[ij]

vol.20, no.01
2023

uncertain
interiors

research
essay

büşra balaban
aslıhan şenel

non-interiors: mapping ambiguous
interiority through Chantal Akerman's
Les Rendez-vous d'Anna

10

non-interiors: mapping ambiguous interiority through Chantal Akerman's *Les Rendez-vous d'Anna*

Büşra Balaban
Istanbul Technical University
and Istanbul Bilgi University
0000-0002-3039-0930

Aslıhan Şenel
Istanbul Technical University
0000-0002-0471-1833

abstract

This text-based research essay, through the theory and practices of mapping, suggests a non-dichotomous conceptualisation of interiority. It offers to probe the potentials of ambiguities and multiple meanings of an interior rather than the traditional oppositions such as inside-outside, private-public, female-male invoked by the term interior. We argue that interiority is not a fixed entity but a continuously changing state through the relationships formed among the imagined, remembered, and lived spaces of a subject. Our research is centred around a study of filmmaker Chantal Akerman's *Les Rendez-vous d'Anna*, which traces filmmaker Anna's encounters with hotel rooms, stations, and trains as she travels through different cities to promote her film. Akerman's film introduces interiors provoked by uncertain and unfamiliar modes of interiority by interrogating its habitation through the peculiar tactics of filmmaking and viewing. By mapping this filmic interiority, we argue for 'non-interior' as a critical and creative way of approaching an interior. Non-interior is not the opposite of interior, nor an in-between position of interior and exterior, yet is concerned with what is unknown, what is excluded, and what is unheeded. It aims to theorise and practise an uncertainty of the interior without assigning a single static definition. The research of a non-interior offers ambiguity, multiplicity, and uncertainty to an interior, allowing us to explore interiority within gradual shades of its materiality as a room, a threshold element, or a piece of furniture.

Mapping came to the fore as a method of this research, which performs the filmic topography. It suggests an embodied practice of film viewing, including the authors' analytical and emotional responses to the encountered representation of the interior. Mapping enables us to explore the potential of filmic representation to blur the presumed definitions and conventional boundaries of the concept of the interior. By mapping filmic interiors, we reveal ambiguous states of the interiors we encountered in the film and multiply their layers of uncertainty. These mapped uncertainties allow the interior to be questioned and the non-interior to be produced. In particular, non-interior draws on the non-dichotomous approaches in art and architecture such as Robert Smithson's 'non-site', Pascal Bonitzer's 'de-framing' or 'off-screen', and Rosalind Krauss's 'expanded field' to explore ambiguity as a critical tool in order to understand the uncertainty of an interior. Mapping of non-interiors proposes architectural theory and representation that consists of fragmented, subjective, situated, and embodied knowledge of interiors.

keywords
interiority; critical spatial research; critical topographical practices; filmmaking-viewing; Chantal Akerman

[ij]

vol.20, no.01
2023

uncertain
interiors

research
essay

büşra balaban
aslıhan şenel

non-interiors: mapping ambiguous
interiority through Chantal Akerman's
Les Rendez-vous d'Anna

11

mapping the *Les Rendez-vous d'Anna*

Chantal Akerman's film, *Les Rendez-vous d'Anna*[01] opens with a sequence where Anna is on a train platform. She leaves the station, arrives at a hotel, and goes up to her room where she heads straight to the window. The camera traces Anna with the window and the curtain behind to direct the viewer to the view outside. The train platform she was on from the previous scene is here inside the room through the view offered by the window. Later, the camera orientates the viewer to the interior of the hotel room. Akerman allows the viewer to assign a context to this anonymous hotel room. The window becomes a threshold between the interior and exterior. It enables the viewer to include what is excluded and to reflect on what is included. It takes the outside view and movement into a relatively static interior space of a hotel room, meanwhile questioning Anna's physical and mental position within this interior. In this instance, the window is regarded as a material and spatial embodiment of ambiguity. The materiality of the window, which allows the viewer to question the concept of interiority and imagine multiple interiors, is considered a state of ambiguity.

The top left corner of the mapping draws the scene in front of the window in the hotel room in Essen. Layer by layer, Anna, the window frame, the view, and the reflection behind her are illustrated [Fig. 01]. Each layer transforms the interior's perception and representation, introducing new and ambiguous spatial boundaries with uncertain interior states.

Mapping refrains from drawing a strict line between the view and the room, yet it allows the superposition of different states of these ambiguous and dynamic relationships.
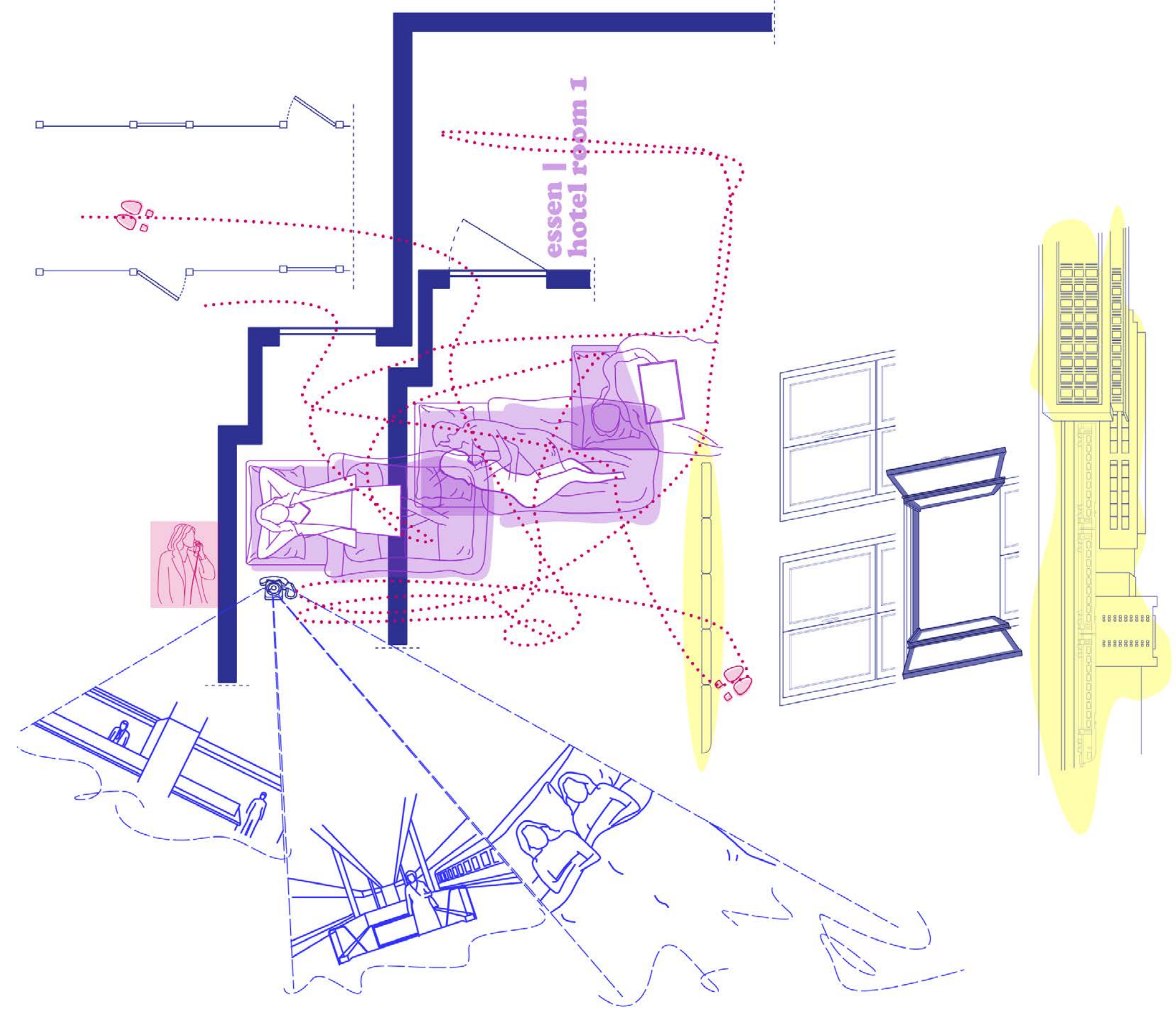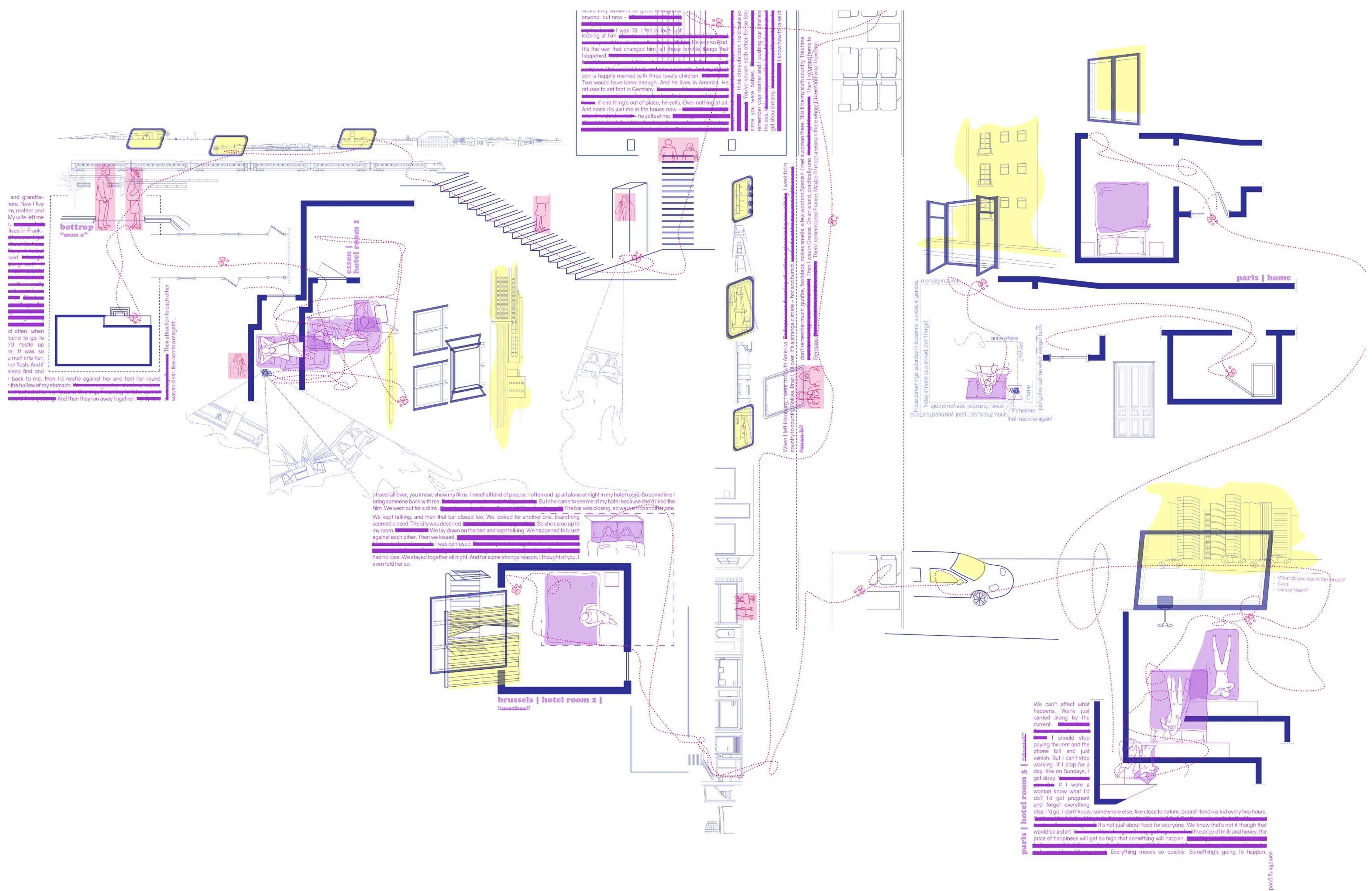

Figure 01.
Drawings that multiply the layers of the window in the hotel room in Essen. From mapping, produced by the authors, 2023.

We propose our mapping as critical spatial research, which is associated with the art and architecture critic Jane Rendell's definition of 'critical spatial practice'[02] and Aslıhan Şenel's term 'critical topographical practices' developed from that.[03] According to Rendell, critical spatial practices propose different ways of doing by unmaking the conventional design practices dominated by power.[04] As discussed by Şenel, the practices of cartography, literature, and film are more than representations of place, as they also offer a dynamic relationship between the place, the maker, and the viewer.[05] Their critical readings, for example, a particular way of mapping, offer critical topographical

[ij] vol.20, no.01   uncertain   research   büşra balaban   non-interiors: mapping ambiguous   12
       2023   interiors   essay   aslıhan şenel   interiority through Chantal Akerman's
                                                                 Les Rendez-vous d'Anna

practices and question the uniformity of representation.[06] Rather than a representation, mapping offers a performance, a continuous production of embodied, situated, and subjective knowledges. Our mapping enables tracing ambiguity at the filmic site as well as revealing uncertain states through its performative practice. It incorporates techniques and methods excluded by conventional representations into the field or differentiates existing ones by using them for other purposes or contents. It offers a practice of tracing those that are difficult to represent and excluded from representations of interiors such as time, movement, and everyday experiences. Revealing the relationships between the interior, the filmmaker, and the map maker, our mapping questions the ambiguities of interiority. Here, we argue that interiority is not a fixed entity but a continuously changing state through the relationships formed among the imagined, remembered, and lived spaces of a subject. These spatialities inherently hold ambiguities by allowing multiple views and meanings. In this research, we argue for an uncertainty that emerged from our specific approach to these ambiguities existing within a filmic interior.

Figure 02.
Mapping Akerman's *Les Rendez-vous d'Anna*. Produced by the authors, 2023.

[ij]

vol.20, no.01
2023

uncertain
interiors

research
essay

büşra balaban
aslıhan şenel

non-interiors: mapping ambiguous
interiority through Chantal Akerman's
Les Rendez-vous d'Anna

13

By revealing our positions as researchers in the field of architecture and addressing our situated, limited, and multiple knowledges of the filmic site, mapping reproduces interiors, as Figure 02 shows. Our mapping conveys the encountered spaces and spatial references to paper through drawing and writing; it allows the viewer to see different spatial relationships by multiplying the perspective offered in the film. Our mapping improvises multiple tactics. It draws the space according to the various positions of Anna, the camera, and the viewer. It includes re-drawings of an interior focusing on its several spatial elements such as a window, a bed, and a telephone. Further, the mapping illustrates overlapping representations of the experiential, atmospheric, and relational qualities within the built interior. It also incorporates the dialogues into the spatial drawings as elements for constructing interiors or rather uncertain boundaries for variable interior situations.

Feminist filmmaker Chantal Akerman's cinema is remarkable because of its focus on women and domestic interiors. In particular, *Les Rendez-vous d'Anna*, completed in 1978 and translated in English as *Meetings with Anna*, is essential in this research with its embedded autobiographical elements. *Rendez-vous* narrates the journey of Anna, a young, successful, and introverted film director, through Essen to promote her new film and her arrival in Paris at her home. Throughout the three-day journey, Anna drags herself from hotel to hotel and railway station to train. Accompanying Anna's journey are several people such as a stranger in Essen, a friend of her mother in Cologne, a traveller on the train, her mother in Brussels, and her lover in Paris. *Rendez-vous* is almost entirely recorded by a fixed camera in various closed or semi-closed spaces. Akerman mostly prefers close-ups in which there are encounters between Anna and other people, and objects and spatial elements in confined spaces such as train cars, stations, hotel rooms, homes, toilets, etc. These frames mainly show temporary spaces and suggest acknowledging interiors in different scales, contexts, and locations. Along with Anna's habitation in such framing of filmic sites, the film creatively questions the ambiguities and different possibilities of interiority. The window appears as a threshold element that enables us to discuss interiority at the boundaries. The bed(s), which are given special attention in the film, can be seen as interiors located within other interiors. The presence and mobility of the other objects, such as the telephone, suitcase, and the clothes accompanying Anna, create a sense of ambiguity by transporting the filmic view outside the confines of the interior space.

Through the filmic production and our mapping practice, ambiguities and multiplicities reveal the uncertain properties of an interior. It allows us to theorise this uncertainty, which we also research through our mapping practice, as *non-interior*. Situating ambiguity as a form of uncertainty and discussing its various forms challenges the traditional binary understanding, which ends up with a division and hierarchy. Non-

[ij]

vol.20, no.01
2023

uncertain
interiors

research
essay

büşra balaban
aslıhan şenel

non-interiors: mapping ambiguous
interiority through Chantal Akerman's
Les Rendez-vous d'Anna

14

interior enables a field to discuss interiority by unveiling the multiple possibilities and ambiguous potentialities of the interior in-between or unheeded. Non-interior as an unconventional understanding of the interior evidently requires another way of production, which cannot be represented by conventional representation techniques and methods. The concept of non-interior and the mapping practice explicitly produce and require each other. A non-interior here offers a spatial practice along with a theoretical discussion of the interior throughout the research.

Up to here, we have introduced how mapping is operationalised to discuss the uncertainty of an interior and what kind of potential it has to produce the non-interior. The following parts of this essay explicate what a non-interior offers conceptually and methodologically. First, we develop the concept of non-interior in order to discuss interiority beyond dichotomous approaches by probing the literature on ambiguity and uncertainty in the history and theory of art, architecture, and feminist studies. Second, we raise questions about the complicated entanglements between the site, the representation, the maker, and the viewer to propose a specific methodology for the production of a non-interior. Echoing the theoretical investigation, we elaborate on the practical production of a non-interior through the embodied practice of film viewing and mapping.

non-interior as an uncertain concept beyond dichotomous approaches

Non-dichotomous approaches in art and architecture have employed prefixes of 'non-', 'de-', and 'off-' operationally to question the ways in which oppression works in thought and practice. For example, artist Robert Smithson, through his art practice, describes the non-site as a 'large, abstract map' in a gallery to refer to the site that cannot be precisely located because it no longer exists or resists representation.[07] This non-site reproduces an actual site without resembling it and offers imaginary travels and new meanings between site and non-site. According to art theorist Nick Kaye, non-site allows the artist to produce a limited (mapped) version of their own subjective and particular encounter with the site.[08] Unmaking the analogy between site and representation, non-site points out those who are not included in the representation rather than reproducing the existing meanings of the site. In film theory, we find similar terms to refer to the unrepresentable. As film theorist and director Pascal Bonitzer points out, 'de-framing' or 'off-screen' allows the film viewers to create a narrative of their own.[09] This exclusion somehow directs the inside of the frame as well. The film can only initiate the narrative, but the viewer creates meaning by establishing connections. De-framing does not divide or separate; rather it multiplies and brings forth new relations.[10] Site and non-site, frame and de-frame, or on-screen and off-screen are not opposing concepts; on the contrary, they have reciprocal dynamic relationships

[ij] vol.20, no.01   uncertain   research   büşra balaban   non-interiors: mapping ambiguous   15
         2023   interiors   essay   aslıhan şenel   interiority through Chantal Akerman's
                                                                        Les Rendez-vous d'Anna

that feed on each other and enable the production of new meanings between them. These remind us of art theorist Rosalind Krauss' argument for an 'expanded field' 'by problematising the set of binary oppositions between which the modern category of sculpture is suspended.'[11] According to Krauss, the sculpture is not a middle term between not-architecture and not-landscape nor a combination of exclusions.[12] The sculpture is rather a 'term on the periphery of a field in which there are other, differently structured possibilities.'[13] Landscape and not-landscape, architecture and not-architecture, and other possible combinations are explored through this other vision of sculpture.

We consider these visions in art theory to claim a creative and critical apprehension of the interiority by adding to it the prefix 'non-.' Non-interior does not fit into dichotomies; it holds ambiguities.[14] These ambiguities are traced to understand and reveal the uncertainty of the interior. As Cathryn Dwyre et al. point out, ambiguity is a critical tool in the era where conventional dichotomies including 'nature/culture, women/men, animal/human, art/technology' are dissolving.[15] Ambiguity, characteristically, holds multiple meanings and even contradictions together and enables a 'critical and productive mode of intellectual and aesthetic inquiry.'[16] Similarly, non-interior is as concerned with what is known as it is with what is unknown, and as concerned with what is included as it is with what is excluded.

Interior, in dichotomous approaches, is 'understood as binary and defined against what it is not,'[17] 'excluded through the hierarchical categories it creates,'[18] and 'disregarded due to the direct misconnections between its prominent practitioners as women.'[19] Transgressing the binary thoughts that create division and exclusion within the context of body and space, Elizabeth Grosz suggests 'the position of the in-between,' which means to think about a location, a relation, a place that is related to other places, but has no place of its own.[20] According to Grosz, in-between positions, lacking a particular form and not belonging to one defined state, are able to facilitate different identities and varied matters.[21] Enhancing the discussion of interiority as an in-between state, Christine McCarthy argues for the creative potential of reciprocal exclusion between interior and exterior rather than falling into conventional binary thoughts.[22] According to McCarthy, the materiality of interiority is variable in relation to the ambiguous entanglements between constructive factors such as boundary, habitation, bodily relationship, and time. Unlike an in-between position, non-interior rejects the division of interior and exterior and suggests multiplicities positioned within an interior, expanding out the interior, and juxtaposing exteriors and interiors. Suzie Attiwill and Gini Lee propose thinking of interior and exterior in which the relationships are dynamic and not determined in advance.[23] Following Grosz's question of architecture as a field that establishes a frame, they suggest excluding architecture in the field

[ij]

vol.20, no.01   uncertain   research   büşra balaban   non-interiors: mapping ambiguous   16
2023   interiors   essay   aslıhan şenel   interiority through Chantal Akerman's
                                                           Les Rendez-vous d'Anna

of interior and landscape for exploring a creative approach to interiority: 'without architecture, there is no frame and hence no inside/outside.'[24] For instance, addressing the discussion of Ross Gibson, they argue the garden is 'situated as a conceptual and metaphorical site where relationships are worked out and dualities and/or oppositions are blurred.'[25] Within this view, 'enclosure, porosity, incompletion, framing/not framing, travelling, transformations at boundaries, instability and mutability' come forward as concepts that layer the qualities of the interior by ambiguating its conventional understanding.[26] In a similar way, non-interior suggests dynamism, continuity, and relationality. Yet it additionally foregrounds the dynamic position of the subject as the main motivation of this relationality. Non-interior recognises that spatial relations might change with the variations of the subject itself and its positions. This dynamic subject multiplies interiority through its layered relationships. Therefore, non-interior is produced by mapping in which the viewer's critical readings are invited.

non-interior as an uncertain methodology through mapping interiority

Akerman's *Les Rendez-vous d'Anna* invites the viewers to make their own readings, interpretations, and spatial productions. We consider the filmmaker's alternative positioning tactics and their potential, referring to the 'death of the author,'[27] to suggest non-interior not only conceptually but also methodologically. Feminist film

theorist Laura Mulvey points out that traditional cinema, with its patriarchal codes and methods, ignores the look of the camera and the viewer and also positions the targeted male spectator in a fixed gaze.[28] Such traditional films turn the subject into a voyeur and promote the illusion of voyeuristic separation. However, as in *Rendez-vous*, the viewer does not have a single, static, and passive position. Different subject positions are produced with multiple bodily as well as visual relationships.

As architecture and art critic Giuliana Bruno points out, a film viewer and a site visitor share similar experiences.[29] The film, by creating frames, transforms the viewer into a visitor, a moving observer who is mapping this haptic space through the embodied encounter instead of expressing a disembodied, fixed gaze.[30] This mobility also transforms the structure of the vision; travel to a site is no longer 'sight-seeing' but also 'site-seeing', which can address many other forms of bodily engagements within the site.[31] As feminist theorist Donna Haraway reminds us, the vision itself is not phallocentric; the 'embodied nature of all visions' provides limited and subjective knowledges.[32] Donna Haraway suggests another kind of vision to explore mystified areas such as science and women as a result of hierarchical divisions. Insisting on the vision that is inherently embodied, interpreted, and biased, being situated can provide subjective, multiple, limited, and fragmented states of knowledge, and defines feminist objectivity by avoiding

[ij]

vol.20, no.01
2023

uncertain
interiors

research
essay

büşra balaban
aslıhan şenel

non-interiors: mapping ambiguous
interiority through Chantal Akerman's
Les Rendez-vous d'Anna

17

binary oppositions along with exploring mystified areas.[33] If we consider the film within its spatial and bodily kinetics, the viewer becomes a voyageur or *voyageuse* rather than a voyeur. A bodily encounter between the film and the viewer suggests a site for re-writings and re-readings. We claim that this embodied experience with a filmic interior can enable the production of a non-interior.

Non-interior does not offer a holistic representation of a space or its precisely defined state, yet provides fragmented productions. These situated and partial productions unveil the uncertainties of an interior by drawing on everyday life, the film as its reproduction, and the mapping as a critical reading of the film. Non-interior evokes uncertainties along with the ambiguous states of whether interior or exterior, variable inclusion or exclusion of interior and exterior, and their transitive conditions. Non-interior evolves conceptually and methodologically to focus on the not-included in the theory and practice of architecture. Non-interior does not have only one definition, yet it is produced, as pointed out above, through an active subject who transforms the traditional meanings and established limits. Here, mapping comes forward since it both shows up as a method of research and a key condition for producing a non-interior, enabling us to pursue critical spatial research.

We suggest the mapping practice as an act of embodiment through drawing.[34] As Paul Emmons reminds us, although the rationalised theory has reduced architectural drawing to mere normative practice, from the Renaissance onwards drawing practices have had explicit entanglements with embodiment, imagination, and materiality.[35] Our mapping traces uncertainty by representing ambiguous entanglements of space and offers a critical spatial practice with an embodied vision. It avoids the conventions and norms of architectural drawing through tactics such as drawing plans and sections from multiple viewpoints, multiplying, juxtaposing, and overlapping these views, and refusing a single, divine perspective. Through the mapping of the *Rendez-vous* in the act of embodiment and performativity, we produce the non-interior by probing different material references of ambiguous interiority such as window, bed, and phone. Below, we unveil the particular material conditions of these spatial elements in the act of exploring the non-interior with the accompanying questions: How can a bed, as impersonal as possible in an anonymous hotel room, and its relationship with the body define an interiority? Can outer-inner perspectives from a window screen differentiate the untimely hotel room's uncertainty to a certainty for an instant? How can a telephone as an agent capable of defining its own spatiality interrelate different interiorities? Can a private dialogue between two people redefine spatial boundaries? Can there be a peculiar form of representing these uncertain interior states?

[ij]   vol.20, no.01   uncertain   research   büşra balaban   non-interiors: mapping ambiguous   18
       2023   interiors   essay   aslıhan şenel   interiority through Chantal Akerman's
                                                                     Les Rendez-vous d'Anna

window as an ambiguous interior at the threshold

Rendez-vous prominently frames spatial thresholds such as windows, doors, entrance halls, and corridors. Windows, in particular, initiate our mapping by providing us with a critical reading of interiority. Anna first faces the windows in each hotel room. The static camera opens up the scene in each interior by framing Anna's body in front of a window and the window itself towards the outside view. As a tactic to introduce a hotel room, Akerman directs the viewer first to the outside through the view within the window, then locates the viewer inside with a perspective gained from the outside. Those window scenes superpose several states: Anna's body, the views concealed or disclosed by the window, the material of the window profile, a closed or open curtain behind, a balcony in front, the interior reflections on the window screen, or the outside reflections on the interior space. These various states of the window are multiple layers that allow the blurring of the threshold itself.

Mapping reflects on the film's tactic of blurring this threshold as ambiguating the drawing of the hotel room. As in Figure 03, the part of the mapping that illustrates the scene in a hotel room in Paris separates layers related to windows to grasp each one's role in an interior, which also differentiates the drawing of the interior. A look at the exterior surroundings or superimposed looks of interior and exterior reflections distinguishes the understanding of interiority. For example, an interior could belong to a room in a skyscraper district in
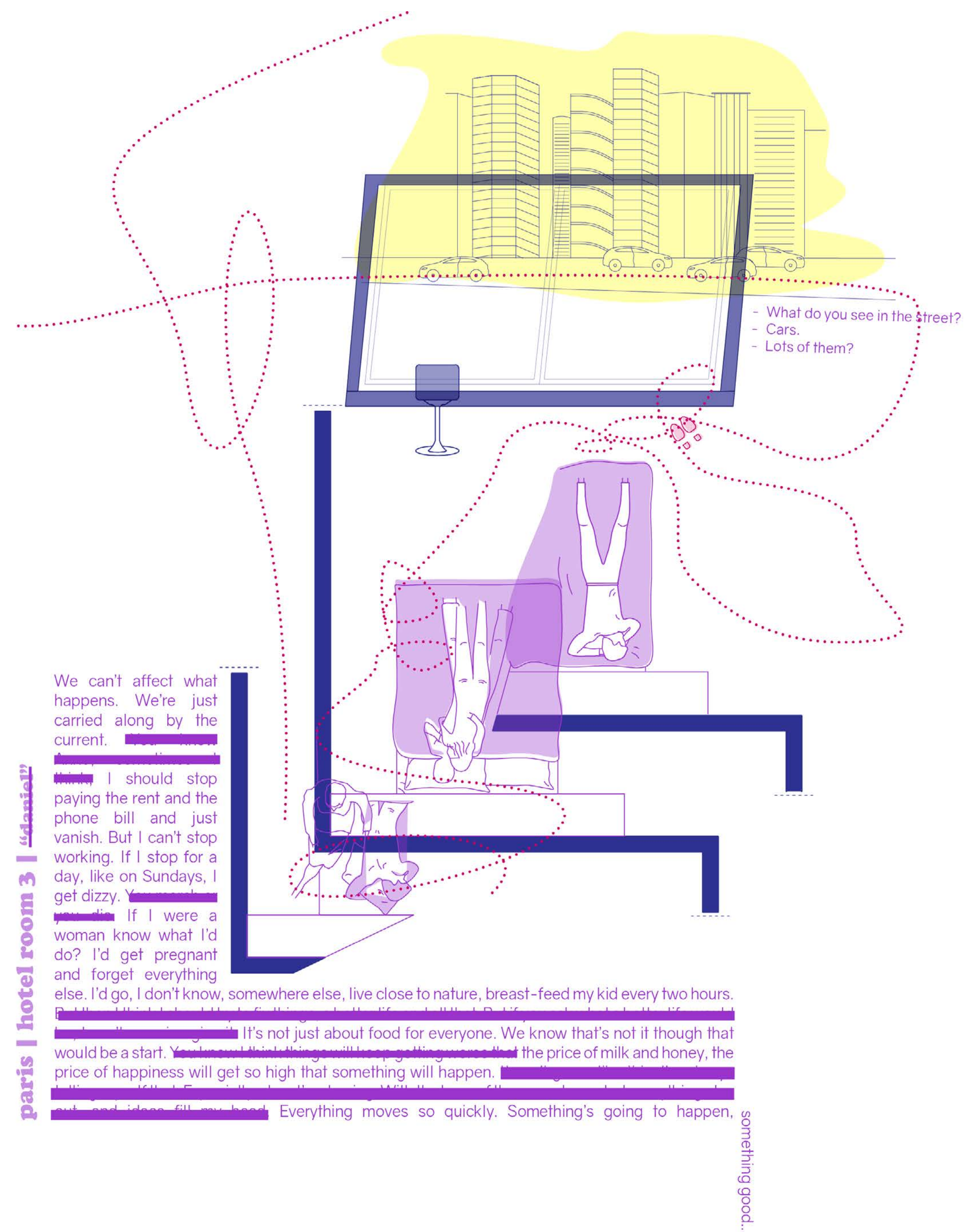
Figure 03.
Overlapping by drawing the varied states of windows and their multiple layers in the hotel room in Paris. From mapping, produced by the authors, 2023.

Paris or a nineteenth-century apartment in Brussels. By this filming tactic and our mapping practice, we claim a hotel room's anonymous, timeless, and ambiguous state is perceived as a certain interior through the window, conveying information about its specific location and time. This exterior information has the potential to transgress the interior and differentiate it accordingly.

These examples of the varying conditions of windows disturb the predefined distinction between interior and exterior, private and public, or object and subject. In our mapping, we point out the window as an element that

vol.20, no.01
2023

uncertain
interiors

research
essay

büşra balaban
aslıhan şenel

non-interiors: mapping ambiguous
interiority through Chantal Akerman's
*Les Rendez-vous d'Anna*

19

questions the interiority of a hotel room, which is unfamiliar to a domestic one. This approach to revealing the ambiguous state of the window through our mapping practice allows us to discover that interiority oscillates between certainty and uncertainty rather than having one specific definition. It also calls the agency of the window one of the key spatial elements in constructing the filmic topography and producing the non-interior accordingly. Our mapping practice and the theoretical discussions enable the exploration of the window not only as part of an existing interior nor a threshold element but rather as an uncertain state of an interior itself.

bed as an ambiguous interior within an interior

Our mapping suggests the bed(s) produces non-interiors through its materiality in the film structure. Akerman frames almost all the scenes in the hotel rooms by centring the bed with a key role in the filmic topography. The bed is a much-depersonalised object in an impermanent and non-domestic interior such as a hotel room; however, those beds and their interrelations with Anna's body urge us to question interiority. Throughout the film, the beds in three different hotel rooms and one in the home in Paris receive Anna and the bodies she has encountered during her journey. Although the bed is supposed to be a comfortable, hygienic, personal, and private area of a house, here, on the contrary, beds are framed as shared spaces in impermanent interiors with clothes that never change for three days.

The mapping aims to discover the potential of the material conditions of the bed(s) as a tool to reveal the uncertainty of an interior. Akerman introduces varied beds where the body(s) performs daily actions: listening to music, talking on the phone, having breakfast, making love, sleeping, or talking. Rather than treating the bed as a fixed furniture block, mapping the beds with bodies and related activities unveils the materiality by drawing it over and over. By questioning whether the architectural drawing focuses on a frozen moment, these embodied drawings investigate how space is defined according to the different positionings of the body on the bed and to the camera tactics recording these interrelations between body and bed [Fig. 04]. Drawing each moment of the bed marks different elements and objects of the interior; therefore, mapping explores the bed as an interiority and overlaps the uncertainties produced through its various states.
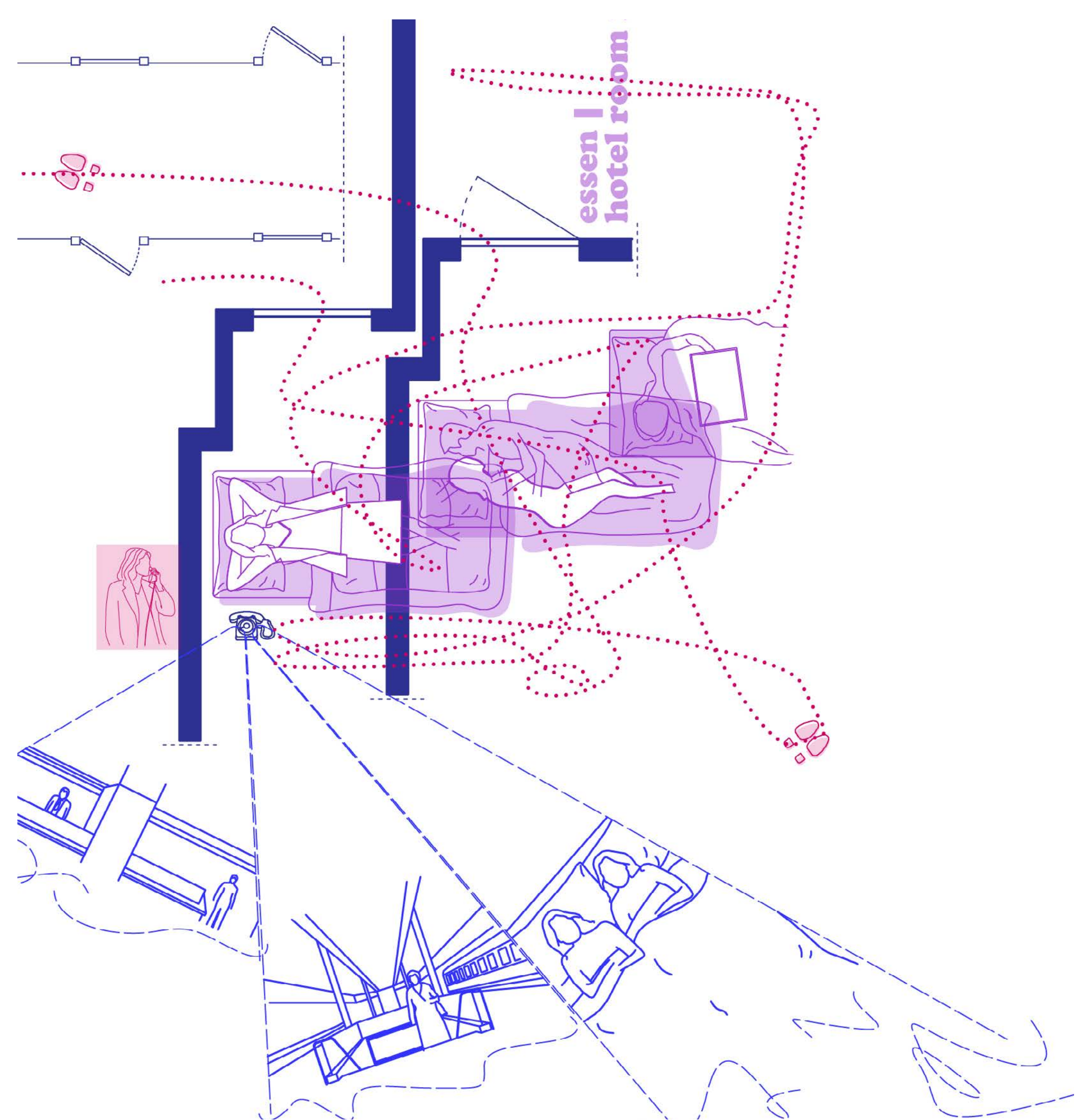
Figure 04.
Plan drawing that multiplies the relationship between body and bed in the hotel room in Essen. From mapping, produced by the authors, 2023.

[ij]

vol.20, no.01   uncertain   research   büşra balaban   non-interiors: mapping ambiguous   20
2023   interiors   essay   aslıhan şenel   interiority through Chantal Akerman's
                                                            Les Rendez-vous d'Anna

This entangled relationship between a hotel room, the bed, and the window reminds us of John Lennon and Yoko Ono's *Bed-In for Peace*, performed in a room in the Amsterdam Hilton hotel. Referring to the sit-in protests, their 'bed-in' performance brings the protest from public space to private space, from the street to the bed. During the performance, the back of the bed faces the window, yet Yoko Ono and John Lennon face the hotel room's interior; 'outside was, of course, Amsterdam, but the bed was far more public than the streets.'[36] Viewers can realise it is in a hotel room in Amsterdam, yet the room and the bed are detached from their context in a way. The bed is occupied in the mornings as their office with interviews on camera and in the evenings as a place where they work to conceive a baby.[37] Unlike the traditional meaning of 'home', which is constructed by separating workspace and living space, this hotel room as an interior constructs uncertainty by oscillating between public and private, or exposure and concealment. In parallel with *Rendez-vous*, the performance undermines issues such as the privacy of a hotel room, the individuality of a bed, and its belonging to a private interior. Mapping through the bed pursues the research of interiority by speculating with the drawings on how the body defines, transforms, or personalises different anonymous interiors. Each drawing experiment probes the materiality of the bed and the window to uncover the ambiguous and anonymous hotel rooms as uncertain interiorities.

Another scene in the hotel room in Brussels, where Anna has a long dialogue with her mother, might also exemplify probing into the bed's materiality. Mapping of this scene, which frames Anna and her mother in a hotel bed, proposes the bed as well as the materiality of the sound—especially communication blocks—as prominent constitutive elements of the filmic topography [Fig. 05]. Visual as well as audial elements reveal uncertain modes of an interior. Here, the voices of the two characters, the emotions conveyed through them, the intimate story she shared, and her mother's barely perceived reactions in the dark room become interwoven with the bodies of the two women lying on the bed. It enables the viewer to pursue questioning the uncertainty of the interior. This scene is not the only example; throughout *Rendez-vous*, Akerman records Anna's encounters with monologues rather than dialogues between two people. Anna listens patiently to the monologues of others and barely responds to the conversations, which are 'passed interspersed with long periods of uncomfortable silence.'[38] These monologues can be described as 'signs of hindered communication' and 'sound masses that rhythmically break the silence' but do not 'function as actual conversational exchanges.'[39] Essentially, each communication block marks a place, a character, and a story. In deciphering these monologues, mapping explores the ambiguous relationships between the space in which the conversation is performed and the spatial references mentioned, remembered, recalled, or visited through these conversations.
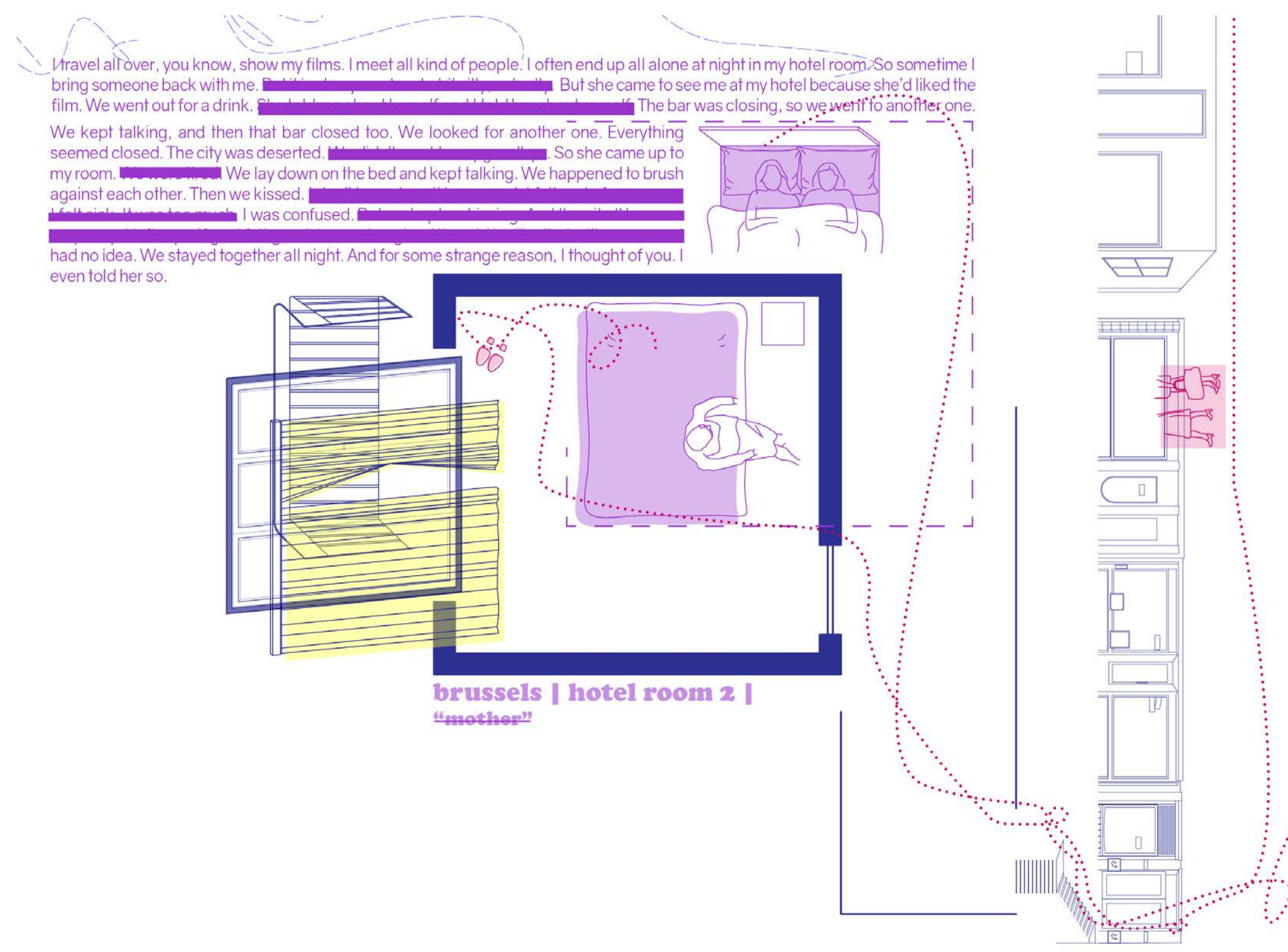
[ij]   vol.20, no.01   uncertain   research   büşra balaban   non-interiors: mapping ambiguous   21
        2023   interiors   essay   aslıhan şenel   interiority through Chantal Akerman's
                                                               Les Rendez-vous d'Anna

Figure 05.
Juxtaposing visual and audial elements entangled with the body and the bed in the hotel room in Brussels. From mapping, produced by the authors, 2023.

phone as an ambiguous interior on transition

Akerman's in-between interior spatialities contain other non-human agents as well as beds and windows. According to Corpas, Anna's body, which constantly wanders around temporary spaces such as hotel rooms, waiting rooms, and trains, is also accompanied by 'transit objects' such as telephones, coffee cups, or suitcases.[40] These are the main materialities of an uncertain filmic topography. They are not only objects available to the subject but also the agents accompanying the subject and the narrative that explores the uncertainty of this filmic interior. For example, throughout the film, the viewer confronts the telephone in different places as an element that produces a destination, awakens, reminds of some places, imagines, or recalls some people. Mapping reflects on the ambiguity of a telephone by drawing its multiple states.

In the hotel room in Essen, the telephone mediates the situations in which Anna talks to reception, attempts to contact a friend in Italy, and arranges a meeting in Cologne. By including the remembered, thought, and wondered places and people in the hotel room, the mapping claims that the phone can interrogate a peculiar mode of the interior. In the mapping, the fixed yet movable position of the desk phone enables new layers to centre the phone by drawing exterior perspectives just as the window. However, we claim that an interior is not only defined by the subject entering and using it but can also acquire other definitions from the perspectives of other non-human agents and subjects. If we look at Anna's return to her home in Paris at the end of the film, all we see is a window, an empty refrigerator, a messy bed, and a desk phone next to the bed. This phone independently constructs the interior of the home by storing and transmitting the messages it received, undermining the relationship between the interior and the user subject. Meanwhile, mapping differentiates the perception of the interior with the people and dialogues are included through the phone and transform the plan drawing accordingly. Here, the sound coming from the phone also appears as a crucial materiality to create ambiguity within this interior [Fig. 06]. The duration of the incoming voice, the content of the monologue, and the emotion conveyed through the voice on the other side of the phone are becoming slightly included in the scene. What is framed by the film is no longer Anna lying on a bed in front of an anonymous wall. This approach of mapping the materiality of the sound opens

[ij]

vol.20, no.01
2023

uncertain
interiors

research
essay

büşra balaban
aslıhan şenel

non-interiors: mapping ambiguous
interiority through Chantal Akerman's
Les Rendez-vous d'Anna

22

a field to explore the ambiguous boundaries of both the house and Anna's interiority. Variations of sound coming from the same phone create ambiguity, and through this, we draw the traces of this particular interior's uncertainties. An interiority is confined by demanding questions from others as well as expanding to infinity with a quick greeting from a friend who has not been touched for a long time. This complicated entanglement of the materialities of the phone, the sound, and the body of Anna establishes an uncertainty.
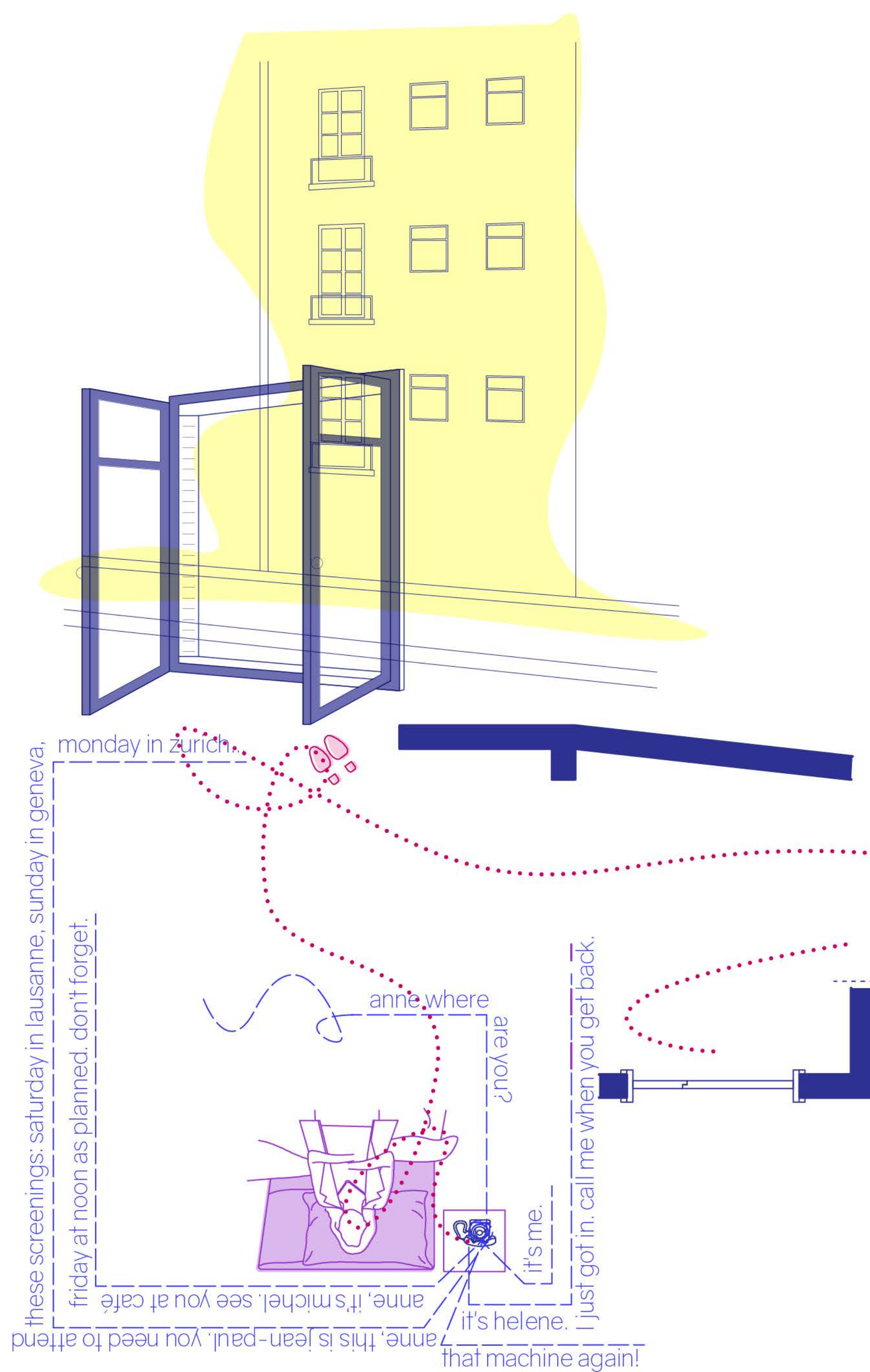
Figure 06.
Establishing spatial boundaries with the heard voices by phone at home in Paris. From mapping, produced by the authors, 2023.

Objects such as the desk phone that unfold by the mapping are not only encountered within an interior space. Even though they are located alone in public or exterior contexts, they may recall or directly reproduce an interior. These can be identical objects encountered in different contexts or only one portable object accompanying the journey. Their own mobility or presence within other mobile interiors has the potential to multiply uncertainties beyond dichotomies. By doing so, *Rendez-vous* allows human and non-human characters to get beyond the dichotomous understanding of space-user, object-subject, or interior-exterior. Mapping enriches this relationship through drawing by discussing the telephone(s) encountered throughout the journey. These drawings examine the modes in which the phone invites the outer space into an interior, produces boundaries of an interior, or overlaps several interiorities. The phone itself as an uncertain interior simultaneously ambiguates and reproduces the environments in which it is located.

conclusions

This essay focused on the possibility of breaking the cycle of architecture that constantly reproduces certain dichotomous approaches, spatial divisions, and their predefined social relationships with the enclosed subjects. Drawing on theories of art, cinema, and feminist studies, we unfolded that the beyond of these dichotomies has so far been sought through methods such as enabling ambiguity, encompassing the unknown potentials

[ij]

vol.20, no.01
2023

uncertain
interiors

research
essay

büşra balaban
aslıhan şenel

non-interiors: mapping ambiguous
interiority through Chantal Akerman's
Les Rendez-vous d'Anna

23

of multiplicities, and including what is excluded from the site. Similarly, we were concerned with proposing non-interior as a theoretical speculation, which we also experimented with a practice-based work on filmic mapping. We criticise architecture's reduction of space to spatial hierarchies, particularly the identification of an interior with the mere female subject. Rather than using binary oppositions, our research exposes the multiplicity and ambiguity of an interior to discuss the possibility of uncertain interiority produced through a specific way of filmic production and our mapping practice. The conceptual investigation of a non-interior together with an embodied practice of mapping offers an interdisciplinary study across and beyond architecture and cinema to explore the uncertainties of a filmic interior. In such cases as the spatial boundaries are blurred when a subject has simultaneous multiple mental and bodily experiences, the privacy of the enclosure is punctured with the cinematic gaze of the camera and the viewer, and different states of dynamism are encountered when the subject relates to various objects. In this critical spatial research, both through our mapping practice and theoretical discussion, we wandered around various scales, contexts, locations, and mediums to unveil the ambiguous materialities of the interior and evoke its unheeded, marginalised, or not-included states in thought and practice.

Tracing the journey of a filmic topography, we uncovered the ambiguities in different scales, locations, and contexts. Our

mapping of Les *Rendez-vous d'Anna* defines various interior states such as being a room, a threshold, or piece of a furniture. An anonymous and temporary room might blur the meanings and functions of interior and exterior; a threshold might establish shifting boundaries or evoke different spatialities; a piece of furniture, which is in transition or confined within an interior, might enable the experience of gradual shades of an interiority located in an interior. Rather than a representation of conventional spatial codes, the room, the threshold, and the furniture are particular states of becoming and forming a series of relationships. These material states are layered throughout the research by tracing the inhabitation of space, its representation in film, and the embodied viewing practices of the researchers. Our mapping draws this multi-layered state of becoming, rather than representing a static and frozen moment. Such an approach, which focuses on the instability and the becoming in the material scale, produces uncertainties for an interior. Despite revealing and distinguishing these ambiguous materialities, our mapping produces a kind of non-interior by overlapping the fragmented knowledges of an uncertain interior. Our aim here was not to specify only one interior nor limit the material uncertainties of an interior to the ones mentioned in this essay. Rather, we claim that further explorations can be pursued on uncertainty by probing into this state of becoming through creative studies of everyday life and critical re-readings of different films or other representations.

[ij]

vol.20, no.01
2023

uncertain
interiors

research
essay

büşra balaban
aslıhan şenel

non-interiors: mapping ambiguous
interiority through Chantal Akerman's
Les Rendez-vous d'Anna

24

author biographies

Büşra Balaban is a researcher and architect who works with critical and interdisciplinary methods. She is a PhD candidate at Istanbul Technical University (ITU) and a research assistant at Istanbul Bilgi University. She studied architecture and completed her master's thesis at ITU. Her research interests focus on feminist theories and practices, mapping, and the practices of film-making/-viewing.

Aslıhan Şenel (PhD) is an Istanbul-based architect, researcher, and educator, working with multidisciplinary and collective methods. She is an associate professor at Istanbul Technical University, where she teaches architectural design and theory. She has explored through theory and practice, themes such as critical mapping, commons, feminist pedagogies, feminist post-human design, and performativeness of representation.

[ij] vol.20, no.01
2023

uncertain
interiors

research
essay

büşra balaban
aslıhan şenel

non-interiors: mapping ambiguous
interiority through Chantal Akerman's
Les Rendez-vous d'Anna

25

notes

01 *Les Rendez-vous d'Anna*,
dir. by Chantal Akerman
(France: Gaumont, 1975).

02 Jane Rendell, *Art and
Architecture: A Place Between*
(London: IB Tauris, 2006).

03 Aslıhan Şenel, 'Unfixing
Place: A Study of Istanbul
through Topographical
Practices' (unpublished
doctoral thesis, University
College London, 2008).

04 Jane Rendell, 'Critical Spatial
Practices: Setting Out a
Feminist Approach to some
Modes and what Matters
in Architecture', in *Feminist
Practices: Interdisciplinary
Approaches to Women in
Architecture*, ed. by Lori
Brown (Abingdon: Ashgate
Publishing, 2011), pp. 17–55.

05 Şenel, 'Unfixing Place', p. 20.

06 Aslıhan Şenel, 'Mapping as
Performing Place', *disClosure:
A Journal of Social Theory*,
23.1 (2014), 91–119 (p.110).

07 Robert Smithson, 'A
Provisional Theory of Non-
Sites', in *Robert Smithson:
The Collected Writings*, ed.
by Jack Flam (London:
University of California
Press, 1996), pp. 364–365.

08 Nick Kaye, *Site-specific
Art: Performance, Place and
Documentation* (Psychology
Press, 2000), pp. 91–96.

09 Pascal Bonitzer, Décadrages:
Peinture et Cinéma (Paris:
Cahiers du cinéma: Editions
de l'Etoile, DL, 1985), pp. 10-20.

10 Bonitzer, 'Décadrages', p. 20.

11 Rosalind Krauss, 'Sculpture in
the Expanded Field', *October*,
8 (1979), 30–44 (pp. 37–38).

12 Krauss, 'Sculpture in the
Expanded Field', p. 36.

13 Krauss, 'Sculpture in the
Expanded Field', p. 41.

14 Literary critic William Empson
defines ambiguity, in daily
language, by referring
to openness to multiple

interpretations and an
intentional uncertainty of
meaning for words, ideas,
and images. In this essay,
non-interior establishes
ambiguity both linguistically
and theoretically. However,
linguistic ambiguity is only
instrumentalised to enhance
the theoretical discussion
rather than being the purpose
of this research. William
Empson, *Seven Types of
Ambiguity* (New York: New
Directions, 1966).

15 Cathryn Dwyre, Chris Perry,
David Salomon, and Kathy
Velikov, 'Weird Worlds
and Peculiar Practices:
Imagining a Tentative Future',
in *Ambiguous Territory:
Architecture, Landscape and
Postnatural*, ed. by Cathryn
Dwyre, Chris Perry, David
Salomon, and Kathy Velikov
(New York: Actar Publishers,
2022), pp. 20–45 (p. 20).

16 Dwyre et al., 'Weird Worlds
and Peculiar Practices', p. 20.

17 Alexa G. Winton, 'Inhabited
Space: Critical Theories
and the Domestic Interior',
in *The Handbook Of Interior
Architecture and Design*,
ed. by Graeme Brooker
and Lois Weinthal (London:
Bloomsbury Publishing,
2013), pp. 40–50 (p. 41).

18 Lynne Walker, 'Home Making:
An Architectural Perspective'
Signs, 27 (2002), 823–835
(p. 823).

19 Graeme Brooker and Lois
Weinthal, 'Introduction', in
*The Handbook Of İnterior
Architecture and Design*,
ed. by Graeme Brooker
and Lois Weinthal (London:
Bloomsbury Publishing,
2013), pp. 1–7 (p. 1).

20 Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture
from the Outside. Essays
on Virtual and Real Space*.
Writing Architecture
Series (Cambridge MA:
Massachusetts Institute of
Technology, 2001), pp. 90–93.

21 Grosz, *Architecture from the
Outside*, pp. 90–93.

22 Christine McCarthy, 'Toward a
Definition of Interiority', *Space
and Culture*, 8.2 (2005), 112–
125 (p. 113).

23 Suzie Attiwill and Gini Lee.
'Introduction', *idea journal,
insideout*, 6 (2005), 3–13 (p. 4).

24 Attiwill and Lee,
'Introduction', p. 5.

25 Attiwill and Lee,
'Introduction', p. 7.

26 Attiwill and Lee,
'Introduction', p. 9.

27 According to French literary
theorist and essayist
Roland Barthes, multiple
interrelations between
representation and meaning
may be possible. The
meaning of the work is not
only in the author but also in
the reader. Roland Barthes,
'The Death of the Author',
in *Image Music Text*, ed. by
Stephen Heath (London:
Fontana, 1977), pp. 142–148.

28 Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure
and Narrative Cinema',
Screen, 16 (1975), 6–18 (p. 9).

29 Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of
Emotion: Journeys in Art,
Architecture, and Film*
(London: Verso, 2002),
pp. 285–335.

30 Giuliana Bruno, 'Site-Seeing:
Architecture and the Moving
Image', *Wide Angle*, 19 (1997),
8–24.

31 Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion*,
pp. 30–78.

32 Donna Haraway, 'Situated
Knowledges: The Science
Question in Feminism as a Site
of Discourse on the Privilege
of Partial Perspective', *Feminist
Studies*, 14 (1988), 575–599
(pp. 581–82).

33 Haraway, 'Situated
Knowledges', p. 581.

34 According to Paul Emmons,
'embodiment' in architectural
drawing practice could be

defined as 'a process of
coming into material presence
which is an effort of making
visible the invisible', which is
far more than only existing
in a site. Paul Emmons,
*Drawing Imagining Building:
Embodiment in Architectural
Design Practices* (New York:
Routledge, 2019), pp. 12–13.

35 Emmons, *Drawing Imagining
Building*, pp. 12–13.

36 Beatriz Colomina, 'The 24/7
Bed: Privacy and Publicity in
the Age of Social Media', in
How to Relate, ed. by Annika
Haas, Maximilian Haas,
Hanna Magauer, and Dennis
Pohl (Bielefeld: Transcript
Verlag, 2021), pp. 186–200.

37 Colomina, 'The 24/7 Bed',
p. 188.

38 Irene Valle Corpas, 'Between
Home and Flight: Interior
Space, Time and Desire in the
Films of Chantal Akerman',
Journal of Aesthetics & Culture,
13:1 (2021), 1–18 (p. 10).

39 Ivone Margulies, *Nothing
Happens: Chantal Akerman's
Hyperrealist Everyday* (Durham
NC: Duke University Press,
1996), pp. 154–55.

40 Corpas, 'Between Home and
Flight', p. 10.