Glass Symbolism, Experiential Transparency and Privacy in *Maison de Verre*[1]

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Use of glass raises several questions about privacy especially when its extensive use is introduced into domestic contexts. *Maison de Verre*,[2] built in Paris between 1927-32, is a suggestive example to discuss some of the paradigmatic themes of modern architecture such as symbolism of glass, and the relation between transparency and privacy. *Maison de Verre* is considered as the most important work of the French architect/designer Pierre Chareau; yet the contribution of Bernard Bijvoet, Louis Dalbet, as well as the clients Mr. and Ms. Dalsace cannot be overemphasized. All of the interiors and furniture were designed to the utmost detail through collaboration between these people to the extent that the house can be considered as a 'big piece of furniture,' as Kenneth Frampton characterized it.[3] The house further raises questions about mechanization and bourgeois domesticity, symbolism of machine and craftsmanship, *Gesamkunstwerk* and client collaboration, as well as the dependence of these issues on the separation and intersection of gendered spaces within the house. Due to my limited time, in this paper I shall only interpret the house in relation to the interplay between transparency and privacy both on the elevation and in the interior of the house.

Maison de Verre is situated in a narrow and squeezed urban spot of Paris, surrounded on both sides by the walls of the neighboring buildings. Originally there was an 18th century townhouse on the site, and the Dalsaces (the clients) were intending to destroy the whole building to construct a totally new one. However the resident on the 3rd floor refused to move out and the building had to be constructed underneath the slab of the last floor. During the construction, the 3rd floor was held in the air by steel columns, and everything else was built within the limits of this structural system.[4]

The house contains both the workspaces for Doctor Dalsaces, spaces for semi-public gatherings and private working/living spaces for all family members. Both the site plan and internal organization of the house was designed to attain a balance between privacy and publicness. Different levels of privacy exist simultaneously among the outdoor spaces, such as the public street, front courtyard and backyard. Inside, the house is sectionally divided into public, semi-private and private floors. On all floors the service spaces are segregated from the main living spaces by their placement in a side wing. The first floor of the house is reserved for the professional medical services of Dr. Dalsace and can be considered as the most public realm of the house (Fig. 1). Upon entering, the patient is directed into a defined procession where she is under the gaze of the secretary who sits in a central room bounded with transparent and movable surfaces (Fig. 3). The patient is then taken to the waiting room, from where she proceeds to the doctor's study (Fig. 4) and examination room by passing through the glazed corridor

Fig. 1. Maison de Verre, *First (Entrance) Floor Plan*

Fig. 2. Maison de Verre, *Second Floor Plan*

Fig. 3. Maison de Verre, First Floor,
Mobile boundaries in the Secretary and Doctor's Examination
Rooms

Fig. 4. Maison de Verre, First Floor,
Interior glass bricks in Doctor's Study Room

situated along the garden facade. The dwellers of the house and their guests are taken to the second floor that can be considered as the semi-private realm of the house (Fig. 2). They are taken to the main hall of the second floor by climbing up the main stairs toward the light that filters into the space through the translucent glass bri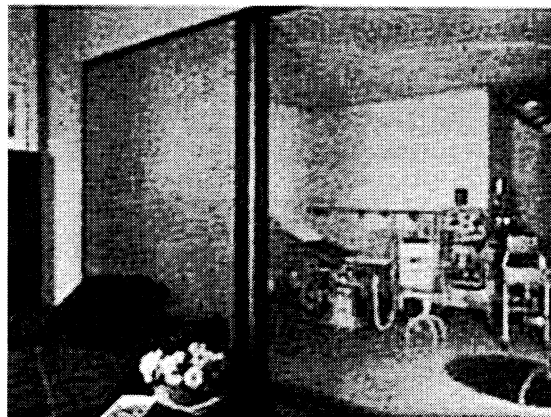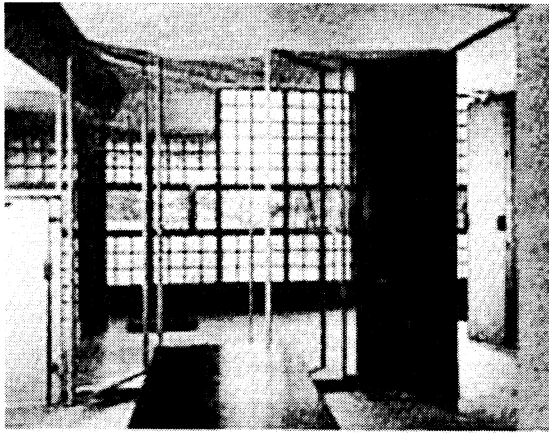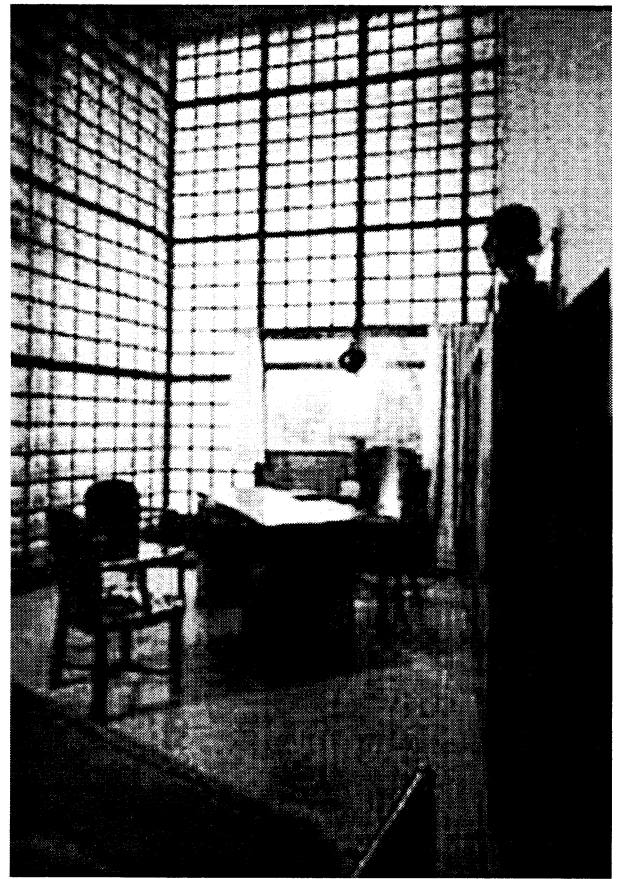cks (Fig. 5). The main hall of *Maison de Verre* is particularly designed for occasional use of semi-public gatherings that were an important part of the Parisian Salon Culture (Fig. 6). There are two separate private rooms on the second floor - Mr. Dalsace's private study room (Fig. 8) and Ms. Dalsace's dayroom ("boudoir") (Fig. 9). Given the physical connection of the 'boudoir' to the bedroom above and doctor's room to the medical services below, these two rooms stand as the joint spaces between the public and private realms of the house. The functions of these rooms imply that the differentiation of these realms were also gendered - reserving the public work spaces for the male, the private spaces for the female user of the space. Nevertheless, visual and physical intersections between these separated gendered spaces are also tenable in the house. For instance, the private dayroom of Ms. Dalsace and private study room of Mr. Dalsace are connected to each other via the sliding doors and a corner niche provided in each room. Other visual connections and their possible implications will be discussed throughout the paper. Finally, the third floor is the most private realm of the house and is reserved for bedrooms and an abundant use of highly mechanized bathrooms. A semi-transparent

book case is used as the boundary between the gallery connecting the bedrooms and the main hall it overlooks.

Symbolism of Glass

Chareau explained the use of glass in *Maison de Verre* in relation to very pragmatic reasons. He explained the necessity to take the maximum amount of light in a site squeezed by the neighboring walls on both sides and a tight courtyard. The decision to use glass bricks, rather than totally transparent glass on the other hand, was probably the result of privacy concerns. Large light projectors were also installed on the outside, to illuminate the interior at night and achieve the same principle of lighting throughout the day. Apart from these functional concerns, I would rather like to discuss the use of glass in the house in relation to two arguments concerning its symbolism and what I would like to call experiential transparency.

A history of modern architecture can be written in terms of different symbolic connotations of glass, which is an unavoidable theme for *Maison de Verre*. Historically, glass has been accompanied with different meanings in relation to transparency, translucency and reflexivity. The relatively more established view of glass popularized by the 'International Style' has emphasized direct transparency by dissolving the separation between inside and outside. However in the case of domestic contexts, it would not sound too speculative to claim that the exten-

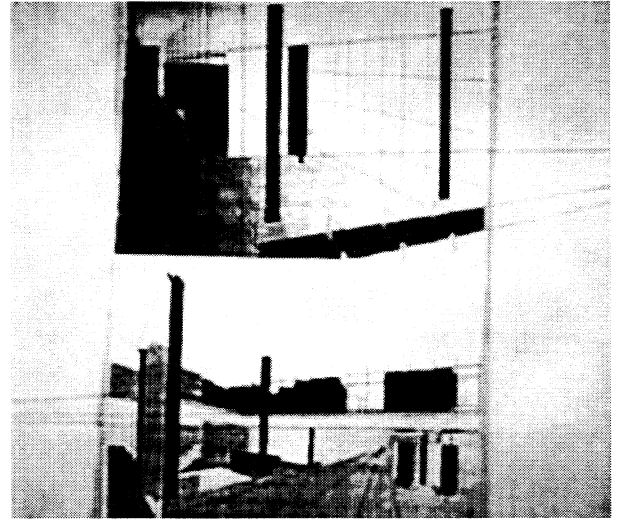Fig. 5. Maison de Verre, Stair connecting First and Second Floors

Fig. 6: Maison de Verre, Interior perspectives
(regulating lines are drawn by the author)

sive use of glass has been popularly judged as a violation of privacy. Yet, within the history of modern architecture, direct transparency expressing values such as honesty, dissolution of the boundaries between interiority and exteriority was not the only symbolism of glass. In the revolutionary writings of Paul Scheerbart and Bruno Taut, and Taut's glass utopias, glass was not necessarily used to create total transparency. Instead, Taut and Scheerbart were highly devoted to the mythic/poetical origins of glass/crystal imagery and their program was directed toward introducing glass as the symbol of spiritual transcendence. Their texts referred to the possibility of glass in creating a dream world through which social change would be achieved.[5]

Though these two traditions of glass symbolism were certainly not the only ones, they are the most important ones to remind the reader for my purposes in interpreting Maison de Verre. I suggest that the use of glass in Maison de Verre creates a specific condition in which we can see features of both. A similar condition can be observed in the 19th century Arcades of Paris that might have intuitively influenced the designers. Walter Benjamin who commented on the use of glass in the same space-time context of Maison de Verre - 1930's Paris - referred both to Scheerbart (though his ideas about Scheerbart were full of temporal hesitations), and to Gropius and Le Corbusier via Giedion.[6] Benjamin appreciated glass for its possibility of creating both direct transparency and a dream world. In other words, to describe the Parisian Arcades, Benjamin re-

ferred to some issues from both of the traditions of glass symbolism that I have differentiated.

First, (unlike Foucault for whom the Glass House represents gaze, control, surveillance and domination) for Benjamin the Glass House is an architectural metaphor of a Surrealist dream world.[7] For Benjamin's Surrealists, dreams, where one steps out of the external reality, are necessary steps for profane illuminations and intellectual awakenings. Just as the Surrealist experience of dreams, or Scheerbart's glass utopias, Benjamin considered the Arcades of Paris to be phantasmagoric dream worlds, that had the possibility of bringing a collective awakening. (He called them "Maison de reve" - dream houses - whose French coincidentally echoes Maison de Verre.)

Second, for Benjamin glass was also important for its potential to challenge the strict separation between inside and outside, and thus between the public and the private. "To live in a glass house is a revolutionary virtue par excellence" Benjamin said, asserting that this exhibitionism would challenge the obsession with isolated privacy that the bourgeois class inherited from the aristocracy.[8] The Arcades attracted Benjamin's interest because they blurred the categories between inside and outside through the use of glass vaults above the streets. The flaneur, has the tendency to turn the Arcades into his home, and to "turn the boulevard into an interior."[9] For Benjamin, the Arcades challenge the traditional dichotomy between the interior and the exterior, by carrying the interior to the other side of the facade.

Fig. 7. Maison de Verre, Second Floor, Main Hall

As a result, the interior of the Arcades forms its own micro-cosmic dream world while the indirect relation with the conditions of the exterior is still attained by way of the diffused light that is let inside through translucent boundaries. The boundary between outside and inside, privacy and publicness is blurred not through the evaporation of the opaque wall into a transparent glass, but through the creation of an ambiguity where one feels both inside and outside.

I suggest that in the main hall of *Maison de Verre* there is a similar blurring of boundaries to the one in the Arcades. This can even be asserted to be intentional when one pays attention to the perspectives drawn for the house. These perspectives emphasize planes in a cosmos that extend infinitely in three dimensions. Unlike more conventional interior perspectives that would have one vanishing point, these perspectives have multiple vanishing points for specific purposes (Fig.6). In the gallery perspective for example, the rules of the conventional one-point perspective is broken in order to express the visual expansion of space. In the main hall perspective, on the other hand, it is ambiguous whether we are inside the space looking in, or whether we are outside looking at a series of objects each represented with two vanishing points. Unlike a usual interior perspective whose aim would be to show the interior boundaries of the space such as walls and ceiling, we see that the limits of this space are not defined. Rather some objects and planes are represented in an un-enclosed vacuum. It is as if we are not looking at a bounded interior space at all, but at a vast open space that extends to infinity in three dimensions. It is ambiguous whether we are inside or outside. We rather seem to be in a micro-cosmos that has its own infinities.

The extreme spaciousness of the main hall in *Maison de Verre* (Fig. 7), its conception as a semi-private space for social gatherings as distinct from the other private realms of the house, the use of rubber tiles as floor finishing are other indications that imply the intentional creation of such a spatial ambiguity. While totally transparent glass in buildings is a medium for achieving a direct relation with the exterior, and an almost total dissolution between inside and outside; the translucent glass and spatial ambiguity of the main hall in *Maison de Verre* establish neither a total transparency, nor a total opaqueness, but an indirect relation with the exterior. In the main hall of the house, we are both inside and outside. We have both the necessary conditions for privacy and a space for publicness. We are in a micro-cosmos that keeps its indirect relation with the exterior through dif-fused light, and that seems to extend to its own infinities. In Benjaminian terms, this would be another architectural manifestation of a Surrealist experience, where the direct relation with the external reality is temporarily suspended, but not denied.

Given the two different uses and symbolisms of glass, being direct transparency on the one hand and mythic-poetic suggestions of Scheerbart and Taut on the other; the main hall of *Maison de Verre* takes features from both. On the one hand, similar intentions with direct transparency, such as blurring the categories of inside and outside or of the public and the private, are shared. On the other hand, the attempt to create a microcosmic interior and a dream world also seems to be pursued. These two intentions are brought together in the main hall of *Maison de Verre* by creating an ambiguous space or an intermediary medium where one hesitates whether one is outside or inside. The translucent boundaries both create a relative isolation from the exterior, and re-attain an indirect relation with the weather conditions outside by way of the filtering light.

Transparency: Literal, Phenomenal or Experiential?

Use of glass also invites a discussion on transparency in relation to the one initiated by Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky in their two part essay "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal."[10] Contrasting Gropius's Bauhaus building and Le Corbusier's Villa Garches, Rowe and Slutzky not only differentiated literal and phenomenal transparency, but they also passed their value judgments for each. For them, literal transparency that is experienced with a glazed opening by simply seeing through is an ordinary experience; whereas phenomenal transparency that allows optical ambiguities and multiple readings is a sophisticated one. Taking help from Kepes's definition of transparency, Rowe and Slutzky define phenomenal transparency as the optical experience when "one sees two or more figures overlapping one another, and each of them claim[ing] for itself the common overlapped part."[11] Here Rowe and Slutzky are concerned with the psychology of seeing and ambiguities (illusions) that occur during the act of looking at an object. Le Corbusier's Algiers Skyscraper for instance, is an example of phenomenal transparency for them, because at least four different readings of its façade are possible.[12] Similarly, at Villa Garches, the viewing eye can enjoy a continuous play of vertical and horizontal planes that divide the volume in complex ways. In the "gridding of space"

Fig. 8. Maison de Verre, Second floor, Doctor's Private Study Room

Fig. 9. Maison de Verre, Second floor, Ms. Dalsace's 'dayroom'

achieved through multiple vertical and horizontal layering, the eye can see different fluctuating forms simultaneously. Rowe and Slutzky's essays have been highly influential in the criticism of 'orthodox modernism' which has been more or less associated with literal transparency. However lately, the hierarchy dictated between these two transparencies and the explanatory power of their definitions have been challenged by several historians.[13]

When one asks whether *Maison de Verre* is 'literally' or 'phenomenally' transparent, I shall also argue that the explanatory power of Rowe and Slutzky's differentiation has its limits. When one concentrates on the front façade, *Maison de Verre* has all the 'bad' monotony and 'orthodox modernity' that Rowe and Slutzky are criticizing in non-phenomenal transparency. The front façade is not open to any optical ambiguity or multiple reading. On the other hand, when one concentrates on the internal volume, one may argue that the complex play of planes within the volume suggests a phenomenal transparency, as in Villa Garches. However, this play of volumes can not be appreciated by looking at the object from outside with a single viewpoint. It is not a matter of frontality as Rowe and Slutzky are concerned with. Though the definitions of Rowe and Slutzky are extremely suggestive in reading architectural exteriors, they are limited in their ability to theorize other aspects of transparency in architecture. They focus only on realms that architecture shares with painting (the main inspiration for phenomenal transparency was Cubist paintings), and fix the observer in a position where he or she looks at a façade, as if looking at a painting. Though their interpretations have suggested a lot about elevational transparency, one needs to expand their categories to explain the experience of transparency in buildings such as *Maison de Verre*.

I would like to propose the term *experiential transparency* to come to terms with *Maison de Verre*. In the house, the use of glass is not only a matter of an external façade. After using translucent glass on the exterior, the designers created various other plays of transparency and semi-transparency, of seeing and hiding, of opening and closing in the interior.

The internal boundaries of *Maison de Verre* have a rich content of materials including transparent, translucent glass and perforated sheet metal. This creates a play on transparency that comes to terms both with Panoptical gaze and privacy concerns. To give some examples, the glass-box room of the secretary on the first floor permits a perfect point of gaze that has control over almost all of the first floor (Fig. 3). Similar visual control

points are allowed to two other women in the house. One is the person (maid) in the service bay who is the only one that can overlook both the courtyard and the main hall. Since the boundaries between inside and outside are translucent, it is hard to see the exterior courtyard from the main living hall. Yet the maid's position that has visual access both to the living hall via the gallery and to the courtyard through the transparent window is the only position that controls both inside and outside.[14] Similarly, Ms. Dalsace can overlook her husband's patients on their way in the corridor from the waiting room to the doctor's study room, through a narrow internal window in her 'boudoir'. This position allows Ms. Dalsace to see her husband's women patients (Dr. Dalsace was a gynecologist) from behind, while it blocks their possibility to see her.[15] These points of visual control allowed to women, may be regarded as several twists that reverse the ideology of Panopticism by using its own tools of control.

To give some examples of semi-transparency one can count: The doctor's private study rooms both on the first and second floor are indirectly related to the rest of the house by way of internal glass brick walls and sliding walls (Fig. 3,4). The main stair is veiled from the general public of the first floor by way of semi-transparent glass and perforated boundaries. The bookcase on the third floor gallery is another semi-transparent boundary between the private realm of the bedrooms and semi-public realm of the main hall.

In the house one can not fail to notice the extensive and creative use of flexible and mobile boundaries. I consider this as another play on transparency. The mobile boundaries allow a choice of openness and closeness. In other words, the levels of transparency and thus privacy can be changed at will. The main

stair's circular sliding doors, the sliding walls between doctor's study and examination room on the first floor (Fig. 3), as well as the ones between doctor's private room and main hall on the second floor, the curtains between doctor's private room on the first floor and the corridor of the medical floor (Fig. 8) can all be listed as examples which allow a choice for transparency.

In Maison de Verre, multiple paths of vertical circulation are possible in relation to different levels of privacy. While there are principal stairs between the floors which are used by the guests, there are other possible vertical paths designed especially for the doctor, Mme. Dalsace, servants, and children. For instance, the stair to the third floor - the most private part of the house - is hidden by spatial arrangement. The flexible stair from Ms. Dalsace's dayroom to the bedroom upstairs (Fig. 9), or the stair from doctor's private study to the workspace downstairs are designed exclusively for the users of that specific room. To give another example for the multiple paths that can be constructed in the house, it may be interesting to quote an anecdote from Marc Vellay's childhood (grandson of Dalsaces):

As a child at my grandparents' house I created my own paths for myself.

Avoiding the main entrance and the majestic staircase so as not to interfere with the doctor's office, I slid around to the right toward the service stairs. In the shadows, clinging tightly to the grillwork, I climbed the steps two by two and passed by the kitchen. The closed door prevented any glance from falling on me, any question from stopping me as I started up the stairs that led to the private floor.

Even if there was company, I knew how to climb up *without being seen*. On the evenings of big parties, at the end of this discreet climb I could lie on my stomach in the long corridor that separated the bedrooms from the hall. Sheltered by the black perforated metal screens, I could spy on the world of adults moving back and forth in the light (my emphasis).[16]

These examples demonstrate that glass bricks on the exterior are not the only transparent/translucent elements in *Maison de Verre*. Different levels and qualities of transparency are attained through various mobile materials and spatial organizations. Numerous plays of physical and visual circulation, of seeing and hiding, privacy and publicness, looking and controlling, opening and closing are being performed in the house. This *experiential transparency* - I would call it - can be appreciated only by moving in the house and experiencing it in different times; rather than looking at it from a single viewpoint. Just as Paul Nelson realized, the house is "cinematographic" rather than "photographic."[17] I would like to add that this cinematographic character is achieved not only because there are possible *promenades* one can enjoy in the house, but also because the whole interior is designed like a flexible, convertible furniture.

To summarize this section briefly, for Rowe and Slutzky, the question is the *psychology of seeing*, or the *perception of transparency* that is at stake while *looking at the object*. Whereas to explain the transparency in *Maison de Verre*, one has to come to terms more with the *experience of transparency* than with the

perception of it, more with the *phenomenology of experience* than the psychology of seeing, more with *being in the object* than looking at it.

And to conclude briefly, the two kinds of interplay between transparency and privacy that were discussed so far, *elevational translucency* on the exterior and *experiential transparency* in the interior, falsifies the direct causality between use of glass and violation of privacy. Rather it demonstrates how the flexibility attained in transparent boundaries can provide spatial ambiguities, different types of relation with the exterior and rich experiences of privacy and togetherness. The relation between these solutions and the need to provide complex experiences for gendered spaces, as well as the implications of symbolism of machine and domesticity within the house still needs to be discussed in a longer paper.

NOTES

[1]　I would like to thank Kenneth Frampton for all his help and inspiring comments during the process of writing the longer version of this paper in 1998.

[2]　For information and interpretations on/by Pierre Chareau and *Maison de Verre* see:

Pierre Chareau. architecte, un art intérieur (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1993); *Pierre Chareau ou Le Meuble en Mouvement,* (Paris: Exhibition Catalogue. 14 Oct - 13 Nov, 1993);*Pierre Chareau, Archieves Louis Moret,* (Foundation L. Moret – Martigny, 1994);"Pierre Chareau", *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* 3 (April. 1934): 89; "Pierre Chareau", *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* 31 (Sept. 1950): vii; "Pierre Chareau", *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* 289 (Oct. 1993):30-33; "Voir et Savoir dans la *Maison de Verre*", *Connaissance des Arts* 499 (Oct. 1993): 54-61; Ben van Berkel, Caroline Bos, "The ideal detail: Theme and motive", *Forum Voor Architectuur,* Vol. 30, No.4, (1987): 187-192; Peter Blake, "Chateau Chareau", *Interior Design* (May 1994): 49-50; Pierre Chareau, "Meubles", *L'Art International d'aujourd'hui,* No.7 (1929); Pierre Chareau, "La Creation Artistique et L'Imitation Commerciale", *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* (Sept. 1935): 68-69; Rene Chavance, "L'art Decoratif contemporain au pavilion de Marsan," *Art et Décoration,* (April 1924): 116; Martin Filler, "A Beacon of Modernism," *House and Garden* 2, (1983): 138, 154-155; Kenneth Frampton, *"Maison de Verre," Perspecta* 12 (1969): 77-125; Kenneth Frampton, Vellay, M., *Pierre Chareau. Architecte – Meublier 1853-1950.* (Paris: Edition du Regard, 1984); Yukio Futagawa (ed), *La Maison de Verre* (Tokyo: ADA Edita, 1988); André Gain, *L'Amour de l'art* 9 (September 1922): 32; René Herbst, *Pierre Chareau* (Paris: Editions du Salon des Arts Ménagers, 1954); Herman Hertzberger, "L'espace de la *Maison de Verre,*" *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* 236 (Dec.1984):86-90; Paul Nelson, "La Maison de la Rue St-Guillaume," *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 9 (Nov./Dec 1933): 9-12; Julius Posener, (Julien Lepage), "Observations en Visitant," *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 9 (Nov./Dec.1933): 11-15; Richard Rogers, "La Casa di Vetro di Pierre Chareau: Una Rivolzione che non Continua" *Domus* 443 Oct. 1966): 8-20; Luciano Rubino, *Pierre Chareau and Bernard Bejvoet dalla Francia dell'art déco verso*

un' architettura vera, (Rome: Editioni Cappa, 1982); Margaret Tallett, "The *Maison de Verre* revisited,"*Architect and Building*, (May 1960): 192-195; Brian Brace Taylor, *Pierre Chareau* (Köln, Lisboa, London, Ny, Paris, Tokyo: Taschen, 1998); Pierre Vago, "Un Hotel Particulier a Paris," *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*, 9, (Nov./Dec1933): 5-9; Marc Vellay, "*Maison de Verre*. An Insider's View," *House and Garden*, v.155, n.2, (1982): 148-152; Marc Vellay, "Agli estremi del mattone Nevada," *Rassegna* 24 (1985): 6-17; Sarah Wigglesworth, "*Maison de Verre*: Sections through an in-vitro conception," *The Journal of Architecture* 3 (Autumn 1998).

3　Kenneth Frampton, "Maison de Verre," *Perspecta* 12 (1969): 77-125

4　Intentionally or not, this also gave rise to the application of the 'free plan' principle in the house, in which nothing but the structural system is organized within a fixed order. A comparison between the final projects and the built version of the house would demonstrate that many alterations were pursued and decisions were made during the construction.

5　Through the narratives that went back to the Old and New Testament, Arabic myths, both sacred and profane images of Middle Ages, Alchemism and German Romanticism; glass has been constructed as the metaphor of transcendental spirituality, purity of spirit, divine wisdom, beauty and love. Taut and Scheerbart's promotion of the use of glass should be interpreted within this context. See for example:
Rosemarie Bletter, "The Interpretation of the Glass Dream - Expressionist Architecture and the History of the Crystal Metaphor" *JSAH* 40 (March 1981): 20-43; Paul Scheerbart, *Glass Architecture*, J. Palmes, S. Palmer (trans). (NY: Praeger, 1914, 1972); BrunoTaut, "Arbeitsrat fur Kunst Program" *German Expressionism - Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, R.W. Long (ed) (Berkeley, LA, London: University of California Press, 1918, 1993); Bruno Taut, *Alpine Architecture*, J. Palmes, S. Palmer (trans). NY: Praeger 1919, 1972).

6　Walter Benjamin, *Paris, Capitale du XIXe Siecle* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1989).

7　Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism. The Last Snapshot of European Intelligentsia," *Reflections*, Ed. P. Demetz (NY: Schocken Books, 1928, 1978).

8　*ibid. p.180.*

9　Benjamin wrote: "The street becomes a dwelling for the *flaneur*; he is as much at home among the façades of the houses as the citizen is

in his four walls. To him the shiny, enameled signs of business are at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to a bourgeois in his salon." in Benjamin, Walter, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, (NY, London: New Left Books, 1978): 37.

10　Colin Rowe, Robert Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal [Part 1]", *Perspecta* 8 (1963): 45-55; Colin Rowe, Robert Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal (Part 2)", *Perspecta* 13/14 (1971): 286-301.

11　Rowe, Colin; Slutzky, Robert, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal", *Perspecta* 8 (1963): 45.

12　*One can read this façade either as a plane that is horizontally divided into four, or as a monolithic single plane with a brise-soleil pattern, or one can concentrate on the left part of the brise-soleil and read it as a total figure by adding the roof and entrance to it, or still one can read an E-shape on this facade.*

13　Rosemarie Bletter, "Opaque Transparency," *Oppositions* 13 (1978): 121-126; Michael Hays, *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject. The Architecture of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer*, (Cambridge, London: The MIT Press, 1992): 150-172; Detlef Mertins, "Transparency. Autonomy and Relationality," *AA Files*, 32: 3-11; R.E. Somol, "Oublier Rowe, "*Any*, 7/8 (1994): 8-15

14　*I would like to thank Kenneth Frampton for this point.*

15　This point has also been noticed by Sarah Wigglesworth, "*Maison de Verre*: Sections through an in-vitro conception," *The Journal of Architecture* 3 (Autumn 1998).

16　Marc Vellay, "Maison de Verre. An Insider's View,"*House and Garden*, v.155, n.2, (1983): 152.

17　Nelson, Paul, "La Maison de la Rue St-Guillaume," L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui 9 (Nov./Dec 1933):9. This essay was translated in *Perspecta 12*, after Frampton's essay. Paul Nelson also payed his debt to Chareau by mentioning the influence of Maison de Verre on his design for Maison Suspendue.

FIGURES

The figures are taken from the following books: Fig.1-2: The plans belong to Bernard Bauchet. Fig 3,5,8,9: René Herbst, *Pierre Chareau* (Paris: Editions du Salon des Arts Ménagers, 1954). (Photographs: Fig.3,9: Jean Collas, Fig.5: Rene Zuber, Fig.8: G. Thinet); Fig.1,2,4,7: Brian Brace Taylor, *Pierre Chareau* (Köln, Lisboa, London, Ny, Paris, Tokyo: Taschen, 1998) (Photograph: Fig. 4,6: Jordi Sarra)