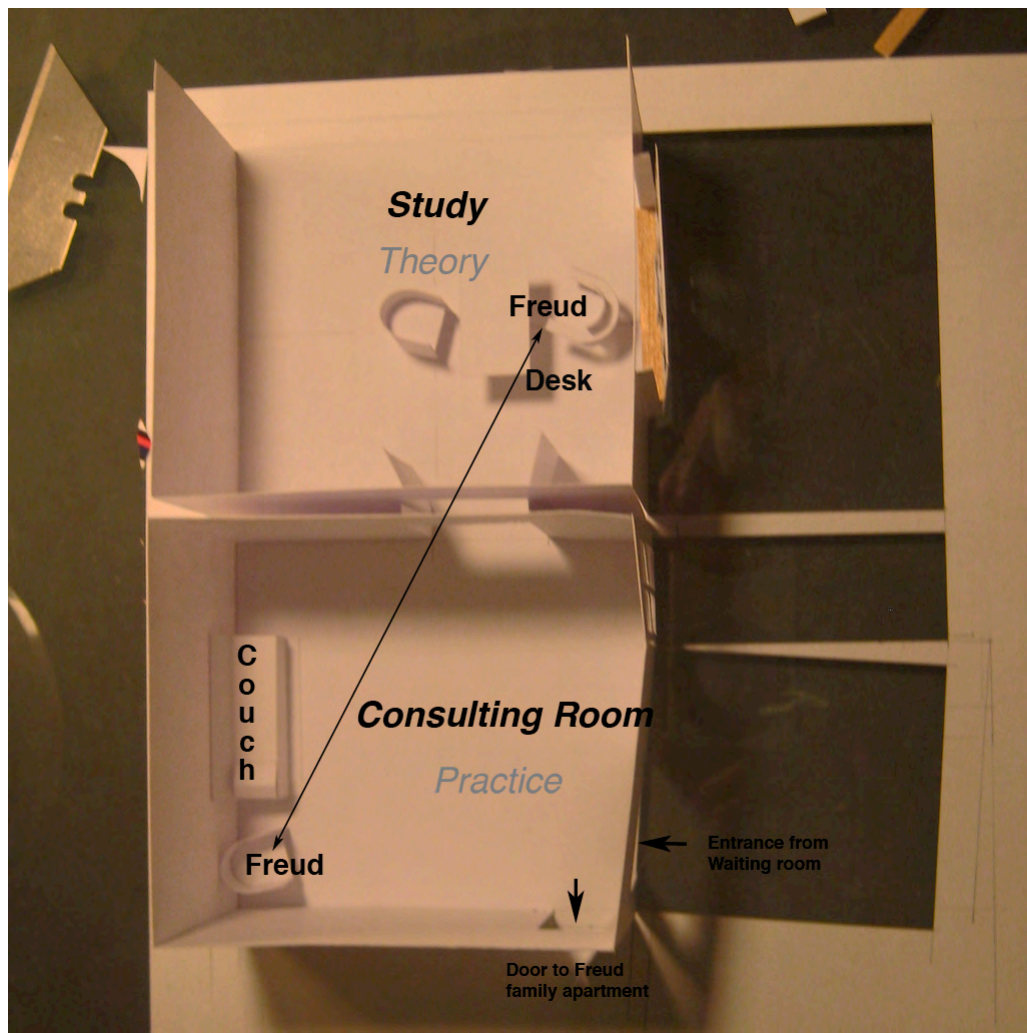


Fig. 5. Sketch model showing layout of study and consulting room.

The adjoining room connected by open double doors contained Freud's inner sanctum: his library and desk. One could describe the first room as housing the practice of psychoanalysis and the second as framing its theory, the two activities visually connected. As Freud returned to his desk to take notes on the session he was literally looking back and reflecting on the

previous scene. The visual arrangement was repeated at Maresfield Gardens, London. This room was used for the reading and writing that throughout his life was an essential activity of his daily routine. Already at the age of eighteen Freud had written to his friend Eduard Silberstein, 'I am one of those human beings who can be found most of the day between two pieces of furniture, one formed vertically, the armchair, and one extending horizontally, the table, and from these, as social historians are agreed, sprang all civilization...'<sup>20</sup>, and later in 1912 in a letter to his friend Sándor Ferenczi, 'I was miserable the whole time and deadened the pain by writing-writing-writing'.<sup>21</sup> We can begin to understand Freud's incredible output in the light of this creative drive fed by the psychic engine of repetition.

The impression of 'orderly overcrowding' often mentioned was created by Freud's collection of antiquities which has been the subject of much study and speculation. He began the collection after the death of his father in 1896, and by the time the family moved to London it numbered over two thousand pieces. The American poet and patient HD described the effect as 'this mysterious lion's den or Aladdin's Cave of treasures'.<sup>22</sup> For Freud the collection was a consuming desire, second only to his primary addiction, smoking cigars. Both the act of collecting and the objects themselves became integrated into his daily routine. Over the years he frequently rearranged the collection and several accounts reveal that he treated the figures as companions; thus for example 'on entering his study each morning, Freud warmly greeted a statue of a Chinese scholar which sat on his desk' and he was in the habit of stroking a marble baboon of Thoth.<sup>1, 23</sup> What is clear is that Freud did not display these objects for value or aesthetics but, as Marina Warner has suggested, 'they were ... the tools of thought, the kitchen utensils of his imagination', functioning not simply as objects but as triggers to the ideas embodied in them.<sup>24</sup>

It is the collection that leads to the observation that occupation is a living condition. Freud is said to have remarked on arrival to London: 'It is true the collection is dead now, nothing being added to it anymore, and almost as dead as its owner'.<sup>25</sup> At Maresfield Gardens, Freud's final home, the space was arranged as closely to the original as possible. This space is now experienced as a museum, the curtains drawn to protect the contents from the light – its relationship to Freud's study rather like the glassy-eyed stare of the stuffed animal to that of the live beast. Like the collection, it has an ability to invite projection and holds Freud's presence to such a degree that the curator has noted visitors have claimed to smell cigar smoke in a space where a cigar has not been smoked for seventy years. But without Freud the interior is dead because occupation is a living act and cannot exist without the occupant. Yet the rituals and to some extent the arrangement live on in the practice of psychoanalysis.

## Conclusion

...the ego is not master in his own house.<sup>26</sup>

An interior is traditionally thought to be defined by its architecture: walls, floors and ceiling, or by the space that they enclose. In this paper we have attempted to challenge this way of thinking, claiming that we order our spaces in a manner resonant with how we order our minds.

The practice of psychoanalysis is one of repetition. The patient attends analysis on a regular



basis. The analyst listens and looks for patterns, recurring themes, events or thoughts that act as triggers, and that therefore have more significance than they might outwardly appear to have (the subconscious disturbing the order of the conscious mind). The analyst's job is to help the patient to order the interior of their mind in the same way as we have suggested we attempt to order our environment. In both cases, the pursuit of order is structured by repetitive actions, as illustrated by the household practices analysed in the first part of the paper, and by Freud's obsessive routines discussed in the second part.

Freud shaped the psychoanalytic consulting room as he arranged, ordered and used it. He did not design the layout of his study in a conventional architectural sense. Rather, it evolved over time through (repetitive) choreographies that became ritualized as patterns of occupation. In doing so, Freud created not only the interior but also the *kosmos* for the practice of psychoanalysis. The process is a symbiotic one: occupation constructs the interior and, conversely, the interior also redefines its own conditions of occupation. Elements like the 'therapists couch', introduced as a gift, became integral 'tools' of the practice. In a similar guise, Freud's personal collection of antiquities while satisfying a more personal desire, are widely understood to have played a role having a suggestive effect on his patients. As in Ariadne's *choros*, the interior is never a frozen entity: it emerges and reemerges through the rituals of occupation.

As professionals working in the realm of interior design, we believe we need to take occupation into consideration if we intend to produce meaningful, *kosmetic* environments. This paper made an attempt to expand the terminology we use in our field to accommodate the dimensions of choreography, repetition, arrangement and use. A next step in this process would be to engage this new terminology in interior practice, finding ways to translate patterns of occupation into dynamic design tools.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Berger, 1984, p. 64
- <sup>2</sup> McEwen, 1993, pp. 62–63
- <sup>3</sup> McEwen, 1993, p. 82
- <sup>4</sup> *Longman Dictionary*, 1995, p. 225
- <sup>5</sup> McEwen, 1993, pp. 41–42
- <sup>6</sup> Cartledge, 1998, p. 3.
- <sup>7</sup> Leonard, 2007, p. 159
- <sup>8</sup> Leonard, 2007, p. 154
- <sup>9</sup> Leonard, 2007, p. 150
- <sup>10</sup> Flanders, 2005, p. 45
- <sup>11</sup> Krauss, 1998, p.140
- <sup>12</sup> Pollock, 2006, p. 160
- <sup>13</sup> Pawley, 1968
- <sup>14</sup> Rice, 2007, p. 43
- <sup>15</sup> Gardiner, 1991, p. 139
- <sup>16</sup> Jones, 1964, p. 450
- <sup>17</sup> Gay, 1976, p.33
- <sup>18</sup> Warner, 1998, p. viii

- <sup>19</sup> Warner, 1998, p. viii  
<sup>20</sup> Freud Museum Staff [1988], p. 59  
<sup>21</sup> Brabant 1994, p. 325  
<sup>22</sup> Fuss, 2004, p. 89  
<sup>23</sup> Spector, 1972, p. 15. The account is given by Freud's maid.  
<sup>24</sup> Warner, 1998, p. viii  
<sup>25</sup> Scholz-Strasser, 1998, p. 21  
<sup>26</sup> Freud 1917, p. 143

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