

I AM A LABORATORY 2012



Scott Andrew Elliott
www.scottandrewelliott.com

Wilhelm Reich: The Orgone Accumulator

This device was conceived and designed by Wilhelm Reich. It is based on his own pseudo-scientific experiments that have been criticized for their unsubstantiated claims and Reich's own lack of scientific training. The theory behind this device is derived from Reich's theories of psychology. A colleague of Sigmund Freud, Reich was continuing Freud's research into the libido. As a reversal of Freud's own theory, Reich believed that psychological neuroses resulted from unfulfilled libido, rather than the cause of sexual dis-functions. Reich was searching for a measurable form of the libido. Reich's work in this field is still respected, despite his fall into disrepute as a result of his 'orgone' research. This early research into sexuality in psychology led to a theory that the human organism was able to create a state of balance through the release of an orgasm. This orgasm needed to have what Reich termed 'orgastic potency' in order to return to a relaxed state of being. In order to have this 'orgastic potency', one's body needed to have a certain amount of 'orgone energy'. 'Orgone energy', Reich believed, was a ubiquitous energy that came from the sun, and pervaded all forms of life, and in fact was the source of all life. He discovered it through his pseudo-scientific experiments. In order to accumulate this orgone energy, to return the body to a state of healthy balance, one could sit in this box, made up of particular materials, which would function to attract and accumulate the energy within it, and therefore within the body. The box, called the 'orgone accumulator', is made up of an exterior layer of press-board (upson board in original instructions, very close to MDF today), then layers of steel wool and fiberglass (in this model, 2 layers of each, alternating), and galvanized sheet metal on the inside. A seat could be added if wished. These materials were chosen for their particular material qualities; steel would attract the orgone energy, and fiberglass would hold on to it, thus accumulating the energy. The door was to be smaller than the rest of the box to allow for air flow. One was to sit in this box up to once a day for general health benefits, the time span being open to how one feels in the accumulator; "One should continue with the organomic irradiation as long as one feels comfortable and

'glowing'. The sensitive person will, after a while have 'had enough.' This manifests itself in the feeling of 'nothing happening any longer.'" There were hazards to its over-use, and instructions on how to reduce one's amount of orgone energy. The box was not supposed to be near fluorescent lights, as these released negative orgone energy, detrimental to the body.

The end of the orgone accumulator, and Reich's own end, came as a result of a newspaper article written in 1947 by Mildred Edie Brady. This article accused Reich of having a sex-cult, and that he was using his orgone accumulators for curing cancer and sexual problems. This led to an investigation by the FBI, which Reich refused to cooperate with, and eventually led to Reich's imprisonment, the public burning of his books ordered by the US Government, and an order that all orgone accumulators remaining at his residence be destroyed. Reich was given a three year prison sentence, but died in his second year of incarceration. Orgone accumulators were forbidden to be sold, and so Reich's family offered free building plans to the public (appendix 1).

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My interest in the orgone accumulator is not in the concept of orgone energy, nor the psychological theories about libido and the possible effects of sexual dysfunction, but rather as an architectural space designed to have a direct effect on the body, in fact intended to change the composition of the body. Though it is on the borders of what may be considered an architectural construction, it does offer a defined space by way of a built structure. In my opinion it offers a distinct spatial experience, and it is this effect, of the dimension, scale, materials, that I am interested in studying.

The second space, the laboratory, is my own design, and functions as more of a one-to-one scale sketch of a space that could possibly be used to experiment on the body, particularly on spatial perception, but perhaps also on other mechanisms. My own research is into the ways that we are integrated into surrounding space, particularly architectural space, and how the design of a space, considering all of its qualities, can directly affect and change the body. My own built spaces are intended to offer an uncommon experience of space, with strange angles and tilted planes removing the elements of architecture that one expects to find, in order to question how we perceive space and how the mechanisms through which we interact with space are taken for granted. This laboratory can function as a testing ground for experiments on these mechanisms of perception, as a place in which to devise experiments that will help to give an understanding of how we are constantly interacting with and being changed by what surrounds us. To further this laboratory concept, any and all situations in which the body is interacting with architectural surroundings can be taken as experimental, and one can become a laboratory, taking everyday situations and places as locations in which to study this interaction between body and space.

Appendix 1: Plans for an Orgone Accumulator

APPENDIX 10

*Plans and Instructions for the Accumulator**

Construction of a three-fold ORGONE ENERGY ACCUMULATOR

1. Construction of a three-fold orgone energy accumulator

1. General information

- a. The accumulator is made in six panels which are to be screwed together. All panels except the bottom are constructed in the same manner, and differ only in dimensions. Each panel consists of an inner surface of iron and an outer non-metallic surface which enclose a braced wood frame and alternate layers of glass wool and steel wool.
- b. The materials specified may, if necessary, be replaced by other materials; celotex, plastic or other wall board may be used in place of the upson board; felt cotton batts, rock wool, etc. may replace the glass wool; steel wool, held by wire mesh may replace the inner sheet iron. If substitutions are made, some adjustments in dimensions of the frames may be necessary.
- c. Consult the accompanying drawings and tables for dimensions, construction details, etc.

2. Construct the frames.

- a. Cut the 1 1/4" x 1 1/4" pine to the specified lengths. Mitre the corners and join with corrugated fasteners. Brace each frame with a 3" piece of pine placed in the center of the frame. Join with corrugated fasteners.
- b. Construct the bottom frame with 3/4" x 1 1/4" pine. No bracing is necessary.

3. Attach the outer surface.

- a. Cut upson board to fit inside the rabbets of each frame. Fasten in place with small nails.
- b. Cut two pieces of 1/4" plywood the same size as the bottom frame. Screw one piece of plywood to frame using flat head wood screws.

* Plans and Instructions for the accumulator were issued by the Wilhelm Reich Foundation on request. Their ready availability emphasizes that the Foundation was less interested in profit than in providing accumulators for as many people as possible. Later models used metal (non-aluminum) screening and polyethylene instead of steel wool and glass wool.

4. Place the glass wool and steel wool in the panels.
 - a. Place a layer of glass wool about 1/4" thick upon the inner surface of the upson board and inside one of the frames. Avoid lumps and holes. Do not compress the glass wool.
 - b. Next place a layer of steel wool upon the glass wool. Steel wool pads when unrolled are the correct thickness. Make the layer as uniform as possible; leave the steel wool "fluffy".
 - c. In a similar manner place the remaining alternate layers of glass wool and steel wool in position.
 - d. Place the glass wool and steel wool in the other panels.
 - e. Bottom panel has different number of layers. (See drawing)
5. Attach the inner surfaces.
 - a. Cut the sheet iron slightly smaller than the frames. Round the corners and file the edges where necessary. Punch holes through the iron and nail to the frames with small nails.
 - b. For the bottom panel, screw the remaining piece of 1/4" plywood to the frame. Then attach sheet iron over this.
6. Attach side supports to bottom panel.
 - a. Cut two pieces of 1" x 3" pine stock 24" long.
 - b. Screw them onto the outer surface of the panel, across the front and back.
 - c. The supports should project 1 1/4" from each side of the bottom panel.
 - d. Attach a slider to the under surface of each projection.
7. Assemble the accumulator
 - a. Place one side in position on the projections from the bottom panel. Drill two screw holes through frame of side panel into bottom frame. Screw through side panel into bottom panel using 2 1/2" wood screws.
 - b. Place the back in position. Drill and screw through side into back.
 - c. Place the other side in position. Drill and screw through side into back and bottom.
 - d. Place top in position. (It will project over front of side panels.) Drill and screw through top into both sides and back.
 - e. Screw three hinges to the door frame. Place the door in position and screw through the hinges into side frame.
 - f. Screw the hooks into the door, the eyes into side frame; one set on the outside, one set inside. The inside hook will screw into the brace of the door frame.
8. Coat the outer surface of the accumulator with shellac.

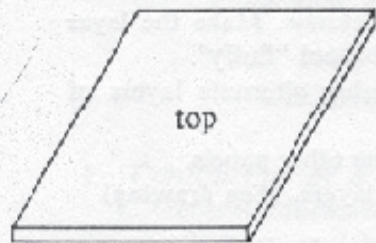
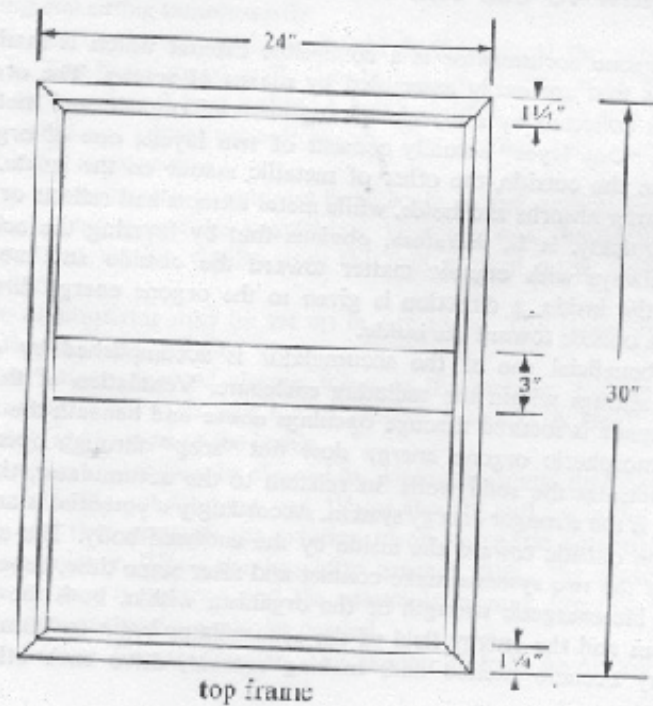
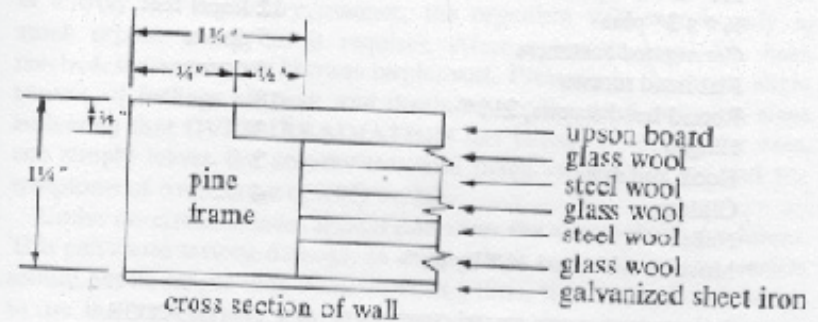
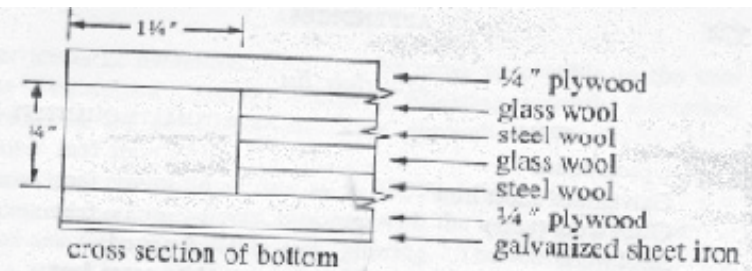
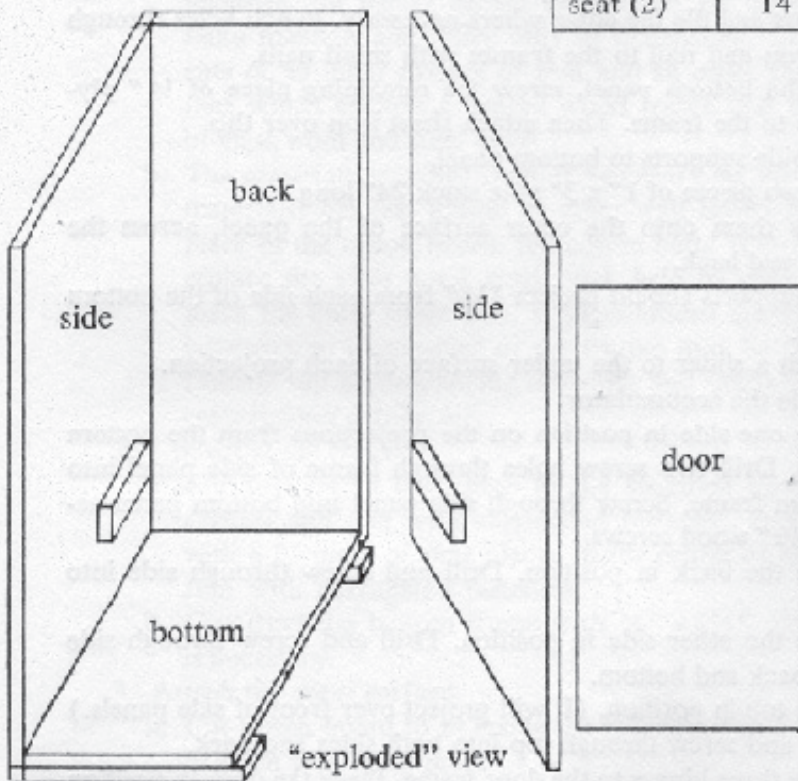


Table of dimensions

| panel | length inches | width inches |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|
| top | 30 | 24 |
| sides (2) | 54½ | 28¾ |
| door | 50½ | 24 |
| back | 54½ | 21½ |
| bottom | 27½ | 21½ |
| seat (2) | 14 | 21½ |



Materials list

| ITEM | APPROXIMATE QUANTITY |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Upson board | 55 square feet |
| Galvanized sheet iron | 50 square feet |
| Glass wool (bats) | 14 square feet |
| Steel wool | 5 pounds |
| 3/4" plywood | 10 square feet |
| * 1 3/4" x 1 3/4" pine | 100 lineal feet |
| 3/4" x 3" pine | 12 lineal feet |
| Corrugated fasteners | 5 dozen |
| Flat head screws | 4 dozen |
| Round head screws, 2 1/2" | 18 |
| Hinges | 3 |
| Hook and eye | 2 |
| Gliders | 4 |
| Nails | |
| * Must be rabbeted 1/4" by 1/2" | |

HOW TO USE THE ORGONE ACCUMULATOR

The orgone accumulator is a collapsible cabinet which is made in six pieces that are easily assembled by means of screws. The orgone energy is collected by a certain arrangement of organic and metallic material. "One layer" actually consists of two layers, one of organic matter on the outside, the other of metallic matter on the inside. Organic matter absorbs and holds, while metal attracts and reflects orgone energy quickly. It is, therefore, obvious that by layering the accumulator always with organic matter toward the outside and metallic toward the inside, a direction is given to the orgone energy directed from the outside toward the inside.

The beneficial use of the accumulator is accomplished by *daily, regular* sittings within the radiating enclosure. Ventilation of the enclosed space is secured through openings above and beneath the door. The atmospheric orgone energy does not "seep" through openings, but penetrates the solid walls. In relation to the accumulator, the organism is the stronger energy system. Accordingly a potential is created from the outside toward the inside by the enclosed body. The energy fields of the two systems make contact and after some time, dependent on the bio-energetic strength of the organism within, both the living organism and the energy field of the accumulator begin to "lamine" i.e. they become excited and, making contact, drive each other to

higher levels of excitation. This fact becomes perceptible to the user of the accumulator through feelings of prickling, warmth, relaxation, reddening of the face, and objectively, through increased body temperature.

There is no mechanical rule as to HOW LONG one should sit in the accumulator. One should continue with the organotic irradiation as long as one feels comfortable and "glowing." The sensitive person will, after a while have "had enough." This manifests itself in the feeling of "nothing happening any longer." It is explained by the fact that, in a truly self-regulatory manner, the organism will absorb only as much orgone energy as it requires. After a certain level has been reached, the sensations become unpleasant. Pressure in the head, slight nausea, ill feelings all over, and dizziness are the most common signs indicating that OVER-IRRADIATION has begun. If such is the case, one simply leaves the accumulator and takes some fresh air and the symptoms of overcharge quickly vanish.

Under no circumstances should one sit in the accumulator for hours. This can cause serious damage. In a three fold accumulator one session should not be longer than 30 minutes at a time. It is better, if necessary, to use the accumulator several times a day at shorter intervals than to prolong one sitting unnecessarily.

The size of the accumulator should fit the size of the person who uses it. The inner metal walls should not be further away from the body surface than 2 to 4 inches. A small child in a large size accumulator would not attract enough energy. The average adult size will be suitable for most people.

It is not necessary to undress completely in the accumulator since orgone energy penetrates everything. However one should not wear too heavy or woolen clothes since this will prevent quick contact and excitation.

The accumulator may be set up in any room. The room should be aired thoroughly every day.

Never attach *exposed* electric wires to the metallic portion of the accumulator since it is possible to receive a shock. A small reading light may be attached to the inside.

The accumulator may be cleaned by wiping the metal surfaces with a damp cloth. Do not let it get wet. Water absorbs and holds the orgone energy and thus prevents the creation of an organotic potential inside the accumulator. When the humidity exceeds 80%, the atmospheric orgone tension is reduced and the accumulator may function poorly, therefore longer sessions may be needed.

The Orgone Energy Shooter: The shooter is built according to the

same principle as the big accumulator. This accumulated energy within the shooter is now directed through flexible iron hollow cables (BX cable) from which the inner wires have been removed, toward the local region to be irradiated. On small areas it suffices to keep the outer end of the BX cable at the surface at a distance of about one eighth of an inch. On larger areas a funnel should be inserted, corresponding in size approximately to the afflicted area to be irradiated. The mechanism of the irradiation effect consists in that the particular local area draws energy from the shooter box through the BX cable. The latter should be insulated with tape or plastic, organic material on the outside, in order to form in itself a radiating structure with metal inside and organic material outside. One should not irradiate for more than 2 to 10 minutes at a time. The irradiation may be repeated at frequent intervals if necessary.

The Chestboard: The chestboard is a rectangular board which serves the purpose of bringing the orgone energy field of the door of the large accumulator closer to the body. To use it one should rest the board upright about 3 inches from the body upon one's knees, the metal surface facing the organism. Remove after a few minutes, or as soon as local sensation of heat is experienced.

The Seatbox: The seatbox is built into the newer (1950) models for the purpose of further orgone energy concentration, from which orgone energy for local irradiation may be derived via an insulated cable. This seat is composed of two boards which should be placed with their metallic surface towards the inside. The organomic potential of the space thus created may be enhanced by loosely stuffing the seatbox with ordinary steel wool (3 to 5 lbs.).

The following areas should be irradiated daily while sitting inside the large accumulator by means of the seatbox or shooter, for a few minutes each:

- a. eyes with lids closed, not more than 1 minute each,
- b. root of nose,
- c. mastoid bone,
- d. mouth and throat,
- e. heart region,
- f. upper abdomen (over solar plexus).

Stop irradiation immediately if burning or discomfort is felt.