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Bodies, boredom and the architecture of home in the adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert

By the end of *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* – the cult film by Stephan Elliott, released in 1994 – its three protagonists, in full drag, reach the summit of Kings Canyon, a landmark in Australia. Despite having achieved a long-held fantasy, Bernadette Bassenger, Mitzi Del Bra and Felicia Jollygoodfellow appear bored: they ‘just want to go home’. Their boredom stems from nostalgia for home, yet home cannot be traditional; it is not, for them, a transgender woman and two gay men, an architecture of static buildings. Instead, their sense of belonging is bound to a moving body, a bus baptised Priscilla. Ornate and architecturally customised to their needs, it provides a space for their bodies while also becoming a place for emotional intimacy, escaping heteronormative oppression. This portrayal, of both social estrangement and the quest for the most genuine abode to dwell, resonates with Martin Heidegger’s elaborations on boredom as the symptom of the modern era. In his understanding of philosophy as active engagement with the world, the modern individual is insidiously out of home, a lack that ought to be acknowledged and rectified. He writes, ‘to be at home everywhere means to be at once and at all times within the whole’; the whole is the world, and the world is home. If one is not at home in the world, then boredom arises as an ontological homesickness that curtails and even dissolves the possibility of finding one’s own place in the world. Although Heidegger notably left the body out of his elaborations on boredom, this paper addresses its presence through the bodies – drag, transgender, mechanical, architectural – in *The Adventures of Priscilla*. The aim is to explore the relationship between inhabitation and individual becoming, with boredom and homesickness as what precedes the envisioning of alternative lifestyles and their spatial configurations. In turn, this questions the role of architecture, as ambiguously enabler and reliever, in the transitions that characterizes modern living: the sensation of being neither here nor there, always waiting to arrive at another destination.