In 1962 the British self-proclaimed surrealist science-fiction writer J. G. Ballard wrote a short story titled “The Thousand Dreams of Stellavista.” It tells the story of Howard Talbot, a young lawyer who buys a so-called “psychotropic house”—a house that through specific types of deformations of walls and ceilings responds to its inhabitant, deeply altering his moods and desires. Quickly it becomes clear that the house has absorbed many of the psychological traits of its previous inhabitant, a famous movie star named Gloria Tremayne, who after a bout of madness, murdered her architect-husband. While the story develops, Howard falls in love with Gloria, who attacks Howard’s wife and chases her out of the house, leading the lawyer and his murderous robot-house to an inevitable climax.

The studio will use the notion of a robot house to investigate a broad range of questions about inhabitation. For example, do we by definition inhabit a house with previous or even imagined inhabitants? Are all houses haunted, in a way? Or, what is the nature of service? When a house “serves” the inhabitant, does that involve the famous master-slave relationship so deeply studied by Hegel?—after all, the word “domination” stems from the Latin *domus*, “house.” What, then, does comfort mean? Does that mean a house can fully take over our lives, close its own curtains and, via the so-called “internet of things,” replenish the groceries and order our pizza? How does home automation relate to our own automated behavior such as habits? Or, when we design a fully robotized house, how far can that push the interaction with the inhabitant, and is the robot-house then still a house or is it simply a second inhabitant, like Gloria Tremayne?

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