



## Never Built House

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A couple walks into an architect's office. She sits, and he stands near the door. He begins itemising the budget in premature detail, she interrupts and starts describing the ways the teak wood grains should pattern the floor. Before she can finish, he takes out a list of acceptable window suppliers. Back and forth they go. The architect's mind starts drifting to dampen the volume of their rancour. He imagines the building that would house their relationship—stairways opening to a two-storey drop, the toilet of one spouse emptying onto the desk of the other, twisted rooms cutting each other off—a house made from spite. When they get to the predictable part of the argument where nobody is speaking to one another (ever again—again), the silence breaks the architect's day-dreaming haze and he says, 'you don't need a new house, you need a divorce'.

That good architecture does not always result in a building is an idea credited to British architect Cedric Price, purportedly at the centre of the above anecdote. Using Price's 'architecture as divorce' as permission to think differently about architectural practice, I came to understand buildings as the materializations of human relationships, that changes in human relations are mirrored architecturally, and conversely, that alterations to buildings have interpersonal ramifications.

I started experimenting to see if relationships could be understood as architecture by offering 'free architectural advice' in 2009. Staged in a gallery, I met with visitors to discuss their apartments in a therapy-like way. By the end of the conversation we would have designed a renovation—of the interpersonal relationship—with architectural implications. One of these 'renovations' started with a woman frustrated by her loft. We soon realized that she did not want a new loft, but rather a boyfriend. The idea of this commitment was both enticing and frightening for her, so we agreed that she could treat it like a performance. Her renovation balances the ledger of architects messing with nuptials. She agreed with another artist to enter into a legal, 'rehearsal' marriage—but that is another story.