THE DREAM HOUSE OF ATREUS: FINDING ANCIENT MYCENAE AT THE PHILIP JOHNSON GLASS HOUSE

por

Adele Tutter*

Abstract: Philip Johnson's masterpiece – The Glass House – is conceptualized as a work of self-representation that is structured and interpretable as a dream. Johnson's words and forms, understood in the context of biographical, art-historical, philosophical and classical texts, allow rich associative paths leading from manifest design elements to be traced to over-determined latent meanings, yielding surprising new insights into the Glass House, its elusive architect, and the process of design. Evidence is provided to support the conclusion that the elaboration of the Glass House over five decades progressed towards a recreation of the Mycenaean Citadel.

Keywords: Mycenae; Glass House; Philip Johnson.

Resumo: A obra-prima de Philip Johnson – The Glass House – é conceptualizada como um trabalho de auto-representação, estruturado e interpretável como um sonho. As palavras e as formas de Johnson, vistas no âmbito de textos biográficos, de história da arte, filosóficos, e clássicos, permitem fazer articulações ricas de interesse. Caminhos que vão desde elementos de desenho patentes, até significados latentes sobre-determinados, permitindo novas visões da Glass House, do seu indefinido arquitecto, e o processo de desenho em causa. Aportam-se aqui dados que sustentam a conclusão de que a elaboração da Glass House ao longo de cinco décadas se deu no sentido de uma recriação da cidadela de Micenas, exprimindo realizações arcaicas de tipo grandioso e envolvendo um processo de trabalho que se foi através delas desenvolvendo.

Palavras-chave: Micenas; Glass House; Philip Johnson.

Excavating the Glass House

The Philip Johnson Glass House is a rectangular, one-room glass house, punctuated by a central brick cylinder containing the hearth and the bath (Fig. 1). "The Glass House" – introduced as Johnson's "Residence in New Canaan"[1] – refers both to this building and

* Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, Columbia University School of Physicians & Surgeons; Clinical Adjunct Professor of Psychiatry, Weill Cornell Medical College; Faculty, New York Psychoanalytic Institute. This study was undertaken with the cooperation of the Philip Johnson Glass House of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. E-mail: atutter@mac.com

[1] As it is called in Johnson's eponymous 1950 essay introducing the Glass House, reprinted in Johnson (1979), p. 212.

to the greater compound to which it belongs, which grew to include seven structures on forty-seven acres in as many years. When the Glass House proper was completed in 1949, it was breathtakingly avant-garde: the world had not yet seen a residential house of glass. Since then, time has only underscored the status of the Glass House as an unsurpassed icon of modernist design, stewarded, since Johnson's death in 2005, by the National Trust for Historic Preservation (Maclear & Dunn 2008), one of only two modern structures in the United States granted that honor. The art historian, Vincent Scully, calls it "the most conceptually important house of the century" (Scully 2009, p. 18). A voluminous scholarship is dedicated to the Glass House, and to the architecture and design it has inspired and informed. Its architect, Philip Cortelyou Johnson (1906-2005), is no less a focus of interest, for he played an unparalleled role in shaping the course of twentieth century American art and architecture: as critic, curator, architect, tastemaker, mentor, and patron to a generation of artists and architects.

This exploration is organized around the conjecture that, like a dream, the visible (or manifest) design of the Glass House conceals disguised (or latent) representations of aspects of its architect – his memories, conflicts and desires. Moreover, I suggest that the transformation of these aspects into design was accomplished via processes analogous or equivalent to those that generate dreams, including the distorting actions of displacement, condensation, reversal, and symbolization, which achieve the obscured representation of unconscious meanings – the hidden, latent content of the design. By extension, the Glass house may be explicable by dream-interpretative methodology adapted specifically for this purpose, which will yield new insights into how it, and perhaps other designs, came into being. Johnson's continual additions to the Glass House complex over the course of five decades can be understood both as the evolution of manifest content and, as I shall argue, as an auto-interpretive elaboration of its latent content. Inasmuch as every dream is about its dreamer, the Glass House is ultimately a form of self-representation – conceived, like a dream, at the tense interface of the desire to reveal unconscious aspects to the self, and the desire for them to remain concealed. This paper shall uncover embedded, overdetermined representations of Johnson's dialectics of power, destruction and mortality, illuminated by following paths that radiate from a single manifest element of the Glass House design.

Beginning with Freud's (1907) analysis of Jensen's *Gradiva*, the psychoanalytic literature has been criticized for its admittedly ill-advised attempts to uncover unconscious content in works of art that rely solely on the analyst's subjective response. Conversely, the inaccessibility of the artist's associations (or equivalents thereof) may have diverted analysts from the consideration of art as-dream. Anticipating Gedo (1983) and Kuspit (1991), Noy (1979) chided the emphasis on "the attempt to uncover latent meaning" for "overlooking almost all the central issues necessary for understanding the way in which art is actually created" (p. 229). However, I hope to show that by virtue of its manifest design and the plenitude of its designer's verbal and artistic associative productions, the Glass House is an accessible and amenable exception to the difficulty in applying dream--interpretative methodology to works of art. I also offer that by baring the generative links that bridge manifest and latent content, the search for underlying meanings may in fact shed light on the processes that transform underlying meanings into visible design, and enhance, rather than neglect, the understanding of the processes via which design is created.

Freud considered the *house* one of the few manifest dream elements that tended to carry a predetermined, universal symbolic meaning: "The one typical – that is regular –

representation of the human figure as a whole is a house" (Freud 1900, p. 153, see also Freud 1916). Nevertheless, among the visual arts, architects and their architecture have only infrequently been the subject of psychoanalytically informed inquiry. While the semiotic inflections of contemporary architectural discourse admit of a fascination with Lacan,[2] attention to architecture in the psychoanalytic literature has often manifested in a fascination with Frank Lloyd Wright,[3] as well as in the expected interest in symbolic meanings and psychological impact of formed space (e.g., Arnheim 1978). One exception is Lebovitz's (2005) effort at interpreting the self-designed residences of four architects as psychological self-portraits, which however attends only to manifest design, and neither explores nor posits the possibility of unconscious or disguised self-representation. And – other than the invocation of the house as archetypal symbol of the body, mother, or female genitalia – architecture is almost never considered in conjunction with dreams. This is especially curious given Freud's frequent use of architectural tropes in his theorizing about the construction of dreams and other psychic constructions. In just one example,

> Though dream-imagination makes use of recent waking memories for its building material, it erects them into structures bearing not the remotest resemblance to those of waking life (Freud 1900, p. 84).

A century later, Mahon (2005) also makes use of this conceit, but, like Freud, does not venture outside the metaphorical realm.

> we think of the manifest appearance of dream as façade, the latent unconscious dream-work that has created this baffling façade can be thought of as the unconscious architecture that supports it... A dream, in that sense, is a piece of psychological architecture, and the dream--work is an unseen architect, whose goal is to create a fancy façade that will totally disguise a trove of unconscious wishes and sneak them past the censor (p. 25).

Another of the scarce considerations of architecture and dreams is Bollas's (2002), in which he asks

> Is visionary architecture a dreaming? Do we intend monumental structures to be dreamt upon and to extend themselves into our dreams and those of the generations to come? (p. 36).

Yet Bollas is imagining architecture as built to be "dreamt upon" – not as having been *dreamt up.* The most comprehensive correlation between the structures of dreams and the structure of design – and the processes of designing and dreaming – that I can locate is Scully's (2003), in which he considers Frank Lloyd Wright's work a "waking dream" (p. 179). Brilliantly – if loosely – Scully evokes and admixes multiple levels of congruence: between Freud and Wright as men; between the experience of a design, and the experience of a dream; between a stimulus behind a dream, and a dream as stimulus for design; and perhaps most successfully, between Wright's architectural work and Freud's dream text as common products of the *fin-de-siècle* cultural milieu. But Scully's idiosyncratic application of Freud's dream book is decidedly indifferent to the censorial, repressive aspect of dreaming:

---

[2] See Jarzombek (1999), Grosz (2001), and Hendrix (2006).

[3] See Anderson (2005), Globus and Gilbert (1964), Scully (2002), Twombly (2005), and Winer (2005).

processes analogous to dream-work are proposed to act in a concrete, physical manner to reduce and purify pre-existing forms into new ones (e.g., Wright's lowered ceilings and elevated floors are "condensed and displaced," Scully 2003, p. 174), rather than to transform and conceal underlying meanings. Like Jung, Scully enlists symbolization iconographically, as when he refers to conventionally gendered spaces such as the male/female "caverns that engulf us... as we submit to their laws" (p. 179), and the understanding of dreams as wish--fulfillment is widened to include clients' wishes for "dream-homes" (p. 179). Yet – and despite these theoretical liberties – Scully bears eloquent testimony to the notion offered here: that Freud's theory of dreams describes that

> most central of creative processes: how the mind makes those forms which embody those meanings that are most essential to it, which can be applied (and I think we can agree without any strain of any kind) to the process whereby Wright made his houses (p. 176).

Both Scully and Bollas appear to draw – as shall I – on *The Poetics of Space,* the extraordinary meditation by the French phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard (1958), who ventures that "the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories, and dreams of mankind" (p. 6).

> For, in point of fact, a house is first and foremost a geometrical object, one which we are tempted to analyze rationally... [and which] ought to resist metaphors that welcome the human body and the human soul. But transposition to the human plane takes place immediately whenever a house is considered a space... that is supposed to condense and defend intimacy. Independent of all rationality, the dream world beckons (pp. 47-48).

The dream world beckons. From an entirely different direction, Bachelard arrived at a conclusion similar to Freud's, although unlike Freud, who saw the house as a symbol – a static, iconic representation of the human figure – Bachelard explicitly considers the house more like a dream, an animated mirror of man's inner life: "Through its light alone, the house becomes human. It sees like a man. It is an eye open to night" (1958, p. 35).

The architect Peggy Deamer (2005) avers that

> psychoanalysis's aesthetic engagement has always stayed on the level of content... but not on form. Precisely because architecture is largely a nonrepresentational art, it has repelled a sustained engagement with psychoanalysis (p. 126).

And Lavin (2004) counters that the "symptomatic deflection of psychoanalysis by architectural modernism in general" (p. 18) is a reaction to presumptuous attempts to "heal architecture through the talking cure by reducing it to a rational semiotics of representation" (p. 22). The problem of psychoanalytic reductionism to representational meanings – or "content" – remains a serious and valid issue. Here, I will suggest that in considering works of design such as the Glass House, non-representational form may have meaning; in other words, content and form are sometimes one and the same. But in the end, all readings, all interpretations, all inferences allow at once for the delineation and delimitation of meaning. As Bachelard (1958) put it,

> language bears within itself the dialectics of open and closed. Through meaning it encloses, while through poetic expression, it opens up (p. 222).

Is the dream-interpretive approach analogous to the poetic? Ricœur (1977) implies that it is: "an endless commentary opens up, which far from reducing the enigma, multiplies it" (p. 170). By addressing the Glass House as a boundless, poetic dream, I hope to open a door to some of its myriad meanings, without closing others.

The approach to design-as-dream taken in the present study is adapted from, and as stringently adherent as possible to that which Freud outlined in the incomparable *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). In this application of dream-interpretative methodology, associative pathways leading from specific manifest design elements are traced and extended by making formal, contextual and narrative links to what could be considered the closest possible "associative equivalents" (Bergmann 1973): namely, Johnson's writings, interviews, speeches, letters, and casual asides, whether clearly or only potentially related to the matter at hand. We will also consider his life history, experiences, relationships, and creations – the forms he made, as well as the forms he knew. Latent meanings will be inferred at the intersection and convergence of the interpretative lines thus developed.

We proceed under the assumption that there is no single meaning of any creative product of the mind, no complete analysis of any single interpretive thread. Designs, like dreams, are presumed to conceal manifold latent meanings that coexist in combined and layered form – the exegesis of which is, of necessity, potentially endless; thus, any interpretation of the Glass House is no less complicated – and, necessarily, no less incomplete – than the interpretation of any dream. In this, we follow Freud's assertion that just as

> dreams, are capable of being 'over-interpreted' and indeed need to be, if they are to be fully understood, so all genuinely creative writings are the product of more than a single motive and more than a single impulse in the poet's mind, and are open to more than a single interpretation (Freud 1900, p. 266)

Interpretations arrived at by the approach taken here will remain just that; they will be considered to comprise only a fraction of a larger body of potential meanings contained in the Glass House, including those already inferred, and those yet to be uncovered. At the same time, it is hoped that this approach will not fail to yield insights both useful and new – about the architecture, the architect, and what Kris and Kurz (1934) termed "the Gordian knot tangling the artist with his work" (p. 7). Nor will we trivialize Johnson's work by comparing it to a dream; rather, we will witness firsthand Kris's (1952) statement that "the artist has created a world, and not indulged in a daydream" (p. 288).

The psychoanalytic purity of the methodology used here may be questioned: in evaluating and extending Johnson's "associations," where do his end, and those of the dream-interpreter begin? This question describes a valid and essential tension; one way to reconcile it with the rigor we aspire to it is to methodically look for a nexus of repetitive and internally consistent patterns which, when taken together, reinforce and validate the proposed interpretation. Another way is to consistently privilege those materials that derive from the architect – even though their status as "associations" may not be immediately apparent – over existing biographical and critical discourse, over the canon of conventionally held truths, and, as much as possible, over the interpreter's subjective response. This is where the psychoanalytical method differs from the art-historical, which neither defers to the artist's commentary, nor assumes a *priori* that his commentary may be encoded or obscuring. For the explanation of the design that the designer offers may be defensively distorted, analogous to *secondary revision,* The difference between illuminating association

and clouding commentary can be difficult – or impossible – to distinguish. Thus, privileging the architect's words and appreciating their transparent candor, while remaining ever aware of their capacity for opacifying disguise, is the challenge. While we may question the finality of the architect's conclusions, so, too, are *our* conclusions tentative. Still, it is hoped that this strategy will yield something useful and new, heeding Freud's admonition that

> We are justified, in my view, in giving free rein to our speculations so long as we retain the coolness of our judgment and do not mistake the scaffolding for the building (1900, p. 536).

In the end, every interpretation of another's creation – dream, poem, or image – must be in some way constrained and corrupted by the interpreter's subjectivity. The aim is to come as close as possible to the inner world of the dreamer, as reflected by his dream. In Richard Kuhns's (1983) words, "the poet is a mask through which we shall find the poems" (p. 144). We can no longer ask this poet – Johnson – about his poem, but also he left behind an abundance of commentary and proffered meanings. "The poet dies; the poem lives" (Kuhns 1983, p. 144). Happily, there is enough of the architect in the architecture to invite a deeper understanding.

Released from the demands and tastes of a client, and focused instead one's own, the architect's self-designed residence is in some ways an ideal design for the application of dream interpretative methodology (Lebovitz 2005), being at least theoretically closer to a product of his wishful unconscious than other designs. Johnson himself noted that

> I have never felt free working for a client... But working for oneself is a different matter. You have to discover your own needs. That is not easy, but it leaves you free (Hughes 1970, p. 57).

The intensely personal nature of the Glass House – which Johnson called it his "diary" (1993, p. vii) – has never been in question. Indeed, its very transparency has invited and supplied the inevitable interpretation of overt metaphor dialectics of voyeurism and exhibitionism, fragility and durability, legibility and illegibility (e.g., Drexler 1949, Friedman 2004). Critical, sardonic, and prone to promoting or preempting critical attack with scathing self-mockery, Johnson was no small *agent provocateur,* and his Glass House unsurprisingly elicited some measure of critical stone-throwing (e.g., Kipnis 1993). Yet, as has been constantly observed, the Glass House – seemingly an "architectural blank slate," so receptive to projection – has been stubbornly resistant to further explication. And while the concept of the Glass House-as-autobiographical diary has been broadly accepted, strategies for reading this diary largely remain within an architectural, rather than a personal framework, seeming to signal a preconscious grasp of Johnson's own duality of opacity and transparency – *of concealing while revealing.* For example, the architect Peter Eisenman states that

> Johnson is at his most opaque when he is speaking of himself – the historian speaking of the architect, the critic reviewing his own book... Johnson is at his most transparent... when speaking of his own house (Eisenman 1979 p. 21).

Yet Eisenman fails to specify what Johnson reveals when "most transparent". Johnson's determined opacity in the face of superficial transparency is in fact a pervasive subtext in

the critical literature. And so the first inference we can make about the Glass House is, perhaps, an obvious (or transparent) one, that its transparency is ironic, an inverted representation of Johnson's purposeful and sometimes covert obscurity. Freud observed that "the only technique that characterizes irony is representation by the opposite" (Freud 1905, p. 72); when employed by dream-work, he termed this *reversal* (Freud 1900, p. 327). In this initial stab at interpretation, the Glass House appears to function like a dream – telling an apparently clear, even "transparent" story of transparency, while at second glance, revealing very little.

Johnson's paramount concerns were sensual: with the aesthetic, kinesthetic, and haptic experience of seeing, approaching, encountering, entering, and being in buildings. Regardless of his intellectuality, as he matured as an architect he paradoxically (and not a little contemptuously) distanced himself from the theoretical and social ideologies that encircled and informed contemporary architectural discourse. In 1982, twenty-four distinguished architects convened for a summit meeting at the University of Virginia – fittingly enough, under the Rotunda, Thomas Jefferson's reimagination of the Roman Pantheon. In the following transcript, Johnson fields questions about his plan for a mixed-use commercial development in Boston, International Place.

> *[Kevin Roche] My question is, how does this building relate to the surrounding buildings?*
> [Johnson]... We are the people who are setting the style here (...)
> *[Robert Siegel] Is there any economic rationale to the plan?*
> [Johnson] The rationale was denied (...)
> (...)
> *[Frank Gehry] Why have [a large entrance that is not be the main one] then?*
> [Johnson] Oh, for effect...
> *[Rem Koolhaas] You have given a very impressive display of indifference and also an impressive display of how to create your own freedom... But... you then make a composition of extremely stiff and awkward elements that does not seem to explore your freedom in any visible way. What baffles me is the contradiction between your casualness and the extreme uptightness, the awkward elements.*
> [Johnson] Good point. I just choose the elements.
> *[Koolhaas] OK, then, but I would like to know on what basis.*
> [Johnson] Oh, there isn't any.
> *[Peter Eisenman]... You abhor the word "pastiche." The fact is that with... your so-called indifference you are making a pastiche... instead of a genuine complex...*
> [Johnson] I do not mind the word "pastiche."... You are quite right... The only analogy I can think of is the Welsh castles, all of which were built because Edward the Sixth liked to look at castles. Ed made them any old way he pleased. And you couldn't figure out the rationale if your life depended on it. There is no more pastiche here than in a Welsh castle [The plan contains two tall ovoid forms similar to castle towers] (...)
> *[Cesar Pelli]... every time a principle was put on the table you said you did not give a damn about it. What do you give a damn about?*
> [Johnson] We give a damn, I think [we] described it very well, about making a citadel, a village, an irregular place (Johnson 1985, pp. 14-19).

While Johnson in this exchange comes across as both baiting and relentlessly blasé, frustrating his peers – who clearly want to know what underlies his designs – the point to be stressed is that he describes making buildings not according to obligations or principles, but according to how he *wanted* them to look. His design process – for better or for worse

– was thus relatively unhindered by such issues as economy and utility (principles which Johnson considered pedestrian, and famously dismissed as "shibboleths," Johnson 1979, p. 142). Johnson's plan "hasn't any" "basis" other than a wish – a wish for a citadel, its elements chosen just like King Edward did – "any old way he pleased." Left unsaid in Charlottesville was that Johnson wanted his plan to *look* like a citadel, how International Place with its crenellated towers actually *resembles* a Welsh castle. Seeming to play his cards close to the chest, Johnson tips his hand.

However, Koolhas makes the astute observation that as rendered, Johnson's vision seems "stiff" and "awkward." Also note how the precision of Johnson's expressed ambition devolves from the specific, grandiose "citadel," to the more vague, proletarian "village," to the highly abstracted "irregular place." I argue that the substitution of the wished-for "citadel" with less grandiose and progressively more intellectualized descriptors indicates that he was more free from external constraints than from the internal, self-imposed ones which required him to obscure or modify his original intention – and perhaps, to constrict, or "stiffen" his design. I suggest that there was a mitigating inhibition operating on the wish for the citadel, activated because this wish was prohibited or otherwise *conflictual.*

We are thus well positioned to begin to unlock Johnson's life-work, the Glass House. By virtue of the keys that open doors to interpretative pathways, making our task easier – indeed, feasible – it is a beautifully suited entrée to the approach to design as dream.

- the minimum of externally imposed and confounding constraints encountered in the design of the architect's own residence, at least theoretically enhancing its inherent capacity for self-representation;
- the hypothetical presence of conflict, inhibiting the direct and/or conscious translation of wishes into design, and motivating the unconscious concealment of self-representation; and
- the plenitude of available "associative material": Johnson's architectural works, biographical and historical data, and, most importantly, his spoken and written words. Famously transparent, and famously obscure, the Glass House invites us to look inside, and invites us to consider the essential dialectics of the dream – the dialectics of revealing and concealing. Let us begin, then, with the wish for a *citadel.*

The Tomb of Atreus

Johnson did indeed leave an overt reference to a citadel at the Glass House: the Painting Gallery, built on the Glass House grounds in 1965 to house his growing collection of contemporary art (Fig. 2, top left). As he explained, it was purposefully modeled on the Tomb (or Treasury) of Atreus (c. 1350 BCE), so named by Pausanius because he fancied it the treasure house of Atreus, the legendary king of Mycenae. The Tomb of Atreus is a prominent component of the Mycenaean Citadel, one the most sensational archaeological excavations of the nineteenth century (Fig. 2, bottom left). It remains the most impressive of the extant Bronze Age *tholos* tombs: at 13.5 meters high and 14.5 meters wide, "it was the tallest and widest dome in the world for over a thousand years until... the Pantheon in Rome" (Mason 2007, p. 35).

Johnson, who by 1963 had already turned away from the ascetic modernist ideal and toward historical motif, here went even further by adopting an ancient, "timeless" form – a type which, as Kuspit (2000) observes, provides "a foundation that seems to guarantee immortality to those who stand on it" (p. 24). Submerged by great earthen berms, the Painting Gallery is a fairly faithful replication of a classical *tholos* tomb: it has a narrow, descending entrance, or *tholos*, leading to a massive, windowless gallery, or *dromos*. The floor plan of the gallery is based on a two pairs of clustered circles (Fig. 2, bottom right); huge, rotating display walls swing around the central axes of the three largest circles, allowing no more than six images to be viewed simultaneously in the gallery's intimate, exalted atmosphere (Fig. 2, top right).

Few of Johnson's structures are as immediately and as wholly identifiable with their sources; fewer still – given Johnson's promiscuous architectural fluency – reference only one.[4] Such mimetic appropriation earns comparison to Freud's description of the wholesale importation of pre-formed fantasies into dream, a parallel made more sympathetic by his reference to classical myth and architectural metaphor – both, common tropes in his dream book.

> I am in the habit of describing the element in the dream-thoughts which I have in mind as a 'phantasy'... the wishful purpose that is at work in their production has mixed up the material of which they are built, has re-arranged it and has formed it into a new whole. They stand in much the same relation to the childhood memories from which they are derived as do some of the Baroque palaces of Rome to the ancient ruins whose pavements and columns have provided the material for the more recent structures... the dream-work will prefer to take possession of the ready-made day-dream and seek to introduce it into the content of the dream... such, for instance, as the boy's dream of driving in a war-chariot with the heroes of the Trojan (Freud 1900, pp. 491-493).

And thus at first glance the Painting Gallery might appear unplumbable beyond its blatant surface designation. But Freud further observes that pre-assembled dream components are themselves "like any other component of the dream-thoughts," in that they, too, are "compressed, condensed, superimposed on one another" (p. 493). So, let us follow this associative line, and further unpack the Painting Gallery by asking: who was King Atreus?

Aeschylus dramatized the legend of the cursed House of Atreus in the *Orestia Trilogy* (458 BCE).

> Atreus and his brother Thyestes were the sons of King Pelops and his wife, Hippodamis. At the behest of their mother, they murdered their half-brother, Chrysippus, to ensure that one of her own sons would gain succession to the throne. For this crime, the brothers were exiled to Mycenae, where Atreus, the elder of the brothers, became King. Atreus' wife, Aerope, deceitfully conspired to help Thyestes – her brother-in-law, and her lover – steal Atreus's golden fleece, and thereby seize the throne. But Atreus regained it by winning a bet that he could make the sun run backwards, a feat Hermes suggested and Zeus achieved by making the sun set in the east. Atreus then sought revenge by tricking Thyestes into returning from his exile by inviting

[4] It was recently suggested that the interior of the Painting Gallery may have drawn on Franco Albini's Treasury of the Cathedral of Lorenzo, Genoa, Italy (1952-1956) also organized around multiple circular forms (Forster 2009, p. 54). It is unclear if Johnson was familiar with this work, and/or whether its very name may have spurred his recollection of the Tomb of Atreus. However, as will become apparent, the motif of multiple circular forms was present in Johnson's mind since at least the mid-1940s.

> him to a banquet in his honor. Unbeknownst to Thyestes, Atreus had murdered Thyestes's sons (except Aegisthus), and cooked and served them as the meal. Afterwards, he unveiled their severed hands and feet, demonstrating his gruesome vengeance. Aegisthus – thought to be Thyestes's son by his own daughter – avenged his father and brothers by killing Atreus and restoring his father to the throne. But Atreus's son Agamemnon once more drove Thyestes into exile, and became the King of Mycenae and the future heroic victor of the Trojan War (adapted from Aeschylus, 2006).

This rather juicy legend, replete with deceit, murder, infidelity, cannibalism, and incest, is especially notable in this context for its pervasive themes of sibling rivalry and exile, and for the fact that the House of Atreus carried a curse – a curse put into play when Atreus assassinated his brother *so that his mother could be mother to a king.*

Johnson may very well have shared Freud's boyhood fantasy of the "heroes of the Trojan," as his deep regard for Aeschylus and the legends of the *Oresteia* long preceded his specialization in classics at Harvard. It was actually gained quite early, for he was from a young age tutored in ancient Greek by his mother, Louise Pope Johnson.[5] Louise was in fact utterly devoted to Johnson's comprehensive and rather compulsive education, both at home and in the museums, cathedrals and ruins of Europe and the Near East. In providing the young Johnson with a solid foundation for his future study of classics and architecture, she also ensured that by the time he graduated as valedictorian from boarding school and entered Harvard, he was a polished aesthete with a reputation for brilliance and ruthless intellectuality (Schulze 1994, p. 27).

Given the effort put into his manufacture, Louise would brook no disappointments. When they inevitably occurred, they were met with shaming gestures:

> Philip never forgot the occasion when she grew exasperated with his seeming inability to master a simple lesson in handwriting. 'All right, Philip,' she said, laying aside her instruction manual in a gesture of irritated resignation, 'perhaps you are just not up to the problem.' He recalled being stunned by her reaction, which he later described as 'a look of such disappointment, such censure' (Schulze 1994, p. 27).

That Louise – like Hippodamis – wanted her son to be some sort of prince is clear: her vicarious wish is signaled by Johnson's middle name, Cortelyou, after his paternal ancestor Jacques Cortelyou, surveyor general of Nieuw Netherlands, who "in 1660 furnished Governor Pieter Stuyvesant with the first town plan of Nieuw Amsterdam" (Schulze 1994, p. 11). That Johnson – like Atreus – internalized his mother's lofty aspirations for him is suggested by his seemingly blithe (but utterly serious, I think) remark to the critic Ada Louise Huxtable: "My ambition? I'd like to be *l'architecte du Roi*" (Huxtable 1964, p. 18). Royal leanings are also readable in Johnson's preference for monumental public architecture, an in the heroic themes represented in his personal collection of art. *Ozymandias,* a sculpture by Julian Schnabel prominently cited at the Glass House, consists of a massive, scarred tree trunk cast in bronze and toppled on its side. It references Shelley's eponymous sonnet, an ode to a fallen statue of the "king of kings" also known as Ramesses II (Shelley 2003,

[5] Johnson's appreciation of Aeschylus is apparent in comments made in 1953: "How much clearer [than in Socrates] the Greek message comes through the plays of Aeschylus or the Parthenon or the Acropolis. Tragedy and sculpture talk to us directly" (Schulze 1994, p. 233).

p. 198), which – like the sculpture it inspired – is a meditation on the ephemeral nature of might, and the futile striving for immortality through greatness, monumental works and art itself. The theme of fallen kings and heroes is echoed by the only painting in Johnson's extensive collection privileged for display in the Glass House proper, *The Burial of Phocion,* whose subject is an esteemed Athenian general executed for questionable allegations of treason and exiled, as a corpse, from burial in Athens.

Might Johnson's replication of the Tomb of Atreus reflect an identification with that other tragic hero, King Atreus? This hypothesis is allowed, if not suggested by the fact that his older brother Alfred died from mastoiditis at age five, when Johnson was only two years old. While I can find no published record of Johnson referring to Alfred (or to his death), he would have been vulnerable to the guilt over sibling death that stems from archaic competitive, and murderous strivings. Making Johnson, like Atreus, the male heir, Alfred's death could have easily felt like a virtual murder at his own hands, like the assassination of Chryssipus by his brothers.[6] And what of Atreus's other unscrupulous method of acquiring power – via the aid of powerful gods? Johnson let it be known that his eventual position as the dean of modern architecture was not, at least in his mind, honestly gotten, but achieved through his shrewd, even prescient choice of mentor, Mies van der Rohe, and his stylistic dependence on him; his fostering of talented protégés, who would themselves become influential and reciprocate his benevolence; and his flair for courting and cosseting the patrons, developers, and politicians needed to win high-profile and public commissions (Varnelis 2009).

Johnson may have had another compelling affinity with Atreus: he too, had suffered experiences of exile, experiences I will argue were traumatic, and would later find overdetermined representation at the Glass House. Most germane here, when Johnson returned to Harvard in 1938 to study architecture, he was publicly disgraced when his pro--Nazi activities prior to World Wa War II were exposed. The theme of disgraced exile, so crucial to the *Oresteia* trilogy, is signified at the Glass House by the highly privileged figure of Phocion, thereby tying together Johnson, Atreus, and Phocion. Phocion and Atreus are further linked by the funereal references to them at the Glass House. The fashioning of the Painting Gallery in the form of a magnificent classical tomb, to hold what Johnson likely knew was his greatest treasure – his superb collection, emblem and evidence of his enduring legacy of influence on contemporary art – was, I suggest, an attempt at mastery and repair, akin to the posthumous rehabilitation of Phocion's honor and reminiscent of one of Freud's own dreams:

> The dream seems to have been saying: 'If you must rest in a grave, let it be the Etruscan one.' And, by making this replacement, it transformed the gloomiest of expectations into one that was highly desirable (1900, pp. 453-454).

But let us not leave the Tomb of Atreus prematurely, but follow the threads leading from it by turning to its context in ancient Mycenae.

[6] In addition, Louise often scolded Johnson by comparing his behavior with that of his apparently unimpeachable late brother (Schulze 1994, p. 18).

The Grave Circles

The Mycenaean Citadel is a massive hilltop complex of dwellings, halls, and tombs (Fields 2004). Its fortifications are made from dry-laid stones so huge they are called Cyclopean walls. Three millennia later, they remain intact. Among the important elements of the Citadel are the Megaron, the central hall; an hidden, underground water cistern; several *tholos* tombs, including the Tomb of Atreus; and two monumental ring structures containing layers of shaft tombs, known as Grave Circles A and B. Family travel photographs document that when during his 1928 tour of the Peloponnesus, the 22 year-old Johnson visited not only the Acropolis, but also the landmark structures of the Mycenaean Citadel, then only recently excavated by Heinrich Schliemann (Fig. 3, top). Attesting to his abiding interest in ancient architecture, Johnson kept his beloved archaeology texts close by – literally within arm's reach – in the shelves reserved for them, proximal to his desk in the Glass House Study. Several of these describe the Citadel in detail (Fig. 3, bottom). It would be an understatement to say that Johnson never hesitated to credit an attribution he was aware of; on the contrary, he had a habit of compulsively listing architectural and art-historical references, which I suggest was a way to ward off perpetual feelings of inadequacy.[7] But yet while Johnson was clearly well acquainted with the Citadel – he visited it, and its structures are detailed in his well-thumbed library – I cannot find any record of him referencing any element of the Citadel, other from the Tomb of Atreus. (This may explain why the literature on the Glass House has not explored the significance of the Tomb's setting.) Given these observations, we thus may safely accept that he was not *consciously* aware of referencing the Grave Circles when in 1971 he commissioned and installed a site-specific sculpture by Donald Judd at the entrance path to the Glass House; for it consists, quite simply, of a large, open, concrete *ring* (Fig. 4, left).

The stipulation of an etiological relationship between the Judd and the paired Grave Circles would be more tenuous if the Judd were the only circular element proximal to the Glass House. But there is indeed a second one, mirroring the Judd in placement and scale: the shallow circular pool on the Glass House lawn. Significantly, the pool was built in 1955, after the well-publicized discovery and excavation of Grave Circle B, between 1952 and 1954 (Mylonas 1966). The pool is in turn rendered more meaningful by family photographs of a seven year-old Johnson wading with his sister in another shallow, round pool, conspicuously similar in form and material to Judd's ring (Fig. 4, right). The twinned circular elements adjacent to the Glass House, the Judd and the pool, may thus be considered *overdetermined,* in accord with Freud's observation that

> elements of the dream are constructed out of the whole mass of dream-thoughts and each one of those elements is shown to have been determined many times over in relation to the dream-thoughts (1900, p. 284).

They may also be compared to a *composite image,* a condensed manifest dream element containing features common to several different latent dream thoughts (Freud 1900, p. 322). In this case, these might include the Grave Circles; the pool in which the Johnson children played; and, perhaps, the grave in which one of them was laid.

---

[7] As example, the essay with which Johnson announced his Glass House was hailed (and reviled) for its plethora of references (Johnson 1979, p. 212).

In actuality, multiple circular forms were prominent in Johnson's designing mind, and represented at the Glass House, from the start. The rear elevation of the 1949 Brick House[8] has three porthole-like windows (visible in Fig. 4, right), and there is the emphatic brick cylinder containing the hearth and the bath in the Glass House, its only internal structural feature. This circular element was then joined by another, the pool. This pair of circles – one inside, and one outside – was then followed by the 1965 Painting Gallery, whose floor plan is based on two pairs of circles – a larger, and a smaller (Fig. 2, bottom right). Finally, a virtual simulacrum of the Grave Circles was accomplished with the 1971 pairing of the Judd and the pool: together, they appear to quote the Grave Circles nearly as explicitly as the Painting Gallery quotes the Tomb of Atreus, despite the apparently unconscious nature of the source. Aerial views of the Glass House and the Mycenean Citadel underscore this striking concordance, relative to the Glass House and the main hall, the Megaron (Fig. 5). See also how the Glass House entrance path – reconfigured to wind around the Judd after it was sited – exactly restates the road that curves around Grave Circle B on the way to the Citadel entrance.

If the Grave Circles were previously signified by the Glass House cylinder, the pool, and perhaps once more by the clustered circles of the Painting Gallery, we must ask – what urged Johnson to redesignate the Grave Circles yet again, with the Judd and the pool? One possibility is that Johnson was merely expanding his ensemble of funereal structures, in a sort of repetition compulsion. It may also be hypothesized that earlier representations of the Grave Circles were insufficiently reminiscent of these unconsciously preoccupying forms, forms Johnson seemed compelled to revive, yet compelled to disguise – only to be most faithfully represented in their ultimate rendering. This succession of these ~works-in--elaboration may be conceptualized as a *progressive approximation of latent content in manifest design.* This process may be compared to serial, concatenated dreams: Freud observed that

> separate and successive dreams of this kind may have the same meaning... If so, the first of these homologous dreams to occur is often the more distorted and timid, while the succeeding one will be more confident and distinct (Freud 1900, pp. 333-334).

Thus, the emergence of imagery evoking the Grave Circles at the Glass House may have involved a process of auto-interpretation – *the simultaneous elaboration and explication of its own dream.*

The Secret Water Cistern

Not long after finishing the Painting Gallery, Johnson built the 1970 Sculpture Gallery, ostensibly to house his growing collection of sculpture. However, as Johnson admitted years later,

> I had some shapes in mind that I wanted to make real... the real reason is, as always, I wanted to build another building. Then I realized that the building I wanted to build was a staircase (Lewis & O'Connor 1994, pp. 45-56).

[8] Sited across the lawn, the Brick House is the contemporaneous dyadic partner to the Glass House.

A nondescript entrance leads to the Sculpture Gallery's central element, which, as one might expect, is a staircase – angular, inwardly turning, and bordered by a low wall (Fig. 6, top left). Because the Sculpture Gallery is built onto a receding slope, one is unprepared for the magnitude of the sunken interior space; off-set, stepped landings form bays for installations. It is brilliantly lit via its glass roof, its steel framework throwing dramatic, striated shadows, a fantastic chiaroscuro that fairly vibrates with the vertiginous pull of the stairs.

Given the correspondences of the Glass House with the Mycenaean Citadel thus far, it may come as no surprise that the Sculpture Gallery also quotes a component of this "classic" source. One of the celebrated landmarks of the Citadel is the Secret Water Cistern, a name that refers to the secret supply of this precious commodity it held for the Citadel's residents when under siege. Like the Sculpture Gallery, the Cistern is entered via a small, unremarkable opening which leads to a deep subterranean space, filled in the past by buried pipes carrying water from the hills beyond. A cutaway diagram reveals a familiar, descending, angular staircase that received and accessed the flow of water (Fig. 6, top right). Apparently as unaware of the recapitulation of the Cistern as he was of the Grave Circles, nevertheless, he understood that "*the building I wanted to build was a staircase.*"

The staircase he did build – one of the "shapes in mind" he "wanted to make real" – had an ancient source, which may shed new light on Johnson's rather enigmatic description of the Sculpture Gallery: as *classical* (Johnson 1993, p. viii), the only inspiration he could name. Yet the concealment of its vast roof-as-skylight by a fortress-like exterior recalls other structures, among them the original McKim, Mead & White Pennsylvania Station; this similarity may be more than mere coincidence, a question we will return to.

If we look at Johnson's subsequent designs, we find that like the Grave Circles, the Cistern's imprint found further elaboration in Johnson's oeuvre. Following the Sculpture Gallery by four years is one of his most compelling public works, the 1974 Fort Worth Water Garden (Johnson 2002, p. 165), in which *water spills down steps* and toward the center of a sunken, angular amphitheatre (Fig. 6, bottom left). Six years later comes the fountain of the later Metro-Dade Cultural Center in Miami (1983; Johnson 2002, p. 236), which is, in essence, *water flowing down a staircase* (Fig. 6, bottom right). Just as the circular motifs of the Glass House progressed toward an approximation of the Grave Circles, so, too, did these works become increasingly allusive of the Cistern, a process which in this instance began at the Glass House and extends into public works. The 1970 Sculpture Gallery recalls the Cistern in form (the angular, descending staircase) and in function (the holding of a precious commodity); the replacement of the Cistern's stored water by stored sculpture reflects a process of *distortion*. Next, the 1974 Water Garden restores the Cistern's water element, remains formally closer to the Sculpture Gallery than the Cistern. Finally, the 1983 Metro-Dade fountain is a fairly unambiguous recapitulation of the Cistern staircase.

Together, these manifest designs comprise a second example of progressive approximation of latent content involving an element of the Mycenaean Citadel. But looking back, we can indeed find an allusion to holding water in the Sculpture Gallery, in its collection of urns and jars by the contemporary British ceramicist, Andrew Lord. Resembling a tiny museum of excavated archaeological finds, they alludes to the holding function of a cistern – both in their form as vessels, and in their physical context in the lower level of the gallery, where, like at the bottom of a cistern, water could be collected and held.

The Megaron

If we conceptualize the Mycenaean Citadel as an overarching conjecture that organizes and represents wishes, memories, and conflicts buried in the Glass House, then the Glass House proper – its primary signifier – remains to be more firmly situated within its grammar. We have tentatively identified the logical analogue: the Megaron, which functioned as a place of worship and as the seat of Mycenaean royalty. Only its outlines remains. Several aspects of the Megaron bear resemblance to the Glass House, including its simple rectangular footprint; its loose separation into several discrete, yet fluid areas; and its dramatic situation at the edge of a promontory. From its walled heights, the Megaron commands a magnificent view of Atreus's kingdom, the fertile Argive plain; the massive stones of the Citadel fortifications recall the hillside of jumbled boulders from which the Glass House overlooks its groomed park. Johnson bought the property immediately after discovering this natural shelf: "the setting on the hill I picked in the first five minutes" (Johnson 1993, p. vii).

Carefully edited by Johnson from a forest, the huge oaks lining the Glass House echo its piers, recalling the theory that columned temples were originally styled after sacred groves of trees.[9] The columned Megaron is considered the forerunner of the classical Greek temple (Fields 2004), and the symmetrical Glass House, with its orderly, unadorned steel piers, has justifiably been understood as a modern-day temple. This view was initiated and encouraged by Johnson, who, from the very beginning, did not hesitate to compare the Glass House to the Parthenon (Johnson 1979, p. 212); the ratio of the Parthenon rectangle is of 2.2, vs. the Glass House's 2.1.

Like Freud, Johnson had an unexpectedly visceral response to the Acropolis; but in contrast to his silence around the Citadel, he frequently remembered this *jouissance:* "when I first liked a building – I guess it was the Parthenon, naturally – I burst into tears" (Stern 2008, p. 20). I suggest that the memory of the Acropolis screened that of the Citadel, and that Johnson's affinity for his rugged outcropping in New Canaan was informed by profound emotions experienced at *both* ancient summits. These in turn likely drew on spatial imagery inscribed in his own ancient history, for the Cleveland neighborhood he grew up in stood on a 440 foot escarpment at the western edge of the Appalachian shelf; "across the street was a park and beyond, a glorious, unimpeded view" (Schulze 1994, p. 15).

The Glass House was one of Johnson's first buildings, and the first to attract critical attention. It was designed at a time when he was still very much under the thrall of Mies; yet in certain ways the Glass House already deviated from its otherwise general adherence to Miesian thematics, the most prominent example being the highly controversial central brick cylinder that contains hearth and the bath (Dal Co 1982, Eisenman 1979, Frampton 1978).

> [Johnson] The [brick hearth] would drive Mies up the wall... That's probably why he couldn't stand the house... It's absolutely important, because that's the hearth. See, Mies wouldn't have done that...

[9] It is not clear if this was an intentional or conscious allusion. However, given that Johnson was consistently preoccupied with the concept of the *tenemos* – sacred places and sanctuaries – he most certainly would have been aware of this theory.

> *[Hilary Lewis] But you did recognize the fireplace as something Frank Lloyd Wright might have done...?*
>
> [Johnson] No, I didn't. To me, it was similar to my upbringing (Lewis & O'Connor 1994, p. 33).

The privileged specification of the hearth summons Johnson's childhood – a conscious pull, powerful enough to override his allegiance to Mies. I will argue that this "absolutely important" sway – if perfectly accurate – also served, like the memory of the Acropolis, to screen the sway of the Citadel. This material thus warded off evidently included an exquisite receptivity toward a crucial aspect of the Megaron – in fact its defining and only remaining interior feature, the outline of its broad, central fire circle (Fig. 7, top).

We have seen how, over time, Johnson approximated the forms of the Grave Circles and the Cistern. Examination of the many preparatory plans for the Glass House reveals that he similarly approached the form of the Megaron (Fig. 7, bottom). Most of these plans are more complicated propositions than the one Johnson eventually settled on;[10] some have multiple cylindrical forms, some have none, and some plans lack a hearth altogether. They underwent many permutations and refinements until the final plan was arrived at, in which the sole remaining internal structural element is the central cylinder containing a hearth and bath. Here, it is not in the progression of individual works, but during the design process itself that latent imagery of the Citadel gradually emerges into manifest design. It nonetheless remains distorted, by the cylinder's upright form, and by its carrying water (the bath) as well as fire, an example of *inversion.*

The only inspiration that Johnson originally identified for the brick cylinder was a "burnt wooden village" (Johnson 1979, p. 223) with surviving brick chimneys, witnessed while touring a Poland ravaged by Hitler as a journalist guest of the Third Reich. Asked about this sixty years later, he recalled,

> it was a horrifying sight. And yet, it's so symbolic, that you've got the hearth, the one thing that was left. And it was so beautiful. That's a horrible thing to say, but ruins are beautiful (Lewis & O'Connor 1994, p. 33).

However provocative and meaningful this memory must be, I suggest that it, like that of the Parthenon and the childhood hearth, screened a *different* devastation, that of the Citadel. In the plans for Johnson's house – like the burnt village, and like the Megaron – the hearth was the *only thing left.*

Thus, as Johnson's life-work unfolded over five decades, it revived key features of the ancient Mycenae. While the Tomb of Atreus was a deliberate, conscious recreation, other inspirations went unattributed, and were apparently unconscious: the Grave Circles; the Water Cistern; the Megaron. As the Glass House accumulated individual correspondences, it also maintained a *topographical* congruence, gradually becoming a more pronounced and mimetic reprisal of the Citadel – both in its parts, and also as a *whole* (Fig. 8). This is, I offer, an unmatched illustration of Freud's assertion that

---

[10] There were a total of seventy-nine schemes, with twenty-seven separate approaches (Schulze 1994, p. 191). One plan incongruously specifies a stone building with a massive colonnade (!), which becomes more comprehensible when viewed within the stone idiom of the Citadel (Frampton 1993). Later in his life, Johnson's work would more overtly admit of such classical monumentality.

> dreams are derived from the past in every sense. Nevertheless the ancient belief that dreams foretell the future is not wholly devoid of truth. By picturing our wishes as fulfilled, dreams are after all leading us into the future. But this future, which the dreamer pictures as the present, has been moulded by his indestructible wish into a perfect likeness of the past (Freud 1900, p. 621).

Most surely, "the artist has created a world, not indulged in a daydream" (Kris 1952, p. 288).

The correspondences – both explicit and embedded – between elements of the Citadel and their postulated recapitulations at the Glass House are, to my mind, too many and too compelling to lack teleologic meaning. The Grave Circles, the Cistern, the Megaron – these constitute imprinted visual tableaux Johnson seemed compelled to recreate, rather than remember: "not only our memories, but the things we have forgotten are 'housed'" (Bachelard 1958, p. xxxvii). A single aspect of the Citadel – the Tomb of Atreus – escaped repression to find conscious articulation its reverent, the Painting Gallery. The cluster of meanings mined from this veritable exposed vein are rich, as one might expect from a royal treasury. And although they sketch but one branch of this latent meanings contained in the Glass House, I suggest they are nevertheless sufficient to support the proposition that the Glass House assembled in part from embedded, unconscious representations of its architect, including his conscious and unconscious memories of the Mycenaean Citadel, and all their potential attendant associations – affects, identifications, conflicts, aspirations, and desires. The distorting transformation of some of these meanings, via processes comparable to dream-work, into embedded and apparently unconscious representations is consistent with Johnson's need to keep them latent – *buried.* And yet the steady emergence of progressively more literal significations of the Citadel, and the resulting evolution of the Glass House toward its visage, suggests that over time, their repression was relaxed, and the need to keep them buried was gradually eased. I will go further, and argue that for Johnson, and perhaps for others too, the process of design, powered by the ambivalent desire for self--representation, allowed the *working through* of that conflict, located at the ambivalent, tense interface of the desire to reveal the self through aesthetic expression, and the desire for concealment – from the world, and from the self.

The Burnt City

An intriguing intersection of history provides a different link between Philip Johnson's constructed dreams of ancient architecture with Sigmund Freud's curiously parallel research into the architecture of dreams and the ancient history of the self. In 1899, while writing his dream book, Freud wrote his friend Wilhelm Fliess that he was reading *Ilios,* Heinrich Schliemann's wide-eyed diary of his excavation of ancient Mycenae and Troy.

> I gave myself a present, Schliemann's *Ilios,* and greatly enjoyed the account of his childhood. The man was happy when he found Priam's treasure [finds that Schliemann attributed to King Priam of Troy], because happiness comes only with the fulfillment of a childhood wish (Freud 1899, p. 353).

Here, Freud appears to be paraphrasing the anthropologist Rudolf Virchow, who, in his preface to *Ilios,* had this to say about Schliemann: "happy the man to whose lot it has fallen to realize in the maturity of manhood the dreams of his childhood, to unveil the Burnt City" (Schliemann 1881, p. xvi).

The "burnt city" is, of course, *Ilios,* or ancient Troy, set aflame in legend by Agamemnon. In the opening pages of *Ilios,* Schliemann vividly traces his archaeological quest to his childhood adventures in a graveyard, and the Homeric legends his father recited.

> the work of my later life has been the natural consequence of the impressions I received in my childhood... the pickaxe and spade for the excavation of Troy and the royal tombs of Mycenae were both forged and sharpened in the little German village in which I passed eight years of my earliest childhood (Schliemann 1881, p. 24).

One can only imagine how this rhapsodic account might have resonated with – or even helped spark – Freud's self-analysis, in which mined his dreams and memories for insights into his own ancient history and the workings of the unconscious mind – he, who as a boy dreamt of "the heroes of the Trojan."[11] Ironically, although Schliemann's claim of fulfilling a childhood wish was completely fabricated (per Schliemann himself, no less), it was clearly nevertheless both credible and meaningful to Freud (and to the venerable Virchow). As Peter Gay (1988) put it,

> If Schliemann, realizing in adult life fantasies from childhood, was one of the few people Freud really envied, [Freud] saw himself for his part as the Schliemann of the mind (p. 326).

Before traveling to Mycenae in 1928, the historically-minded and well-read young Johnson would have almost certainly read the international best-seller *Ilios:* "it was said that every person of culture and education lived through the drama of the discovery of Troy" (O'Donoghue 2004, p. 661). He would have thus known of certain parallels between himself and Schliemann. Both were ambitious and gifted; both were fanatical students of ancient Greek literature. And, both lived with the ghost of a dead elder brother. In fact, Heinrich Schliemann was named after his own brother, the first Heinrich, who died just before the second Heinrich was born.[12] Niederland (1965) suggests that given Schliemann's status as a "replacement child," archaeology was a symbolic means of restoring the lost object. This may also have been true for Johnson, who for most of his mature career revived ancient forms. Just as I have postulated for Johnson, the loss of an elder brother may have promoted Schliemann's own identification with Atreus, and thus his fascination with the ruins of Mycenae and Troy. Lending credence to this idea, Schliemann – the self-appointed excavator of the Mycenae – named his son "Agamemnon," renamed his

---

[11] As O'Donoghue (2004) notes, "although Freud did not purchase the 1881 German translation of Schliemann's Ilios until 1899, Schliemann's exploits beneath the Turkish soil were rendered virtually folkloric by the extensive coverage accorded them in the Viennese press" (p. 659). The reader is referred to O'Donoghue's study for an excellent discussion of the influence of the immensely popular Schliemann saga on the development of Freud's theorizing.

[12] Unlike much of Schliemann's history, the death of Schliemann's brother, his interment in the village graveyard, and the reassignment of his name are well documented (Traill 1995).

manservant "Pelops" (adding a wry Oedipal twist to the tale), dressed his Greek wife in "Priam's treasure," and called his mansion in Athens "Iliou Melathron" – Palace of Troy.

Soon after visiting the Acropolis and Mycenae, Johnson had what he liked to call a "Saul-Paul" conversion, during which he resolved to dedicate his heretofore unfocussed life to architecture (Schulze 1994, p. 44). Johnson, who once described himself "an architect by accident" (Johnson 1979, p. 108), may have found an idealized yet accessible role model in Schliemann, who, however triumphant, was still widely considered a rank amateur. Like Schliemann, Johnson rapidly achieved dominance in a specialized world in which he initially lacked any professional qualifications or credibility, in spite of finding his "true calling" relatively late in life. And so the figure of Heinrich Schliemann may have provided impetus and inspiration to two very creative, very driven, and very different people. Freud fashioned himself as the "Schliemann of the mind"; he wrote his dream book, and then realized his dream of seeing the ancient world. Johnson reinvented himself as the "Schliemann of architecture"; he saw the ancient world, and then recreated it in his dream house. But there is yet more to learn from *Ilios.*

Motivated by a thirst for verifying ancient legend, Schliemann freely interpreted evidence for destruction by fire in ancient Troy as proof that Agamemnon had in reality burned it, going so far as to pinpointing "The Burnt City" to specific excavation strata. In an autobiographical passage of *Ilios,* he describes viewing the Lithuanian city of Memel in 1854, after it had suffered a fire, comparing it to

> an immense graveyard on which blackened walls and chimneys stood out like tombstones, mournful monuments of the fragility of human things (Schliemann 1881, p. 13).

This evocative description – which I suspect Schliemann lifted from Henry David Thoreau's "Walden"[13] – seems to have been further recycled, for it cannot help but recall the source Johnson identified for the brick cylinder of the Glass House, *"a burnt wooden village... where nothing was left but foundations and chimneys of brick".* Eighty years later, Memel would be burnt again – by Hitler, on *Kristallnacht.* Perhaps this "burnt city," here, in *Ilios,* is the link that connects Johnson's disowned remembrance of the Citadel with the remembered wartime experiences that screened it: Hitler's burning of Poland, representing in conscious memory the ruination of Mycenae and Agamemnon's victorious burning of Troy; all, failed promises of immortal glory.

Ars Longa, Vita Brevis

Bachelard (1958) notes that "a house constitutes a body of images that gives mankind proofs or illusions of stability" (p. 17). The Glass House dismantles those illusions, as opposed to the enduring remembrance offered by ancient monuments. Witness Johnson's acceptance speech for the inaugural Pritzker Architecture Prize, in 1974.

[13] In *Walden* (2004/1854) – published the same year Schliemann visited Memel – Thoreau wrote "The chimney is to some extent an independent structure, standing on the ground, and rising though the house to the heavens; even after the house is burned it still stands sometimes, and its importance and independence are apparent" (pp. 232-233). It would not be surprising if Schliemann appropriated this observation, as he was not only prone to doing so, he was also very broadly read, and was living in the United States when *Walden* was published (1850-1858).

> It is no wonder to me that whole civilizations are remembered by their buildings; indeed some only by their buildings. I think specifically of Teotihuacan in Mexico, a people whose very name is lost... Yet they flourished for more than a thousand years and built a great and unforgettable city that [speaks] to us a thousand years after [they] disappeared from the earth... *ars longa, vita brevis* (Hyatt Foundation 1979, pp. 13-14).

If Johnson did indeed have a profound experience at the Citadel, why would he repress awareness of representing all but one of its aspects, and use the memory of the Parthenon, an ancient site seen on the same tour, as a screen? The question gains import when one takes into account that the Parthenon (447-432 BCE) was built atop the ruined fortifications of another, long-gone, Mycenaean-era citadel (c.1600-1100 BCE; see Bundgaard 1976). Displacing what came before it, the Parthenon is itself a virtual screen memory, hewn in stone and marble. But might there have been something vital, something reassuringly permanent about such standing survivors as the Parthenon and the ghost city of Teotihuacan, their heights still intact, their enclosed spaces still defined, that allowed them to be kept in Johnson's conscious mind? After all, the Tomb of Atreus, which Johnson was clearly consciously aware of, is among the Citadel's only extant standing structures; in contrast, the skeletal remains of most of the Citadel – buried for millennia and only recently exhumed when Johnson saw them – are but potential structures, their roofs and rooms leveled, their volumes violated. The tomb of a vanished civilization, the Citadel is a stupendous monument to mortality – ultimately, and utterly, a *memento mori.*

And would not the grave personal meanings stirred in Johnson by witnessing the rent and ravaged seat of the accursed House of Atreus be better left interred? It can only be imagined how the obliterated Citadel might have wakened and attached itself to Johnson's memories and feelings about his brother's death and related, prohibited infantile wishes and impulses – let alone the premonition of future losses and his own mortality. I suggest that it was this – the nexus of the unspeakable specter of death, devastation and loss, and all its meaningful mythic allusions – that drove the memory of the Citadel deep into Johnson's unconscious designing mind. His undreamt dreams of the ghost city of Mycenae were symbolically elaborated, or *dreamt* – buried, but *brought to life* – in the Glass House, a house as ephemeral as life itself, which he was nevertheless sure to be remembered by; a house haunted by the ghost of a boy, a boy whose very name was lost.

There is evidence for Johnson's interest in structures being sparked by their destruction. In the early 1960's he helped spearhead the movement to preserve Pennsylvania Station. The effort failed; tragically, the historic building was demolished in 1963. The Painting Gallery, perhaps his first mimetic appropriation of classical form, was completed two years later. The timing is consistent with the notion that his new interest in the re-interpretation and reincarnation of ancient structures – itself, a form of preservation – was stimulated by the destruction of Pennsylvania Station, whose skylight is also remembered by the Sculpture Gallery. Indeed, Johnson's words suggest as much.

> When I was 13, I was introduced to Gothic at the cathedrals in France, and they made an indelible impression... the same thing happened in Greece... I had done this [preservation] thing... we tried to save Penn Station. So it brought up memories and desires that were latent in my work with modern architecture (Lewis & O'Connor 1994, p. 159).

It is worth repeating: *"memories and desires latent in my work with modern architecture."* Might the destruction of Penn Station – which Johnson could not prevent or undo – have wakened his memories of destroyed Mycenae, both conscious and unconscious?

In *The Survival of Images,* Rose (2001) elegantly relates the art historian Aby Warburg's concept of "the afterlife of antiquity" to Freud's concept of "the return of the repressed" and Kris's psychoanalytic approach to creativity. As he explains,

> Image-making in the classical tradition... provided a means of return, drawing the ancient into a dynamic and disquieting relationship with the modern – a relationship which Warburg described as "the afterlife of antiquity"... a means through which persons created comprehensible and adaptive links between the past and present. For Warburg, the construction of images provided an opportunity for organizing fragments of the past, and therefore promised the self a greater sense of control... In a different, but not unrelated context, Kris concluded that image--making... derived from an effort at integrating past and present experiences... [and] served not only to recover portions of the past but also to renew one's engagement with the world of the present (p. 156).

Rose further argues that the "rhythm of destruction and creation" of ancient imagery in modern art is also found in *dreams,* which, like resurrected images, function to "break down conscious connections and appearances so as to arrange new psychical combinations and compose new mental visions" (p. 79).[14] While the various allusions to royalty at the Glass House are consistent with representations of Johnson's conflicted, infantile grandiose strivings, they may also achieve the simultaneous realization of that wish: the enactment of the cultural myth of the heroic artist (Kris and Kurz 1934) – in Johnson's fantasy, *l'architecte du Roi* – or perhaps more accurately, *Le roi de l'architecture.*

The Glass House is a dream of dynasties and blasphemies, fallen heroes and striving kings. If, as Freud believed, that every dream revives an "indestructible wish" (Freud 1900, p. 556), then entombed in the Glass House of Atreus is one such archaic childhood wish, *the wish to be king.* The surreptitious, dream-like resurrection of ancient forms in the Glass House – a symbolized synthesis of classical and modern iconography – may thus be understood as a bridge between past and present; between history and identity; and between art and dream.

References

Aeschylus. (458 BCE). *The House of Atreus,* trans. E. D. A. Morshead, London: Dodo Press, 2006.

Arnheim, R. (1978). *The Dynamics of Architectural Form.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bachelard, G. (1958/1994). *The Poetics of Space.* M. Jolas, trans. Boston: Beacon Press.

Bayrle T. & Zybach, A. (2003). *Layout. Philip Johnson im Gespräch mit Rem Koolhas und Hans Ulrich Obrist.* Köln, Germany: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König.

Bergmann, M.S. (1973). Limitations of method in psychoanalytic biography: a historical inquiry. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.* 21: 833-850.

[14] In accord, Katz (2005) cites Hartmann's observation that "non-linear processes of connection between affectively significant and similar experiences of past and present take place through dreaming... largely in the form of visual-spatial imagery" (p. 1210).

Bollas, C. (2002). Architecture and the unconscious. *International Forum of Psychoanalysis,* 9: 28-42.
Bundgaard, J. A. (1976). *Parthenon and the Mycenaean City on the Heights.* Copenhagen, Denmark: Publications of the National Museum, Archaeological Historical Series.
Dal Co, F. (1982). The house of dreams and memories: Philip Johnson at New Canaan. In *Philip Johnson: The Glass House,* eds. D. Whitney & J. Kipnis, New York: Random House, pp. 115--122.
Deamer, P. (2005). Adrian Stokes: the architecture of phantasy and the phantasy of architecture. *Ann. Psychoanal.,* 33: 125-137.
Drexler, A. (1949). Architecture opaque and transparent. In *Philip Johnson: The Glass House,* D. Wh Whitney, & J. Kipnis, eds, New York: Random House, pp. 3-8.
Eisenman, P. (1979). Essay. In *Writings,* P. Johnson, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 10-26.
Fields, N. (2004). *Mycenaean Citadels C. 1350-1200 BC,* Oxford, GB: Osprey Publishing Ltd.
Frampton, K. (1978). The Glass House revisited. In *Philip Johnson: The Glass House,* D. Whitney, & J. Kipnis, eds, New York: Random House, 1993, pp. 91-114.
Friedman, A. T. (2004). People who live in glass houses: Edith Farnsworth, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Philip Johnson. In: *American Architectural History: A Contemporary Reader,* K. L. Eggener, ed., New York: Routledge, pp. 316-341.
Freud, S. (1900). *The Interpretation of Dreams.* SE IV-V, London: Hogarth Press, pp. ix-627.
Freud, S. (1905). Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious. SE VIII, London: Hogarth Press, pp. 1-247.
Freud, S. (1907). Delusions and dreams in Jensen's Gradiva. SE IX, London: Hogarth Press, pp. 1-96.
Freud, S. (1937). Constructions in analysis. SE XXIII, London: Hogarth Press, pp. 255-270.
Gedo, J. (1983). *Portraits of the Artist.* Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press.
Globus, G. G., Gilbert, J. (1964). A metapsychological approach to the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright. *Psychoanal. Rev.,* 51B: 117-129.
Grosz, E. (2001). *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space,* foreword by P. Eisenman, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Hartmann, E. (1996). Outline for a theory on the nature and functions of dreaming. *Dreaming* 6: 147--170.
Hendrix, J.S. (2005). *Architecture and Psychoanalysis: Peter Eisenman and Jacques Lacan,* New York, Peter Lang.
Hughes, R. (1970). The Duke of Xanadu at home. In *Philip Johnson:* The Glass House, D. Whitney, & J. Kipnis, eds, New York: Random House, pp. 55-61, 1993.
Huxtable, A. L. (1964). He adds elegance to modern architecture. The *New York Times Magazine,* May 24, 1964, p. 18.
Hyatt Foundation (1979). Pritzker Prize Brochure, c. 1979 by the Hyatt Foundation, Inc., Chicago, Illinois. (http://www.pritzkerprize.com/laureates/1979/ceremony_speech1.html, accessed August 21, 2010)
Jarzombek, M. (1999). *The Psychologizing of Modernity: Art, Architecture, and History,* Cambridge, GB: Cambridge University Press.
Johnson, P. (1979). *Writings.* New York: Oxford University Press.
Johnson, P. (1985). In *The Charlottesville Tapes,* Introduction by J. Robertson, New York: Rizzoli, pp. 12-19.
Johnson, P. (1993). Preface. In *Philip Johnson: The Glass House,* D. Wh Whitney, & J. Kipnis, eds, New York: Random House, pp. vii-x.
Johnson, P. (2002). *The Architecture of Philip Johnson,* P. Johnson. Boston: Bulfinch Press.
Katz, H. M. (2004). The dreamer's use of space. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.* 53: 1205-1233.
Kipnis, J. (1993). Throwing stones – the incidental effects of a Glass House. In *Philip Johnson: The Glass House,* D. Whitney, & J. Kipnis, eds, New York: Random House, pp. xi-2.
Kris, E. (1952). *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art.* New York: Int. Universities Press.
Kris, E., and Kurz, O. (1934) *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.
Kuspit, D. (1991). Visual art and art criticism: the role of psychoanalysis. *Ann. Psychoanal.,* 19: 1-16.

Kuspit, D. (2000). *Psychostrategies of Avant-Garde Art.* Cambridge, UK: The Cambridge University Press.

Kuhns, R. *Psychoanalytic Theory of Art.* (1983). New York: Columbia University Press.

Lavin, S. (2004). *Form Follows Libido: Architecture and Richard Neutra in a Psychoanalytic Culture.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Lebovitz, P. S. (2005). Houses as self-portraits: notes on architects who design their own houses. *Ann. of Psychoanal.,* 33: 67-75.

Lewis, H., & O'Connor, J. (1994). *Philip Johnson: The Architect in His Own Words,* New York: Rizzoli International Publishers, Inc.

Maclear, C. & Dunn, D. H. (2008). *The Glass House.* The National Trust For Historic Preservation, New York: Assouline.

Mahon, E. (2005). Dreams of architecture and the architecture of dreams. *Ann. Psychoanal.,* 33: 25-37.

Mason, D. (2007). Treasury of Atreus. *Oxford Journal of Archaeology 26:* 35-52.

Mylonas, G. E. (1966). *Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age.* New York: Princeton University Press.

Niederland, W. G. (1965). An analytic inquiry into the life and work of Heinrich Schliemann. In *Drives, Affects, Behavior, Vol. II,* M. Schur, ed.. New York: Int. Universities Press, Inc.

Noy, P. (1979). Form creation in art: an ego-psychological approach to creativity. *Psychoanal Q.,* 48: 229-256.

O'Donoghue, D. (2004). Negotiations of Surface: Archaeology within the Early Strata of Psychoanalysis. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.,* 52: 653-671.

Petit, E. (2009). *Philip Johnson. The Constancy of Change.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Ricœur, P. (1977). *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation.* D. Savage, trans. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Schulz, F. (1994). *Philip Johnson: Life and Work.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Scully, V. (2003). *Modern Architecture and Other Essays.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Scully, V. (2009). Art and irony. In *Philip Johnson. The Constancy of Change.* E. Petit, ed. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Shelley, P.B. (2003). *The Major Works: Percy Bysshe Shelley.* Z. Leader, M. O'Neill, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shirer, W. (1941). *Berlin Diary: The Journal of a Foreign Correspondent 1934-1941,* BBS Publishing Corporation, 1995.

Stern, R. A. M. (2008). *The Philip Johnson Tapes.* New York: The Monacelli Press.

Twombly, R. (2005). Raumplan: Adolf Loos, Frank Lloyd Wr Wright, residential space, and modernity. *Ann. Psychoanal.,* 33: 191-205.

Varnelis, K. (2009). Philip Johnson's empire: network power and the AT&T Building. In *Philip Johnson. The Constancy of Change.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, pp. 120-135.

Winer, J. A. (2005). Frank Lloyd Wright: power, powerlessness, and charisma. *Ann. Psychoanal.,* 33: 179-190.

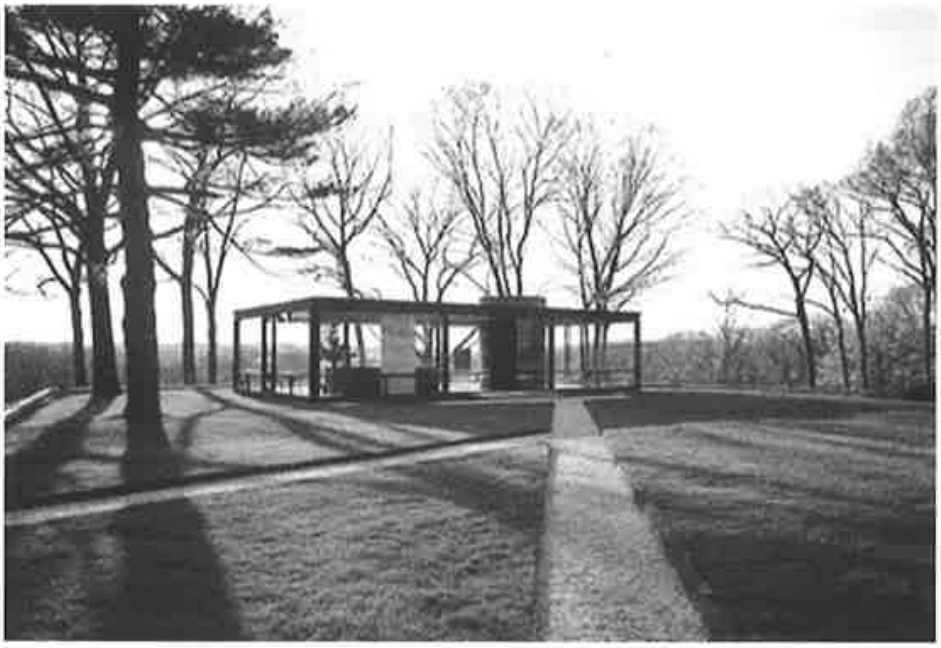

Figure 1: The Glass House, P. Johnson, 1949, New Canaan, Connecticut. Note the internal brick cylinder.

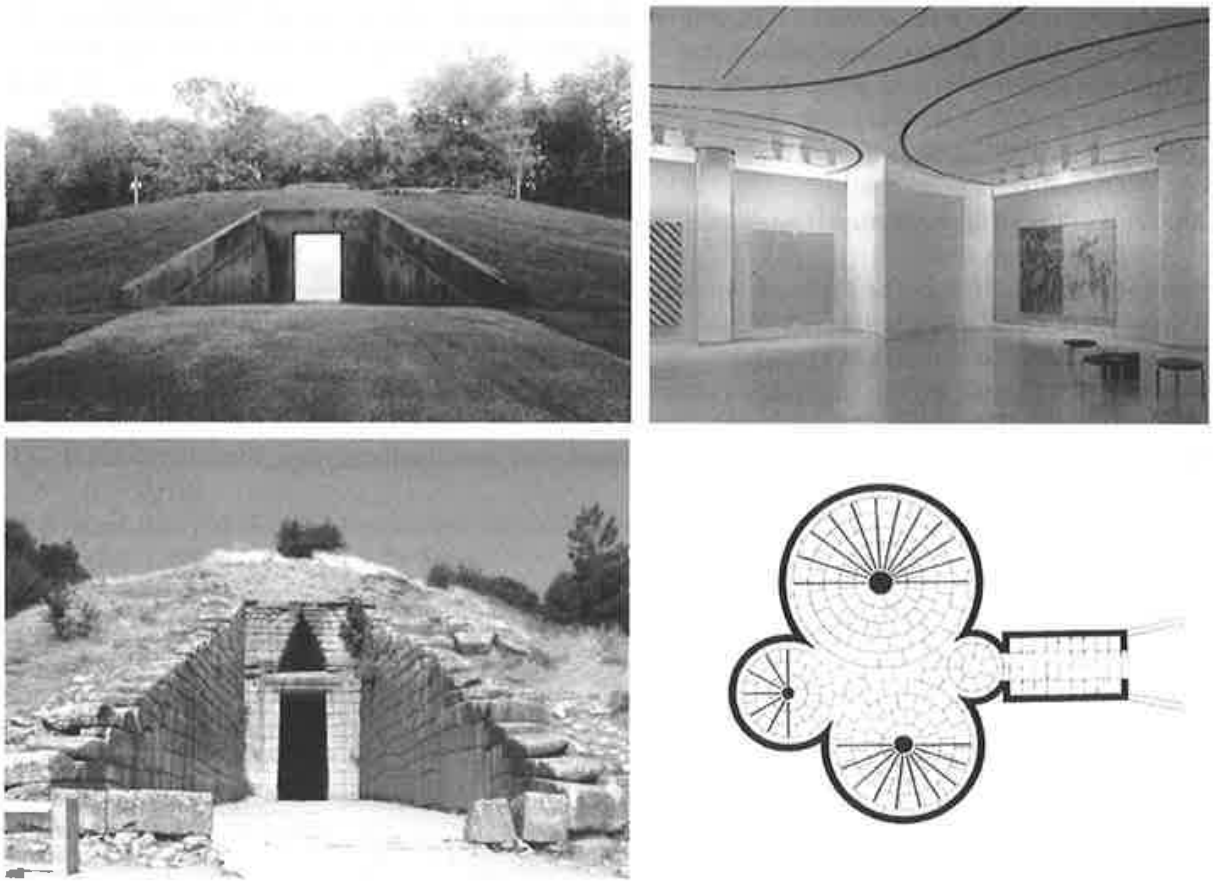

Figure 2. Top left, The Painting Gallery, P. Johnson, 1965. Bottom left, the Tomb of Atreus of the Mycenaean Citadel. Top right: Interior, Painting Gallery. Rotating displays center on three of the circles, as seen in floor plan. Outlines of the circular plan are visible at the top of the berms. Bottom right: floor plan of the Painting Gallery.

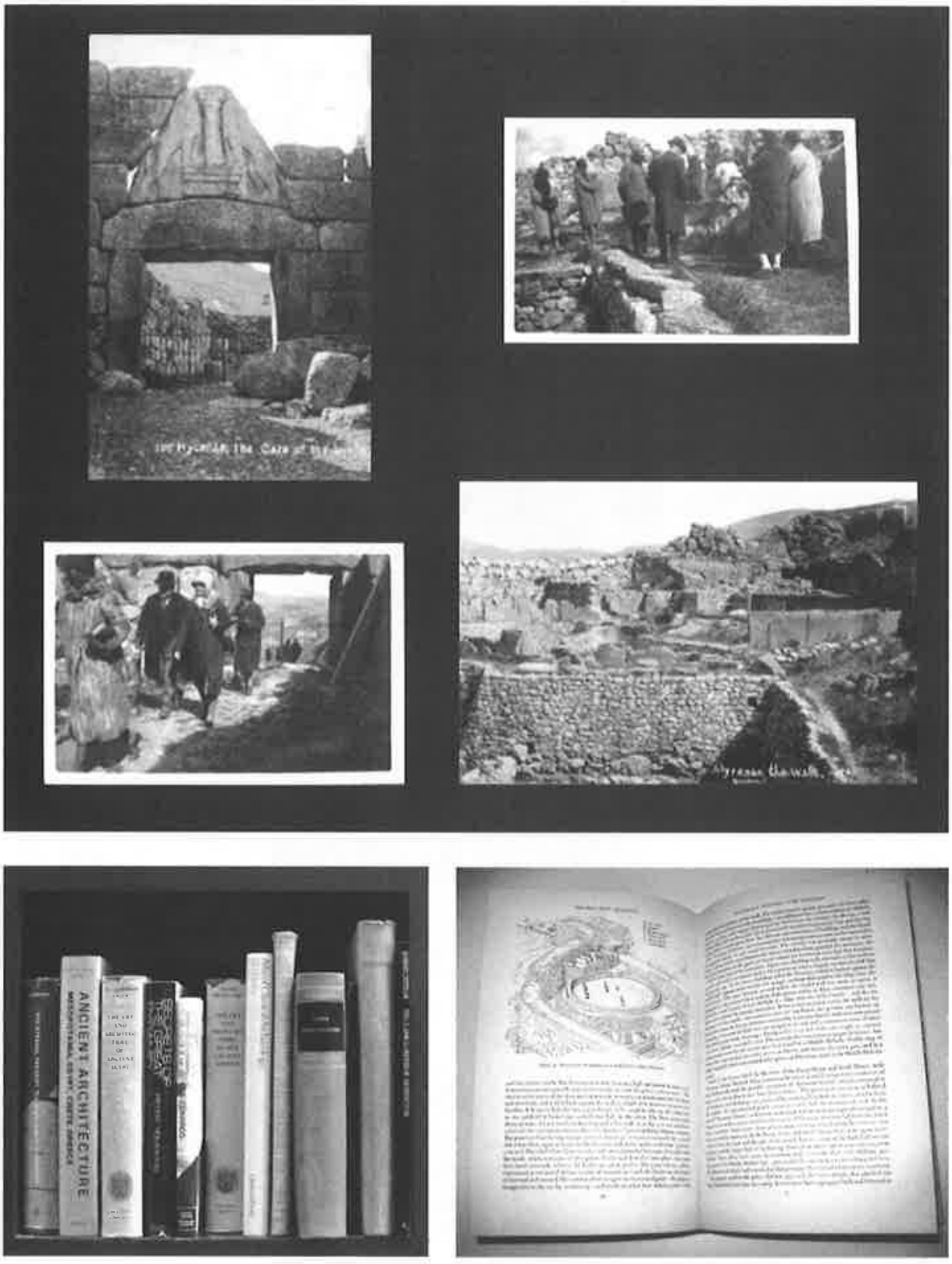

Figure 3. Top, Travel pictures, Mycenaean Citadel, 1928. A page from a Johnson family album, courtesy of the National Trust. Bottom, books on archaeology and classical architecture on the shelf closest to Johnson's desk. One is shown opened to a diagram of Grave Circle A.

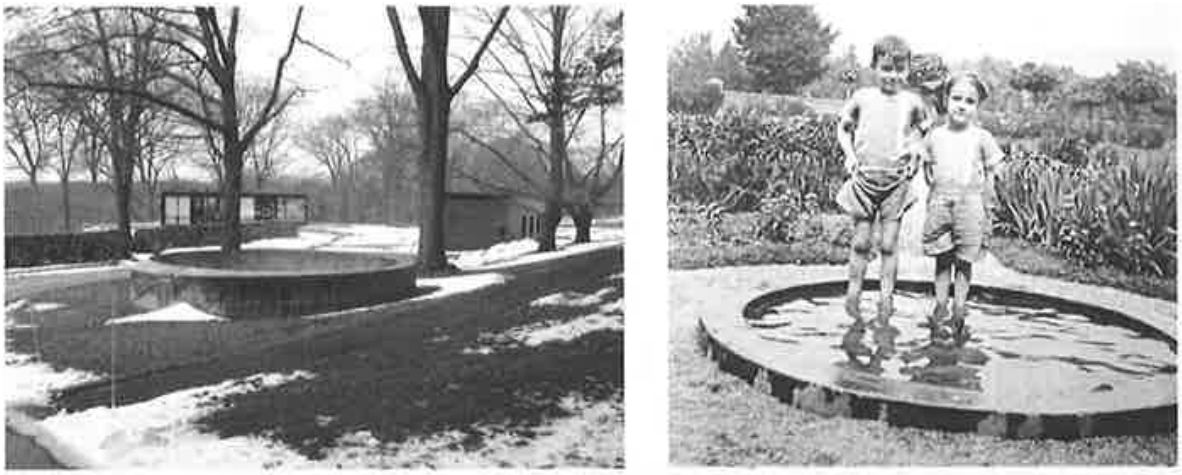

Figure 4. Left, Untitled, Donald Judd, 1971, site-specific sculpture, foreground; the Glass House, left; the Brick House, right. Right, Philip Johnson and his sister Theodate in a wading pool in the garden, c. 1913. From a Johnson family album, courtesy of the National Trust.

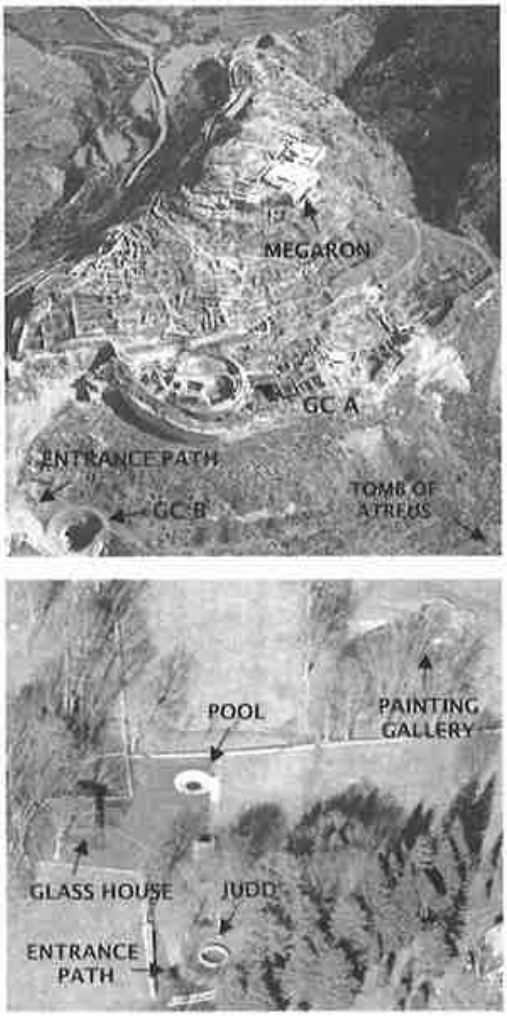

Figure 5. Top, Aerial view of the Mycenaean Citadel complex. The Tomb of Atreus, not visible here, is located a short distance away in the indicated direction. Bottom, Aerial view of the Glass House. From Google Earth.

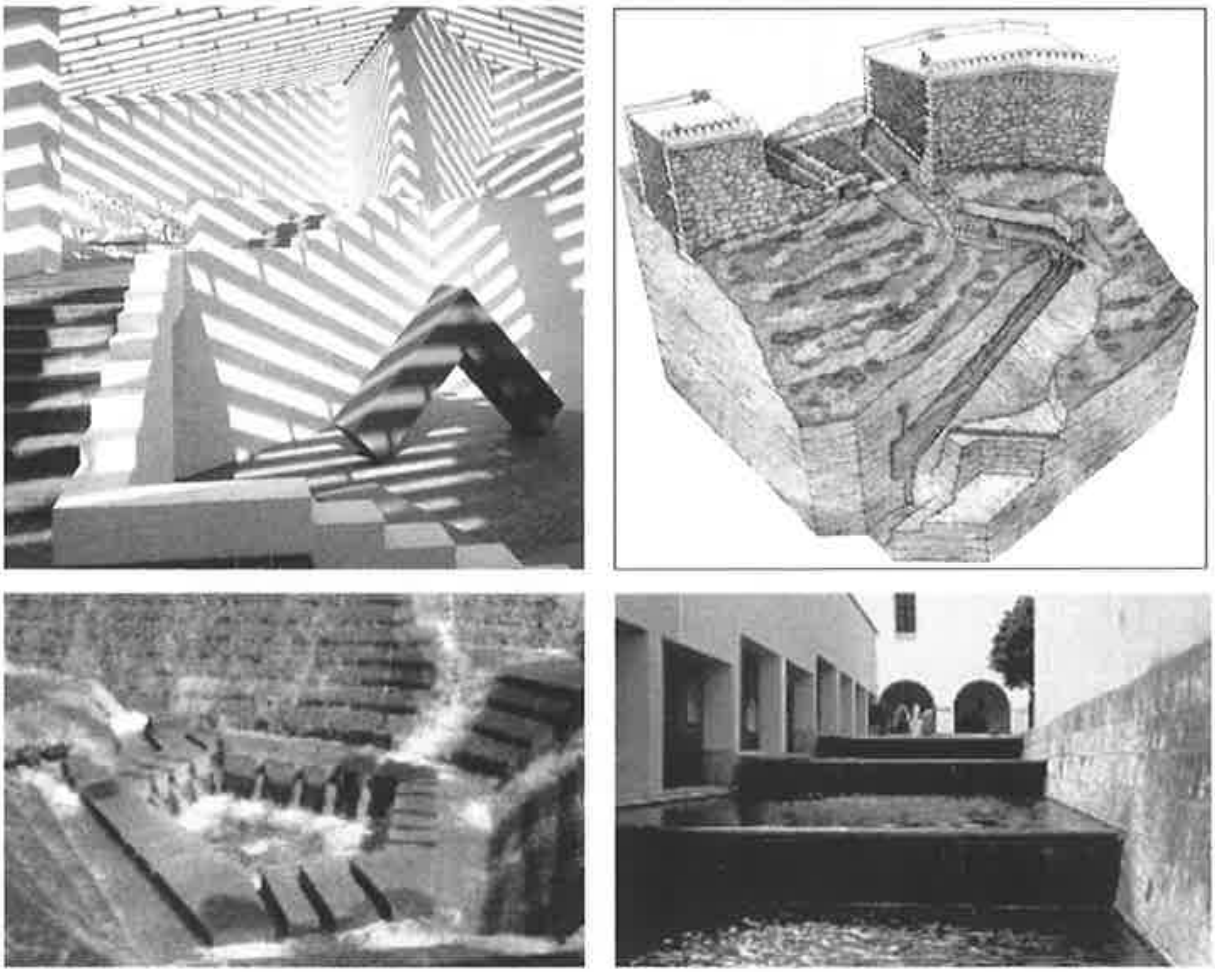

Figure 6. Top left, Sculpture Gallery, P. Johnson, 1970. Top right, The Secret Water Cistern, reconstructed cut-away view. From Fields 2004, p. 31. Bottom left, The Fort Worth Water Garden, P. Johnson, 1974, Fort Worth, Texas. Bottom right, Fountain, The Metro-Dade Cultural Center, P. Johnson, 1983, Miami, Florida.

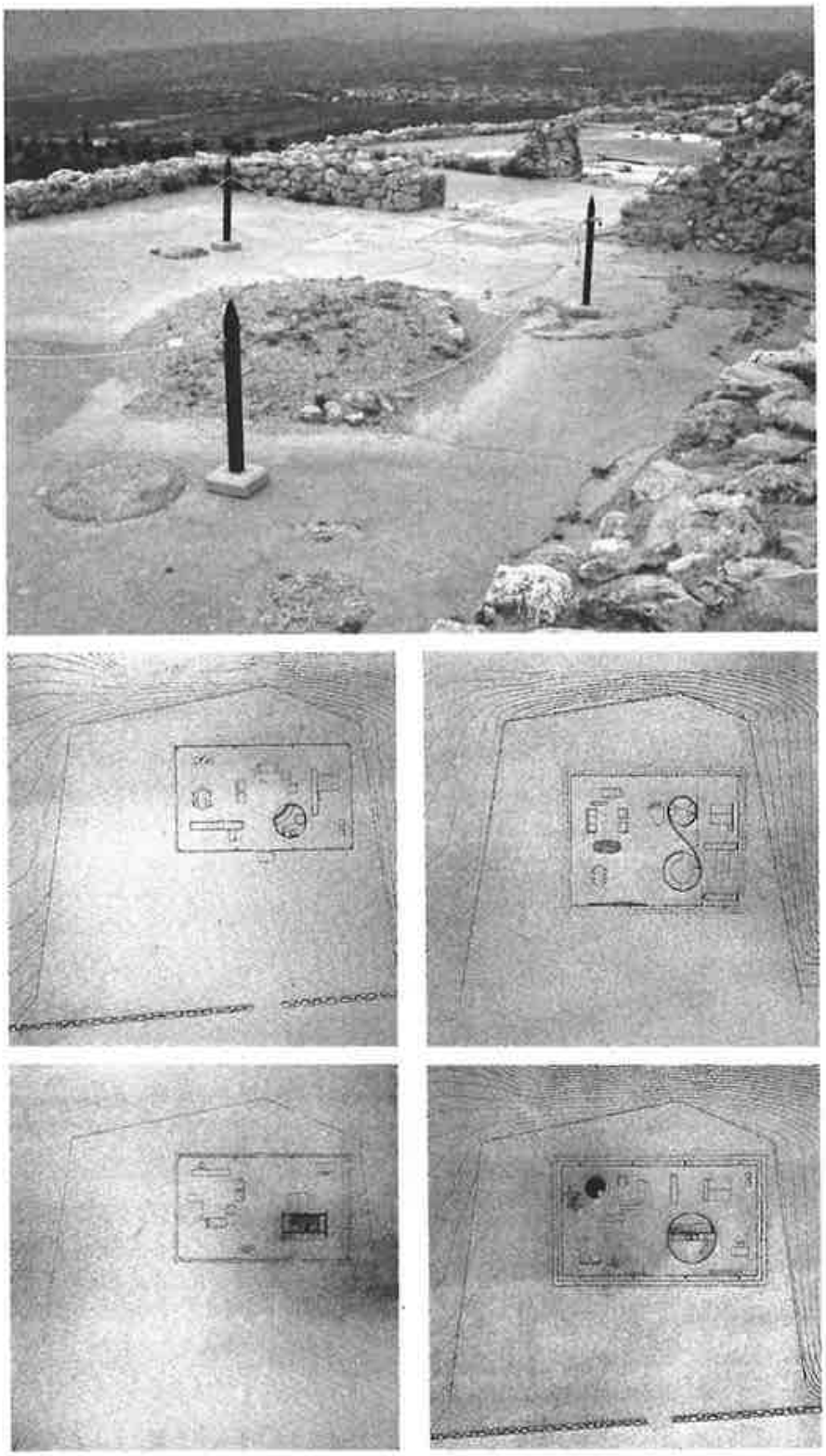

Figure 7. Top, the Megaron of the Mycenaean Citadel. Note the large circular hearth (within roped area) in the central throne room. Left, Selected preliminary plans of the Glass House. Clockwise from top right: Sept. 1946, two conjoined cylinders, evocative of the Grave Circles; April 1947, two separate cylinders; Oct. 1947, penultimate plan without cylinder or hearth; Nov. 1947, final plan with single cylinder. From Frampton 1993, pp. 100-103.

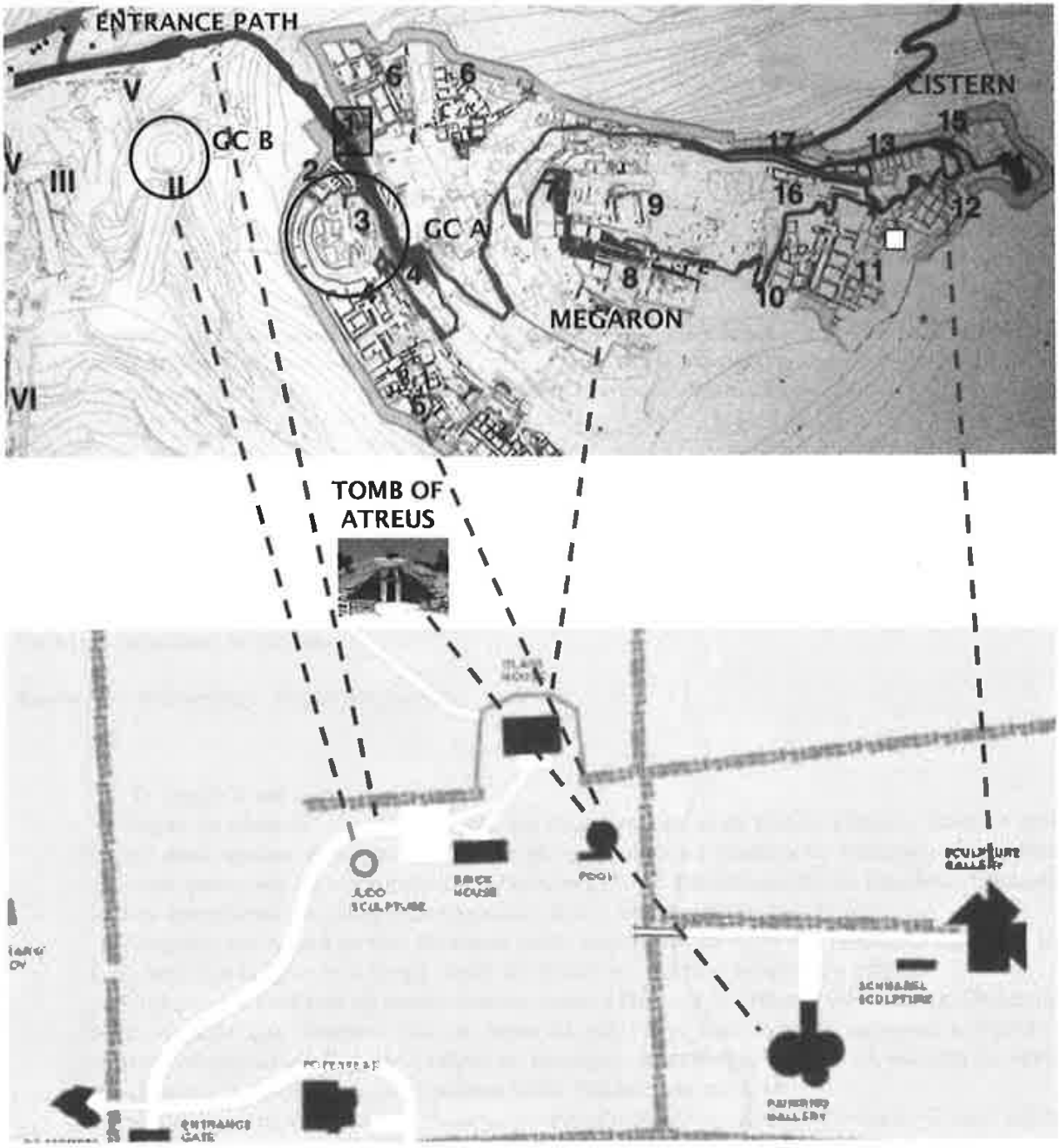

Figure 8. Topographical congruence of the Mycenaean Citadel (top) with the Glass House (bottom). The Tomb of Atreus is located in the approximate location of its picture. Lines connect the Tomb of Atreus with the Painting Gallery; Grave Circles A and B (encircled) with the Glass House pool and Judd sculpture, respectively; the Cistern with the Sculpture Gallery; the Megaron with the Glass House proper; and the two entrance paths.