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# *Opening the Boundaries of Architectural History*

## Popular Culture, Imaginary Buildings, and the Influence of the Bachelor Pad

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*How do we understand what the object of architectural history can be? The boundaries of “architecture” as a category are an open question, debated by first-year students and the editorial boards of architectural journals alike. In the last thirty years, as the questions asked by architectural historians have broadened, the subject matter of architectural history has expanded to embrace a wider range of vernacular and popular buildings, but an idea of architecture as something above and beyond ordinary building persists. While much of our research is about physical buildings, often attributable to a specific named architect, architectural history has also long included within its purview “paper architecture,” designs that were never built or never intended to be built. Treatises and pattern books beginning with Vitruvius, and unbuilt experimental designs from the Renaissance to the present, have all been seen as legitimate foci of historical inquiry.*

*This paper argues for pushing the boundaries of what we understand as architecture by taking the imaginary spaces of popular culture seriously. Before the advent of mass culture ideas about architecture were likely to be shaped by the work of professionals. But in the modern context, films, magazines, television shows, web environments, and other forms of popular culture have enormous influence on our collective understandings of the built environment, its possibilities, and its meanings. My current research focuses on one example of popular culture architecture, the bachelor pad, a largely imaginary but quite detailed architectural type that was elaborated most fully in films and popular magazines of the 1950s and 60s. This popular culture artifact, largely unbuilt, frames our collective understanding of the architectural expression of masculinity, the meanings of modernism, and the romance of urban life.*



The boundaries of “architecture” as a category are an open question, debated by first-year students and the editorial boards of architectural journals alike. In the last thirty years, as the questions asked by architectural historians have broadened, the subject matter of architectural history has expanded to embrace a wider range of vernacular and popular buildings, but an idea of architecture as something above and beyond ordinary building persists. Architecture, we believe, is not just building, but also art. In our research, we tend to privilege extraordinary works by named architects. When we come at architectural history from an art historical point of view, one that focuses on canonical works, questions of style, and the work itself as the primary source of information, we use close analysis as a tool to explicate the genius of a particular work. But architectural history is also a branch of history, and as such can also focus on larger social and cultural questions, as art history in general also increasingly does.<sup>1</sup> Learning in part from cultural landscapes studies and the study of vernacular architecture, which examine the built environment as an expression of a larger culture, we can ask how both vernacular and high architecture, works of genius as well as works with no particular artistic significance, are expressive of the culture that created them.<sup>2</sup> We can understand a work of architecture as historically significant because of its cultural role, whether or not it is artistically significant.

While much of our research is about physical buildings, architectural history has also long included within its purview “paper architecture,” designs that were never built or never intended to be built. Treatises and pattern books beginning with Vitruvius and unbuilt experimental designs from the Renaissance to the present have all been seen as legitimate foci of historical inquiry. This sort of paper architecture works as a sort of theoretical foil to built works, an expression of what architecture as art might be if it were pushed to its limits. But paper architecture can also encompass other kinds of imaginings of architecture, outside the traditional structure of architectural practice and architectural theory. If we take an inclusive view of architecture, the range of sources expands significantly, to all imaginings of the built environment, in popular magazines, on television, in the world of video games, wherever our understandings of the built world and its possible forms are explored.

This paper argues for pushing the boundaries of what we understand as architecture by taking the imaginary spaces of popular culture seriously. Before the advent of mass culture ideas about

1. This social and cultural history approach is similar to what Andrew Leach, in *What is Architectural History?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), calls “Theme and Analogy.” He describes this approach as working from the “coincidences between architectural activity and other kinds of historical activity,” (71), tending to suggest that architecture is a realm easily separable from history and culture rather than deeply embedded within it.

2. Two models of taking a broad vernacular approach to high architecture are Dell Upton’s *Architecture in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), which examines the canon of American architectural history through rubrics such as “home” and “money,” and Abigail van Slyck’s “The Spatial Practices of Privilege” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 70, no 2 (June 2011), 210-239, which explores the high style children’s cottage at the Breakers estate in Newport, Rhode Island, as a site for the spatial management of status through children’s play.

3. See, for example, architect and historian Nick Yablon's *Untimely Ruins: An Archaeology of Urban Modernity, 1819-1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), which explores science fiction and cartoon depictions of the city in ruins as an expression of the experience of urban modernity.

4. Pamela Robertson Wojcik, *The Apartment Plot: Urban Living in American Film and Popular Culture, 1945 to 1975* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

5. Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), as well as her recently curated exhibit, *Playboy Architecture 1953-1979*. For an architectural historian's take on architecture as depicted in film, see Dietrich Neumann, ed., *Film Architecture: From Metropolis to Blade Runner* (New York: Prestel, 1999).

architecture were likely to be shaped primarily by the work of professionals. But in the modern context, films, magazines, television shows, web environments, and other forms of popular culture have enormous influence on our collective understandings of the built environment, its possibilities, and its meanings. The question of the cultural role of imagined architecture has been taken up by scholars of popular culture, in American studies, film studies, and communication.<sup>3</sup> For example, in *The Apartment Plot* film scholar Pamela Robertson Wojcik explores how filmic and televisual presentations of apartments in the 1950s and 60s helped to construct an urbanist alternative to the suburban ideal.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, studies of popular culture depictions of architectural space by architectural historians are much rarer, although the question of the relationship between the popular press and architectural practice has been explored by Beatriz Colomina, among others.<sup>5</sup>

My current research focuses on one example of popular culture architecture, the bachelor pad, a largely imaginary but quite detailed architectural type that was elaborated most fully in films and popular magazines of the 1950s and 60s. This popular culture artifact, largely unbuilt, frames our collective understanding of the architectural expression of masculinity, the meanings of modernism, and the romance of urban life. Examining the bachelor pad from the point of view of an architectural historian, I can uncover its significance not only as an expression of the postwar “crisis of masculinity” and the growth of consumer identity, but also as an architectural dream double of the single-family suburban house and as a site of the invention of a new vocabulary of architectural masculinity. The remainder of this paper explores the bachelor pad as a piece of paper architecture, and in so doing argues for expanding the boundaries of architectural history more fully into the world of popular culture.

The bachelor pad as a type is an apartment (or more rarely a weekend house) for a single professional man, organized for entertaining and pleasure, and displaying tasteful consumption. The pad serves primarily as a space for entertaining, both individual dates and larger groups (at parties similar to, but on a smaller scale than, Hugh Hefner's regular bashes chronicled in the pages of the magazine and shown, in cleaned-up form, on the 1959 television show *Playboy's Penthouse*). While this entertainment is presented purely in the context of leisure and pleasure, it also functions potentially as a tool of upward mobility, a chance,



as we have seen in numerous sitcoms, to entertain the boss, show that you are the right sort of person (consuming the right sort of things) and thus move up the corporate ladder.

The bachelor pad began to be articulated as a particular type in the mid-1950s, both on film and in magazines, although the term “bachelor pad” did not come into common usage until the early 1960s.<sup>6</sup> This new idea of the bachelor pad, I have argued elsewhere, served as a fantasy double of the suburban home, and as a site to imaginatively address the masculinity crisis, and thus was aimed as much if not more at married men than at bachelors.<sup>7</sup> Statistically, bachelors were much more common in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and were rarer in the mid-1950s than at any time before or since, as 1956 marks the youngest age ever at first marriage in the United States (22.5 for men, 20.1 for women).<sup>8</sup> Many men went from their parents’ house to a college dorm or fraternity and straight into a home shared with a new wife, spending most of their lives in spaces shared with, and typically decorated by, women. In spite of the rarity of bachelors, in the mid-1950s, publishers of *Playboy*, movie directors, and other culture shapers found it compelling to articulate a new independent space to fit the unmarried, heterosexual, middle-class, professional man. As the historian Howard Chudacoff has shown, from 1880 to 1920 the vast majority of bachelors lived in family settings, either with their own relatives or as boarders with a family.<sup>9</sup> A few more affluent bachelors also lived in bachelor flats, an architectural type that was first developed in New York City in the 1870s. A bachelor flat was an elegant suite of rooms in a building that provided hotel-style restaurant dining and maid and laundry service. It combined the privacy and prestige of an apartment with the sociability and conveniences of the boarding house.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, the new 1950s bachelor pad was self-contained and self-sufficient, a fully domestic space for a domestic bachelor. Rather than serving as a radical alternative to the single-family house, as the bachelor flat did, the bachelor pad instead is its double, mirroring its rooms, including the kitchen and dining room missing from earlier bachelor accommodations, and even the outdoors space of the yard, transformed in bachelor pads into an elaborate patio. As I will argue later in this paper, the bachelor pad simultaneously critiques the suburban ranch house and the ideals of homeownership and family togetherness that it embodied, but also mimics it, in the process serving as a way to rethink the suburban house as a more masculine space, and as a house that embraces individuality rather than conformity and togetherness.

6. The first use of the term cited in the Oxford English Dictionary is in the *Chicago Tribune* in 1959. It is first used in *Playboy* in 1960 to refer to an artist’s apartment, but becomes more common with the series of “Playboy’s Pads” beginning in 1964. It is first used in the *New York Times* in 1964 in real estate listings.

7. Jessica Sewell, “Power, Sex and Furniture: Masculinity and the Bachelor Pad in 1950s-60s America,” Occasional Paper 43, School of Social Science, Institute for Advanced Study, 2011.

8. U.S. Census Bureau, “Table MS-2. Estimated Median Age at First Marriage, by Sex: 1890 to Present,” [www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/ms2.pdf](http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/ms2.pdf). In 1960 only 25.3% of all males over the age of 14 had never been married, the lowest rate in the period from 1950 to the present. U.S. Census Bureau, “Table MS-1. Marital Status of the Population 15 Years Old and Over, by Sex and Race, 1950 to Present,” [www.census.gov/hhes/families/files/ms1.xls](http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/files/ms1.xls).

9. Howard P. Chudacoff, *The Age of the Bachelor: Creating an American Subculture*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1999), 95.

10. Chudacoff, *Age of the Bachelor*, 85-86.

One of the most prominent articulations of the bachelor pad, and the swinging bachelor it contained, was created in *Playboy* magazine, which began publishing in 1953 and published its first bachelor pad design in 1956. *Playboy* described the particulars of the ideal bachelor pad many times from 1956 through 1979, in four commissioned designs for houses and apartments, several designs for elements of the ideal apartment (kitchen, patio, entertainment wall, and beds), and a series of articles showing real bachelor pads, including the ultimate party palace, Hugh Hefner's own Playboy Mansion in Chicago, and its eventual replacement, the Playboy Mansion West in Los Angeles. Playboy's presentation of the bachelor pad was complemented by a number of films that articulated a parallel, although not identical, model of the bachelor and his pad. The majority of these films were made between 1955 and 1966, the same time that Playboy was publishing commissioned designs.

In the introduction to the first issue, Hugh Hefner, the founder and editor, proclaimed that *Playboy* was centered on private, interior, urban space:

We don't mind telling you in advance—we plan spending most of our time inside. We like our apartment. We enjoy mixing up cocktails and an hors d'oeuvre or two, putting a little mood music on the phonograph and inviting a female acquaintance for a quiet discussion on Picasso, Nietzsche, jazz, sex.<sup>11</sup>

11. *Playboy* 1, no. 1, November 1953, 3.

As evoked in this quotation, the *Playboy* bachelor was a sophisticated, urban man, interested in ideas, art, and the connoisseurship of jazz, and his apartment expressed his character and provided a stage for his seduction performance. Similarly, the bachelor in most bachelor films (often played by Rock Hudson, Tony Curtis, Frank Sinatra, or Dean Martin) is a professional, typically in a creative field such as advertising or theater; has impeccable taste, demonstrated through his clothes, furniture, and consumption of food, liquor and art; and juggles multiple women. In most of these films, including *The Moon is Blue* (1953), *The Tender Trap* (1955), *Pillow Talk* (1959), *Come Blow Your Horn* (1963), *Sunday in New York* (1963), *Under the Yum Yum Tree* (1963), the Matt Helm films (1966, 1967, 1968, 1969), and *There's a Girl in My Soup* (1970), the pad serves as a stage for the bachelor and a tool for his seduction of women, much as the pad functions in *Playboy*.



Rejecting marriage and children, the bachelor's primary responsibility was to himself. His life combined pleasure, both his own and his guests', and pleasurable work. On the pages of *Playboy* and on film, the bachelor was a successful professional whose work is a source of power and satisfaction. A 1956 subscription advertisement in *Playboy* emphasized this balance of professional success and love of pleasure:

What is a Playboy? Is he simply a wastrel, a ne'er do well, a fashionable bum? Far from it: He can be a sharp-minded young business executive, a worker in the arts, a university professor, an architect or engineer. He can be many things, provided he possesses a certain point of view. He must see life not as a vale of tears, but as a happy time; he must take joy in his work, without regarding it as the end and all of living; he must be an alert man, a man of taste, a man sensitive to pleasure, a man who—without acquiring the stigma of the voluptuary or dilettante—can live life to the hilt.<sup>12</sup>

12. "What is a Playboy?" *Playboy*, April 1956, 73.

The playboy defined himself through his taste and consumption, not through his work, but he earned his pleasure by working hard. On film, the man pictured as the bachelor in his pad was either a high-level executive or an independent creative professional such as the songwriter played by Rock Hudson in *Pillow Talk*, the theatrical agent played by Frank Sinatra in *The Tender Trap*, and the playwright played by Dean Martin in *Bells are Ringing*. The advertising man, as portrayed by Rock Hudson in *Lover Come Back*, is arguably the ultimate bachelor professional, as his position combined creative thinking, high pay, and a corner office. This hardworking professional identity is similarly visible throughout *Playboy*. While the *Playboy* designs were described as inhabited by "you," the reader, the "Playboy Pad" series profiled 18 men and their pads. Many of these bachelors were artistic professionals, including seven architects, a photographer, a toy designer, an interior designer, and an artist.<sup>13</sup> The remainder of the Playboy Pads belonged to business owners and high-level executives.

13. In the 1970s, an increasing number of the real-life bachelor pads profiled in *Playboy* belonged to out gay men, including Arthur Elrod, the interior designer whose John Lautner-designed house in Palm Springs was the subject of "Pleasure on the Rocks," *Playboy*, November 1971, 151-55; 208.

While an identity as a successful professional is assumed for the bachelor, what truly defines him is his taste. *Playboy* functioned in many ways as a guide to hip upper-middle-brow consumption, telling its readers what to wear, drink, eat, listen to, and buy.<sup>14</sup> The bachelor in *Playboy* and in popular film desired the best of everything, and more important, he knew what was the best. The bachelor communicated his individuality and his

14. For more on *Playboy* and consumption, see Elizabeth Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Bill Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise: Masculinity, Youth and Leisure-Style in Modern America* (London: Berg, 2001); Carrie Pitzulo, "Selling the Dream: *Playboy* and the Masculine Consumer" in her *Bachelors and Bunnies: The Sexual Politics of Playboy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 71-103; and Steven Watts, "An Abundant Life" in *Mr. Playboy: Hugh Hefner and the American Dream* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2008), 123-142.

social status through the objects that surrounded him. Even for those who could not afford the expensive designer furnishings, the fully stocked bar, the Brooks Brothers suit, or the lobster Newburg, knowing about them gave them the cultural capital essential for moving up socially and professionally. Through reading *Playboy*, bachelors could gain the necessary connoisseurship to emulate the bachelors in print and in films. This reinvention through tasteful consumption is shown in the 1962 film *Come Blow Your Horn*. Buddy, the younger brother of the bachelor played by Frank Sinatra, is remade through a visit to the right barber and manicurist; the purchase of a suit, hat, coat, and cigarette case; and finally his first martini. This unusual, and long, male makeover sequence, shows how the right taste can turn a man from an outer-borough bumpkin into a hip bachelor.<sup>15</sup> Audiences for this and other bachelor films, as well as readers of *Playboy*, could imagine similarly transforming themselves, making use of the consumer knowledge they gained in *Playboy* and in films.

15. The sequence is four minutes long.

The bachelor pad is the perfect expression of impeccable masculine taste, the embodiment of hip consumer masculinity. Signature furniture marks the stylish taste of the bachelor. For example, in 1953's *The Moon is Blue*, the earliest bachelor pad film, William Holden's pad sports a Noguchi coffee table, the Eames' bikini chairs, Saarinen's womb chair, and other modernist furnishings, as well as modern art including a Picasso print (figure 1). The 1956 *Playboy* bachelor apartment is similarly furnished: it includes a pair of Saarinen womb chairs, one in the living room and one in the bedroom, next to the same Noguchi table and a bent-wood Eames' chair (see Figure 4). The Eames' classic lounge chair and ottoman grace the study of the 1956 *Playboy* bachelor apartment, the living room of the 1962 *Playboy* townhouse, and the loft of the bachelor airline pilot played by Cliff Robertson in *Sunday in New York*. Even the stripped-down pad in the "Playboy Coloring Book" is furnished with a Saarinen womb chair and modern art.<sup>16</sup> In the films the furniture plays a central role, with the Saarinen womb chair in *The Moon is Blue* and the Eames lounge in *Sunday in New York* inhabited for long stretches by the female leads. In the *Playboy* designs, modernist chairs and other furnishings take center stage in the designs, often dominating the rooms, and are referred to repeatedly in the text with the designer's name attached. They are also pulled out and shown separately, and information about the designer, manufacturer (often Knoll), and

16. "The Playboy Coloring Book," *Playboy*, (January 1963).







Figure 1. Screen shot from *The Moon is Blue*.



Figure 2. Dining room from “The Playboy Town House,” *Playboy*, May 1962, 88. Courtesy of Playboy Enterprises.

price is included in captions (figure 2). For readers, the Playboy bachelor pad designs can function as both aspirational fantasies and catalogues, allowing readers to go out and buy sophisticated elements of the ideal bachelor pad to decorate their own homes. They also gave young bachelors cultural capital, allowing them to recognize high-style objects (at their boss' house for instance), even when they could not afford them themselves.

Bachelor pads were modernist, and thus rejected the previous popular models of architectural masculinity, which were based on either the elite men's club (leather club chairs, dark wood) or the hunting lodge (rustic textures, antlers), both homosocial spaces that served as a male-only antidote to spaces men shared with women. These models were too both too homosocial and too backward-looking for the hip bachelor, whose apartment needed to express up-to-date taste and to be a comfortable space for a young woman to spend time. However, it was essential that the bachelor pad be resolutely masculine, as both bachelorhood itself, as well as an interest in interior design, were potential markers of homosexuality. To this end, set designers and *Playboy's* designers worked with high-fashion modernism, but carefully purged it of any elements that might be seen as homey or swish. A color palette that reflects that of the men's club, with dark greens and browns and leather and wooden surfaces, helped to mark the pads as masculine. This neutral palette and the presence of books, help mark the pads as both modern and masculine.<sup>17</sup> Textures were also used to express the ruggedness and roughness of masculinity, and set it apart from the femininity that had been historically linked with smoothness.<sup>18</sup> In the Penthouse Apartment, a "sense of masculine richness and excitement stems in part from . . . a juxtaposition of textures – the smooth wall, the stone, the planter, the cork floor – and for visual impact the unadorned brick wall."<sup>19</sup> Similarly, in the Playboy Town House texture is all: one entire wall is of rugged fieldstone, with a "three-story-high wall of teak" facing.<sup>20</sup> We can see these masculine signs playing out in *Pillow Talk*, which juxtaposes the bachelor pad of Brad Allen (Rock Hudson) and the feminine apartment of Jan Morrow (Doris Day), often in split screen, heightening the contrast (figure 3). The walls of Jan's apartment are smoothly painted in light colors, and the color scheme of her apartment overall is pastel colors, accented with pink and with images of flowers and gardens. In contrast, Brad's apartment is relatively dark, with modern oil paintings and landscapes in dark wood frames, and the furnishings include

17. See William W. Braham, "A Wall of Books: The Gender of Natural Colors in Modern Architecture," *Journal of Architectural Education* (September 1999); 4-14.

18. Juliet Kinchin, "Interiors: Nineteenth-Century Essays on the 'Masculine' and the 'Feminine' Room," in *The Gendered Object*, ed. Pat Kirkham (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 21.

19. "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment: A High, Handsome Haven – Pre-planned and Furnished for the Bachelor in Town," *Playboy*, September 1956, 57.

20. "The Playboy Town House," *Playboy*, May 1962, 92.





Figure 3. Split-screen screen shot from *Pillow Talk*

great deal of dark woods and leathers, as well as showing up-to-date modern clean lines. One wall is of bare brick, and most of the others are covered in textured wallpaper evocative of wood or bark.

Straight masculinity is also performed through absences; in the Penthouse Apartment “lamps, which would impede the clean, open look of the place, are virtually dispensed with; there is a complete absence of bric-a-brac, patterned fabrics, pleats and ruffles.”<sup>21</sup> While the windows in the bachelor pads sometimes have curtains, they are all of a solid, unpatterned color and typically made of modern materials like fiberglass. Unlike the windows in Jan’s bedroom in *Pillow Talk*, they have no valences or ties, but hang straight and do their best to be purely functional. Toile, afghans, and most throw pillows are similarly banned from the bachelor pad, no matter how uncompromising and uncomfortable the modernist sofa.

Stylistically, the bachelor pad proclaims its masculinity through its contrast with the feminized suburban home. Where the suburban house is family-oriented and homey, with ruffles and feminine touches, the bachelor pad is spare and individualist, with no space for children. Where the suburban house is owner-occupied and freestanding, the bachelor pad is not only an apartment, but most likely a rental, as it was not until after 1961 that condominiums could get FHA-backed mortgages.<sup>22</sup> The rental nature of bachelor pads is sometimes called to our attention in bachelor films, as in *Come Blow Your Horn*, where the pad is owned by a woman who gives Sinatra’s bachelor an excellent deal, and in *Cash McCall* (1960), in which the title character (played by James Garner) lives in a penthouse that is

21. “Playboy’s Penthouse Apartment: A Second Look at a High, Handsome Haven – Pre-planned and Furnished for the Bachelor in Town,” *Playboy*, October 1956, 70.

22. Section 234 of the National Housing Act, passed in 1961, extended the Federal Housing Administration’s mortgage benefits to condominiums; they were very rare before then. By the end of 1962, only seven states and Puerto Rico had passed condominium acts. Most states followed by 1965, and they were allowed in all states after 1969. Donna S. Bennett, “Condominium Homeownership in the United States: A Selected Annotated Bibliography of Legal Sources,” Northern Kentucky University Salmon P. Chase College of Law, March 2010. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1493368>.

part of a New York hotel, although decorated to his taste. As a rental, the bachelor pad expresses mobility while the suburban home evokes stability and a masculinity based on responsibility. Where the suburban home embodies the erasure of the individual in favor of the group identity of the family, the bachelor pad celebrates individual taste and individual desire.

In spite of these very real rifts between the bachelor pad and the suburban home, they were also closely tied through their design. Architecturally, *Playboy's* bachelor pads are dream doubles of the suburban home, potentially allowing readers to reimagine their familial homes as chic, masculine space. The visual presentation of the 1956 "Penthouse Apartment" reflects the pads' status as both urban and suburban, both apartment and house. The two-page overview of the apartment shows the rooms of the pad suspended above a dark sketched cityscape (figure 4). While this setting highlights the urbanity of the pad's setting and the vision and power embedded in its site above the city, it also removes the apartment from any immediate setting, as it shows no buildings on either side. In so doing, it reminds current viewers of Julius Shulman's photographs of lit-up Case Study houses in Los Angeles.<sup>23</sup> It sits alone like a single-family house, the urban setting like a backdrop or a fantasy.

The classic *Playboy* bachelor pads are penthouses, so rather than being constrained by occupying just one portion of the floor space of an apartment building, they sit on top of the building, much like a suburban ranch house placed atop a tower. Patios take the place of the suburban yard; the continuity of indoor and

23. I would like to thank Alan Plattus for helping me to see this relationship. The Shulman photographs which this illustration most evoke are of CSH 22, the Koenig-Stahl house, of 1960, but several of his earlier photos also give the sense of a house floating in dark space.

Figure 4. "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment", *Playboy*, October 1956, 65. Courtesy of Playboy Enterprises.



outdoor space in these designs follows the prominent modern Californian trend highlighted in *Architectural Record's* 1957 review of house designs.<sup>24</sup> In 1959's "Weekend Hideaway," for example, sliding glass panels in the living room allow twenty feet of wall facing the pool to be slid away. The flooring in the living room and the paving around the pool are continuous, so that "indoors and outdoors become one."<sup>25</sup> Similarly, in 1970's Duplex Penthouse, separate patio terraces open onto nearly every room.<sup>26</sup>

Space in the *Playboy* pads is typically open and flowing. The description of 1956's "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment" emphasizes the open plan, arguing that "it doesn't follow the conventional plan of separated rooms for various purposes. Instead, there are two basic areas, an active zone for fun and partying and a quiet zone for relaxation, sleep, and such."<sup>27</sup> In fact, this plan fits well with the conventions of suburban architecture in the 1950s. Not only high-style designs in *Architectural Record*, but also every winning entry in the 1955 and 1956 Indianapolis Home Show Architectural Competitions featured flowing space between kitchen, dining, and living areas and often a distinction between this active zone and the private zone of bedrooms and

24. Record Houses of 1957 (F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1957).

25. "Playboy's Weekend Hideaway," *Playboy*, April 1959, 52.

26. "Playboy Plans a Duplex Penthouse," *Playboy*, January 1970, 155-61, 233-35.

27. "Playboy's Penthouse Apartment," *Playboy*, October 1956, 65.

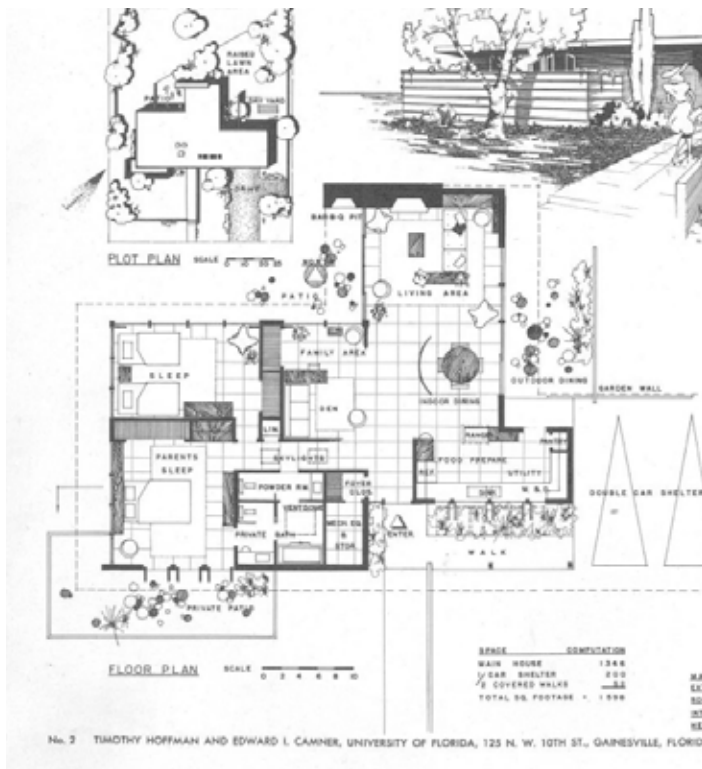


Figure 5. House Design by Timothy Hoffman and Edward I. Camner, 50 House Designs: Indianapolis Home Show Architectural Competition, 1955

bath (compare figures 4 and 5). As an architectural double of the suburban house, the bachelor pad comments on and critiques both its design and the people and activities it is assumed to hold. Posing as an alternative to the suburbs, it serves as well as a way to rethink the suburban house as a more masculine space, and as a house that embraces individuality rather than conformity and togetherness.

By examining the imaginary space of the bachelor pad from the point of view of an architectural historian, the relationship between this dream space and the very real architectural practice of the era becomes visible in a way that it has not been to film scholars and historians.<sup>28</sup> The paper architecture of the bachelor pad enlivens our understanding of the architectural expression of gender, of the meanings of modernism, and of critical takes on house design, cities, and suburbia. Opening our eyes to the rich paper architecture of popular culture will enrich our understanding of the roles of and importance of architecture to culture, and how architecture matters well beyond the boundaries of the profession.

