

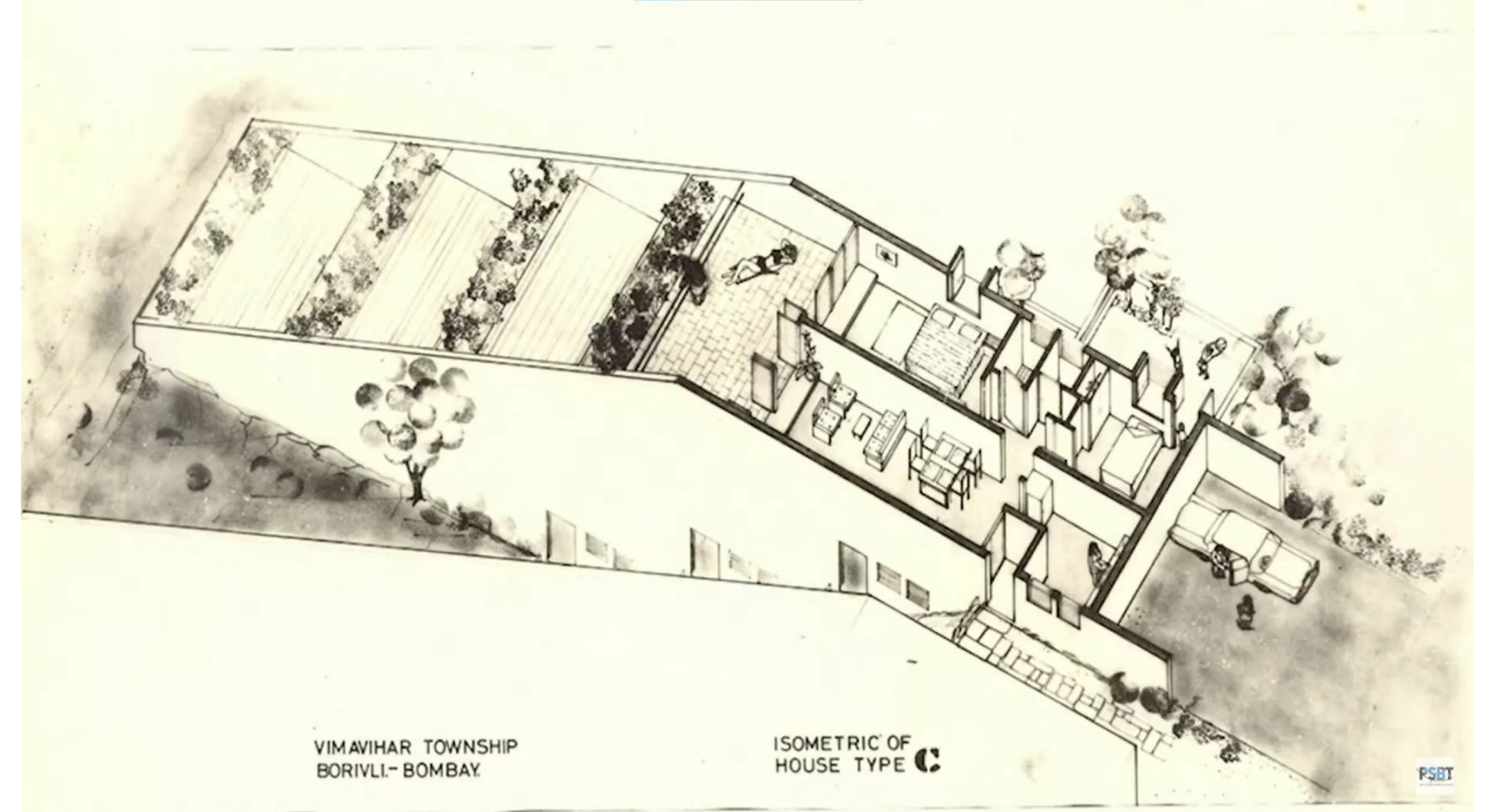
Lovely Villa - Architecture as Autobiography

Architecture of Memory and Everyday Life

Nadja Michl & Chenlu Ni, SoSe 2024, Family Matters: Domestic Ethnography, Home Movies and Autobiographical Documentaries in Indian (Diasporic) Contexts



How does a newly built housing estate become a home for a family and its members? How do its architecture and design shape the family and neighborhood relationships as well as forms of living together, and consequently also the biography of the residents – even long after they have left this home?¹ These are some of the questions that have been reflected by the film *Lovely Villa – Architecture as Autobiography* (2019) by the Indian architect and filmmaker Rohan Shivkumar.² The film uses four lines of vision to narrate three main themes, each with a distinct language and voice – the voice of the state, the architecture itself, inhabitants of the house, and personal feelings of the architect. The three themes are collective memories, housing architecture, and individual narrative in everyday life.



The design of LIC Colony, still from the film *Lovely Villa – Architecture as Autobiography* (5:21)

Collective Memories

The film is a tribute to the post-independence Indian national identity and the national vision for affordable housing for the middle class. Being a housing complex built by the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and designed by architect Charles Correa, it is a promise of future as those who fulfilled the payment requirement of the insurance policy will own the property at the end, while the buildings are specifically designed to bring different social classes and immigrating white-collar works together, resulting in an interesting intermingling of population within a greenery-surrounded area in the middle of the metropole, creating a collective memory belonging to the specific historic epoch.



The outside view of LIC Colony, still from the film *Lovely Villa – Architecture as Autobiography* (9:15)

Housing Architecture

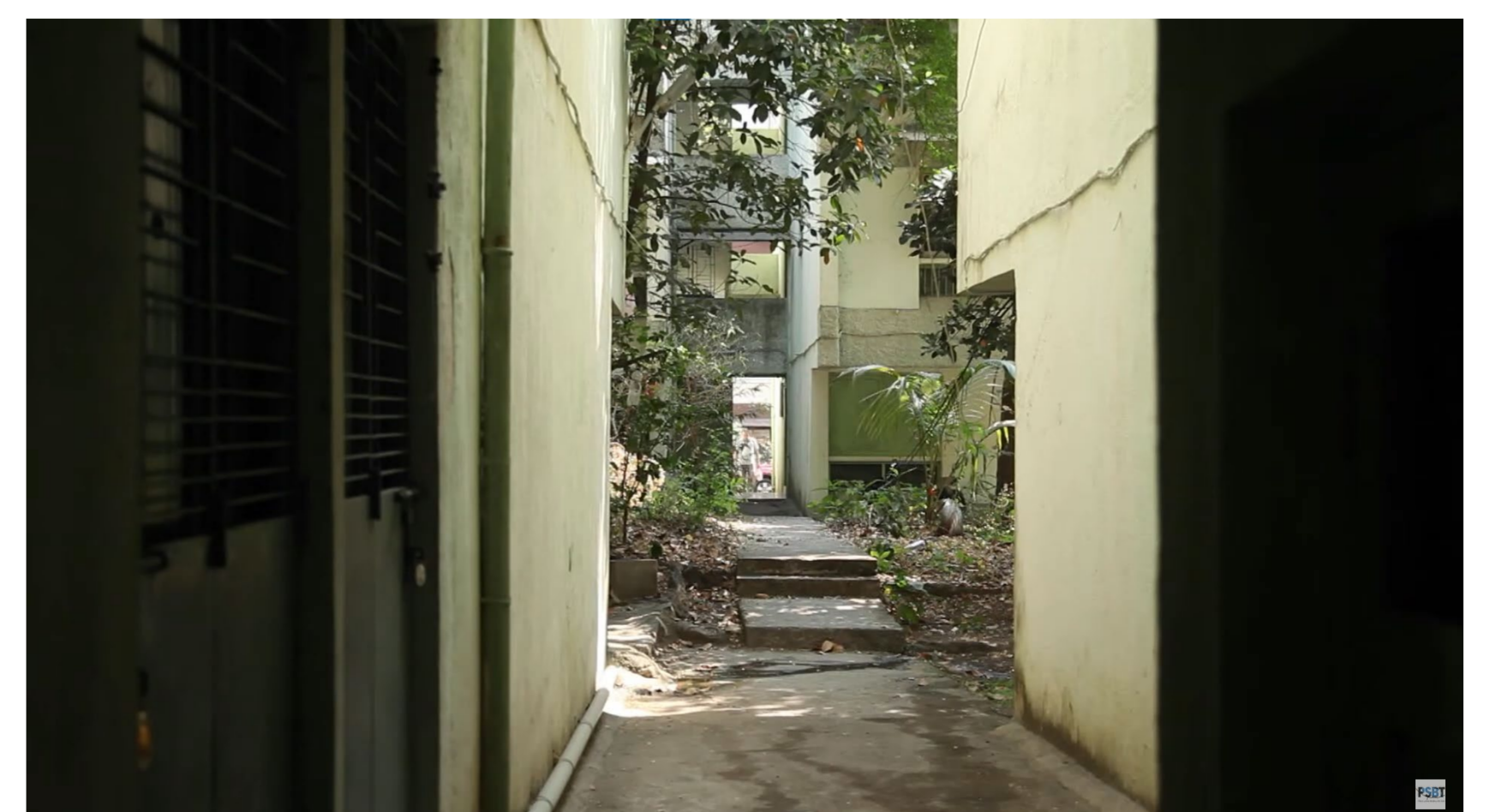
Charles Correa's design philosophy is reflected in the housing complex and influenced the way the filmmaker perceives an ideal living space. Every housing complex has large spaces on top for access to the sky and large openings on the side for cross ventilation. Different sizes of apartments allows a healthy mix of different social classes in the same building, and communal spaces are incorporated in the design so that neighbors could interact with each other. All the footpaths were interconnecting so that residents could reach their house without crossing the main street, and children of different families could play together. The physical spaces the architecture creates impact the life of residents on a daily basis.



Inside view of the house, still from the film *Lovely Villa – Architecture as Autobiography* (10:27)

Individual Narrative in Everyday Life

Lovely Villa embodies on the one hand, the state and societal attitudes towards housing and family life, roles and relationships between parents and children. On the other hand, the intimacy of shared life, of certain ways of living and of all the practices and routines that made this house a home for its inhabitants. Every home is the witness, and no witness is mute. It is a dialogical space where one can create a "speaking storage medium" for the different levels of personal, family and social life, just as naturally as the family's photo albums. Rohan Shivkumar's personal development and familial relationship are influenced by the living space, connecting him to the spatial and the temporal that is historically contextual based.



Routes connecting different buildings, still from the film *Lovely Villa – Architecture as Autobiography* (10:39)

Watch the film here:



¹ Schneider, Nadja-Christina. 2024. Memory, Housing Architecture and Everyday Life: *Lovely Villa: Architecture as Autobiography* in *Reimagining Housing, Rethinking the Role of Architects in India*. Media and Cultural Studies 5. Heidelberg: Heidelberg Asian Studies Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.11588/hasp.1381>.

² Shivkumar, Rohan, director. *Lovely Villa – Architecture as Autobiography*. PSBT India, 2019. 32:08. <https://youtu.be/tjGJz3DLh1U?feature=shared>.