COMMENTARY ON ADELE TUTTER’S “DESIGN AS DREAM AND SELF-REPRESENTATION: PHILIP JOHNSON AND THE GLASS HOUSE OF ATREUS”

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Summary: In this discussion of Tutter’s essay “Design as Dream and Self-Representation: Philip Johnson and the Glass House of Atreus” the authors, an interdisciplinary team of an architect and a psychoanalyst, highlight what they see as the most important of Tutter’s contributions as regards an understanding of Johnson’s work, and discuss those contributions as they illuminate the study of the relationship of architecture and design on the one hand, and psychoanalysis on the other.
Adele Tutter, in her essay “Design as Dream and Self-Representation: Philip Johnson and the Glass House of Atreus” (2011), meticulously examines Johnson’s home and masterpiece, the Glass House. Her central idea is that an architectural work can be seen as if it were a dream, and a model for this creative process is Freud’s description of the dream-work in “The Interpretation of Dreams” (1900). She points out that there are three reasons for examining architectural design by comparing it to a dream. These are that both dreams and designs reflect wishes and aspirations; because of conflict dreams disguise psychic content and she believes a design does, as well; and finally, and to us most compellingly, dreams and designs are both visual expressions of the self.

Tutter emphasizes that the dream-work involves compromise formation, that the dreamer wishes to express and fulfill a wish, and simultaneously struggles with the prohibition against that wish, and to expressing that wish openly. Thus, the manifest dream disguises the hidden dream wish; she asserts that the same is true for an architect’s design, the visual representation of which is analogous to the manifest dream. She also notes that in situations where a series of dreams deals with the same subject repetitively, the underlying, latent meaning of the dream may become increasingly clear, even as it still requires interpretation to be made conscious. She indicates again that the design process shares this characteristic.

While Tutter remains nuanced in stating this explicitly, the thrust of her essay suggests that dreaming and designing exert similar attractions on what are unconscious and conflictual wishes. This would be so because the visual holds great potential for representation, and therefore, the expression of wishes, as well as their disguise.

If we are to assume that Johnson’s experience with his Glass House is shared in some ways by other architects, it seems clear that the design process adds a dimension to the life of its practitioners, potentially encouraging, sometimes very seductively, a fuller expression of their inner lives. Tutter offers a detailed description of the evolution of Johnson’s Glass House, a compilation of seven structures. She examines and considers them as a collective group that was created over almost fifty years, and considers each structure as an individual design project, as well. She informs us of how various buildings in
the complex were created by a planning process which involved many designs, and that each design iteration was ever more revealing of the unconscious inspirations and aspirations motivating what Johnson built. In parallel, the seven structures taken together reinforce that observation and conclusion: as a group they reveal with increasing clarity what was central to Johnson’s unconscious desires and conflicts.

Inspired by Tutter’s essay, we can hypothesize that the design process is a vehicle which activates, stimulates, and enhances a fuller experience and expression of one’s inner, for the most part unconscious and conflictual life. We can also infer that the inevitable existence of unconscious conflictual wishes might motivate the designer in her or his work. Thus, if one has the ability to design, a kind of ongoing psychological feedback loop might exist, in which unconscious conflict stimulates the design process, and the design process activates the expression of conflictual wishes. In a process which has its own psychodynamic power, conflict repetitively propels design, and design repetitively stimulates conflict.

Tutter shares with the reader her diligent search for clues to the intrapsychic building blocks of the Glass House. She develops her evidence by noting and exploring what we know of Johnson from his life history, his own words, archeological sites we know he visited and studied, ancient mythology with which we know he was familiar, and the design detail of one building within the Glass House complex, the Painting Gallery, which Johnson acknowledged was based on the actual Tomb of Atreus. Tutter builds on all this to draw inferences about correspondences to ancient structures in the Glass House complex, of which she asserts Johnson was almost always not consciously aware.

In the course of this inquiry Tutter clarifies Johnson’s conflicted desires to be a king in a citadel. She does this, as just indicated, by discussing the building Johnson publicly acknowledged to be modeled on the Tomb of Atreus, the Painting Gallery. She explains how the Tomb was part of an archeological site, the Mycenaen Citadel, which was well studied during the nineteenth century, which Johnson knew well from visiting it, and in which Johnson maintained an interest.

Tutter then astutely notes that Johnson also included other elements of the Citadel in the Glass House complex, and of these, uncharacteristically, he did not acknowledge an historical antecedent in the ancient past. Tutter concludes
from this that these elements were not consciously understood for what they were by Johnson, and goes on to explain why this might be so. Central to her argument, we believe, is the effect on him of the death of his five-year-old brother when Johnson was two. That such a trauma can contribute mightily to shaping a life is clear, and it is not surprising that an awareness of that shaping might be unconscious. Consistent with this is that Tutter was not able to find a single reference to Johnson referring to that brother, or to his death, over the decades of his life.

Tutter convincingly explains that Johnson’s interest in the Mycenaean Citadel is consistent with a preoccupation with Atreus, and the connected themes of sibling rivalry, fratricide, and loss. We would add that given his age when the loss of his brother occurred, Johnson would have been unable to understand and mourn it, and yet might have struggled with the unconscious effort to metabolize it for the rest of his life. In fact, guilt over the death would probably have been developmentally impossible when it occurred, but could well have become organized outside of Johnson’s conscious awareness later in his life. Such an occurrence would have made Johnson’s task of working through the death even more complicated, and certainly could have predisposed him to dealing with it unconsciously in his work as an architect. We are familiar with how such efforts at reworking the traumatic past may appear repeatedly in the dreams of traumatized individuals, over the span of life, and this is consistent with Tutter’s conclusion that the dream is a vehicle for understanding Johnson’s design process in creating the Glass House.

Further supporting this line of inference is the fact that Johnson majored in the classics in college, after having been tutored in them from a young age by his mother. He knew the plays of Aeschylus well, and was very familiar with his Oresteia Trilogy, in which the myth of the House of Atreus was dramatized (458 bce). It is hardly surprising, then, that the design of the Glass House complex, over time, brought to new life, even while disguised, the elements of the ancient Mycenaean Citadel.

Psychoanalytic clinicians are well aware that a dreamer will turn to experiences of waking life, often part of the day residue, to create dream images. Sometimes these building blocks of manifest dream content are structures like buildings or monuments, which are psychologically compelling and symbolically meaningful, though their compelling quality may or may not have been obvious to the dreamer while awake. Tutter’s investigation is so detailed and precise that it offers convincing support for her contention that
the lens of the dream-work, as exemplified by such a well known clinicalphenomenon, is a valid way of using psychoanalysis to better understandJohnson’s architecture. Tutter offers such meticulous consideration of space,shape, and design detail in the Glass House complex that she establisheswithout doubt that it parallels what he saw in the Mycenaean Citadel. We feelthat no further discussion is needed to support the validity of Tutter’sargument that Johnson’s Glass House borrowed from these ancient structureshe knew, which had always had potentially important psychological meaningfor him.

We would, however, like to comment on Johnson’s use of glass. As apractitioner and advocate for the fledgling modernist movement in the UnitedStates, Johnson curated the landmark exhibition in 1932 at The Museum ofModern Art in New York, The International Style. This tremendouslyinfluential show introduced the American public to modern architecture.Johnson embraced and exploited the particular properties of the newly utilizedmodern materials of glass, steel and concrete. More than any other material,glass embodies the extraordinary and otherworldly potential of these newmaterials, advanced by proponents of modernism. Until the early twentiethcentury the use of glass had been relatively restrained, primarily due to technological limits in the size of the glass panes as well as limits on thestructural members required to support structures themselves.

As a material glass is one of the most critical in propelling the agenda of theearly modernist architects forward. Large panes of glass supported by lightsteel columns liberated the spatial constraints of traditional construction. Forthe first time entire walls that enclosed space could exist physically, whilevisually and, more importantly, conceptually exist as effaced. Johnson’s GlassHouse introduced modernism into American residential architecture. In thissense Johnson’s use of glass must be seen in its aesthetic and architecturalcontext.

But there is more to this, as Tutter points out. Glass is transparent andobscuring, revealing and concealing. Effective at separating the interior fromthe surrounding elements, the material simultaneously isolated and connectedits occupants to the outer world. Johnson’s Glass House is an adamantmanifestation of this phenomenological duality. To make this concrete for areader who is not an architect, consider that at night, when the outside world isdark, a person standing within a lit room looks at a glass exterior wall and seesonly a reflection: the glass has become a mirror. The next day, it is a window
through which the outside is readily observed. But then again, during the day, it may offer a mirror-like reflection of the observer and a view of the outside at the same time. It is, like the dream image produced by the dream-work, an element that has variable and rapidly changing properties.

We suggest, then, that like a dream image, objects affected by glass literally blend and mix in the perceptual world of waking experience. In selecting glass as the primary embodiment of his own house, Johnson selected a material which possesses these complex and dream-like phenomenological properties. The care in detailing and execution, the careful minimization of mullions and other necessary connections, support this idea. As an expression of the ideals of early modernism it would have been enough to simply create the walls as minimally as possible, yet there is more at work here as Johnson is tapping into the more complex and multi-valent properties of the glass and their seamlessly integrated detailing. We think this reflects the influence of dream-like processes as he created his residence, and is another observation supporting Tutter’s hypotheses of how the process involved in Johnson’s design of the Glass House is analogous to a dream.

BUILDING ON THE ESSAY: DREAMING, DESIGNING, AND THE ROLE OF UNCONSCIOUS CONFLICT

We will now discuss more of our own perspectives on the architectural design process, as well as a design project in which we ourselves are engaged, in order to further examine Tutter’s essay. Our goals include further inquiry into the nature of the relationship of dreaming and designing, and the role of unconscious conflict in the design process. At times in this section of the commentary the text will switch to a first person account, because the discussion will reflect the experience of one of us, though that experience took place in the context of our collaboration. In the end our hope is to better understand the relationship of psychoanalysis and architecture, and we see Tutter’s essay not only as a vehicle for understanding Johnson’s Glass House, but as an important contribution to the evolving understanding of that relationship.

Tutter notes that little has been written about architecture from a psychoanalytic perspective, and seems aware that reductionism is a danger when visual works are examined psychoanalytically. Interestingly, several of the psychoanalytic articles she cites (Anderson 2005; Deamer 2005; Lebovitz 2005; Winer 2005), and seems to find of at least some value, appeared in
volume 33 of *The Annual of Psychoanalysis, Psychoanalysis and Architecture* (Winer, Anderson & Danze 2005), which one of us guest edited (Danze), and to which both of us contributed essays (Danze 2005; Sonnenberg 2005). That shared experience set us on a course which has led to our collaboration, and one of our goals is to understand and describe the relationship between psychoanalysis and architecture without ignoring its complexity.

Tutter, in supporting her thesis that Johnson’s Glass House represents a dream-like self-representation, quotes the noted art and architectural historian Vincent Scully, as writing that Frank Lloyd Wright’s architecture was a waking dream. That fundamental concept, that the barrier between dreaming and waking life may not be as constant and well defined as it is often assumed to be, is not well elaborated on nor enthusiastically investigated by contemporary American psychoanalysts. It is familiar to us because it was employed by one of us, somewhat idiosyncratically (Sonnenberg 1985), in an attempt to understand certain experiences in those who suffer from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. In that essay, the introduction to a book devoted to the study of war trauma in Vietnam veterans, it was proposed that flashback phenomena might be understood as the dream intruding into waking life. At the time this intrusion, dreaming while awake, was thought of in that essay concretely, though this is not explicit in the text.

This idea of a form of dream intrusion into wakefulness was once a subject of significant interest among American psychoanalysts, when Lewin (1950) wrote *The Psychoanalysis of Elation*, and later when Levitan (1967) wrote of Depersonalization and the dream. But in our reading of these two authors we believe that what they observed were certain characteristics of the dream state carrying over into waking life. While Lewin (1950, pp. 88) does state that in a hypomanic attack his “patient was partly asleep while awake,” we do not interpret him to mean that a physiological dream state concretely occurred while awake.

Today, following in that tradition, while not a subject of active clinical investigation there is a sensible consensus among psychoanalysts that dreaming occurs when asleep. This view holds that while dream-like thinking, characterized by such mechanisms as condensation, displacement, symbolization, and disguise can occur when awake -- Tutter’s basic idea about elements of Johnson’s design process -- dreaming is a sleeping event. This does not preclude the idea that dream states and experiences can influence the dreamer upon awakening, that when awake a person may continue to be
affected by what was experienced when asleep. A corollary of this consensus is that what occurs in waking life is daydreaming, or reverie, which is fundamentally different from the sleeping dream because the physiological state of consciousness of the daydreamer is different from the sleeping dreamer.

But we are in a position to ask “what did Scully, a distinguished art and architectural historian and educator, mean when he wrote that Wright’s design activity was a waking dream?” We find ourselves asking this for three reasons. First, we have engaged in a design process, and we do wonder, with the encouragement of reading Tutter’s essay, how that process relates to dreaming when asleep and awake. Second, since one of us is not a psychoanalyst, and is unencumbered by psychoanalytic consensus or canon, we can wonder together about the nature of the designer’s waking dream while we, ourselves, are stepping “outside the psychoanalytic box.” And finally, the architect on our team asserts that when discussing the design process with colleagues, who admittedly are not burdened by having studied the physiological, clinical, or metapsychological nature of dreaming, the experience is sometimes compared to dreaming.

**DANZE’S ACCOUNT OF DREAMING AND DESIGNING:**

Architectural design projects, and this is true for the one in which we are engaged (the three dimensional Erikson model), are extraordinarily complex, involving the resolution of myriad conflicting agenda and most often unaligned interests and constraints, of more than one client and often more than one designer. Solutions are inevitably complex, involving a visual creative process that results in three dimensional, spatial, and volumetric propositions often created out of patterns and organizations which are outside of anyone’s awareness. Projects are imagined, drawn, and completely “built,” before they are actually constructed. They are “dreams” that are both created and experienced by the designer before any construction on the site has begun.

It has been my experience that solutions present themselves, not in a necessarily purely logical, linear process, but often while in a state much like dreaming. I find idea generation to be most productive when I am able to suspend reality and respond to vague cues, memory impressions, subjective evaluations and stimuli, all that have some degree of structure but also lack clarity. Time after time my solutions seem to emerge from nowhere, as if
attributable to a muse: the best of these solutions then appear logical and inevitable, as if the result of keen, linear intellect. But I know better.

I believe that a part of what accomplishes this resides deep into what is active in me while dreaming, and it is complex, spatial and visual. Reinforcing these views of mine is that as a teacher working with a student I have often experienced the sudden inability to continue speaking, in midsentence, and I seem to be relying on a nonverbal dream-state while very much awake and designing through drawing.

My teaching technique has evolved in relation to this kind of experience. To encourage inner orientation in my students I ask them to recall very specific moments of their past and to put the sensations or sensual qualities of their remembrances into a drawing or three dimensional model. They are then compelled to make physical connections to the forgotten, the obscured, the essential, and the intuitive. The memory and the object become the same by distilling, abstracting and overlapping. This involves the moving in and out of abstraction and concretization, encouraged by what I think of as a process of daydreaming, reverie.

I can’t say exactly what Scully had in mind regarding Wright, but certainly, with Tutter’s prompting, I am aware that while designing my consciousness changes, and I believe processes are at work which have much in common with what happens when I’m asleep, and creating dream images, dreams. In the end I think Scully, who as a scholar knows many architects intimately, was getting at this when he wrote of Wright’s “waking dreams.” I conclude from all this that once again Tutter seems to have defined something important about Johnson, and many of us.

ERIKSON’S DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL:

Now, to further investigate Tutter’s ideas about the relationship of unconscious wish, prohibition, and disguise within the design process, we will discuss in more detail the project on which we have worked: the design and production of a model in three dimensions of Erik Erikson’s developmental grid, which appears in two dimensions in his classic paper “The Problem of Ego Identity” (1956). We demonstrated that model at the Scientific Poster Session at the 2010 American Psychoanalytic Association winter meeting (Danze, Ruckman, Winn & Sonnenberg 2011).
Our attempt to create the three dimensional Erikson model was born in a 2006 study group led by one of us (Sonnenberg), where we studied Erikson’s paper. As we discussed Erikson’s grid we were both struck not only by the richness and significance of its application, but by the limits of its two dimensional configuration. Almost simultaneously we each proposed that the grid needed to be reconsidered in three dimensions, because its important developmental perspective would then be more vivid and accessible to those using it for clinical, research, and teaching purposes. Soon after, at a meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association’s Committee on Scientific Activities, one of us (Sonnenberg) mentioned the proposed model, and learned from the late Stuart Hauser, who then chaired the Committee and who knew Erikson, that Erikson himself believed that the grid should be executed in three dimensions. At this point we recognized that we were studying Erikson’s ideas, with the goal of redesigning his grid to make it more usable by psychoanalysts, in a way he would have appreciated.

The effort to create the three dimensional Erikson model turned out to be a far more complicated task than we at first imagined. Now, five years since the project began, we have been able to describe the steps in interdisciplinary modeling research, which creates a bridge connecting architecture and design at one end, and psychoanalysis at the other. The first step is the determination that a psychoanalytic concept would be better understood if presented in the form of a physical model. The second step involves design of the model, and the third building the model. Steps two and three, it turned out in this case, were difficult. So, let us begin with a brief description of these steps, of how we worked, in preparation for an account which will relate the way intrapsychic conflict complicated our task.

In the original two dimensional diagram which appeared in Erikson’s paper (see Figure 1), at the top running across the grid horizontally is infancy, and at the bottom is mature (old) age. Between these are the other stages of life, all running across the grid. Running across in the center of the diagram is adolescence, with all its developmental challenges, and the precursors and subsequent developmental iterations of the adolescent identity crisis run vertically. At the center, where these horizontal and vertical lines corresponding to adolescence cross, is the box representing the central developmental experience and challenge of adolescence, the identity crisis and the need to consolidate identity.
In designing the three dimensional model we realized that infancy belonged at the base, and old age at the top, because each phase of life rested on what came before it. So we flipped the grid, as is clear from the illustration (see Figure 2). We then needed to invent a way to depict a spectrum of successful and unsuccessful development for every challenge on the model. We were able to do this by creating a color spectrum, with saturated red representing a poor adaptation, at one end, and saturated blue a healthy adaptation at the other. Red was most saturated at the back of the model, and blue most saturated at the front. So adaptation was represented both spatially and with color. On the front of the model we recreated the original two dimensional grid, with written indications of where each developmental experience was represented (though this is not fully represented in Figure 2). Finally, we created another version of the model (not pictured here) that allowed a clinician to manipulate it, to use moveable pieces to depict the course of life of a person. At that point we realized that the model also allowed its user to actually experience the passage of time, because as one used it to plot the course of a person’s life, from infancy to the age the subject had reached, the very act of working with the model took time. Though years would be represented by the seconds and minutes it took the clinician to work the model, it would allow a concrete experience and appreciation of time, rather than only abstract thoughts about it. We now believed this three dimensional model we had created would encourage clinicians, researchers and
developmental educators to use Erikson’s seminal, and often neglected ideas, in their work.

Figure 2

Sounds simple and logical enough, doesn’t it? So why did it take so long to create the model? And why was it only at the 2010 American Psychoanalytic Poster Session (Danze, Ruckman, Winn & Sonnenberg 2011) that Sonnenberg, the analyst on our team, became consciously aware that the design process for him had been extraordinarily challenging, and at times confusing? And why was it only then that he became aware that it was extremely difficult for him to explain the model to others? Now we will hear from him in the first person, to learn the answers to these questions.
SONNENBERG’S ACCOUNT OF THE ROLE OF UNCONSCIOUS CONFLICT IN DESIGNING:

When we presented the model to interested analysts at the American Psychoanalytic Association Poster Session I was surprised to see that it demanded a great deal of effort on my part to explain it. I found myself really struggling to teach something I thought I knew very well. At the time my focus was on describing the model to interested observers, and I didn’t allow myself time to think about how difficult it was for me to explain it, or why it was so difficult.

Encouraged by Tutter’s description of the relationship of Johnson’s unconscious conflicts and his Glass House architecture, recognizing the greater clarity of unconscious purpose which subtly emerged over almost five decades of his designing, and understanding the influence of compromise formation on his design process, I recently became determined to employ self-analysis to see if I could make more sense of my experience as interpreter of Erikson, as designer, and as teacher of what I had helped design.

What I have come up with relates to experiences which go back decades, and while I know these in turn rest on my life experience going all the way back to childhood, there is a specific conflictual educational experience which I believe I was trying to work out with the Erikson model design process.

I was extremely fortunate to have been admitted to the psychiatry residency program I attended. There was, and is, no doubt in my mind that I might just as easily have been turned away by that program, and that my acceptance depended on a relationship with a particular senior professor in that department, whom I had met by chance as a medical student. In short, I was accepted to the residency because he was able to hand pick one member of the incoming class, and I was his pick.

The program’s faculty was composed of the very finest analytic teachers from what, at that time, was arguably the foremost analytic institute in the United States. Furthermore, they represented a particular point of view: they were focused on infantile sexuality and ego psychology. Almost everything we learned, in the end, reflected that orientation. But curiously, there was one exception: my benefactor, the man to whom I owed my acceptance into the program.
Even before this effort at self-analysis I had a very vivid memory of a course all the residents participated in during our first year of training. The course was taught by a cadre of those outstanding ego psychologists, with one exception: again, my benefactor. And what did he teach? Erikson’s 1956 paper “The problem of ego identity.” I have, over the years, often remembered the conscious conflict I experienced as I listened to him teach that class. He conveyed Erikson’s ideas about how there was much to learn from studying the relationship of psychoanalysis and other disciplines, such as sociology and anthropology, and he spoke of development throughout the life cycle, of the interaction of a young person with society. He played down the exclusive importance of infantile sexuality. He preached heresy, and I have always remembered how conflicted I felt in class that day. Should I absorb and embrace what he was teaching, should I be loyal to him, or should I turn away from him and within my mind declare my allegiance to the ego psychology group within my residency?

Needless to say, my conflict did not abate after the class ended. I wanted very much to fit in within my residency, to be a part of the studious group, learning from our department’s great teachers. Yet I simultaneously felt pulled to join my benefactor and embrace heresy. In the end, back then, I made what I know was my “safe” choice: I turned my back on my benefactor, on Erikson, on the exciting possibilities which were evident in the text of Erikson’s paper, and on his developmental grid. And I felt guiltily disloyal and opportunistic.

But did I really turn my back on Erikson and my benefactor? Is that accurate? Is it the whole story? For along with becoming a quite conservative analyst, a practitioner of a traditional variety of ego psychology, I continued to pursue interests which connected me to scholars in other fields. I didn’t forget about anthropology and sociology, and developed interests in the law and international relations, as they intersected with psychoanalysis. Nevertheless, despite participating in many interdisciplinary research projects, and trying to apply lessons learned in them to my clinical work, an unconflicted embrace and integration of my clinical and research interests was always elusive. And Erikson was always relegated to the sidelines.

Now, with the benefit of self-analytic effort, I recall that I intermittently and barely consciously thought of that teaching session led by my benefactor, and my conflict at the time, when I decided to assign Erikson to my study group, when we discussed the paper, and at the moment when I and Danze simultaneously thought the grid should be recreated in three dimensions.
In retrospect, I am sure that my labored contributions to the design process, which I know slowed it down, and the difficulty I had describing the resulting model at the Poster Session, reflected exactly the kind of conflict between desire and prohibition, exactly the kind of compromise formation, which Tutter describes in Johnson’s Glass House architecture. Further, I believe it is no coincidence that I developed an interest in architecture and design, and cultivated my relationship with Professor Danze, because among many other motivations, I believe I always wanted to rethink Erikson’s grid, and make right my relationship with my benefactor of decades ago. In the end, the visual did attract me; I was drawn to it; I worked to create opportunities to learn more about it and participate in the design process; my unresolved and unconscious conflicts about my benefactor and Erikson did motivate me to seek out opportunities to engage in designing the three dimensional model. I am now very aware, as well, that the prospect and process of designing did result in a reactivation and resurgence of my old conflicts about loyalty to my benefactor, and to Erikson, the person whose work he chose to teach.

It is striking to me that I didn’t recognize much of this before studying Tutter’s work, because I have written about the analyst’s use of self-analysis in teaching, clinical work, research, and writing (Sonnenberg 1990, 1991, 1993a,b, 1995), and for decades I have engaged in self-analysis regularly to enhance my performance in all those areas, as well as to help me live my life as happily as possible. I have written about the way conflict is reflected in the relationship between the analyst and research colleagues and research subjects (1993a), and about the way the relationship of the analyst to a teacher from the past might influence clinical work in the here and now (1991). However, I am also aware that as we grow, as we encounter, seek, and undertake new challenges, new forms and expressions of conflict arise, and new self-analytic tasks must be undertaken. Tutter has taught me that designing for me is such a new challenge and task, requiring awareness of how it interacts in a feedback loop with my unconscious processes, and demands self-inquiry. Inspired by Tutter’s research on Johnson I’m better able to understand myself, and extrapolating from my self-analytic experience, I am convinced that Tutter got Johnson right.

CONCLUSION

In this commentary we have discussed Tutter’s investigation of Philip Johnson’s Glass House. We have described the way she gathered data to support the view that for Johnson the dream-work is a useful model for
understanding his design process. That process reflects his conflict over actualizing his desire and prohibition against the expression of his desire, of disguise and compromise formation, and of a persistence of repression of what is behind his designs and built structures. At the same time, in an almost five decades long effort building The Glass House complex, Tutter makes clear that Johnson’s unconscious and conflicted wish became increasingly clear. This is consistent with what Freud said about the increasing transparency of the meaning behind sequential dreams.

We explored ideas about the relationship of the visual and unconscious conflict which also emerged in Tutter’s essay, pointing out that the visual attracts the unconscious, that the unconscious stimulates the visual, and that there is a psychodynamic feedback loop which operates over time during the work of designing. This loop has a power of its own, as it operates as a self-stimulating system impelling the architect to design and build.

We moved on to describe a research project of our own, the design of a three dimensional model of Erik Erikson’s developmental grid. We did this in order to further consider Tutter’s ideas about the relationship of dreaming and dream-like processes in the work of designing, and of conflict and compromise formation in the design process. After all, if we could validate that what was true for Johnson was observable in our work, we might then report to both architects and psychoanalysts that collaboration between practitioners from each field might illuminate and enhance the architectural effort, and increase psychoanalytic understanding of creativity involving the visual. In each case our understanding of our own work supports Tutter’s observations of the design process, as we concluded that the dream-work is a useful model for understanding designing and building, and unconscious conflict is a useful way of understanding what are impediments as well as stimulants to designing and building.

In the end we believe that Tutter’s work is a creative leap forward in understanding, encouraging, and enhancing the emerging relationship between architecture and psychoanalysis, and we feel that we are in her debt.
REFERENCES