

## **Text accompanying the show**

### Spatial Disruptions 2010

#### Psychological Spaces

In her most recent body of work entitled *Spatial Disruptions*, photographer Jennifer Mason investigates the messed-up psychology of houses. Following on from earlier work, where Mason used carefully cast actors and banal domestic interiors to create scenes of suburban neurosis, she has set aside the figure as the subject to focus on the power of suburban architecture to induce a similar sense of unease. Choosing to document buildings found in 'house for removal' yards, her photographs depict conservative beige, cream and pastel domestic interiors that through their emptiness ask us to imagine their divorced pasts and uncertain futures.

However, there is more at play in these images than just the captivating relics of suburbia. At second glance we become aware that the interiors have been digitally altered to bear strange optical incisions or contain odd spatial transplants. Some of the images closely resemble Gordon Matta-Clark's 'building cut' works of the 1970s where he physically sliced through whole houses and industrial buildings reconfiguring their interiors and opening them up to the outside world. However, Mason's virtual interventions differ greatly in their emotive implications in contrast to Matta-Clark's brutally physical and sterile dissection of buildings. Her Photoshop manipulation also functions more like a house of mirrors where we are disorientated by duplicated and warped versions of reality. Surprisingly we also find that her manipulation is far from subtle as we notice perspective lines that blatantly do not correlate, tonal gradations that contradict the available light and even unstitched pasting of images upon another so that you can see the rectangular edges of individual digital images. Her deliberately crude manipulation resembles some sort of botched cosmetic surgery or abnormal Frankenstein-like creation.

More importantly the series of images evoke a feeling of dread or disquiet. Some rooms seem to be plagued by an unnatural and potentially hostile shadow; others feature half opened doors leading to menacing dark rooms. This surreal and haunting imagery suggests the presence of the paranormal but without the obvious use of horror. Indeed, these images are meant to make us anticipate what might be lurking around the corner rather than presenting us with Hollywood or even B-grade shock imagery. These emotionally charged interiors are successfully disturbing primarily

because they disrupt our conventional notions of the home being a place of sanctuary, solitude and intimacy. Through this disruption they also reveal that our notion of 'home' is subjectively created. Indeed, we use the home as an archive of our most formative and cherished memories to the extent that a house ceases to be merely a physical dwelling but becomes a psychological one. Doors, windows, corridors and living rooms are not just part of a building but are also subjective spaces that we have emotional association to via our own memories of similar spaces. This is why a child's drawing of their home reveals important unsaid emotional slippages for psychologists. Therefore, if a house is not just a physical shelter but also a space psychically tainted by our inhabitation, Mason's images must surely make us question what memories lurk within these common suburban interiors.

**Bruce E. Phillips 2010**  
**Curator at Te Tuhi Centre of the Arts**