

Homebody

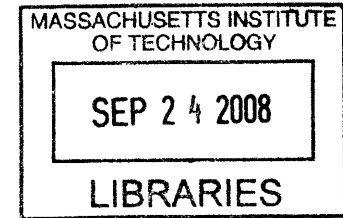
by
Kate James

B.A., Architectural Studies
Brown University (2001)

Submitted to the Department of Architecture in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Visual Arts

at the
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
September 2008

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abstract

This thesis represents a foundation of research and ideas upon which I build my practice as an artist. By closely examining my chosen artistic site, the home, and my artistic medium, the body in performance, I hope to clarify the intentions of my practice.

The homebody project analyzes the dynamic relationship of the individual body to the individual home site in the cyclical process of everyday identity production. This involves an interrogation of *habit*, the choreography of repeated gestures over time that confirm inscribed cultural norms, and the habitual topographies of the private sphere.

I rely on both personal and theoretical histories and discourses to develop an understanding of the homebody situation and its larger implications.

Establishing the home-body relationship as both deeply intimate and culturally determined, I show how a creative practice sited in the home can disrupt or even reinvent the habit continuum, and suggest new modes of operation within the cycle of home-body coproduction.

acknowledgements

Many thanks to the faculty of the Visual Arts program and the Department of Architecture. In particular, thanks to my thesis advisor, Joan Jonas, and thesis reader, Wendy Jacob, for their thoughtful comments.

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1. introduction: homebody

homebody:

a person who prefers pleasures and activities that center around the home; stay-at-home.

[Origin: 1815–25, Americanism; home + body]

I am a homebody. My current art practice centers around producing actions and video performances made in the home, recorded, and then later presented outside the home site. While my first videos in the home were more incidental, recording the process of my art production rather than intentional performances, over time the home site has become more than the staging ground I once considered it. It has become the stage.

The term homebody might have connotations of agoraphobia, isolation, a person incapable or uninterested in engaging in the outside world. Private/ public boundaries and dialectics are certainly in primary consideration for the homebody. The home is a protected ground to retreat to on

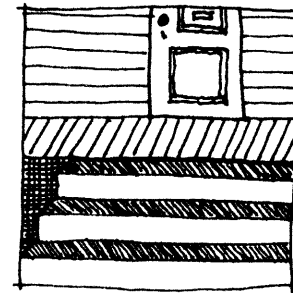
I HAVE HAD TWO DISTINCT HOME EXPERIENCES; ONE OF STASIS AND ONE OF INSTABILITY...

MY FATHER LIVED IN THE SAME HOUSE THROUGHOUT MY CHILDHOOD. THIS IS THE HOUSE THAT I INHERITED FROM HIM WHEN HE DIED IN 1997, AND CONTINUE TO LIVE IN NOW. IN A SENSE, I HAVE SPENT MY WHOLE LIFE IN ONE HOUSE.

ON THE OTHER HAND, MY MOTHER MOVED OVER A DOZEN TIMES AS I GREW UP, AND AS A RESULT MY IDEA OF 'HOME' WAS A VERY UNSTABLE ONE, CONCERNING CONTESTED EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT, ABSENCE AND MEMORY. MORE THAN THE HOMES THEMSELVES, I REMEMBER THE LEAVING.

SHARING THESE TWO SITUATIONS, AND CONSIDERING THE VARIOUS DRAMAS PLAYED OUT IN EACH, HOME, AS A CONCEPT AND IN ALL ITS PERSONAL ITERATIONS, TAKES CENTER STAGE AS A SITE FOR MY MOST EXTREME FEELINGS OF COMFORT, FEAR, LOVE, TRUST, EMPOWERMENT, INSANITY

MY CURRENT HOME EXPERIENCE CAN BE DEFINED AS A SINGLE AMERICAN SUBURBAN WOMAN'S. I HAVE EXPERIENCED MY CURRENT HOME IN VARIOUS STAGES: AS A BABY WITH CO-



many levels, a place where one can most easily *be themselves*. Its environment feels most natural, offers the least resistance to the inhabitant's identity because it is self-conducted.

If an inhabitant invests too heavily in the comfort and self-support systems of the home, refusing the exterior, what was once a relative retreat becomes an entire universe in itself. This insular universe is one without reference or critique. If the home habitat exists without the juxtaposed challenges and opportunities of its other, the public sphere, the inhabitant repeats the home validations of their own identity until they become confined and narcissistic, impotent in their extreme case of withdrawal.

But this isn't the homebody that I know.

I prefer to think of the homebody perspective as an opportunistic suggestion of an individual reinvesting in the analysis of their own identity production in the individuated space, in reference to a larger scope of societal systems. The homebody examines the home site with a perspective that allows for magical engagement with, and deviation from, prescribed habit there.

The definition itself hints at the possibilities: *pleasures* and *activities* that center around the home. The homebody experience is more than a retreat; it is a reinvestment in

interior relations, a reintegration of the home and body with pleasure (rather than requirement or angst), and through activity (rather than passivity or immobility).

The compounding of the terms home and body to describe a person is a significant textual move. There is no dash between them; they become one entity. The whole identity is wrapped up in the marriage of the terms, suggesting an inextricable link between the home and body.

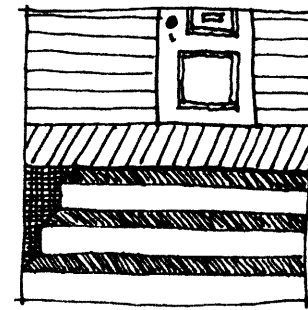
My main questions in this thesis address this link: how does the body effect and form the home? How does the home effect and form the body? What is the nature and driving force at play in this ever-developing relationship? And finally, what creative actions can be taken, with the dedication and enthusiasm of the homebody, in response to a deeper understanding of this relationship?

In this thesis, I will begin by describing three projects created during my time in the MIT Visual Arts program that are sited in the personal space of my home: atHABITat: costumes for domestic oppositional training (fall 2006), Keep up! domestic and fitness upkeep training (fall 2007), and Spring Cleaning (spring 2008). Each of these projects is an exploration in calculated self-production, and involves the design of custom costumes, choreography, and props

HABITATING PARENTS, AS A CHILD DURING WEEKEND CUSTODY VISITS, AS A TEENAGER LIVING FULL-TIME WITH MY FATHER, AS A SUDDEN OWNER/LANDLORD UPON MY FATHER'S DEATH, WITH ROOMMATES AFTER COLLEGE, AS A WIFE, AND NOW AGAIN AS A SINGLE ADULT AND ARTIST.

MY HOUSE REPRESENTS AN IMPORTANT ANCHOR FOR ME. IT IS THE ONE THING THAT HAS ALWAYS BEEN IN MY CONSCIOUSNESS AND SEEMINGLY ALWAYS WILL BE. IT IS A PLACE THAT I KNOW, AND THAT KNOWS ME. MY HOUSE TAUGHT ME HOW STEEP STAIRS ARE, HOW FAR LAUNDRY IS CARRIED, HOW TO LIFT A HEAVY FRONT DOOR TO LOCK IT, HOW TO BATHE, SLEEP, EAT, MOVE. MY BODY MEMORY IS SO STRONG IN THE HOUSE THAT I COULD RUN FROM ONE END TO THE OTHER WITH MY EYES CLOSED WITHOUT BUMPING INTO ANYTHING OR FALLING ON THE STEEP STAIRS.

SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE A CHILD STILL IN MY HOUSE, FROZEN IN TIME. THE WORLD OUTSIDE CAN SHIFT AND RUMBLE, BUT IN MY HOUSE CHANGE IS MINE TO MAKE OR REFUSE.



to create meaningful deviations in the habitual home-body relationship. After introducing the projects, I will present the personal and academic research that has informed them.

I hope that this work reflects my enthusiasm for the domestic experience, my pleasure in rediscovering my relationship to my home, and the extraordinary possibilities that are afforded through reclamation of the active experience of inhabitation.

The homebody asserts that the most mundane tasks can be transformed through intentional production. The recalculation of the mundane reveals it to be engaged with profound extremities of comedy and tragedy, the real extending into the surreal and back. "Why should the study of the banal itself be banal? Are not the surreal, the extraordinary, the surprising, even the magical, also part of the real? Why wouldn't concepts of everydayness reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary?" (Lefebvre, 9). My projects are precisely meant to reveal the extraordinary in the everyday tasks of the homebody.

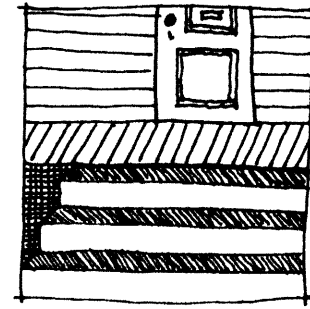
I therefore locate this thesis, and my work, in the dynamic, mediated space between the body, its home, and the discursive reflection of both in society. It engages at the moment of embodiment with the domestic site, the active interaction of the inhabitant's body and its inhabited structure. By per-

forming the relationship between the body and the home, I call into question the naturalized habit and inhabitation of both.

MY HOUSE IS ALSO THE SITE OF DEEP LOSS. SINCE IT WAS MY FATHER'S AND HE DIED SUDDENLY IN 1997, THE CONTENTS AND ARRANGEMENT OF THE HOUSE AT THAT MOMENT TOOK ON THE ROLE OF REPRESENTING HIM, CONTAINING HIS MEMORY GOING FORWARD. HIS CHOICES, THE THINGS HE OWNED AND THE STORIES EMBEDDED IN EVERY BIT OF THE HOUSE BECAME THE ONLY FORMAL REFLECTION OF HIM AFTER HE WAS GONE.

THE HOME STRUCTURE OUTLIVED ITS OWNER, BUT STILL BORE HIS VERY SPECIFIC CHARACTER IMPRINT SINCE HE HAD BEEN SO ACTIVE AND CREATIVE IN FORMING THE HOUSE WHILE HE INHABITED IT, BY SUCCESSIVELY CRAWLING INTO HIS SHELL, I COULD BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND AND ACCEPT HIS IDENTITY, AND THE LOSS.

I HAVE GRASPED TIGHTLY THE IMAGE OF MY FATHER'S HOUSE IN THE PAST TEN YEARS. THE OVERRIDING THEME IN MY HOME DECOR WAS PRESERVATION. THE MORE I KEPT THINGS THE SAME WAY, THE MORE I FELT I COULD STILL REMEMBER MY FATHER. ANY CHANGES I MADE FELT LIKE A FLIPPANT DISCARD OF A PIECE OF HIS CHARACTER, HIS MEMORY. THERE



2. methodology

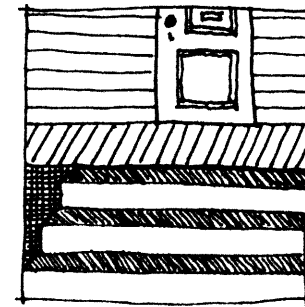
In my first architecture school critiques, I often built my arguments on personal connections to design problems: the flow and velocity of a building based on my experiences riding motorcycles, a concept of memory and material accumulation on a site that I had been driving by throughout my life, notions of site boundaries based on seeing a father and daughter racing to and from a border wall on the beach.

Over time, rather than investing further in the stock of these personal connections to abstract design problems, I found myself extracting them from the representation of the process and concept. Instead, voices of critics and historians and other architects flooded my presentations. I felt confidence in their voices, and allowed them to explain my interests in a more 'universal' and academically cogent way than my quirky and highly individual experiential lens. This was more than an issue of confidence in my own ideas, it was a devaluing of the personal in favor of the discursive (ideas with precedent and proven acceptance).

This extraction/ invalidation of the personal from my creative process contributed to my failure in the practice of architecture. I had removed my bodily understanding of the world (my most developed aptitude after years of being a dancer), and the complexities of my perceptive capacities based on phenomenal first-hand experience of space and the world.

WAS A NOTION THAT IF THE HOUSE COULD JUST STAY THE SAME, IT COULD REFUTE THE PASSING OF TIME, THE INEVITABLE LOSS OF MEMORY.

BUT A HOUSE IS NOT A MUSEUM, AND THE PATTERNS OF LIFE MAKE THEIR MARK IN THE SPACE NO MATTER HOW HARD WE TRY FOR PRESERVATION. THE FLOW OF EVERYDAY LIFE: CONSUMING AND DISCARDING, CLEANING, SHIFTING, ALL MORPH THE SPACE OVER TIME IN SMALL WAYS. ADDING UP OVER TIME, THEY MEAN BIG CHANGES. LOOKING THROUGH OLD PHOTOS OF MY HOUSE WHILE DOING RESEARCH FOR MY THESIS, I AM SHOCKED BY HOW MUCH I HAVE CHANGED THE INTERIOR OF MY HOUSE IN ELEVEN YEARS. DESPITE MY EFFORTS, THIS SHELL HAS REFORMED AROUND ITS NEW INHABITANT.



Over two years in the Visual Studies program, I have re-introduced myself into my produced work (largely without noticing). This in no way discounts the importance of discursive texts or artistic precedent, but rather developed into a method of using both the personal and the discursive to produce work.

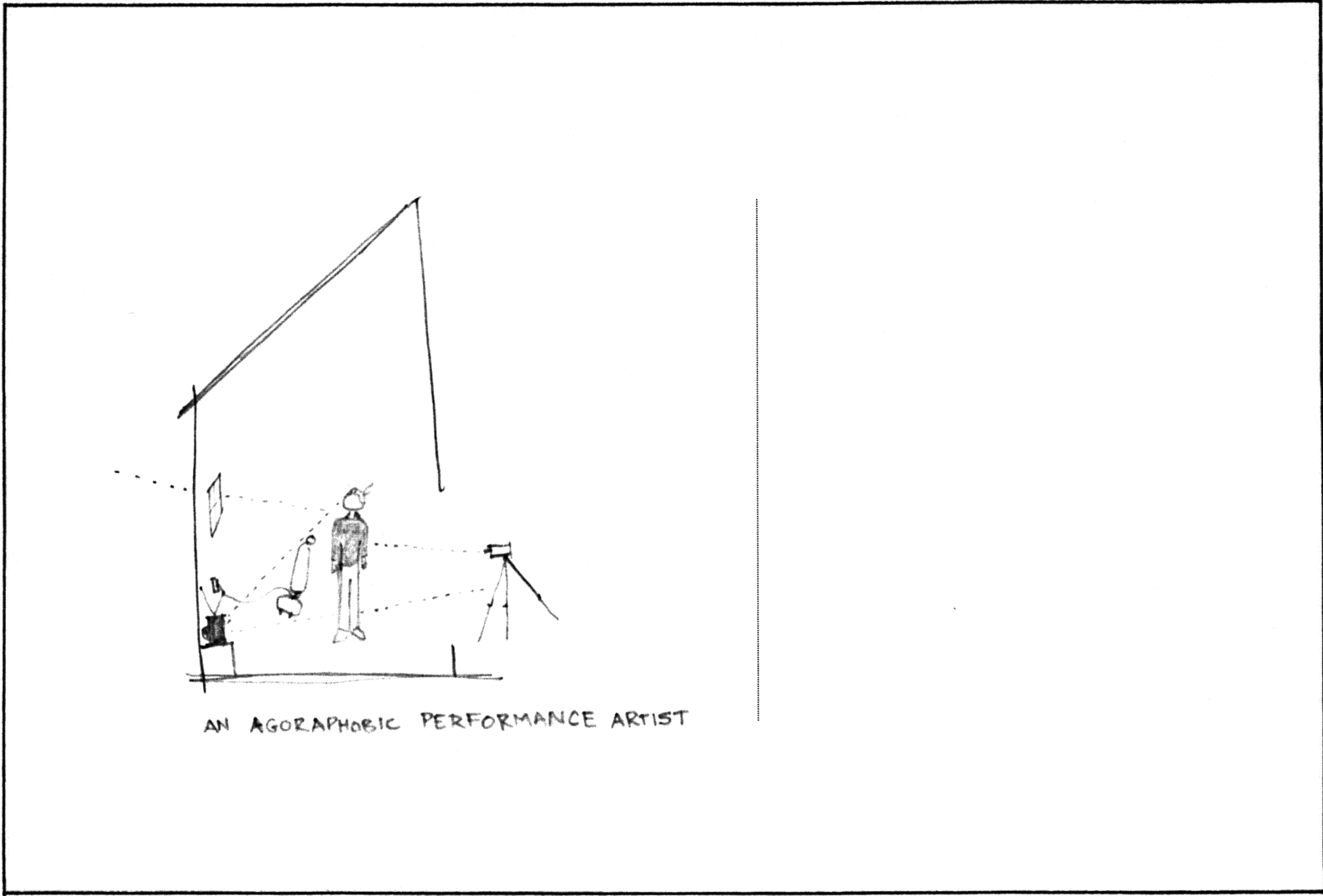
Just as I am proposing in this thesis that the private zones of the home and body are inextricably bound to public cultural practice, so too does the personal history and phenomenological experience of the individual relate to cultural and historic discourse. "The relation between everyday life and philosophy must therefore be critical and dialectical. Any philosophical truths or logics need to be recognized as having their ground in the life-world, but the life-world itself cannot be appealed to as a pure datum, and can indeed be criticized, interrogated, and renovated, if not justified" (Colebrook, 693).

This thesis is therefore composed of two juxtaposed components that together form a foundation for my work: note-taking on the history of my body and my house, and the history and critical theory about bodies and houses that situates and infiltrates that personal history.

In 'Housework and Artwork,' Helen Molesworth says: "One legacy of feminist critique is to establish that it is the private sphere that can help us to rearticulate the public sphere, as opposed to the other way around" (Molesworth, 83). Instead of a one-way feed of cultural into the individual, it goes both ways, the private and public form in reference to each other.

The novel idea that Molesworth points to is the possibility for important change effected from within the armspan of a single individual in their private space. It is possible that a shift in the intimate actions and energies of a single homemaker could result in a larger shift in the culture she inhabits. This is the cultural equivalent of the flap of a butterfly's wings causing a tsunami on the other side of the world: the new ironing routine causing a radical jump in thinking about multitasking, feminism, textile material properties, pattern-making, and task values.

My artwork is admittedly small. It involves domestic lifestyle alterations; shifts to energy dispersal patterns in the everyday tasks I perform. It is admittedly self-absorbed as well, in that I am using myself, both my body and my personal circumstance and relationship with my home, as test sites for creative homebody experiments. But in these small, personal projects, I hope to allow thoughts about the way things are, and the way they could be.



AN AGORAPHOBIC PERFORMANCE ARTIST

3. three homebody projects

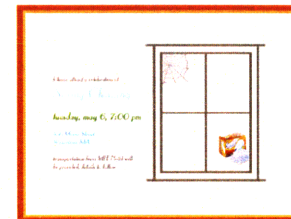
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ATHABITAT:
*COSTUMES FOR DOMESTIC
OPPOSITIONAL TRAINING*

FALL 2006

The atHABITat costume set was my first project designed in response to my house. and its activities.

I noticed how much strength and effort cleaning my house required. The labor of household maintenance isn't really taken seriously as vigorous manual work (despite feminist cries to the contrary over time), but I was certainly exhausted after vacuuming the three floors and the stairs between. On days that I vacuumed, I rarely went to the gym. It would have simply been too much activity.

My arm made a certain motion with the vacuuming wand. It shifted forward, then pulled back. If I locked my elbow into a path parallel to my motion path, and swung the other arm in opposition, vacuuming felt like a travelling Bowflex routine as much as it did a cleaning chore.

I decided that the vacuum was *almost* a piece of exercise equipment. The vacuum's proximity in look and value to a piece of exercise equipment was ripe with potential for engaging with contemporary values of multitasking. Instead of denying the labor efforts involved in this repetitive activity, why not simply push the activity one step beyond its current practice, and make it explicitly an exercise? Vacuuming could be defined primarily as an aerobic exercise, with the secondary benefit of cleaner floors!





What was missing from the current vacuuming practice (or many other equally rigorous home tasks) to be recognized as exercise was *resistance*. The motion, and to some extent the timing, was predefined by the functionality of the appliance. And since the whole exercise had to move around the house to achieve the floor-cleaning objective part of the task, the resistance had to be constructed between the vacuum and my body. I therefore designed costumes to mediate/ adjust the relationship between the user's body and the appliance or home object in use.

Using strategies of iso-kinetic oppositional fitness training, the costumes are built to exercise and extend muscle activity in isolated movement paths (established by the choreography specific to the task/ upkeep chore at hand) in relation to physical resistance. They also serve as toolbelts, equipped with the necessary accessories of the specific tasks, and are designed to retain the notion of optimally efficient performance of household tasks.

This project involved a fundamental shift in thinking about the definition of the household chore and the role of the household appliance. While the appliance advertisements tout ever-increasingly 'easy' appliances, those that take over more and more of the work and require less and

less exertion on the part of its human user, the atHABITat costumes propose adding a layer to the user interface, in this case an intermediary costume, that adds energy requirements to the task. The gain is in the exertion itself, a product that many people pay many gyms a lot of money for.

atHABITat costumes are garments designed to draw questions of exertion, body interfaces, multitasking models, and protocols and value systems of home labor.

COSTUMES

The term costume connotes performance, (re)-enactment, customization, and temporality. While its application may normally be reserved for those situations of externally-directed performance, I apply it in atHABITat to the domestic stage for two reasons: 1) the isolated, domestically-sited body is every bit as choreographed and performative as the expressive body playing/dressing for an outside world, and 2) costume's orientation towards a specific act or occasion is appropriate for the discrete, specific habitual motions created by individual domestic upkeep tasks.





In this sense, costumes are highly situational, and intentional. “Dress is always located spatially and temporally: when getting dressed one orientates oneself/body to the situation, acting in particular ways upon the surfaces of the body which are likely to fit within the established norms of the situation” (Entwistle, *Body Dressing*, 45).

To dress at all is to declare something in relation to the dynamic body in the dynamic situation. To use a costume to mediate a household chore necessarily questions the norms of the activity and the body’s performance (or not) of those norms.

for domestic

The atHABITat costume serves as an enabler of extended action in the home stage, where bodies (in particular women’s bodies) are most inscribed and embedded in habitual action.

At home we are in a constant repetitive dynamic state of upkeep choreography: upkeep of body, and upkeep of household. atHABITat hopes to harness, merge, and extend the meaning of the associated corporeal iterations: to reactivate the body at home, and therefore reformulate the corporeal self in the world.

oppositional TRAINING

Using strategies of iso-kinetic oppositional fitness training, the costumes are built to exercise and extend muscle activity in specific movement paths (established by the choreography specific to the task/ upkeep chore at hand) in relation to physical resistance.

atHABITat costumes activate the wearer by demarcating a resistance surface at the boundary of normalized movement. In feeling the resistance at the edge of habit, the performer is challenged by the costume to extend beyond that edge.

atHABITat costumes are highly customized; each is designed for one task, to work one muscle group in its use, and to respond to the specific domestic setting of the task. The result is an active domestic optimization: through the system of costume, the woman at work in the home can simultaneously maintain her body, her household, and her discourse.







FALL 2007

Keep Up! domestic and fitness upkeep training is a project I developed through my ongoing interest in the performativity of everyday activities and associated body language. It addresses a potential overlap in maintenance of the body and maintenance of the domestic environment through a choreographed fitness/ cleaning routine comprised of six activities in six minutes.

The goal of Keep Up! was hyper-efficient multitasking in the form of simultaneous improvement of the home and the body. At its base, the project is chasing an image of perfect home and the ideal figure through dedicated performance of a choreographed routine. It challenges notions of the private and public body, feminine idealism, body discipline, contemporary concerns for efficiency and technological engagement, and labor and leisure value systems.

In the Keep Up! video, the movements of everyday upkeep chores are refined and repeated to an accompanying soundtrack to comprise a 6-minute full-body aerobic routine. The six exercise activities in the video are: vacuuming, cleaning the bathroom tile, ironing, carrying a laundry basket, chopping potatoes, and stacking firewood. Each set is a codified and repeated version of





the task, often augmented with bi-lateral motion to the oppositional limb to build core strength (if scrubbing with the right hand, the left leg is lifted and counter-rotates). Motion techniques are introduced to make the requisite tasks more challenging (the laundry basket involves a deep squat instead of a simple lift, wood is moved in an overhead arch that works the oblique and thigh muscles).

The video format references circuit training workouts, in which a person works out by completing repetitions of different exercises in succession, essentially creating a cardio routine through performing sequences of muscle toning activities. Each household maintenance task worked different muscle groups, and the activities are meant to be performed in rapid succession. After six minutes, the exerciser has achieved a cardio workout, muscle sculpting, and a cleaner house. If performed every day, the additive nature of this consolidated routine would result in achievement of a high standard of both fitness and household cleanliness.

Aesthetically, it was important that the costuming and shots convey effort in their image. I designed made all of the fitness costumes from jersey cottons and stretch flower nylon lace. The materials and basic cuts of the costumes

were common to fitness fashions, while the finishes were far more decorative and feminine. I was careful to be 'made up' properly, with 'done' hair and fresh lipstick.

The look references the happy housewife image of American domesticity, poised and perfectly polished. This image is ripe with cultural values. The postwar American woman in the home, coiffed and dressed, performing tasks with efficiency and grace, is a key foundation for the contemporary domestic paradigms of the super-efficient career woman/ domestic conductor that I embody in the Keep Up! workout.

The music in the routine was equally referential. I intersliced audio of an Arnold Schwarzenegger workout tape, Ethel Merman's 'If I Knew You Were Comin' I'd've Baked a Cake' (the interval music) and electronica adaptations of classical favorites (Four Seasons and The Pachelbel Canon). I wanted to create a landscape of sound that worked for the movement, also introduced/ reinforced questions of gender, presentation, and adaptation in the project.

Keep Up! plays with the standard format of the exercise video. Most workout videos are shot in a (public) gym space with a group of fitness instructors, and then viewed and re-performed by the individual in the isolation of the





home. In **Keep Up!**, the video is of the individual performer in the (private) home, and is meant to be re-performed by others outside of that home.

The Keep up! workout was tested as a group activity in an MIT studio review in December 2007. Four classmates took the Keep Up! workout class in the Joan Jonas Performance Hall in MIT's Building N51. Six workout stations were set up, each with a dvd of one specific exercise playing. The stations were marked by various decorative carpet sections to invoke the home atmosphere. The fitness 'equipment' at the stations included a pile of wood, an iron and board, a basket of laundry, a scrubber and tile palette, and some vegetables to chop. They viewed and mimicked the movement at each station with the props provided. After each 60-second interval, the participants would rotate stations. I conducted the class, correcting the movement techniques and postures to ensure optimal athletic benefit and encouraging the participants to keep going at full power for the whole six minutes.

Several classmates noted sore thigh muscles from the laundry station, and sore forearms from the wood stacking, in the days following.

While it was a fruitful experiment to have a full performance of the workout video in a location remote from the home site, and to test its effectiveness as a group rather than individual activity, the real project is the video itself rather than its communal performance.





Please attend a celebration of
Spring Cleaning

tuesday, may 6, 7:00 pm

106 Morse Street
Watertown MA

transportation from MIT N-51 will
be provided, details to follow



SPRING 2008



Spring Cleaning was an event that took place in the evening on May 6, 2008 in my home in Watertown, MA, a suburb of Boston. Guests were transported by rental bus and my truck from MIT to my house, where I invited them to join me on a tour, followed by dinner.

Upon arriving, everyone assembled in the backyard. I explained that I hadn't had time to complete my annual spring cleaning yet because of a strenuous thesis-writing schedule, and asked for my guests' help in getting the cleaning done as I showed them the house. Since there were so many people passing through, if we all cleaned along the way it could add up to a thorough sweep and polish of the whole house.

The first task I asked for help with was seeding the barren back lawn. Guests were given grass and flower seeds to spread in the bare spots and edges of the yard. Meanwhile, I changed into my host/ tour guide costume, a Swiffer rosette dress and blue vinyl mop boots. This costume allowed me both to look 'dressed up' and to participate in the cleaning. I held a video camera during the rest of the tour.



As guests entered my house from the back yard, I requested that they remove their shoes and put on house slippers constructed from waterproof nylon and mop materials. They were given accessories made from Swiffer dusters, Brillo scouring pads, microfiber polishing clothes, and sponges to wear as head-, knee-, and arm-bands or belts. They were also equipped with various spray cleaners, and encountered several waiting vacuum cleaners along the way. As we toured the house, the guests were asked to use these accessories to clean whatever dirt, cobwebs and dog fur they encountered.

As we progressed through each room from the first floor to the third, I described my experiences living in the house throughout my life: as a child/daughter, a teenager, a wife, an ex-wife, a graduate student, and an artist. I spoke of improvements as well as deteriorations, and tried to relate the history of the house to my personal history as an inhabitant there. I spoke a lot about my father, the way he had designed the space when he was alive, and how I've responded to this 'memorial arrangement' since, both in terms of practical and emotional requirements.





As we moved through the space, guests took extra sweeps with their feet to clean the floors. They used the vacuums as we went up the stairs, and carried books and shoes that had to be moved back to their appropriate places on different floors. Some used their elbows and knees to clean moldings, and occasionally someone swept a section of wall with their forehead.



The Spring Cleaning event was meant to encompass a compilation of thoughts about my art practice in my home that have developed during my years at MIT. I wanted to talk about my relationship to my house in explicit terms, to draw that intimate experience into the center of a performance. I wanted to invite people into my private space first-hand rather than through the video camera. I wanted people to really interact with the topography of my house, to make contact with its surface as they learned about its identity.

The tour was meant to feel like a process of revealing and opening up of the private home shell. Guests were asked to open all the windows as we went through the spring cleaning tour. This was, in one way, a practical reference: spring cleaning overhauls always involve a flushing out of the stale air of the winter months, a wiping-clean with

the spring breeze passing through the interior. But it was also symbolic; while I had previously treated my house as a closed private entity which was reported to the outside or occasionally visited, it was now being opened up, its narrative and form revealed to a crowd through direct contact.

The time of day chosen for the performance speaks to this goal of revealing the interior as well. In the dim light of the dinnertime hour, the suburbs light up and families can be seen through slivers in their curtains sitting down to dinner. You can see the blinking lights of tvs reflected off the ceilings. As each home unit first settles in for the night, there is an opportunity for brief gazes into each others' spaces.

The communal nature of the event was a departure from my regular depiction of the home as a place of isolation and individual control. The production of costumes for other users was important in that it signaled an invitation for my guests to experience my home in a way influenced by the costumes/ second skins that I had designed for them. In this way, the movement of the guest was influenced by the formation of the site and the design intention of its inhabitant.





I also wanted to talk about the nature of the maintenance activity and its gestures in the home, and to introduce a nonstandard, more whimsical cleaning methodology. This new protocol was still based on notions of efficiency as maintenance routines inevitably are, but refuted the previously prescribed strategies.

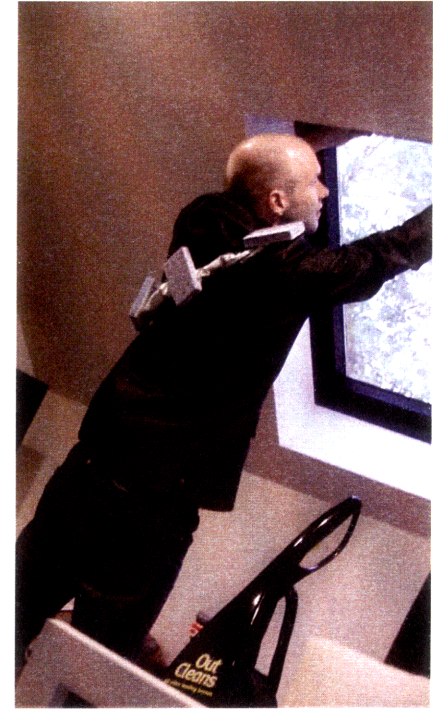
Consumer cleaning products and tools were used but reconfigured, transformed from disposable applicators and cleaning solutions to costume accessories. While playing within the realm of expected cycles of consumption and maintenance labor, a kink of reappropriation is introduced in the reconfigurations of those products and their associated maintenance labor movements.

The house tour lasted about half an hour, and was followed by a bbq on the back porch. There was grilled bread, a cheese plate, a large salad, veggie kabobs, grilled salmon, and creme brulee served. Guests socialized loosely and ate dinner as the last daylight disappeared, and then filtered out in small groups to drive back to Cambridge.

I wanted to accentuate the ambiguity of the boundaries of the performance. It wasn't entirely clear whether the event began at the bus in Cambridge, upon arrival at the home, or when the costumes were put on. The end was

equally unclear: the end of the tour and the beginning of the dinner bled together, and departures weren't planned, but happened as people had other obligations to get to or found rides together back to Cambridge.

Overall, the performance felt successful in its participatory nature. Inviting people into my home, and engaging them in the simultaneous acts of cleaning and tour-taking let them understand the intimacies of my house







4. homemade identities: notes from the everyday

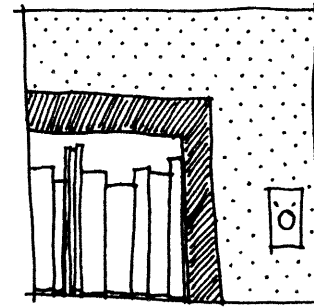
In studying the homebody experience in terms of philosophy, the best foundation can be found with in the study of *the everyday*. Its thinking allows the sites of the home and body, and the activities generated in their interaction, to become charged with philosophic stake.

Twentieth-century philosophy and art reflect a new appreciation of the discursive power of everyday life. The everyday represents an overarching image of contemporary cultural situation as constructed through the dynamic additive nature of infinitesimal, mostly banal individual actions. It is everything that happens out of habit and without notice. But the everyday is increasingly recognized as distinctly infiltrated by apparatus of power, politics, and consumerism in contemporary culture.

In Lefebvre's terms, "The everyday is therefore the most universal and the most unique condition, the most social and most individuated, the most obvious and the best hidden. A condition stipulated for the legibility of forms, ordained by the means of functions, inscribed within structures, the everyday constitutes the platform upon which the bureaucratic society of controlled consumerism is erected" (Lefebvre, 9).

COLLECTION OF HOMEBODY WORDS:
(IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

- ACTION
- ACTIVITY
- AGENCY
- AGORAPHOBIA
- APPLIANCE
- ARTFUL
- AUTOMATED
- BODY
- BOUNDARY
- CASINGS
- CHOREOGRAPHY
- CONDUCT



The everyday is at once the most incidental and profound, the most individual and the most universal. What allows for this dichotomy is its occupation of time: the everyday happens in a plodding, continuous way. It is marked by flow, and its actions and activities are naturalized through their repetition. But it is this (often banal) flow, rather than the events that disrupt it, that most directly forms individual identities in terms of systematic society.

In 'Starts and Stops,' Helen Molesworth addresses the formative stake of the everyday in relation to the events that disrupt it: "Experience, desire, and fantasy are not always sites of rupture and break; they are also a continuum inhabited by subjects whose routines and habits (of both body and mind) continually shore up and protect the ego. In this regard, the repetition of the everyday needs to be accounted for; to neglect this temporality would be to overlook its impact on and formation of identity. The everyday, after all, is what occurs in the time between two traumatic encounters. Without a model of the everydayness of subjects, we run the risk of hypostatizing the traumatic, and possibly conflating it with the formation of identity itself" (Molesworth, 'Starts and Stops,' 159).

Molesworth notes the tendency to erroneously attribute identity production to the more *notable* events of trauma and rupture rather than the banal continuum that exists

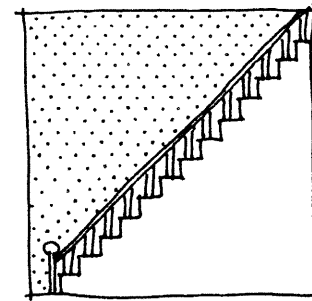
between. Though the event is more recognizable, perhaps quantifiable in terms of personal impact, it is the massive flow of the regular, rather than (or in addition to) the occasional break, that forms an individual.

The infinitesimal continuum of the everyday might indicate an ephemeral consistency, something that gets lost in its ubiquity. It operates as background. The everyday can be described and critically analyzed, but not really discernible in the fabric of the real world. It is a philosophical notion devoid of material evidence, stretched thin over time and in the small scope of its individual components. There is not a natural connection between the theoretical stake of the everyday and its actual happenings. When a person is walking the dog or answering the telephone, they don't assume that anything of larger cultural consequence is occurring.

But the charm of the everyday as a philosophical theory is that over time, and through accumulation, it has the grandest of consequences. Through the repetition of activities such as dog-walking or telephone-answering, cultural typologies are produced and validated. These typologies are identified with specific tasks, and associated sets of manual/ corporeal actions. In engaging with the flow of everyday actions, our bodies are *performing*, or *enacting*, culture. Judith Butler goes so far as to say that identity is the "stylized rep-

I HAVE A MEMORY OF PLAYING IN THE BASEMENT OF THE SMALL FARMHOUSE OF ONE OF MY CHILDHOOD FRIENDS. THE BASEMENT WAS PARTIALLY FINISHED, FILLED WITH FURNITURE, STACKS OF RECORDS, FREEZERS FULL OF DEER MEAT, AND ARCADE GAMES. WE WOULD CIRCLE THE BASEMENT'S PERIPHERY IN A RACE. THE ONLY RULE WAS THAT YOUR FEET COULD NEVER TOUCH THE FLOOR. WE JUMPED FROM THE COUCH AROUND THE SUPPORT COLUMN POLE ONTO THE SHELF AND THEN TEETERED ON THE SIDE TABLE. WE PRETENDED THE FLOOR WAS A LAVA SURFACE; THIS ADDED THE NECESSARY SENSE OF PURPOSE AND THEATRICALITY TO THE RACE. THE STAKES WERE SELF-PRODUCED, AND THE FRENETIC CHOREOGRAPHY WAS CREATED FROM THOSE STAKES.

THIS GAME OFFERED A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO BE INVENTIVE IN OUR PHYSICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE HOME AND ITS CONTENTS. INSTEAD OF FOLLOWING THE ERGONOMIC RULES GIVEN BY CONVENTION AND DESIGN, WE TESTED NEW INTERACTIVE PHRASINGS.



etition of acts though time" (Butler, 115). The conflation of repeated action and identity formation means that identity is sited, corporeal, dynamic, and compounded.

The everyday body is more than just the site of identity then, it is its own producer. Through repetition of actions, identity forms.

Also important in Butler's assertion is the word 'stylized.' While identity might be formed through individual actions, these actions have been styled, or choreographed, by a ubiquitous societal power structure.

Foucault describes this infusion of larger control structures into the body on the level of its smallest productive actions. He addresses the ability of the body to be trained to the point that this body acculturation supersedes, or conjoins with, natural corporeal physics. "The disciplinary controls of activity belonged to a whole series of researches, theoretical or practical, into the natural machinery of bodies; but they began to discover in them specific processes; behavior and its organized requirements gradually replaced the simple physics of movement. The body, required to be docile in its minutest operations, opposes and shows the conditions of functioning proper to an organism. Disciplinary power has as its correlative an individuality that is not only analyti-

cal and 'cellular,' but also natural and 'organic'" (Foucault, 156). Body function itself, what is considered natural, is formed through repetition of everyday choreography.

It is appropriate to think of the everyday being sited in the body of the individual; there is a map of communal control dispersed through the individual physique. But the everyday also has a specific spatial siting, or rather a set of sites, in relation to this individual body.

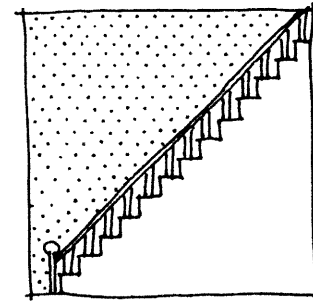
In Molesworth's terms of flow and shock, the everyday occurs in the nondescript spaces of flow: the spaces that need no mention, that are a given in terms of the body's path through the world of living and working. They are not noteworthy sites; *no one sends notes back from the everyday.*

It is important to note that these sites of everyday flow are often those sites that we consider private, most 'ours'. Because activities of flow are most naturalized, they relate directly to those sites that are most naturalized: the body and the private spaces directly associated with, and produced by, that body.

This siting of the everyday then leads philosophy directly into a space rarely marked as a consequential site of cultural production: the home. The home has been historically perceived as a site of response rather than claim. It is the stage for continuum rather than event, flow rather than

IT WAS A STUDY OF TOPOLOGY, SURFACE, STRUCTURE OF OUR ENVIRONMENT. WE SAW HOW OUR BODIES FIT ONTO AND INTO THE HOME SPACE, AND TESTED ITS TOLERANCE OF OUR BODIES' WEIGHT AND VELOCITY.

CHILDREN ARE OFTEN INVESTIGATIVE IN A WAY THAT ADULTS FORGET TO BE AFTER YEARS OF REPEATING THE SAME PATHS AND ACTIVITIES. THEY INVESTIGATE WITH THEIR BODIES, AND SPEND MORE TIME PERFORMING EXPERIMENTS THAN TRYING TO BE CONCLUSIVE.



rupture, maintenance rather than production. The home is seen as a receptacle of culture systems, not a place for their production.

But the philosophy of the everyday allows us to think that ongoing, repetitive acts of habit and maintenance in the private space of the home has a significant cultural stake. The private can and should be acknowledged as a site of discourse, consequence, and progress.

For the homebody, the everyday allows a new potency in the sites of the individual body and individual home. With that recognition, the homebody can take stock of their everyday activities and sites with new enthusiasm: these small moments and methods *matter*. The home and its activities are *noteworthy*.

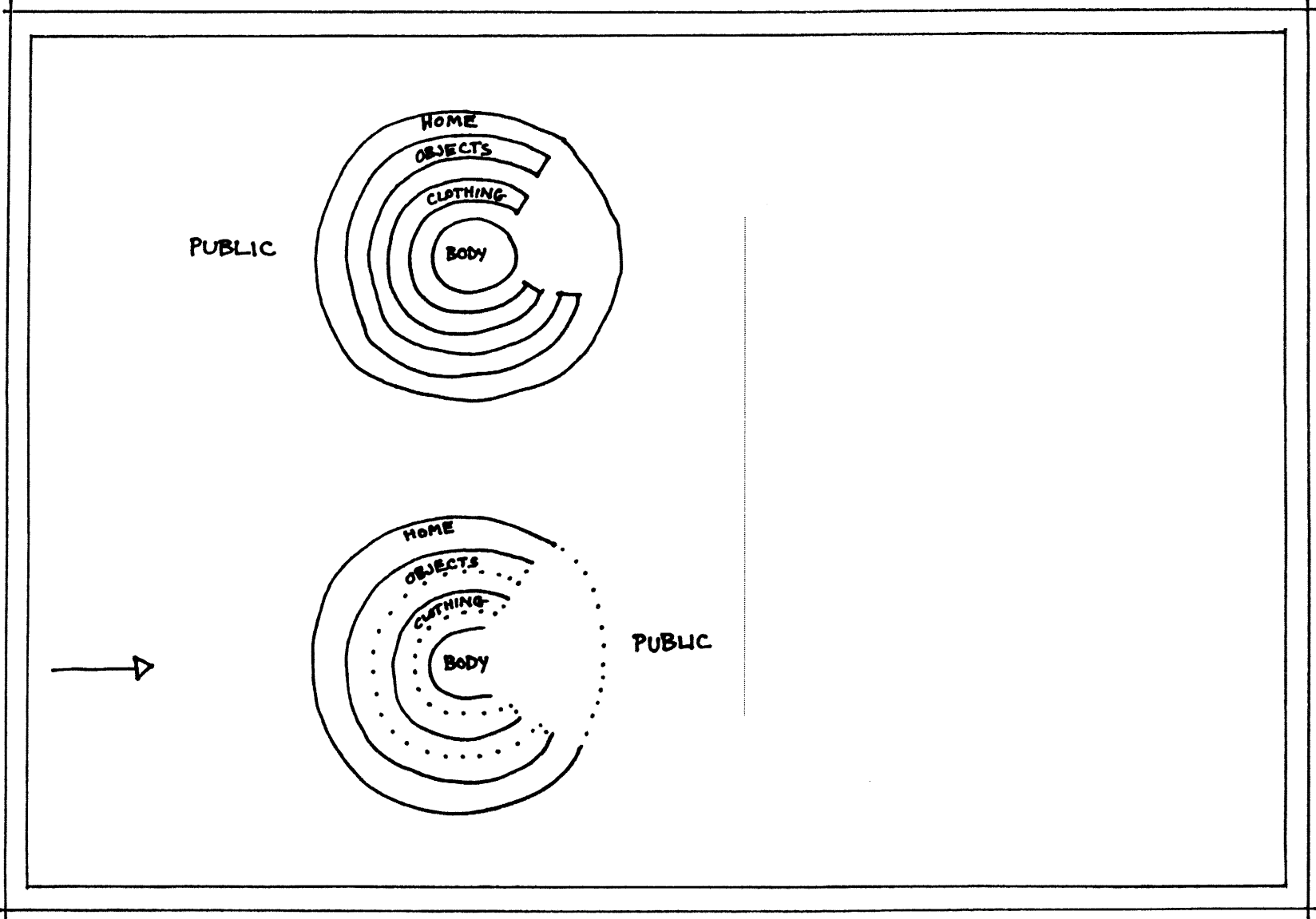


5. Habitus, Habit, Habitation

Describing the identity production in the relationship of the individual body to the home begins with a closer look at the boundaries of the body and the home structure, how they form in relation to each other and the cultural and environmental forces of the outside. The whole issue becomes something of a chicken-and-egg question: did the body design the house, or did the house design the body? Or did social forces design both, and the system of their relations?

Thinking of the span of public to private sites of experience, there is a notion of exposure and retreat. The body itself is the most intimate site, protected and defined by the encompassing shells of clothing, possessions, and the house. "The notion of personal space is one that locates an individual in the physical world. Its significance lies mainly in how it marks out a personal territory, enabling the individual to develop a sense of identity and engage in the rituals of communication and recognition" (Madanipour, 35).

Personal space protects the individual body from exposure to exterior forces, or the impersonal. We think of private zones as respites from the world, sites of retreat to the essential identity of the individual, to rest and regroup. The body itself is our most privatized site, where we exercise the



most unique agency and self-control. Clothing, possessions, and architecture define the boundary of body and world, forming layers or skins to allow a nested self.

Walter Benjamin presents the idea of the home in this way:

“The original form of all dwelling is existence not in the house but in the shell. The shell bears the impression of its occupants. In the most extreme instance, the dwelling becomes a shell. The nineteenth century, like no other century, was addicted to dwelling. It conceived the residence as a receptacle for the person, and it encased him with all his appurtenances so deeply in the dwelling’s interior that one might be reminded of the inside of a compass case, where the instrument with all its accessories lies embedded in deep, usually violet folds of velvet. What didn’t the nineteenth century invent some sort of casing for! Pocket watches, slippers, egg cups, thermometers, playing cards—and, in lieu of cases, there were jackets, carpets, wrappers, and covers” (Benjamin, in Leach, 18).

Benjamin’s idea of the casing suggests a gradient sectional scale of intimate to universal in reference to the body. The soft space on the interior molds around the form of the inhabiting subject, while the hard exterior/ shell, while it is born of the form it contains, holds its boundary in reference to the exterior. Those layers closest to our bodies, clothing, are the softest, most responsive to the form and movements of the individual body (the self is a wearer). Intermediary interior objects (furniture, appliances, etc.) might respond

to a conceived body, rather than a specific one (the self is a user). The home layer of the shell, in its hardness, represents an even more abstracted body, a biological entity requiring essential functions of shelter and maintenance (self is inhabitant).

When I began this research, the shell diagram was what I had in mind. This diagram, though, is a falsely static and unidirectional one, and one that mistakes solitude for remove, and material flexibility for social malleability. While the body itself, and its protective layers of the clothing, possessions, and the house, may indeed show a gradient of individuality, this individual expression is determined on the first level by the way it responds to dominant cultural expectation. Wearing, using, and inhabiting are all individual body actions taken in response to these norms. They all represent a methodology and choreography of acculturation, the performance of the everyday.

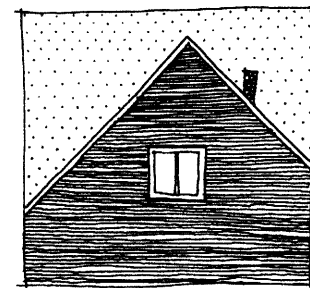
On every level of the diagram then, there is the infiltration of the public into that which is perceived as private. Softness and hardness, customization or abstraction, are less meaningful in the face of overall porosity. There is no such thing as a body pure from the infiltration of society, no such thing as an identity or an environment exempt from the powers of consumerism, politics, and history.

MY HOME WAS BUILT IN 1895. IT HAS BEEN OWNED BY ARCHITECTS FOR THE LAST 80 YEARS OR SO, FROM WHAT I KNOW. IT WAS OWNED BY HIDEO SASAKI BEFORE MY FATHER BOUGHT IT IN 1976. HE BOUGHT IT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH HIS FRIEND AND ARCHITECT COLLEAGUE, STUART DAWSON.

STUART, OR 'STU,' KIND OF AN UNCLE FIGURE TO ME, ALWAYS SAID THE HOUSE HAD BONES LIKE AN IRON SHIP. WHEN THEY FIRST MOVED IN, AN ENGINEER CAME TO EVALUATE HOW MUCH WEIGHT THE TWO-FAMILY STRUCTURE COULD HANDLE, AND WERE ASSURED THAT IT COULD HANDLE A CROWD OF 100.

AROUND THESE IRON BONES, EACH OWNER HAS CHANGED THE HOUSE IN SOME WAY.

THESE CHANGES LEAVE A MARK ON THE FORM AND THE CHARACTER OF THE DOMESTIC SPACE. THE KITCHEN WAS REMODELED, AN UPSTAIRS CLOSET WALL REMOVED. FLOORS HAVE BEEN RESURFACED. THE FOYER WALL WAS CUT IN HALF, THE THIRD FLOOR WALLS CUT AWAY AT OVER TIME AND



The architecture of the home and its contents support the identity formation that occurs there, but not through static extraction from cultural influence. Instead, a dynamic co-production of the individual and their personal environment happens in relation to, or as a part of, cultural practice. The skins we wield to preserve the essential self from the force of the exterior world are products of that world, serving to fortify its influence rather than extract it. The impersonal is personal, and vice-versa. "Personal space is often closely related to the realm of privacy as its essential ingredient. It provides an invisible and portable protective layer for an individual, ensuring the desired level of privacy and freedom from outside intrusion. With a closer inspection, it becomes clear that it is equally a constituent part of the public realm" (Madanipour, 37).

The nature of this identity production is distinctly habitual. The flow of the everyday is constructed of habit, actions and gestures repeated over time that embed the body with memory and define its physicality. The body performs these habits with or without audience inside the perceived protective shell of the home site. The repetition of the everyday, the additive result of habit over time, constantly (re)defines the body in the present. "Performativity is thus not a singular 'act,' for it is always reiteration of a norm or set of

norms, and to the extent that it acquires an actlike status in the present, it conceals and dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition" (Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 12).

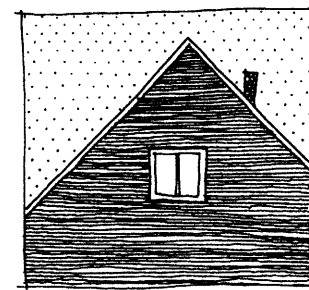
Through its repetition of habitual physicalities, the body is *choreographed* by dominant cultural systems. This systematizing finds its form in the smallest movements of the body, the productive labor that body provides, the consumer choices it makes, and the architecture it builds. Ultimately, the subjection of the body renders it a tool or cog of the larger system, nominally held by the individual.

Foucault discussed the body's social training: "But the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labour power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection (in which need is also a political instrument meticulously prepared, calculated, and used); the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body" (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 26). This

FINALLY GUTTED AND REBUILT IN A NEW LAYOUT WITH AN ADDED BATHROOM, TRANSFORMING IT FROM A MAID'S QUARTERS TO A MASTER SUITE (MY CONTRIBUTION).

MAYBE BECAUSE OF THESE RENOVATIONS/MANIPULATIONS, OR MAYBE DESPITE THEM, THE IRON BONES SHOW WEAR IN 2008, OVER 100 YEARS INTO THE HOUSE'S LIFE. THE HOME HAS A LIFESPAN AS HUMAN STRUCTURES DO, AND NEEDS CONSTANT UPKEEP TO PROLONG THE DETERIORATION. THE BACK SECTION OF THE HOUSE, WHERE THE KITCHEN, OFFICE, AND MASTER CLOSET ARE STACKED, IS SINKING OFF AT AN ANGLE. THERE IS A 10-INCH SLOPE FROM ONE PART OF THE OFFICE TO THE OTHER, AND A DISTINCT CRACK IN THE CORNER WHERE THE SINKING PART CONNECTS TO THE STURDY CENTER SECTION OF THE HOUSE. THE HOUSE'S LIGAMENTS ARE STRETCHING, THERE IS LITERALLY A SPLIT IN THE STRUCTURAL BODY.

JUST AS WITH A HUMAN BODY, WHEN THERE IS A FAILURE IN ONE PART IT ECHOES INTO OTHERS, CAUSING WARPS, WOBBLING, AND CRACKS THROUGHOUT THE INSIDE OF THE HOUSE. THE SHIFT ALSO CAUSES ALL KINDS OF TROUBLE WITH THE OUTSIDE. THE GUTTERS DON'T ACCOUNT FOR THE SLOPE,



body is entrenched in its role as subjected and productive without recognition or resistance, since this constant duality is naturalized.

The everyday body, the body that is perpetually in formation in the home site, is one that is inextricably linked to and defined by the habitual gestures it performs. It is a body marked by flow and present-moment attempts at sustenance and maintenance. The movement that it performs is both intimate and universal; the body is at once allowed its individuality/ singularity and is also participatory in the universal choreography of progressive society.

Marcel Mauss, in his article 'Techniques of the Body,' remarks on the variations between habitual choreographies of different cultures. In these differences in specific physical techniques, Mauss recognizes the ubiquity of physical education. "The action is imposed from without, from above, even if it is an exclusively biological action, involving his body" (Mauss, 73).

Mauss introduces the term 'habitus' to represent the body's performance of taught habit. "In them (habitus) we should see the techniques and work of collective and individual practical reason rather than, in the ordinary way, merely

the soul and its repetitive faculties" (Mauss, 73). The body is not purely the house of the subjective soul, Mauss declares, it is a trained object as well.

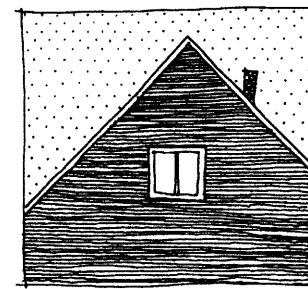
Bourdieu expands on the concept of habitus as 'a system of dispositions, a socialized biological body.' This perhaps best describes the link of the body to the gestures it performs. The body is systematized, coded by socialization, in relation to its biological form. Habitus challenges Cartesian dualism's notion of the internal and external, nature and culture, and instead presents a body that can't be extracted from its situation as a unit of both.

Bourdieu's definition of the habitus also recognizes it as a choreographed unit in motion, dynamically performing its dispositions. This is important in that it refuses essentialist imaging by refusing stillness; it recognizes the temporal stretch of the real body definition. The body is defined by what movements its form takes, what it does, and the complex mess of emotions and expectations involved in these movements. Decision-making is given over to the system of dispositions housed by the individual body to the extent that there is no decision-making.

The body achieves a present-tense flow in the performance of the systematized choreography. This dynamic flow of the choreography is what allows the duality of productive and

WHICH MAKES THEM DYSFUNCTIONALLY DUMP WATER OUT AT
RANDOM POINTS ONTO THE GROUND HOLDING THE FOUNDATION.
THEY NEED FIXING; EVERYTHING DOES. THE HOUSE IS OLD AND
DECREPIT, AND NEEDS THE PARTNERSHIP OF A HUMAN, ME, IF
IT HAS ANY HOPE OF SURVIVAL.

THE BEST WE CAN HOPE FOR IS MAINTENANCE.



subjected body to go largely unnoticed; the body gets so engaged in the present moment flow that the perspective on the performance is too myopic to recognize the true value system at work. "The presumption of bodies already in motion, what dance takes as its normative condition, could bridge the various splits between body and mind, subject and object, and process and structure that have been so difficult for understandings of social life to negotiate" (Martin, 6). This erasure of the gap between body and mind, subject and object, could be seen as a blindfold rather than a bridge in the context of the everyday politicized body.

...

Primary shelter design responds to the most primary needs of the body: refuge from harsh environmental elements, and establishment of spatial claim/private ownership. The body existing in the outside creates a need for an inside.

The home is designed/ formed in order to delineate a personal protected space for the individual or familial body. It marks a zone of retreat, of supposed neutrality and non-performance within a space of our own creation. "For our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word" (Bachelard, 4). According to Bachelard, the house is at once a private corner of the world and a total cosmos

in and of itself. As such, it would seem to be subject to both the systems of the larger universe and the systems of the individual.

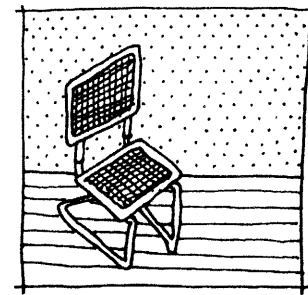
What does the design of this private cosmos say about the biological body and the cultured body? Architectural design intends to be a phenomenological endeavor. That is to say, an understanding of scale, boundaries, requirements, and structural logic comes from bodily experience. These naturalized corporeal sensibilities are used to design built structures to shelter and reinforce the existing bodily experience. This is especially true of the structures we inhabit as our homes.

In that vein, our house structures are in many ways constructed echoes or metaphors of biological bodies. If Cartesian dualism divides the body into a soft inner space of the soul and feelings, and the hard physical outer space of the world," the body is a (given) boundary between. The home is a constructed echo of that most natural boundary, reflecting many of the same conceptual configurations and basic formal attributes.

Houses are designed to reflect an inner/outer, soft/hard dialectic, and to accommodate the functions and movement of the body. The body's needs for light, information, power, nourishment, hygiene, temperature control, etc. determine

IN MY SECOND YEAR OF ARCHITECTURE SCHOOL, WE HAD A PROJECT TO DESIGN APARTMENTS ON A WINDY, VACANT PIER IN CHARLESTOWN. THE PROFESSOR COULD SEE THAT WE WERE HAVING TROUBLE GRASPING THE PROPORTIONAL SCALE OF THE SITE AND OUR PROPOSAL, SO ONE AFTERNOON HE CLEARED OFF THE LARGE MEETING TABLE AND TOLD US TO PLACE OURSELVES ON THE TABLE AS THOUGH WE WERE PLACING OUR BUILDING ON THE PIER. EVERYONE IN THE STUDIO SEEMED SKEPTICAL. I WAS TOO, BEFORE I FOUND MYSELF DISTRACTED BY THINKING OF MY BODY AS A BUILDING (WHOSE STRUCTURE COULD WORK IN DIFFERENT WAYS WITH MORE OR LESS EFFORT, AND WHOSE EXTREMITIES COULD TUCK IN FOR DENSITY OR SPRAWL HORIZONTALLY FOR SEPARATION), AND THINKING OF THE TABLE AS A PIER.

THE SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE AND SCALE HAD A BIG IMPACT ON MY ABILITY TO SEE A 'GOOD' DESIGN CONCEPT: ONE THAT INCLUDED NOTIONS OF GRAVITY, STRUCTURE, SUSPENSION, EXPOSURE, AND HIERARCHY. I CRAWLED AROUND ON THE TABLE FOR AN HOUR. THIS WAS THE ONLY TIME ARCHITECTURE HAD MADE COMPLETE SENSE TO ME.



the basic form of the home. There are intakes and outputs from the body and the home, and the home functions from the dynamic controlling contact with the body. There is interaction between the body and the home, adjustments by each to the other. Plumbing, power, consumption and refuse patterns, orifices, and zones of public and private are all conditions reflected from the body to the design of the home.

Contemporary architects seem more inclined than ever to discuss buildings in terms of systems of structures and skins. The anthropomorphology of architectural terminology and contemporary design concepts represents a connection of increasing concern with that which is most efficient, sleek, and custom along with a return to that which is most primal: the body and its basic functions. Buildings are more and more body-like; cognizant of dominant geometry but deferring to more fluid biological forms to represent a closer relationship to the needs of the contemporary body itself.

In this model, the body clearly precedes and determines the home. In terms of Benjamin's diagram, the shell may reveal only an abstract concept of its inhabitant, but its very existence and basic form was born from that inhabitant's need for sheltering and separating functions. The home is a *product* of the body and identity of its inhabitant.

On a deeper level, home design then does more than refer to or imitate the concepts of the body; it establishes the functions and expectations of its own on the body, and trains and validates that body through repetition of its forms and systems. It produces the body through *activity*.

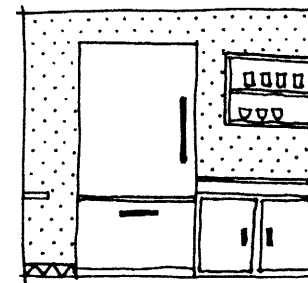
So, the house may indeed be a product of the body, but the shell precedes the inhabitant as well, belongs to and is defined by the public sphere of economy and environment. Bachelard describes the house as a sort of 'keeper' of the body: "Without [the house], man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life. It is body and soul" (Bachelard, 7). He indicates a functional scope larger than simple shelter from the environment: the space of the domestic architecture organizes the individual body, sets its boundaries and choreographs its movements.

The homebody physicality is performed in a present-tense flow, the flow of the everyday, but relates strongly to memory and original formation. The domestic interior always speaks of the past, the original shell. Bachelard speaks of the first house as the one that encodes the body, all inhabitation practice after being based on that physical coding. "But over and beyond our memories, the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us. It is a group of organic habits" (Bachelard, 14). While this relates to body memory,

I STUDIED DANCE AT BROWN UNIVERSITY. WE WORKED IN CHOREOGRAPHY CLASS IN THE ASHAMU DANCE SPACE, A NICE STUDIO WITH WINDOWS LINING ONE SIDE, A SMOOTH WOOD FLOOR, EVEN OVERHEAD LIGHTING, WHITE WALLS, AND SEATS ON ONE END. THE STUDIO WAS AN IDEAL OF MODERNIST DESIGN. IT FELT 'PURE,' READY FOR ACTION TO BE PLACED INTO IT.

IN CHOREOGRAPHY CLASS, WE USED IMPROVISATION TO START BUILDING MOVEMENT VOCABULARY. MOVEMENT WAS TO START FROM THE IMPULSE OF THE BODY; THE MORE THOUGHTS COULD BE REMOVED IN FAVOR OF PRESENT-MOMENT FLOW, THE BETTER. WHILE CHOREOGRAPHING WAS CERTAINLY A GENERATIVE PROCESS GROWN THROUGH THE CREATIVE INDIVIDUAL, THERE WAS A SENSE OF EFFORT INVOLVED IN QUALIFYING IT AS AUTHENTIC.

AT THE TIME, THE DANCE STUDIO WAS A VACUUM FOR ME. MY FATHER HAD PASSED AWAY IN THE WEEKS BEFORE I STARTED TO STUDY DANCE. THE PERSISTENT PHYSICALITY OF DANCE FELT LIKE A TOTAL RELIEF FROM THE HEAVY THOUGHTS OF GRIEF AND OBLIGATIONS.



it is a more profound connection of the body's movement to the home that Bachelard describes; it is inscription. It is the original habit to which all other movements reply. In terms of Bourdieu's habitus, it is the body itself.

"In short, the house we were born in has engraved within us the hierarchy of the various functions of inhabiting. We are the diagram of functions of inhabiting that particular house, and all the other houses are but variations on a fundamental theme. The word habit is too weak a word to express this passionate liaison of our bodies, which do not forget, with an unforgettable house" (Bachelard, 15).

Here Bachelard introduces a liaison of body to home that isn't adequately described by the word 'habit.' Habit implies a separation, or possibility for a separation or rupture from the prescription of repetitive action. In the relationship of the body to the home, though, there is no separation possible. The body will always retain the choreography of its home, the accumulation of its gestures, to the extent that the body is the choreography of its home, and very idea of home is constructed by the motile repetitions of the individual body.

In his book Camouflage, Neil Leach discusses the coproductive, co-forming nature of the body and its environments, a movement of one towards the other. The body forms into

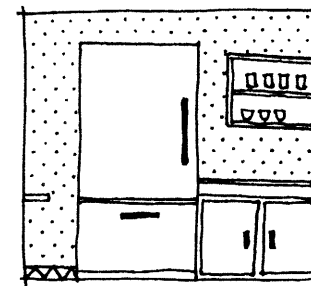
its home, and in turn forms that home around the body. "The process involves a two-way interaction. Not only do we grow into and become part of our environment, but our environment becomes part of us. Architecture, it would seem, plays a vital role in the forging of personal identities" (Leach, 7). In this way, the home precedes or determines the body, whose physicality is forever responsive to or coded by its home.

The cyclical nature of this relationship involves a mutual nurturing, co-validation, and constant maintenance. It is a ritualized relationship, in that it is a choreography that repeats in the direction of the consistent goal of fortifying or maintaining the self. It is important to note the physicality of the ritual; it is through the action of the body in relation to a common goal of maintenance and fortification that these gestures become ritualized.

"'Home' may equally be constituted by a set of familiar actions. The way in which we may climb a staircase, for example, or perform certain daily tasks, like cleaning our teeth or folding clothes, can be absorbed into our familiar world, to the point where they take on the status of highly charged symbolic rituals. Through repetition, otherwise mundane actions can come to form part of our stable symbolic frameworks. As such, these actions take on a deeply meaningful role, operating as a fixed horizon against which

AT NIGHT, WHEN I WOULD GET HOME FROM HOURS OF REHEARSALS IN THIS SPACE, MY BODY WOULD STILL BE ACTIVATED. DOING LAUNDRY OR PREPARING MY DINNER INVOLVED SPINS, TWISTS AND BALANCES BUILT IN. THE REFRIGERATOR HANDLES BECAME COUNTERWEIGHTS TO BEND AWAY FROM. THE SHOWER STALL THE PERFECT WIDTH TO CLIMB AND FALL IN. EVEN DOING ACADEMIC WORK WAS A DANCE. I PROBABLY WROTE HALF OF MY PAPERS AT BROWN EITHER UPSIDE-DOWN OR IN SOME CONTORTION ON THE LIVING ROOM FLOOR.

THESE 'LEFTOVER' MOVEMENTS WERE NOTABLY DIFFERENT THAN THOSE PRODUCED IN THE DANCE STUDIO. ESCHEWING THE FORMALITIES OF DANCE STANDARDS, THESE INTIMATE MOMENTS, ALWAYS PERFORMED ALONE, WERE INTERTWINED WITH LIVING. DOING AN ARMSTAND WHILE SIFTING THROUGH ESTATE DOCUMENTS SOMEHOW MADE THE TASK MORE PALATABLE. ACTIVE EMBODIMENT WAS A COPING STRATEGY FOR THE DRUDGERY OF THE SITUATION. MY BODY, RATHER THAN MY PSYCHE, WAS THE INTENDED SUBJECT FOR CHALLENGE, CONTROL, AND SOMETIMES PAIN.



to gauge our lives. Through experiencing not only familiar images, smells, sounds, and textures, but also through making certain familiar movements and gestures, we achieve a certain symbolic stability" (Leach, 7). This symbolic stability confirms the self, provides a baseline against which to test deviations from that self. The ritualization and repetition validates these activities.

A rupture or deviation from the ritual everyday gestures has implications of breaking down the self, challenging the body in a way that dislodges from the comfort of the body that is self-known.

To reject the home habit is to reject the domestic offerings of shelter and identity preservation. To sustain a habit is to sustain the self and the home, but at the cost of subjectivity and meaning.

Molesworth explains:

"For nowhere is habit and repetition more at play than in the space of the home, particularly in rituals of cleaning. Yet the paradox or the irony of this fact is that while these daily repetitions serve to structure our identities, it is also within these spheres of repetition that we are potentially most free to be let loose from the constriction of the first-person pronoun. Habit and ritual preserve and bolster the

'I' as much as they render the category potentially meaningless, in that our habits and rituals are often performed mindlessly" (Molesworth, 'Starts and Stops,' 162).

The *habitus*, the 'system of dispositions' that is our body, isn't concerned with the 'I,' it is aligned with the system rather than the individual. This system defines the home, the techniques of the body, and the nature of their interaction. To deny the habit and ritual of the established household behavior is to degrade the *habitus*, and to bear the burden of complete subjectivity, a total ownership of the first-person pronoun.



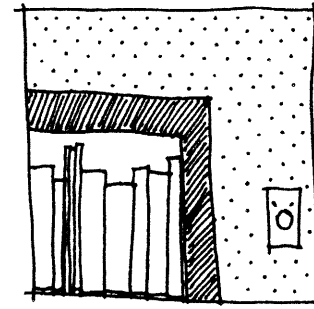
*6. maintenance vs production,
the production of maintenance*

If *habitat* (home) and *habitus* (body) are developed through *habit*, the act of maintenance epitomizes the dominant mode of this identity production. In both conceptual and actual terms, maintenance efforts are directed towards *keeping things up*, limiting the impact of dynamic living on *that which was set before*. In conjunction, this involves both the physical activities that make up home maintenance and the conceptual paradigms that frame and define them. Maintenance operates on the dual strata of actual and discursive: it is keeping all the linens clean, ironed, and folded, as well as keeping ideas about labor allocation and gender roles intact.

In the 'Maintenance Art Manifesto' (1969), artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles describes the two categories of human labor: development and maintenance. "Development: pure individual creation; the new; change; progress; advance; excitement; flight or fleeing. Maintenance: Keep the dust off the pure individual creation; preserve the new; sustain the change; protect progress; defend and prolong the advance; renew the excitement; repeat the flight" (Ukeles in Molesworth, 78).

As discussed in the previous chapter, the home is a site clearly associated with maintenance rather than development. This labor distinction is an important one. While development looks forward, maintenance distinctively uses

- CONDUIT ...
- CONSUMERISM
- CONTINUUM
- DEVICE
- DEVELOPMENT
- DISCIPLINE
- DISCOURSE
- DISRUPTION
- DOMESTIC
- DOMESTICATE
- EFFICIENCY
- ENERGY
- EXPECTATION
- EXPERIMENT



the past as its reference. The methodology and instruments of maintenance may advance over time but the act is always a repetition of the method that came before, that has been practiced in an evolving form for as long as there have been homes to maintain.

“The smells, the rituals, the sounds, the sensations of cleaning house are, for many of us, the stuff of powerful childhood memories” (Horsfield, 31). Activities of the household embed themselves firmly in our memories, since they are procedures that we witness or participate in over and over throughout our lives.

Home maintenance is the activity that best epitomizes the co-productive interchange between the body and the home, as it is an everyday gestural activity common to all homes and individual memories, in various forms and methods. It is also an activity steeped in issues of gender, hygiene, technology, consumerism, and economics.

Housework has been seen throughout history as menial, physically hard, isolated, and based on the unit of individual labor. Through performance of maintenance acts, there is a sense of the home being reliant on the touch, the physical attention of a caretaker. However habitual, culturally determined, or oppressive the nature of that contact

may be, there is an intimate and long-standing relationship of the individual body to the individual home in the act of maintenance.

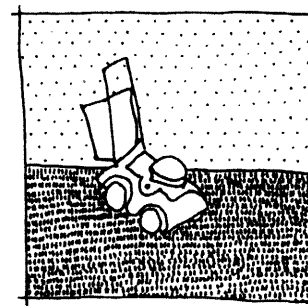
Of course, it is impossible to address maintenance labor without recognizing it as traditionally women’s work, performed in the women’s sphere, the home. Though there may be a contemporary shift towards a more active male participation in home upkeep, the woman has been and still is the key character in the production of the home.

And this woman’s work has always been done in isolation, extracted from the public sphere of economic and cultural exchange. It involves the closed cosmos of the woman and the home. Her only company is that of the ghosts of housewives before her: “The ritual enactment of housekeeping typically links its performer back in time to the company of female ancestors... Consequently, although housework as it is generally practiced is a solitary occupation, some sense of community is provided by the method of doing, when that method reflects the performance of earlier women” (Rabuzzi in Horsfield,).

I LEARNED HOW TO KEEP HOUSE FROM MY FATHER. THOUGH HE WAS AN ACCOMPLISHED LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT, HE WAS A FIRST AND FOREMOST A HOMEBODY, FINDING DELIGHT IN COOKING, SEWING, AND ORGANIZING HIS HOUSE FULL OF THE WONDROUS THINGS HE BROUGHT BACK FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE WORLD.

I DON'T REALLY REMEMBER MY DAD CLEANING ON A REGULAR BASIS. MAYBE BECAUSE HE WAS A MAN, OR BECAUSE OF HIS ARTISTIC INCLINATIONS, MY FATHER'S VERSION OF HOUSEWORK NEVER QUITE LOOKED THAT SAME AS THE VERSION I SAW IN MY FRIENDS' HOMES. WE DIDN'T HAVE AN ESPECIALLY CLEAN HOUSE. I THINK CLEANING HAPPENED IN SMALL WAYS ALL THE TIME, ALONG THE OCCASIONAL ENTHUSIASTIC MANIC OVERHAUL RIGHT BEFORE A DINNER PARTY OR ON THE FIRST WARM SPRING EVENING.

THE AFFECTION HE HAD FOR SERVING A BEAUTIFUL MEAL TO GUESTS OR ORGANIZING BOOKS ON THE COFFEE TABLE WAS PASSED ON TO ME. I LEARNED TO COOK, SEW, AND VACUUM FROM WATCHING HIM. NOT JUST THE SKILL SETS INVOLVED WITH THESE HOME ACTIVITIES, BUT THE METHODOLOGY AS



An embrace of the dominant maintenance practice is in effect a temporary relinquishing of the self to the communal in a pattern of repetition of history. It also involves engaging with the performance expectations set by the precedents of these activities.

The home maintenance act is marked by a dichotomy that serves to symbolize the larger struggle of women's identity in society. There are two versions of domesticity: the imaged and the actual. While the image of a clean, well-kept house is valued and represented in mass media, the work itself is often invisible. The unsightly process is removed from view in the polished result expected.

"Since the concept of an "angel in the house" took hold in Victorian times, Western culture has elevated the image of woman as domestic goddess while consistently undervaluing, if not just plain denigrating, the actual content of domestic work—a contradiction that has often made, in the modern age, for major antagonism between the so-called female realm and the actual living, breathing women who occupy it" (Zeisler in *Bitchfest*, 217).

Feminists have long struggled with the relationship of the woman to the home, and the labor that she performs there. Two main strains of thought prevail in this debate: one that points towards a revaluing of home labor in society (an

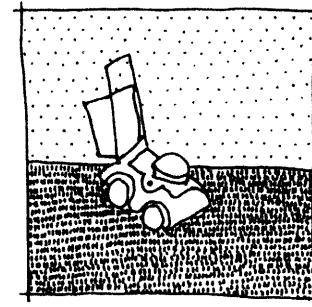
adjustment from the exterior of the home walls, the public sphere), and one that rejects it outright as a form of oppression, and disdains participation in its continuation or pride in its product (an adjustment made on the part of the individual laborer).

The primary evolutionary strand of housework involves neither its revaluing or its abandonment, but rather its procedural improvement. The constant improvement to the activity and tool set of housework is meant to be the anecdote to the drudgery and dissatisfaction associated with its labor.

Critical thoughts about housework are always played out in the methodology of the activity. Housework has changed in scope and technique throughout history in response to its contemporary valuations and technological developments. The nature of that maintenance conversation between body and home quietly morphs to suit societal development, with the bodies and homes themselves also being constantly retrained and reformed in response.

In the 19th century, the conversation about home maintenance centered around the realization that this work was isolating and culturally devalued. The response was to attempt to make the tasks of the home less burdensome to the women who performed them by making the activity more efficient and rational. This rationalization of housework also

WELL. EVERY MEAL WAS AN ADVENTURE, EXPECTATIONS WERE ALWAYS BEING DASHED. HOME ACTIVITIES COULD INVOLVE WIT AND IMPULSE, WONDERFUL INTENSITY OR COMPLETE NEGLECT.



developed a notion of professionalism that would allow pride in the home labor and connect it to “a larger system of social, scientific, patriotic, and evangelical meaning” (Tonkovich, in *The American Woman’s Home*, xi).

Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s guide *The American Woman’s Home* offered this strategy, emphasizing technique and scientific rigor to home maintenance activities. “Following such general principles, a woman can simplify her work and behave as a rational professional” (Tonkovich, in *The American Woman’s Home*, xxiv). The scientific rigors of the guide’s techniques were aimed at *simplification*.

Improvement of the housekeeping process, while it nominally reduced the drudgery of housework, failed to resolve the gender inequality of the home site. Efficiency is, after all, partnered with notion of control and discipline, not freedom. As Foucault states: “A disciplined body is the prerequisite of an efficient gesture” (Foucault, 152). But increased discipline was not the tool was liberation that rationalists promised women.

Instead, programs like the one presented in *The American Woman’s Home* and other instructional household manuals gave stringent guidelines for efficient performance. A woman’s success was judged in relation to the strength of

her value system and dedication to procedure. The quality of her character was read in her ability to follow instructions, to be most disciplined. While the individual task may have become ‘easier’ on the laborer, this ease came at a cost of lost control on the part of the individual, and intensified critique of their performance.

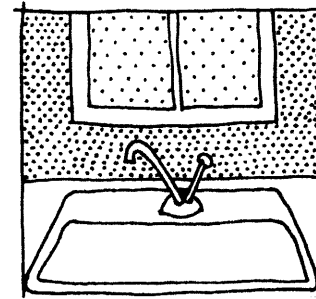
The rational housework notion also failed to connect the labor of the home to the larger economic system. Though its new productivity may have allowed for some pride to be taken in the work, domestic work still wasn’t paid, and therefore remained firmly outside the realm of production and economy.

If efficient, measured allocation of time and energies was the nineteenth-century solution to the difficulties of domestic maintenance, the twentieth-century proposal was largely consumerism and mechanization. In *Never Done*, Susan Strasser discusses the evolution of housework in terms of societal progress: “Between about 1890 and 1920, mass production and mass distribution brought new products and services—gas, electricity, running water, prepared foods, ready-made clothes, and factory-made furniture and utensils—to a large number of American families” (Strasser, 6).

MY EX-HUSBAND AND I USED TO ARGUE OVER WHO WOULD DO THE DISHES.

HE WOULD SAY: "IT'S NOT LIKE YOU EVEN HAVE TO DO ANYTHING. YOU AREN'T DOING THE DISHES, THE DISHWASHER IS DOING THE DISHES."

TO WHICH I WOULD REPLY: "THEN WHY DON'T YOU 'NOT DO THEM'?"



The mass-produced consumer goods, including new household machines and appliances, claimed to be the housewife's partners and saviors, her labor efforts subsidized by efficient, affordable manufacturing. Women could *buy* rather than *make*, and could load and unload a machine instead of scrubbing and rinsing.

The mentality of housekeeping changed along with its equipment. "If the house was a battlefield, the woman became a combination of military commander, scientist, and doctor. Since the beginning of the century, the house had been her laboratory, kept scrupulously clean of dirt, dust, and, above all, germs" (Colomina, 161). Standards for cleanliness increased, as did the scope and intensity of housewife's maintenance battle.

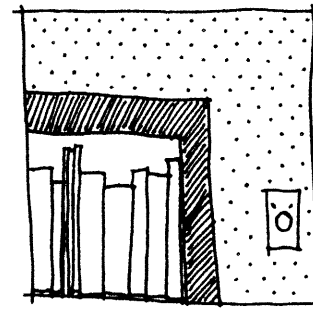
"Many of the changes in housework matched changes in other kinds of work during the long process of industrialization. Shorter hours and better working conditions—less hard, constant physical labor, in safer and more comfortable circumstances—distinguish other twentieth-century housework as they distinguish other twentieth-century labor. Like other workers, the housewife lost control of her work process; manufacturers exerted their control on her through product design and advertising rather than through direct supervision" (Strasser, 9).

The army of consumer products and machines in women's twentieth-century home tightened the grip of control over her mode of operating still more. Her individual agency in defining the physicality and process of the necessary tasks is lost to systematics of mass production. While the physical demands may indeed have been reduced, the expressiveness and individuality of the maintenance labor was further endangered.

Simone de Beauvoir, a second-wave feminist, wrote The Second Sex in 1949. Her writing reflects contemporary frustrations with the continued seclusion of the woman in the home to perform mindless and repetitive work. She speaks of the housewife figure with intolerance, fed up with her inability to break out of the oppressive cycle of ignoble work.

"Simone de Beauvoir used the figure of the housewife to encapsulate all that she saw wrong with women's lives. Conjuring up an image of 'the manic housekeeper,' she claimed that the housewife wears herself out marking time in the endless repetition of her work and in waging a furious war against dirt and life itself for the rubbish and mess it creates" (Lesley, 7).

- FEMINISM
- HABIT
- HABITAT
- HABITUS
- HOME
- HOUSE
- HYGIENE
- IDENTITY
- INHABIT
- INSTRUCTIONS
- INSTRUMENTATION
- INTERROGATE
- ISOLATION
- LABOR



De Beauvoir suggests that there is some malformation of character (mania) to be developed in endlessly repeating household maintenance acts. She suggests a radical shift in the feminist state of mind, a perspective beyond the home cosmos.

Betty Friedan's 1963 text, The Feminine Mystique, describes a terrible legacy of control of woman through their isolation the home. She discussed housework as unchallenging labor that woman should be ashamed of rather than take pride in. She also associates liberation with a departure from the confines of the homefront.

"Betty Friedan's solution to women's entrapment in domesticity, as we have seen, advocated that they develop life plans through which they could define themselves, their identities and their futures. The self-realization or actualization that she advocated for women involved them making projects out of their lives and their selves" (Lesley, 12).

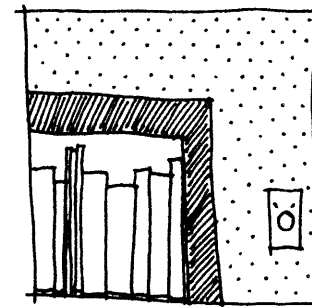
Important is the fact that the promise of self-actualization comes only with the dissension against the status quo. In Friedan's thinking, woman could not become more than housewives without disowning those labor activities in absolute terms: "In this (Friedan's) narrative, the housewife represented the past self—the quintessentially prescribed self—who was to be left behind as bowed down by tradi-

tion and authority... Friedan, like others, was arguing for a feminist subject who was a reflexive self, and therefore was providing practical guides for women about how they should and could become such a self" (Lesley, 14).

Other feminists have suggested similarly drastic breaks with the binds of housewifery. Anne Oakley, a 1970s feminist, states simply: "Housework is work directly opposed to the possibility of human self-actualization" (Oakley, 222). The nagging dependence of the home, its need for nurturing and constant attention, is too strong to coexist with any more meaningful projects of self-actualization. For many feminist, only a radical break from the role of home laborer, from the long history of these activities, would relieve the oppression.

Despite these calls, it would seem that there will be no grand divorce between women and home labor. Contemporary media imaging of home maintenance involves hyperefficiency, graceful multitasking, and expert skill in home activities. The contemporary exemplar is a woman who achieves definitive self-actualization outside of the home, but who tempers this radical act by also embracing, even relishing in, her duties on the interior. She doesn't eschew her responsibilities or deny her homemaking precedents, but also refuses to be isolated or enslaved by home activities.

- MACHINE
- MAINTENANCE
- MANUAL
- MEMORY
- METHOD
- MOTILITY
- MULTITASK
- NOTEWORTHY
- OBJECT
- ORIFICE
- PERFORMATIVITY
- PHYSICAL
- PRESENTABLE
- PRIVATE



Much of the contemporary feminist discussion on the topic of domestic activity involves a character of appropriate contestation: Martha Stewart. Martha Stewart, the woman who used her domestic prowess to build a multi-million dollar corporation and media conglomerate, seems to have self-actualized with a radical embrace of, rather than break from, domestic activities.

Martha offers a novel model of a *productive maintenance*. Her repetition of the maintenance act is connected to the larger cultural and economic system, and it impacts the methodology of the practice of home maintenance through its televised performance. With some squinting, Martha Stewart could look like a subversive genius and feminist hero!

But more than anything, Martha spawns a new generation of the debate about the woman's relationship to the home and her successes in the larger world: "And then, of course, there's Martha. Fearsome, scandalous, contagiously domestic Martha Stewart, who has knocked the stereotype of the docile homemaker on its aproned rump... Her work and her public image played as much on fears that women who are too self-sufficient are doomed to remain alone as on women's anxieties about not being 'good enough' at supposedly innate domestic tasks" (Zeisler in *Bitchfest*, 220).

While she may not offer the clearest character of feminist hero, Martha does allow us to see a potential for subversion of expectation, and reclamation of that which was, and still is, a binding labor relationship between the woman and the home. Her production suggests that this reclamation can be both profitable and culturally effectual.



7. Stuff & Things & Machines

“Over the years, women with improbable hairstyles, wearing good dresses and high heels, have been routinely photographed smiling alongside their various appliance; their ease, their beauty, and their grooming somehow reflect the effortless efficiency of the gleaming piece of equipment at their sides” (Horsfield, 129).

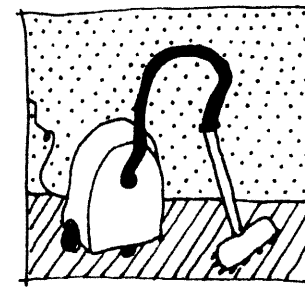
In thinking of the dynamic negative space that exists between the body and the interior walls that the body inhabits, the topography of this space is defined by the contents we select, consume, and collect to cohabit with.

Purely in terms of spatial definition, these contents create a rich surface condition that could, in some way, stand in as a representation of their owner. A person’s domestic environment is a profound indicator of their personality, style, and priorities. The home is the place for self-production, and the objects all props, chosen more or less attentively, to set the stage for our self-production. In this sense, as an image, the objects of our homes are a sculptural representation of ourselves to be formed from very personal criteria.

We might, then, begin to think of ourselves as curators of our personal objects. The home is our own museum, an exhibit conveying the self or family unit. Though the contents themselves are largely mass-produced consumer goods,

ALL OF MY VACUUMS SERVE DIFFERENT PURPOSES. A HANDHELD FOR MY TRUCK; A SHOPVAC FOR THE BASEMENT, ONE THAT'S GOOD FOR THE STAIRS, ONE THAT I USE ON TILE, ETC. ETC. I HAVE USED THESE VACUUMS TO (TRY TO) MAINTAIN A CLEAN HOUSE FOR MANY YEARS. IT TAKES 55 MINUTES TO CLEAN THE FLOORS IN THE WHOLE HOUSE, ANOTHER 15 IF I DECIDE TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE COB-WEBS IN THE CORNERS OF THE CEILINGS. THE VACUUMS ARE ESSENTIAL TO MY HOUSE-CLEANING REGIMEN; I WOULD BE A DISASTER WITH A BROOM.

ONE VACUUM, MY YELLOW DYSON, HAS BECOME A FORMIDABLE WRESTLING OPPONENT. A NORMAL CLEANING CAN OCCASIONALLY SPIRAL OUT OF CONTROL INTO BOUTS OF ROLLING AROUND ON THE FLOOR, RIPPING OFF STUCK BRUSH HEADS, YANKING AT TANGLED CORDS. YEARS OF FRUSTRATION WITH THE VACUUM'S INADEQUACIES POUR OUT, AND THE DUST BALLS FLY. THIS, OF COURSE, ADDS TO THE 55 MINUTES.



the individual has agency in the selective introduction and placement of those goods in the home. We orchestrate these objects, place them hierarchically locations in our intimate space and engage with them in personal rituals.

Through our actions, we chase an image of a glorified relationship to these home objects. The image is one of ease, personalization, presentability, cleanliness. It involves confirming the identity through employing personal consumer agency to access and reiterate a universalized domestic value system.

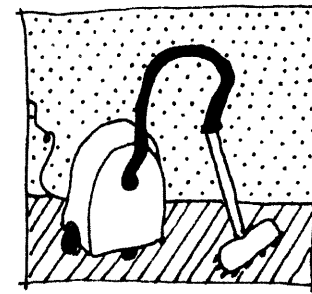
This image is one that was manufactured along with, or inside of, modernism after WWII. The image of the home as a static space, impeccably cared-for and 'presentable,' was rampant in post-war America. After the shock and turbulence of the war, the intimate space of the home became a new ground for control and cultivation of an image that would propel Americans forward into a contemporary age of order and prosperity. The home objects presented were uniquely functional; they represented the upkeep and efficiency of the home rather than sentimental ornamentality.

The post-war barrage of home images was important in the development of our contemporary consumer culture and the notion of home contents representing power, political and personal, through control of our environment with

machines and instruments. "Appliances topped the list of the most desirable objects in the postwar years. In 1946, a double-page spread in *Life* titled 'Family Utopia' presents 'the dream to which all Americans aspired' displayed on the lawn... Beginning with a suburban house and a lawn, what Americans wanted most was a convertible station wagon, an electric stove, a television-phonograph-radio, a washing machine, a vacuum cleaner, a dishwasher, a toaster, an iron, a lawn sweeper, a power mower, aluminum porch furniture, an aluminum slide, a doll carriage... and a helicopter. The prototypical family stands on the lawn, surrounded by its gadgets" (Colomina, 136). Notions of military efficiency and technology spilled into the home front and into the idealized imaging of the domestic stage.

Rather than serve a purely representational purpose, it is the postwar image of the home and its contents that fed, and still feeds, back into the personal home site, defining the intimate relationships there. The image of domesticity, in its compounded value over time, enters into and defines the truly complex psychological and physical relationship of the self to the home. "On whatever theoretical horizon we examine it, the house image would appear to have become the topography of our intimate being" (Bachelard, xxxvi).

EACH VACUUM IS A DANCE PARTNER, SOME BETTER THAN OTHERS. THEY SWAY, THEIR SPINNING SCRUBBERS PROPEL THEM FORWARD. THEY TAKE WEIGHT, AND MAKE CONTACT WITH EVERY INCH OF THE SPACE WITH A METHODOICAL CHOREOGRAPHY OF BACK AND FORTH SWEEPS. THE VARYING WEIGHT OF EACH ONE MAKES ITS RHYTHM DIFFERENT, AND THE MOMENT BETWEEN FORWARD AND BACKWARD SWEEPS MORE OR LESS DRAMATIC. SOME JUST LIKE TO GO IN CIRCLES. THEY WORK BETTER IF YOU DANCE WITH THEM IN THE PROPERLY CALIBRATED WAY.



And the topography of our intimate being in the contemporary home is determined through identity confirmation from the images that enter into it. Dolores Hayden points out: "Most of the time men and women viewed these 'modern,' appliance-filled houses, with their living rooms, kitchens, dining rooms, bedrooms, and multiple baths, as perfectly natural domestic environments" (Hayden, 295). The current domestic typographies feel natural because we grow into them; they what our bodies understand as a fundamental, natural habitat.

The same deterministic imaging and naturalization occurs with the body. The body, though dynamic, is culturally defined through images of idealized forms. This representation process and the expectations of the body imaged are placed onto, or inscribed into, the body real. The body forms in relation to cultural normatives and habitual actions, through the relational dynamics of coded household instruments.

By producing our home we are producing ourselves, and vice-versa. "The act of making the world like the self is the equivalent to the act of making the self like the world. Both involve a play between the animate and the inanimate, and both ultimately serve the same ends. Once the inanimate world of architecture has itself been animated, identification can take place" (Leach, 160).

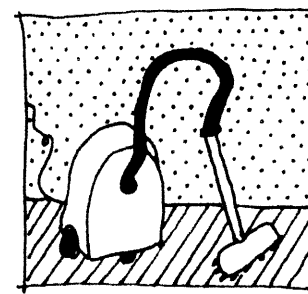
This animation takes place as our dynamic relationship to our home objects is ritualized and repeated. The conventions at work in these household repetitions involve contemporary notions of health and hygiene, gender labor production, consumerism, and many others, all evolved from the post-war domestic revolution. These macro issues play out in the finest detail of the body's habit, and the highly specific arsenal of objects that are engaged in that habit.

"For nowhere is habit and repetition more at play than in the space of the home, particularly in rituals of cleaning. Yet the paradox or the irony of this fact is that while these daily repetitions serve to structure our identities, it is also within these spheres of repetition that we are potentially most free to be let loose from the constriction of the first-person pronoun. Habit and ritual preserve and bolster the 'I' as much as they render the category potentially meaningless, in that our habits and rituals are often performed mindlessly" (Molesworth, 'Starts and Stops,' 162).

The act of upkeep of the home environment involves using a home object to address and maintain other home objects and the home container itself. Maintenance directly relates the body to the topography of the home contents and the boundaries of the interior space: the floors, walls, windows,

THERE ARE TWO VACUUM CLEANERS THAT I HAVE LOST. ONE, A 1970S RAINBOW VACUUM WITH A LARGE WATER RECEPTACLE. IT WAS A MUTED BROWN COLORED PLASTIC. I GAVE IT TO MY MOTHER WHEN I WAS CLEARING OUT MY HOUSE 10 YEARS AGO, SINCE I HAD DECIDED I NEEDED A NEW ONE THAT WORKED BETTER ANYWAY. THE OTHER LOST VACUUM WAS STOLEN AFTER I LEFT IT IN A DANCE SPACE IN COLLEGE. I HAD USED IT IN A PERFORMANCE, DANCED WITH IT IN A CONTACT IMPROVISATION, AND THEN LEFT IT OVERNIGHT NEAR THE STAGE. IT WAS GONE THE NEXT MORNING.

IT WAS AN ORECK, THE VACUUM I HAD BOUGHT TO REPLACE THE RAINBOW. MY FATHER ALWAYS SAID THEY WORKED THE BEST; IT WAS AN OLD, RELIABLE COMPANY. IT WORKED REALLY, REALLY WELL ON CARPETS, AND WAS GENERALLY A VERY SATISFYING . I WAS DISTRAUGHT WHEN IT WENT MISSING. EVENTUALLY I BOUGHT AN OTHER, AND THEN 6 MORE, TO TRY TO REPLACE IT, BUT I STILL HAVEN'T FOUND ONE THAT WORKS AS WELL. THEY ARE ALL USEFUL IN THEIR OWN WAYS, BUT THERE ISN'T ONE MACHINE THAT SATISFIES ALL MY VACUUMING REQUIREMENTS.



corners. It is a conversation between the home and the body/housekeeper through the interlocutor of the maintenance device.

In addition, the act of home maintenance engages with the most uniquely functional objects of the home, those products that service the home through the latest technologies and scientific applications available to the private consumer. The ongoing design of household devices can drastically impact the nature and psychology of their use. "Without resorting to nostalgia or simple physical comfort, design can offer a mechanism for engaging with the world that overcomes feelings of alienation. In this respect, design can provide a form of connectivity, a mediation between individuals and their environment. Design can contribute to a sense of 'belonging'" (Leach, 9). The devices of home maintenance evolve over time to enable the interaction of the body and the home to seem more seamless and natural, and to reinforce their associated activities.

Foucault describes the relationship of the body to the use object as a process of *coding*. "This is an example of what might be called the instrumental coding of the body. It consists of a breakdown of the total gesture into two parallel series: that of the parts of the body to be used (right hand, left hand, different fingers of the hand, knee, eye, elbow, etc.) and that of the parts of the object manipulated (barrel,

notch, hammer, screw, etc.); then these two sets of parts are correlated together according to a number of simple gestures (rest, bend); lastly, it fixes the canonical succession in which each of these correlations occupies a particular place" (Foucault, 153).

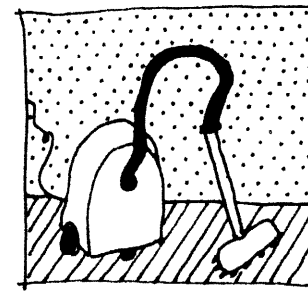
The objects in the home are associated with particular use/activity, and these uses have a particular ergonomic map and gestural sequence. Through repetition, they train us in their use. They become extensions of us through repeated activity.

Foucault elaborates on the power dynamics involved in this coupling of coded body and its operated objects. "Over the whole surface of contact between the body and the object it handles, power is introduced, fastening them to one another. It constitutes a body-weapon, body-tool, body-machine complex" (Foucault, 153). There is a particular power dynamic housed in the particular physicalities of the coupling.

Certeau's notion of the everyday describes it as 'ways of operating' within a given system of rules and expectations. This points to the poignant role of the home object in the everyday homebody production. Since the contents are embedded with designated use methodologies, they powerfully guide the individual in their way of *operating*.

I THINK THE BEST REPRESENTATION OF THE CURRENT DISCURSIVE STATE OF HOME MAINTENANCE IS FOUND IN ONE OF MY SEVEN VACUUMS: THE ROOMBA ROBOT VACUUM. THE ROOMBA PROMISES HOURS OF RECLAIMED TIME THROUGH AUTOMATED VACUUMING ACTION. IT EMPLOYS LOGARITHMS TO MAKE SURE THE FLOOR SURFACE IS EVENLY SWEEPED. ALL IT REQUIRES IS THE PERIODIC DUMPING-OUT OF THE SMALL COLLECTION COMPARTMENT AND AN OCCASIONAL FILTER CHANGE. IT THINKS IT'S REALLY SMART.

THE ROOMBA ROBOT VACUUM THAT I OWN WAS A GIFT FROM MY EX-HUSBAND. PERHAPS ACCORDINGLY, IT IS CURSED TO FAIL TO DELIVER ON ANY OF ITS SHINY PROMISES. IT GETS JAMMED ALL THE TIME, REQUIRES BARRIERS TO KEEP IT FROM FALLING DOWN STAIRS OR INTO A DIP IN THE FLOOR THAT IT CAN'T GET ITSELF OUT OF. THE CHARGER IS FINICKY, IT USUALLY DISCONNECTS WITH THE SLIGHTEST BUMP. WHEN I STILL USED IT, I WOULD INEVITABLY FOLLOW IT AROUND THE ROOM WAITING TO COMING TO ITS RESCUE. THE DOG AND I WOULD CIRCLE IT IN A GAME, SOMETIMES I WOULD USE MY FOOT TO PUSH A BIG FURBALL INTO ITS PATH IF I DIDN'T HAVE FAITH IN THE LOGARITHM. IT DID NOT WIN ME BACK HOURS OF



The ergonomics of the body-home conversation of are defined by the products and appliances. Most objects in the home declare how they are held, how they open and close, in what position they will hold a body. The length of the magnetic duster brush determines how far you stretch to reach to top bookshelf, the width of the mop determines how many swipes it takes to cover the kitchen floor, the ability of a vacuum to reach under a sofa determines whether or not that sofa has to be moved to clean the floor beneath it. "Technology is appropriated as an extension to our bodies, like some prosthetic device, so that—just as we learn to drive a car through the car—our bodies come to operate through that technology" (Leach, 9).

The motility of maintenance, though defined by this ever-improving set of tools, is naturalized through organic evolution over time. "These body-machine couplings, unions made possible by developments such as plumbing and electricity, have been theorized by Deleuze and Guattari in their famous *Anti-Oedipus*. They argue that desire is structured by precisely such continual and changing connections, which they term 'hooking-up' or 'grafting.' They posit that desire has a mechanistic and additive logic, governed by flows, stops and starts, and continuums" (Molesworth, 'Starts and Stops,' 161).

The newest, most efficient tools always build on the gestural norms established and taught to users by the preceding generation of devices. They draw on the already-naturalized instrumental coding of the body as the starting point for a design trajectory.

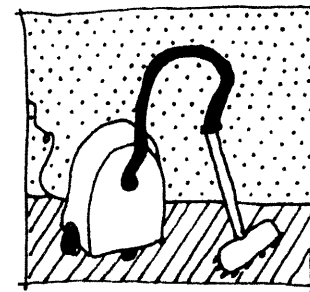
Interestingly, the activities associated with maintenance objects' are still denigrated and undervalued, associated with an image of physical drudgery. It is still banal, repetitive work, no matter how advanced the tools become. The only novelty in the milieu of home maintenance will come from the appliance or machine, rather than its operator. The device itself wins the glory, the user feels satisfied only in having made a productive consumer selection.

With the improvement of maintenance tools and appliances, no less attention has been required for the production of the home. These new technologies coincide with an ever-raising standard of hygiene and cleanliness. The scope of the home maintenance work has expanded, and the time it requires increased, with the new efficiencies of post-war technology in the home. "Still the housewife worked alone and her work was never done: time budget studies in the United States and other industrialized countries show that the housewife's hours of work increased rather than decreased after the 1920s, despite labor-saving devices and commercial services" (Hayden, 26).

FREE TIME. THE ROOMBA NOW RESIDES UNDER MY COUCH IN THE BACK OF THE LIVING ROOM COLLECTING DUST AND FUR. I VACUUM IT ONCE AND A WHILE.

THE QUASI-FAILURE OF THE ROOMBA PROVIDES AN INTERESTING READ ON OUR CURRENT POSITION WITH TECHNOLOGY. STILL EMPLOYING THE LANGUAGE OF POST-WAR TECHNOLOGIES TO DESIGN AND DESCRIBE THE MAINTENANCE DEVICE ('VACUUM'), IT PROMISES A NEW PARTIAL ERASURE OF THE LABOR OF THE ASSOCIATED TASK ('ROBOT'). IT DOESN'T YET REMOVE THE BODY FROM THE TASK, BUT CERTAINLY CHANGES THE NATURE OF THAT PHYSICAL ENGAGEMENT (FROM ACTIVELY DRIVING THE VACUUM TO WALKING AROUND WATCHING IT).

I ACTUALLY ENJOYED THE PECULIARITY OF THIS PHYSICALITY WHEN I FIRST GOT THE ROOMBA. IT FELT NOVEL, AND UNCOMFORTABLE IN THE WAY IT FEELS TO SPEAK A FOREIGN LANGUAGE FOR THE FIRST TIME. THE GRAMMAR WAS RECOGNIZABLE, IT FELT FAMILIAR BUT NOT NATURAL. WALKING THE VACUUM FELT LIKE A CREATIVE ACT, A REINVENTION OF THE HABIT OF VACUUMING.



What has changed because of product evolution is the allocation of energies; housework now involves consumption as a key activity: "Over a century and a half, the content of housework had changed until the time spent in the consumption of manufactured products nearly equaled the time spent in cooking, cleaning, and child care" (Hayden, 26).

At the same time that the scope of housework has expanded, the physicality of the household maintenance ritual has been streamlined and made less strenuous. The technology of the tool, its good design, replaces physical engagement and exertion. It promises another sequential step towards independence from human requirement. The tools of maintenance try to shift from physical to manual to automatic operation, promising to eliminate the body partnership from the home production.

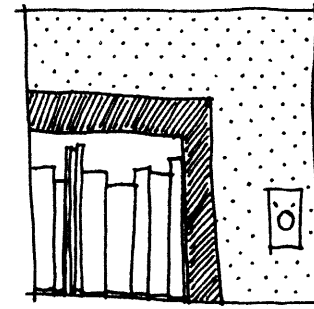
With more housework expectations, more tools/devices for performing that housework, there are additional objects in the home object topography to be maintained. Technology advances to expand the role of the household tool as interlocutor, to become more of an operable agent in its own right, promoting the acculturation of the home-body relationship. In the evolution of this equation, the body itself dissipates; maintenance is purely automated and engagement is through digital orchestration rather than corporeal

activity. As this occurs, the individuality of the maintenance coordinator- caregiver, her elbow grease or the persistence with which she attacks a stain, become moot.

"Marshal McLuhan's 1951 book *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man* includes an essay about depictions of the female body as a machine-like aggregate of detachable, interchangeable parts, a pattern McLuhan found in the croppings and juxtapositions of photographs in journalism and advertising" (Lupton, 9). This representation of the body describes the detachment from corporeality in the household. The tasks become mechanical as the tools do, and the body follows suit. The engagement of the body is not creative, or productive in an integral way, but rather the result of mechanized, ever-diminishing motility in relation to the home.

More than 50 years later, this motility, the nature of the home performativity, is challenged once again. As contemporary culture has pushed forward technologies and presented new concerns of safety, sanitation, and information, the nature of household maintenance, its tools and ergonomics, and the coproductive relationship of the body and home, stands to undergo further change.

- PRODUCTION
- PRODUCTIVITY
- PROP
- PUBLIC
- RECLAMATION
- REFUGE
- RESISTANCE
- SELF-ACTUALIZATION
- STANDARDS
- TECHNIQUE
- TRAINING
- USE.



Despite household products' promises of automation, they will never actually reduce the involvement of the body in maintenance acts. The body is still engaged in the systems of housework, and this engagement is still technical, choreographed, and repetitive. The tools and devices in the household have taken on the role of trainer, dispersing the choreography of consumerism through their use. As such, they are a key props in the restaging of the domestic performance, key tools in the reformulization of the homebody production.



8. Conclusion: domesticating the habitus

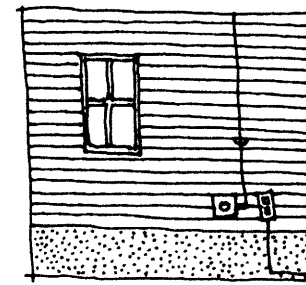
do·mes·ti·cate

-verb (used with object)

1. to convert (animals, plants, etc.) to domestic uses; tame.
2. to tame (an animal), esp. by generations of breeding, to live in close association with human beings as a pet or work animal and usually creating a dependency so that the animal loses its ability to live in the wild.
3. to adapt (a plant) so as to be cultivated by and beneficial to human beings.
4. to accustom to household life or affairs.
5. to take (something foreign, unfamiliar, etc.) for one's own use or purposes; adopt.
6. to make more ordinary, familiar, acceptable, or the like: to domesticate radical ideas.

AS I WRITE THIS, A NEW HOLE IS BEING MADE IN MY HOUSE. I'M INSIDE, ON THE THIRD FLOOR, FEELING THE VIBRATION OF THE ELECTRICIAN'S DRILL BIT FORGING A NEW PASSAGE FROM THE EXTERIOR INTO THE BASEMENT (BACHELARD WOULD HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT THE PARTICULAR SITE OF THE PUNCTURE). WALTER BUNKER (A NOBLE NAME, HOPEFULLY A NOBLE ELECTRICIAN) SUGGESTED THAT I USE A FOAM SEAL AND CONCRETE PAINT TO PLUG THE OLD HOLE THAT WILL REMAIN FROM MOVING THE ELECTRIC CABLE INPUT OVER 8 FEET.

I CAN HEAR THE ELECTRICIAN YELLING INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE DRIVEWAY TO HIS SON IN THE BASEMENT. I CAN ALSO THE EXCHANGE, MUCH MORE CLEARLY AND LOUDLY, THROUGH THE HEATING VENT. THIS CONVERSATION BETWEEN INSIDE AND OUTSIDE IS A LOUD ONE, HAPPENING THROUGH THE GLASS OF THE BASEMENT WINDOW OVER THE SOUND OF THE POWER TOOLS.



Having researched the complicated issues and relationships facing the homebody, I have begun to form a strategy an art practice to reflect my developing opinions.

My first conclusion is that the reformulation of the homebody experience in terms of individual creativity is a radical act. The relationship of the home to the body in its systematized choreography is long-standing and deeply ingrained. To stray from the prescription of habit is to recognize the effort and intentionality involved in creative self actualization.

With the proper treatment, habitual activities of the home can have cultural stake. This involves recognizing the creative potential in the site of the home, and seeing maintenance as transcending its former bounds as a purely upkeep-oriented activity. As a creative act, housework is a form of production, and sparks something new and noteworthy.

Bachelard describes this potential moment of creative engagement:

“But how can housework be made into a creative activity? The minute we apply a glimmer of consciousness to a mechanical gesture, or practice phenomenology while polishing a piece of old furniture, we sense new impressions come into being beneath this familiar domestic duty. For consciousness rejuvenates everything, giving a quality

of beginning to the most everyday actions. It even dominates memory. How wonderful it is to really become once more the inventor of a mechanical action! And so, when a poet rubs a piece of furniture—even vicariously—when he puts a little fragrant wax on his table with the woolen cloth that lends warmth to everything it touches, he creates a new object; he increases the object’s human dignity; he registers this object as member of the human household” (Bachelard, 67).

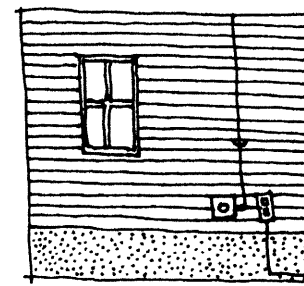
This indication of house maintenance as a creative (even poetic) act seems potent. If maintenance is already latent with a production value, one so intricately entwined with the historic and cultural situation and imaging, why could it not therefore be confirmed as such, truly embraced as a performative interchange?

Consciousness and intentionality are key ingredients in this productive engagement. Rather than accepting naturalized methodologies for production, the character of the performative ritual can be redefined, once again in very clear terms, in the interest of an individual body and an individual home. Moreover, by formalizing the ritual in a way that be truly externalized, truly performed, it is possible to focus consciousness on the naturalized gesture and reveal the

IT REMINDS ME OF THE TIME MY FATHER AND I CON-
STRUCTED A COFFEE CAN AND STRING PHONE, AND TRIED
TO USE IT THROUGH THE CRACK OF A WINDOW INTO THE
BACK YARD. IT WORKED MIRACULOUSLY. MAYBE I SHOULD
SUGGEST IT TO THE ELECTRICIANS.

WE ALSO USED THE STRING PHONE FROM THE THIRD
FLOOR TO THE FIRST. IN THIS SAME ROOM, MY CHILDHOOD
BEDROOM, (AND A CONVERTED ATTIC, WHICH BACHELARD
WOULD ALSO HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT), I LEANED
OUT A CUTOUT SECTION IN A WALL THAT NO LONGER
EXISTS, AND I SPOKE BACK AND FORTH WITH MY FATHER
ABOUT WHAT TO COOK FOR DINNER, WHAT COMIC STRIPS
WERE THE BEST IN THE NEWSPAPER THAT WEEKEND, IF
MY VOICE SOUNDED LOUDER WHEN I CRAMMED MY FACE ALL
THE WAY INTO THE JAR. I COULD HEAR HIS VOICE TWICE,
ONCE IN THE COFFEE CAN AND ONCE MORE FAINTLY IN
THE SURROUNDING AIR.

WHEN I INSTALLED A NEW HEATING VENT INTO THE KITCH-
EN PANTRY A FEW YEARS AGO, I QUICKLY DISCOVERED
THAT IT WORKED LIKE THE STRING PHONE. I COULD TALK
TO MY HUSBAND IN HIS OFFICE ON THE SECOND FLOOR



conventions at work in this gesture's performance. It is possible to re-territorialize the home as a space for honorable, creative, meaningful production.

My proposal, then, involves *domesticating the habitus*. By this I mean making a homebody commitment to embodiment of the subjective self inside the activities of the habitual maintenance activities of the home.

I choose the term domesticating in particular because of its multiplicity of poignant meanings. Firstly, it is directly associated with the home. It also involves a human action and another entity, implied by the language of its definitions: to take, to adopt, to convert, to adapt, to tame.

To domesticate is both to appropriate and to alter. It involves a necessary subjectivity, an assertion of self in its actions. Definitions five and six are particularly loaded with a sense of the agency of the domesticator:

5. to take (something foreign, unfamiliar, etc.) for one's own use or purposes; adopt.

6. to make more ordinary, familiar, acceptable, or the like: to domesticate radical ideas.

I'm suggesting then that the individual take (back) the habitus from the systems that choreograph it, to absorb and make familiar radical reformulations of habitual behaviors.

This domestication is an adaptation to a new *technique* for the performed habits of the homebody. It is an adjustment to methods of use and maintenance in order to affect positively the identity production of the individual.

The habitus, a system of disposition that constructs the body in action, defies the assertion of subjectivity, instinctually rebukes attempts at self-domestication. There is so subjective habitus. Its alliance with the systems of maintenance, with protocol, are strong. In Foucault's terms, it is a disciplined body, held in place by precedent and product.

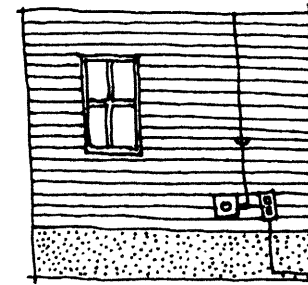
The habitus should be challenged with every swipe of the vacuum cleaner, every scrub of the bathtub. As intentionality enters these maintenance acts, they are reclaimed as noteworthy, and begin to creatively alter the culture of their original programming. The individual homebody can thus nudge the paradigmatic performance of housework by engaging in its activities with new subjectivity and personal control.

The ongoing struggle between individual and systematic control of the homebody finds its terms in the dialectic of progress and precedent. Since self-realization and subjectivity necessarily break from the traditions of labor practice, they would seem to be incongruous with a respect for that precedent.

THROUGH THE VENT AS THOUGH HE WERE THREE FEET AWAY. THE VOICE SOUNDED CLEAR AND LOUD. AT THE SAME TIME I COULD HEAR THE FLOOR CREAKING ABOVE ME AS HE WALKED TO AND FROM THE VENT.

THIS LATER BECAME A CURSE, WHEN HE WOULD ASK CONSTANT NAGGING QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW TO DO THINGS ON THE COMPUTER, WHERE TO FILE THINGS, HOW TO SPELL SOMETHING, ETC., WHILE I WAS TRYING TO COOK DINNER. OUR COMMUNICATION WASN'T COMPETENT ENOUGH TO HANDLE THE VENT CONVERSATIONS. I WOULD INEVITABLY GIVE UP ON THE VENT AND GO UPSTAIRS, AND DINNER WOULD EITHER BE BURNED OR GET COLD. EVENTUALLY, I JUST CLOSED THE HEAT VENT IN THE PANTRY.

NOW, AS THE ELECTRICITY IS CUT OFF IN MY HOUSE FOR THE DAY, I FEEL ALMOST PANICKED WITH LACK OF CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE. MY TV IS OFF, A RARE OCCURRENCE, AND THE INTERNET IS DOWN WITH THE MODEM. MY PHONE AND ANSWERING MACHINE ARE DISCONNECTED. RATHER THAN FEEL RELIEF FROM A TEMPORARY DISCONNECT WITH THESE CONSTANT NOISEMAKER DEVICES, I FEEL DISCOMFORTED BY THEIR ABSENCE. THE SOUNDTRACK



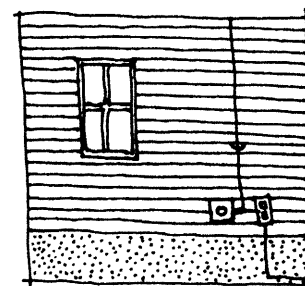
However, any break from habit necessarily quotes that habit, and draws upon it for reformulation. The homebody should therefore respect the history of the body in the home, acknowledge the methodologies and techniques that have evolved there, and even employ the product devices that are assigned to it. In the transformation of maintenance into a performative production, the success of the performance relies on its legibility in reference to standard practice.

The homebody hopes for progress from within, through embrace and transformation of home labor practice. Through the appropriation and creative adaptation of maintenance protocol, the homebody calls for both intense self-reflection and meaningful progress.

...

“Some people cry out against the acceleration of time, others cry out against stagnation. They’re both right” (Lefebvre, 10).

IS TURNED OFF. IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE GLORIOUS (BUT QUICKLY DIMINISHING) BATTERY POWER OF MY LAPTOP AND CELLPHONE, I WOULD BE IN A TOTAL VACUUM, STUCK TO INEFFECTUALLY WATCH OUT THE WINDOW AS THE DRILL PIERCES THROUGH THE ALUMINUM SIDING. OR TO WRITE THINGS DOWN WITH A PENCIL AND PAPER, TO LATER BE TYPED. ALL EFFICIENCY WOULD STOP. I COULDN'T EVEN CLEAN WITHOUT THE VACUUM, HOT WATER FROM THE HEATER, LIGHT IN THE DARKER CORNERS. I WOULD HAVE TO LEAVE; I WILL HAVE TO LEAVE.



Images

All drawings and photographs in this thesis were produced by the author.

Morse Street photographs:

page 8 1992

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