

## Yuko Minamide

Yuko Minamide is a 3D designer based in Tokyo whose work sometimes explores the relationship between security and familiarity, or comfort and discomfort in domestic space. Minamide's new work 'Bed/House' equates the most familiar form of shelter – a pitched-roof house – with the primal space of comfort, a bed. In her words, " 'Bed/House' was created to produce the 'second layer' in our personal private space: its aim is to allow people to escape from reality. I see the 'first' layer as being our dwellings, our shelter from the outside world. As the second, the form of the 'Bed/House' also had to consequently become an archetypal or iconic dwelling." Minamide's 'Bed/House' is akin to a pictogram or child's drawing of a house, and might be compared to architects Herzog and de Meuron's 'Rudin House'. Herzog and de Meuron, like Minamide, have recently examined how the most familiar or traditional forms of building types can be reinvented.

Firstly, Minamide has removed all extraneous details from the design, so that it becomes as close to an archetype as possible – a severe, minimal form reduced to its essence: "there are no curvy lines, just straight lines and sharp edges." However, the work's surface also complicates our easy identification of the work, and our rush to classify it as an unthreatening, charming doll's house. The initial associations offered are of warmth, comfort and domestic security. These are more than offset by the deployment of highly synthetic, lustrous pure black plastic on the walls. This 'skin' repels certain types of imaginative identification. There is no colour or pattern to delight in, nor any sense of weight, history or texture. Instead, our eyes can only glide across the black mirror-like surface. Such materials are ordinarily used, for example to cover CCTV cameras or for other 'security' purposes instead of in domestic dwellings. As the designer remarks, "I chose black to give the work a strong, monolithic presence. On this glossy black surface, the mirror effect confuses our normal sense of perception. It is as though we see 'shadows' depicted on the surface; the way in which we register the idea of solid matter is somehow reversed." Reflected at different angles, other viewers appear like colourless ghosts, or shadowless phantoms. As the work is at a human scale, Minamide also invites viewers to anthropomorphize it: "since it exudes such an inhospitable ambience, the work appears to want people not to feel closer to it. But that is precisely the key to ensuring total isolation for the one person inside." In contrast to the external image offered, when the user steps inside, the work provides sensations of comfort, protection and relief. When inside the work, the viewer rests on a mattress and faces down. Three holes at the far end allow space for one's head and arms: underneath is a book and light. The viewer is then in the perfect reading posture. As the designer notes, "within five minutes of being inside 'Bed/House', the user will be in a state of rapt contemplation, totally absorbed by the book. A world of imagination will be created, and they are wholly encapsulated within 'Bed/House' – and then the world outside will be forgotten and disappeared for a moment..."