Dan Graham: Beyond

"All artists are alike. They dream of doing something that's more social, more collaborative, and more real than art. This is part of my dream. [This work] came out of my love for architecture and a love for the model form."--Dan Graham

The exhibition, Dan Graham: Beyond is on view at the Walker Art Center through January 24, 2010.
This set includes works from the Walker Art Center by the artist, background information, plus three short videos about Dan Graham. It can be used by teachers as pre-tour preparation, follow-up discussion after a tour, or a general introduction to the work of this important conceptual artist.

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Introduction to Dan Graham: Beyond

Dan Graham: Beyond surveys the four-decade career of one of contemporary art's most innovative and influential figures. Dan Graham has been at the forefront of many significant developments since the mid-1960s, including conceptual art, video and film installation, performance, site-specific sculpture, and musical collaboration. This exhibition—his first retrospective in the United States—examines each stage of his career through a focused selection of his photographs, projects for magazine pages, films and videos, architectural models and pavilions, performances, prints, drawings, and writings.

Graham was born in Urbana, Illinois, in 1942 and grew up in New Jersey amidst a suburban landscape that has inspired him throughout his career. In 1964, he founded and directed the short-lived John Daniels Gallery in New York, exhibiting the work of a new generation of conceptual and minimalist artists that included Sol LeWitt and Robert Smithson. This experience had a deep influence on Graham, shaping his ongoing interest in art's economic and social framework as well as his relationship to his peers and to the culture at large.

Like his Pop contemporaries, Graham rejected the high seriousness of modern art. His commitment to an art situated between people and beyond the traditional values and contexts of the gallery and museum placed him squarely amidst the democratic repositioning of art that occurred during the 1960s. His performances and architectural pavilions—one of which was permanently installed in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden in 1996—demonstrate his interest in revealing the private self as part of a broader social and public context. Today, as new technologies and media reshape our social behaviors and collective consciousness, Graham offers ways to critically explore our desire for connection and the structures that facilitate it.

Dan Graham: Beyond
by Susan Rotilie

Homes for America

Discussion questions:

What do you notice about these photographs?

What do they remind you of?

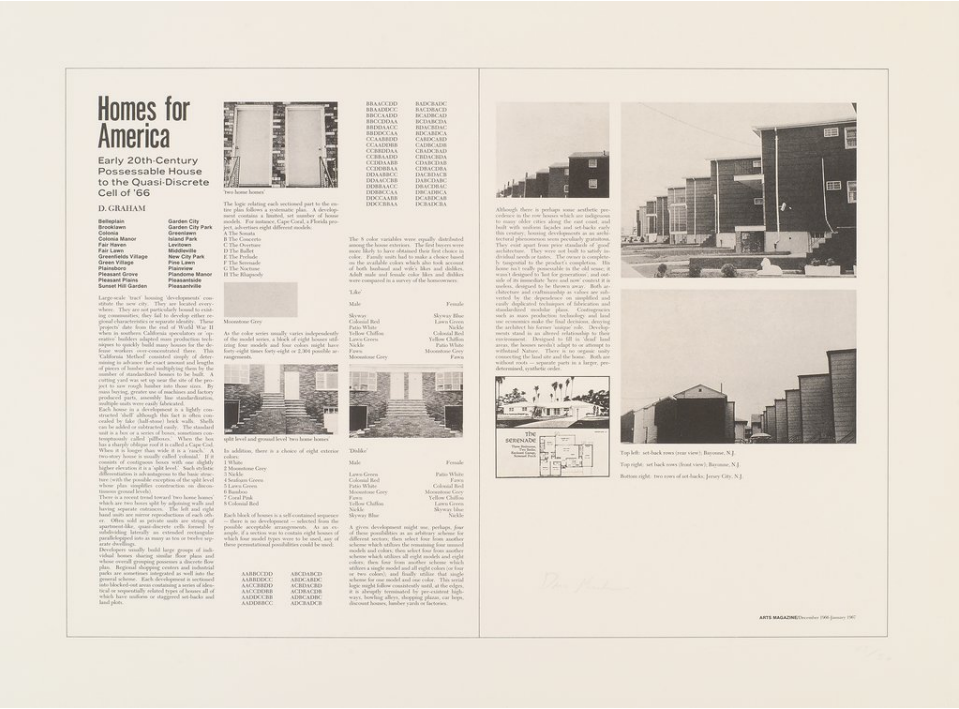
What do you think Dan Graham had in mind when he took these photographs?

Homes for America

Artist: Dan Graham
Date: 1966-1967
Medium: Photographs
Size: 34.5 x 25 inches
Institution: Walker Art Center

Homes for America is among the first works Graham produced during the period following the closure of his short-lived John Daniels Gallery in 1965. It was initially realized as a slideshow of photographs that the artist shot on his frequent train rides between Manhattan and his parents' home in suburban New Jersey. His photographs underscore the geometry and mass-produced seriality of the new suburban developments of the 1960s, resituating the Minimalist language of artists like Donald Judd outside the gallery walls.

Homes for America



Homes for America

Early 20th-Century Possessable House to the Quasi-Discrete Cell of '66

D. GRAHAM

Bellaplain
Brooklawn
Colonia
Colonial Manor
Fair Haven
Fair Lawn
Greenfields Village
Green Village
Plainsboro
Pleasant Grove
Pleasant Plains
Sunset Hill Garden
Garden City
Garden City Park
Greenlawn
Island Park
Lakeview
Middlevile
New City Park
Pine Lawn
Plainview
Plandome Manor
Pleasantvale
Pleasantville

Two home homes

Moonstone Grey

eight level and ground level two home homes

Although there is perhaps some aesthetic precedence in the row houses which are indigenous to many older cities along the east coast, and built with uniform façades and set-backs early this century, housing developments as an architectural phenomenon seem peculiarly gratuitous. They exist apart from prior standards of good architecture, and apart from the needs of individual needs or tastes. The owner is completely tangential to the product's completion. "His home isn't really possessable in the old sense; it wasn't designed to 'last for generations', and otherwise it wasn't made to be lived in, it was made to be modern, designed to be thrown away. Both architecture and craftsmanship as values are subverted by the dependence on simplified and easily duplicated techniques of fabrication and standardized modular plans. Contingencies such as mass production technology and land speculation have made it a fact of life that even the architect his furnes 'unique' role. Developments stand in an altered relationship to their environment. Designed to fill in 'dead' land areas, the houses needn't adapt to or attempt to withstand Nature. There is no organic unity connecting the land site and the house. Both are simply arbitrary elements in a larger, predetermined, synthetic order.

THE SUBURBAN

Top left: set-back rows (rear view), Bayonne, N.J.

Top right: set back rows (front view), Bayonne, N.J.

Bottom right: two rows of set-backs, Jersey City, N.J.

ARTS MAGAZINE/December 1966-January 1967

Artist: Dan Graham
Date: 1971
Medium: Prints, Edition Prints/Proofs
Size: framed 24.25 x 31.25 inches
Institution: Walker Art Center

Homes for America subsequently appeared as a layout for the pages of Arts Magazine, in which the photographs were accompanied by short texts and schematic information written by Graham. The two iterations of Homes for America remain hallmarks of his early work and of conceptual art in general. Like many of his peers in the 1960s, Graham made writing an important part of his practice and would go on to become one of the most significant artist-writers of his time. His layout for Arts Magazine is a hybrid work, acting both as artistic design and critical parody. It is an important predecessor to his later works— such as Rock My Religion (1982–1984)—which merge commentary and imagery derived from popular culture.

Use the Zoom tool to examine this piece.

Alteration to a Suburban House

Artist: Dan Graham
Date: 1978/1992
Medium: Sculpture, Sculptures
Size: overall 11 x 43 x 48 inches
Institution: Walker Art Center

American conceptual artist Dan Graham employs models as well as life-size architectural units that examine space and material and their relation to the environment. In *Alteration to a Suburban House*, clear glass replaces the façade of a suburban home while the interior space is bisected by a mirror. By exposing the home's inhabitants and reflecting the environment it faces, Graham investigates the boundaries of public and private, providing an ironic commentary on the utopian ideal of suburban life and social conformity.

Alteration to a Suburban House - detail

Two-way Mirror Punched Steel Hedge Labyrinth

Since the mid-1960s, conceptual artist Dan Graham has been investigating how spaces affect human behavior, how art and audiences are connected, and the ways works of art are linked to their physical, economic, and social contexts. Graham's work is often said to exist between the worlds of art and architecture. For the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden he created a large geometric maze with walls that provide both transparent and reflective surfaces. As we interact with the sculpture we both see and are seen, viewing the surrounding environment and our own reflections. The piece conjures up questions about inside and outside, about public and private spaces, and-as the reflective surfaces respond to the motion of clouds and sun-about nature and culture.

Artist: Dan Graham
Date: 1994-1996
Medium: Sculpture; three sections of paneled walls - some with dark glass, others perforated and rows of green arborvitae trees
Size: installed 90 x 206 x 508 inches
Institution: Walker Art Center/Minneapolis Sculpture Garden

Two-way Mirror Punched Steel Hedge Labyrinth

Discussion Questions:

How are these opposite or contradictory ideas combined in the work of Dan Graham:

transparent / opaque?

public / private?

inside / outside?

Three short videos about Dan Graham

"Dan Graham's Greatest Hits at the Whitney" *Graham says his work is all about anarchistic humor. This is one of the many rapid explanations he gives for his art, speaking in a way the* Village Voice *describes as, a verbal performance akin to high-energy jazz. Graham also explains that his work commands participation, asking visitors to sit on cushions and watch videos together, or adjust their make-up. Note: Teachers should preview this video because of brief adult content in beginning.*

"Dan Graham on Los Angeles" *In this video, the artist discusses New York and his experiences in working with artists from Los Angeles.*

"Paul McCarthy on Dan Graham" *On the occasion of the opening of* Dan Graham: Beyond *in Los Angeles, artist Paul McCarthy spoke on the work of Dan Graham. His introduction becomes a work of prose/poetry. Recorded February 13, 2009 at MOCA Grand Avenue.*

Dan Graham's Greatest Hits at the Whitney

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnE08JzPlJM&feature=youtube_gdata

Dan Graham on Los Angeles

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoseHBDgiuo&feature=youtube_gdata

Paul McCarthy introduces Dan Graham

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmlaiIYn7Pk&feature=youtube_gdata

Links to other web sites about Dan Graham

Read an article about Dan Graham on the Walker Web site.

Check out this blog: Your 10-minute guide to Dan Graham at the Walker.

This blog is about an Art Lab actvity related to the work of Dan Graham.

View the *Dan Graham: Beyond* exhibition Whitney web site.