

Title: Dilapidated Dwelling

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Abstract:

Where I live, there seem to be two kinds of space. There is new space, in which none of the buildings are more than about ten years old, and there is old space, in which most of the buildings are at least twenty years old, a lot of them over ninety years old, and all are more or less dilapidated.

Patrick Keiller begins his 1998 essay *The Dilapidated Dwelling* with a concise and simple description of the issues he raises in both the essay and the film to which it relates, *The Dilapidated Dwelling*, 2000. In both film and word Keiller's description of the UK's physical infrastructure at the turn of the millennium was both depressingly evident and in need of explanation. Continuing in the vein of his most famed films *London*, 1994, and *Robinson in Space*, 1997, *The Dilapidated Dwelling* is narrated by an invisible voice that probes the peculiarities of the economic, political and social conditions of late 20th century Britain through the prism of its infrastructure, urban blight and, in particular, its housing.

The narrator, a woman is recalled to Britain after two decades in the Arctic investigates 'the predicament of the house', discovering that the most recent advances in industrial manufacture have left the house building industry practically untouched. By contrast, changes to the global economy and the emergence of the digital age have conspired to create wealth that has seen the market price of the existing, dilapidated housing stock skyrocket. Revisiting the ideas of Constant, Buckminster Fuller and Archigram she discusses the anomalies of housing supply and demand that have allowed some to escape housing poverty and yet leave millions in 'dilapidated dwellings'.

To coincide with the the launch of its three year project *Housing – Critical Futures*, Architecture, Media, Politics, Society, is republishing Keiller's essay and re-showing his film. The essay is reprinted from Keiller's recent book, *The View From the Train*, Vesro, 2013; and the film is shown as part of a one day series of film screenings and debates about the effects of housing on issues of public health, *Housing, Health and Film*. Screened at the Bluecoat Chambers Art Gallery, Liverpool, the film is accompanied by debates from architects, filmmakers and public health officials.