School of Art

Itinerary of Home

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This thesis is presented as part of the requirements for
The award of the Degree of Master of Creative Arts
Of the Curtin University of Technology

November 2000
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ABSTRACT

Embodied in my art practice is the exploration of the relationship between my subjective self as consumer and the material culture of home. As an artist this *praxis* suggests alternative ways of reconstructing domestic subjectivity (self-portrait) through the formal processes of drawing and cataloguing insignificant collections acquired through ‘lived experience’. This analysis utilises Michel de Certeau’s concept of *bricolage*, a ‘tactic’ of fragmentation that ‘makes do with what is at hand’ to corrupt the ‘proper’ space and time of a contemporary productionist society. In the course of developing an art practice, I seek to re-value marginal space and re-appropriate time from a modern culture designed for efficiency.

Through the introduction of key elements in *process drawing*, I have adopted a method to subvert modernist representations of the domestic. As Certeau writes ‘mak[ing] use of techniques of re-employment in which we can recognise the procedures of everyday practice’ is a political deployment, an individual ‘tactic’ orchestrated against social ‘strategy’. A fragmentary tactical operation allows me fleeting moments of visibility to record ‘lived experience’ through an installation based art practice.
FRONT DOOR

The people who built the house must have liked roses. They planted them along the pathway leading to the front door where an artificial lead-light panel replicates the real - where imitation roses, full bloom and bud, creep up the window opposite the door.

Pretty.

As I reach out to unlock the door, I sort through the colony of keys trying to locate the particular one needed to open the door.

Open Sesame.

Wouldn’t it be great to open doors with a voice command? They can do that now. But what would happen to all the keys - would they become the discarded remnants of a past civilisation, my civilisation? Those keys with no further use, they would become valuable to me. You see, I’m interested in the discarded inconsequential things that accumulate in our homes, more specifically, my home.

The door is weathered, as the portico isn’t large enough to shelter it from the driving rain and the late noon sun. The bottom of the door has timber veneer peeling in vertical strips along the surface, revealing the base structure. It has taken ten years of seasonal abuse to achieve that effect. The inside of the door is pristine. The door provides a structure that articulates the movement between public and private space. When the door is open, its public face is introduced to the privacy of
the home, revealing evidence of forces beyond our control. In illustrating the function of the door, it is important to remember that only when the solid front door is open, can a breeze carry air into the home. The importance of airing our homes, a process of ventilation, allows grievances and opinions to be expressed; this reflects a practice of good housekeeping. The open door policy implies a willingness to accept the articulation of alternative points of view that are carried in on the breeze, air that is in continual global circulation.

I forgot about the security screen, or maybe that was intentional because I don’t like it. It’s a nuisance when you are trying to bring in the groceries because it has one of those springs that make it self-close. The security screen offers a semi-transparent divider that opens out into a reception area for the public - the portico. The protective mesh structure is functional only when the screen is locked.

These doors act as hinged panels that are designed as access ways, not only to physical space, but also to the intellectual space of knowledge with the key acting as a sanction, or signifier of trust. The traditional giving of the twenty-first key by the parent to the youth is a symbolic act, a rite of passage that indicates they have obtained the trust of the previous generation. This trust is bound by respect and love, an acknowledgement that both generations have a mutual obligation to one another.

I wonder how long it will be before the average home will have automatic front doors. The doors to the supermarket are automatic, non-discriminating, ready and waiting to
serve, so long as you present yourself for reception, in front of the monitor. Sometimes I approach the automatic doors at the wrong angle and they don’t open - a blind spot perhaps? It’s embarrassing, like you don’t exist, or worse, you have been singled out as invisible, transparent. So I have to back track and re-present myself before the surveillance monitor will grant me access.

Entrances have become very important in our communities. All my local shopping centres have had facelifts, which emphasise the entrance - the facade. Being caught in the act of locating self¹, the entrance becomes a visible process, a gateway to shopping. Emulating the symbolism present in ritual entrance, the shopping centre has taken on the fun of the fair, the carnivalesque, making the shopping experience novel, perhaps even fanciful. Now shopping is the ultimate leisure activity. Entrances, both public and domestic, offer the individual a place of transition that refocuses our attention on place and the task at hand.

On arriving home from grocery shopping, I step over the threshold. My thoughts are trying to focus on what to cook for dinner, what a mess; but I can’t concentrate on anything with the dog barking, what a noise. This is a ritual on arriving home in the late afternoon (or early evening of winter). Hardly a profound ritual; what to cook for dinner, what a mess, what a noise! It’s a ritual that occurs in my head, a ritual conversation in

¹Susan Sontag writes in the introduction to One Way Street by Walter Benjamin [1979:10], ‘Benjamin relates that for years he had played with the idea of mapping his life. For this map, which he imagined as grey, he had devised a colourful system of signs that “clearly marked in the houses of my friends and girl friends, the assembly halls of various collectives, from the “debating chambers” of the Youth Movement to the gathering places of the Communist youth... each important relationship figures as an
my head that is triggered by my movement through the door.

Once inside my home, I proceed to the kitchen and scan the fridge for materials that can be processed into dinner.
INTRODUCTION

My thesis involves the exploration of contemporary feminist art practices concerning identity which are centred on the home, a site which I contend assists in the formulation of identity. This thesis is intended to introduce to the viewer the social and theoretical issues that are pertinent to my visual art research into an itinerary of home. The domestic space of home is the initial focal point for my investigations. The primary questions being asked are: how does the ‘site’ of home operate in the construction of identity? How can that identity be visually presented within an installation art practice? I have used my home as the domestic ‘site’ of investigation and myself as ‘subject’ to contextualise these questions. The subject’s identity in this study is as consumer, collector, artist, and performer of home duties.

The structural format of this paper owes much to the Geography of Home by Akiko Busch[1999]. She moves from room to room throughout her home investigating changing cultural perceptions of a house over time as they relate to each room. The rooms are an assemblage tool that intimate the piecing together of ideas, loose pages in a diary that have become dispersed and reorganised as a floor plan. In elaborating on her own Front Door Busch writes,

While the house itself is a straightforward clapboard farmhouse, the entry porch has slightly higher aspirations, expressed in a Greek Revival style. Three white steps lead up to the small platform with a roof supported by graceful round columns. The ceiling is painted a pale blue and narrow benches frame the front door. A slim transom, with decorative iron scrollwork, and sidelights surround the door, both to bring light into the entryway and to add more ornament to it. All of this spells out the poetry of arrival in a place where no one enters. [Busch, 1999:30]

Busch’s home, being built before the advent of the motor vehicle, now has as an obsolete front doorway, as they drive the car up to a side door, which leads directly into the kitchen bypassing the front of the home. Busch asks the question, ‘why do new houses even have front doors at all?’[1999:33] She elaborates on this question by suggesting that like many other rooms and objects in our homes, the door ‘serves a more symbolic function’. [1999:33] The front door is a ritual entree that provokes a

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2 Akiko Busch is a contributing editor at Metropolis and House and Garden.
sense of home coming, as Busch puts it, ‘reminding us of a time when public and private rituals structured people’s lives.’[1999:34] Despite the obsoleteness of the front door, the need for a somewhat romantic framework that allows us a reference point, an opening, seems necessary in our lives. I am not suggesting a return to the romance of yesteryear; rather I would like to investigate the blurring process of traditionally conceived public and private spaces. Is there a consequence to revealing all that is private to the public, that would see private lives, (the part), absorbed into the public sphere, (the whole), obliterating the flawed details that occur in commonality?

I have applied social theory surrounding the everyday, particularly Michel de Certeau’s [1984] concept of bricolage to illuminate working methodologies that fragmentarily disrupt ‘proper’ institutional spaces. The process of bricolage operates as an aspect of ‘alterity’ (otherness), from within institutional structures so that these anonymous strategic structures remain visibly intact while tactics of re-employment operate throughout its corporate body (personalising institutional space).


investigation of difference between the laws, rituals, and representations imposed by the dominant order, and the subversive practices of compliance, adoption and interpretation by the weak, ... His concern is not with the
intended effects of a social system, [as Foucault highlights], but the actual uses made of it by the people who are operating within it. The politics of everyday life revolve around two dimensions. First are the ways in which people make ethical responses to the social order, and thereby humanise their relations with each other. Second are the ingenious and devious ways by which the weak, the marginal majority, make use of the strong. These tactical responses are necessary, he argues, since the individual is increasingly situated in a position where the social structures are unstable, boundaries are shifting, and the context too vast and complex to either control or escape. [1998:25]

It had been my original intention to try and make an inventory of everything in my home. In achieving such a task, I would have had to isolate a point in time for this analysis to occur, undermining the transitional continuity of the home as it actually exists as lived experience. I feel the concept of home cannot be isolated to a single point on time. It is in a continual state of reconstruction that is demonstrated through the process of lived experience - ‘uses’. Certeau, for the purpose of illustrating ‘uses’ ‘resorted to the category of “trajectory”.’ [1984:35] It can be seen as ‘the unity of a diachronic succession of points through which it passes, and not the figure that these points form on a space that is supposed to be synchronic or achronic.’[1984:35] While the ‘trajectory’ can be illustrated as a figure, Certeau would prefer us to see the continuum as a succession of points as a process of lived experience. I recognise that I am one of the marginal majority (part of the continuum), looking to insinuate myself within dominant systems of power, more specifically, the institutions of art and home.

A critique of art institutions and their procedures has an epistemology that is situated in process art and site-specific art practices of the 1960s and 70s, which in turn, are grounded in a re-awareness of Marcel Duchamp’s art practice. Ihor Holubizky, in Soapbox, installation practices and artists, states:

the first moment [in installation art] is in 1917 when Duchamp nailed a coat

[Certeau’s discussion on ‘uses’ is seen in relation to consumption. He grounds his analysis on the writing of ‘Gilbert Ryle, [who], borrowing Saussure’s distinction between “langue” (a system) and “parole” (an act), compared the former to a fund of capital and the latter to the operations it makes possible: on the one hand, a stock of materials, on the other, transactions and uses. In the case of consumption, one could almost say that production furnishes the capital and the users, like renters, acquire the right to operate on and with this fund without owning it.’ [Certeau, 1984:32]
hanger to his New York studio floor - the self-evident and self-described Trap. The French title Trebuchet, is a chess term which means to place a pawn in order to trip (and capture) an opponent’s piece. It evokes the oft-repeated punditry that new sculpture is the thing you trip over when backing up to look at a painting. Pun and witticisms aside, Duchamp denied his guests the comfort of hanging their coats and declared the functional object made useless, except for the purpose that he determined. This was the atelier production, object and site locked in a textual bliss. [Carroll/Holubizky, 1999:39]

Figure 2, Cultured: Skirt, Hibiscus rosa sinensis Trimmed Lining

Duchamp then, art historically speaking, is regarded as the precursor to installation art. Outside the context of critical art practice, the ‘anxious object’, one that no longer fulfils its original function and as such has an identity crisis, has been insinuated into other uses throughout the invention of human history. The act of turning a bin upside down to be used as a stool compromises the bin’s original function, as the receptacle no longer hold the rubbish, but now provide a resting place. Just as the object’s function changes according to a person’s needs within society, so too the appropriation of the commodified object as ‘ready-made’ has become part of installation art. It is not only the object that has under gone this transformation within visual art practices, but also a critique of the site and the process of making.
Miwon Kwon elaborated on the origins of site in an art context:

Site-specific art initially took the “site” as an actual location, a tangible reality, its identity composed of a unique combination of constitutive physical elements: length, depth, height, texture, and shape of walls and rooms; scale and proportion of plazas, buildings, or parks; existing conditions of lighting, ventilation, traffic patterns; distinctive topographical features. If modernist sculpture absorbed its pedestal/base to sever the connection to or express its difference to the site, rendering itself more autonomous and self-referential, and thus transportable, placeless, and nomadic, then site-specific works, as they emerged in the wake of Minimalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, forced a dramatic reversal of this modernist paradigm. [Kwon, 1997:85]

Like my predecessors, my site is constitutive of physical elements that are imbued with the subjects that occupy it. The grounding of an artwork to a site attempted to defy its ability to be commodified. If the artwork was part of a fixed site, constituent of its physical elements, then it could not be sold; but capital venture should not be underestimated. Today, artists and their processes of making are seen as a commodity to be exchanged between institutional sites, not unlike the modernist sculpture - “transportable, placeless, and nomadic”. A professional installation artist may be seen as a cultural attaché with several staff working to a prescribed format to realise the artists’ objective within a limited time frame. Site, for me, operates as
blurred duality, the home being the site of deposition, a private collection base, that sees the home as a public resource space and studio; and the site of exhibition, the gallery, then becomes a home for the private collection, the material culture that I deem important. This is similar to Mark Dion’s archaeological digs where two sites become linked through a process of object retrieval, passing the object from obscurity (in the muddy banks of the Thames river), to prominence (at the Tate Gallery of Modern Art). Dion’s work operates in the public sphere, assuming conventional strategies associated with the field of archaeology, whereas my own work operates from within the private sphere, utilising the tactics employed by the ‘home duties’ provider and the accession of household deposition collected from the domestic into the gallery.

Kwon goes on to summerise the primary concerns arising from a critique of modernism by visual artists engaged in site specific works:

In turn, the uncontaminated and pure idealist space of dominant modernism was radically displaced by the materiality of the natural landscape or the impure and ordinary space of the everyday. The space of art was no longer perceived as a blank slate, a tabula rasa, but a real place. The art object or event in this context was to be singularly experienced in the here-and-now through the bodily presence of each viewing subject, in a sensorial immediacy of spatial extension and temporal duration (what Michael Fried desirously characterised as theatricality), rather than instantaneously “perceived” in a visual epiphany by an embodied eye....

The (neo-avant-garde) aspiration to exceed the limitations of traditional media, like painting and sculpture, as well as their institutional setting; the epistemological challenge to relocate meaning from within the art object to the contingencies of its context; the radical restructuring of subject from the old Cartesian model to a phenomenological one of lived bodily experience; and the self-conscious desire
to resist the forces of the capitalist market economy, which circulates artworks as transportable and exchangeable commodity goods—all these imperatives came together in art’s new attachment to the actual site. [Kwon, 1997:86]

![Figure 5, Cultured](image)

I seek to build my visual art practice from these foundations described by Miwon Kwon:

Going against the grain of institutional habits and desires, and continuing to resist the commodification of art in/for the market place, site-specific art adopts strategies that are either aggressively antivisual-informational, textual, expositional, didactic-or immaterial altogether-gestures, events, or performances bracketed by temporal boundaries. The work no longer seeks to be a noun/object but verb/process, provoking the viewer’s critical (not just physical) acuity regarding the ideological conditions of that viewing. In this context, the guarantee of a specific relationship between an artwork and its “site” is not based on a physical permanence of that relationship, but rather on the recognition of its unfixed impermanence, to be experienced as an unrepeateable and fleeting situation. [Kwon, 1997:91]

The influences of feminism on the cultural climate of site-specific process art can be seen in the works of Sylvia Plimack Mangold’s, *Untitled (Wide Planks)*, 1973-74, and Nancy Grossman’s, *War Diary*, 1973. I particularly enjoy Grossman’s title, *War Diary*, as it seeks to promote the idea of a domestic front conceived out of a fight to stay in control of the battle that occurs in lived experience. Parents of children will
relate to this analogy as they try to get children ready for school, preparing breakfasts and lunches, sorting the laundry, doing the dishes, then depositing their offspring at school in time for the siren, lest they be seen as tardy. Grossman’s title highlights the home as a combat zone, shifting the public perception of home from its soft core to a command centre where tactical manoeuvres are carried out.

Cornelia H. Butler as organiser of the retrospective exhibition, Afterimage: Drawing Through Process, (1999) makes the following observations in her essay Ends and Means, about their art practices:

Posing the domestic environment as their subject, Plimack Mangold’s interior studies introduce a theme that becomes paramount for Feminist artists working in the 1970s. The home as studio, with its floorboards and distinctly unloftlike dimensions and appearance re-enforce this idea of work as an extension of lived experience. That this conflation was scrutinised by a women artist turning her attention to her surroundings ... re-inscribes the domestic/studio space with an unprecedented social dimension... To this extent Plimack Mangold’s early work represents a transitional movement when the fertile ground of process art is shifted by the activity of several important women artists whose work insists on the subjective reworking of meaning within an abstract, post-minimalist vocabulary. [Butler, 1999:104]

The shift in the role of drawing from an almost diaristic privacy to the enacted publicity of the studio come public space is a move that becomes politically charged in Feminist practice later in the decade [1970s]. The idea of a diary, a private space where daily activity is recorded, is the place that Nancy Grossman’s Diary Drawings emerge... Grossman’s excration and abstraction of the language of her interior life, lived experience as raw material, are two such strategies. The conflation of her private thoughts and public acts in the cacophony of these tectonic compositions adds up to the visual equivalent of scattered and reordered thought as material substance. [Butler, 1999:106]

In the way that Grossman’s ‘collage as process’ was seen as a means of undermining the hierarchical structures of modernist sculpture, so too my work can be seen as a process to undermine the order of the institution. The use of diaristic recording is also apparent in the collection and exhibition of envelopes that arrive at my home. Some contemporary artists working within the context of lived experience recently exhibited in the Everyday (1998, Sydney). I am thinking of Maria Hedlund’s ‘photographs, close-ups of familiar nooks, crannies and surfaces, but focus[ing] on their soiling through use and time - drops of fat on kitchen fan, dust on top of

In the exploration of identity within the home site, the residue of household dust that insinuates itself throughout my home has become a powerful raw material. I am indebted to Mary Douglas and her analysis of dirt in *Purity and Danger* [1978] not only because it has enabled me to postulate the collective importance of dust, but also the importance of ritual in our lives. Douglas writes:

> everyday symbolic enactment does several things. It provides a focusing mechanism, a method of mnemonics and a control for experience. To deal with focusing first, ritual provides a frame. The marked off time or place alerts a special kind of expectancy, just as the oft-repeated ‘once upon a time’ creates the mood receptive to fantastic tale. We can reflect on this framing function in small personal instances, for the least action is capable of carrying significance. [Douglas, 1978:63]

The home is the framework for a discussion on lived experience, a viewing device from which to critique modernity. Throughout this research, domestic identity has been linked to collections of seemingly insignificant objects. The multiple of collected objects (and matter) when reconstituted as a mass becomes visible, challenging its original insignificance. It is through exhibition that these collections will obtain a status. Pearce writes, ‘[t]he accepted order [of the hierarchy of modernity] is subverted when very ordinary, everyday things, things which are
worthless by ‘accepted’ moral or aesthetic standards, are collected with the same obsessive care which others would lavish upon ‘acceptable’ material.’ [Pearce, 1999:189]

As a bricoleur I choose to write, edit, piece, paste, cut and remodel this paper so it carries the mark of the maker, reflecting not only my art practice but also a positivist research methodology that is interceded through lived experience.
HOME: MELISSA

The dwelling and dwelling spaces we inhabit house the attitudes and traditions through which we both conform to and confront the world beyond (Bourdieu’s habitus)... Dwellings serve both to ‘reveal and display’ and ‘to hide and protect’ (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995:2). [Allison, 1999:1]

The measured structure of my home is similar to many others in my neighbourhood. The ‘Melissa’ by Perception Builders was the most popular design built in my area during the late 1980s, early 90s. If my house is structurally the same as many others in the Forest Lakes area, then why don’t I accidentally drive to their houses, put the key in the door, and? ...

I know where to locate the front door keyhole. I know that when I cross the threshold the formal lounge/dining area will be on my left and a small study/bedroom will be on my right. Opposite to the hearth, that creates a short angular corridor between lounge and bedrooms, is the main bedroom with a walk-in-robe, and an open vanity that leads to the ensuite with shower and toilet. Continuing through the formal dining area, I step via a doorway that opens onto the country kitchen, from here I can view the sunken games room to my left over a half wall that divides kitchen and games room. Moving forward through a gap in the half wall that divides the kitchen from the family room, I have three options. One, to move down the steps to my left entering games room that will in turn provide an exit via double sliding doors; two, move to the right through the family room to exit via a single sliding door; or three, walk directly ahead to a doorway that opens onto a small passage. Once in the passage, from left to right, I can access bedroom four, bedroom three, bathroom, linen closet, laundry or bedroom
two. If I choose the laundry option, I can utilise the toilet or exit to the backyard.

I may know the structural design of these other houses, but they are not my home, my ‘Melissa’. What makes my home visibly different from others in the area is the contour of the street, the garden, the colour scheme-surface treatment, or the variation in porch style. Admittedly these external differences are limited, but it is when you step inside and occupy the space that these differences become more extensive (not limitless because I may still find my bed in the same position as those in other ‘Melissa’s’). It is the family, their things and the activities they pursue that enact difference on the structural limitations of our dwelling places.

Melissa, a daughter of Melissus king of Crete, who, with her sister Amalthea, fed Jupiter with the milk of goats. She first found out the means of collecting honey; whence some have imagined that she was changed into a bee, as her name is the Greek word for that insect. [Lempriere, 1972:369]

What are the concrete structures of home sites?
Floor plans,
delivery systems,
measured drawings,
information channels,
mapped locations.
These physical structures are intertwined with the social structures of a people (law, economics, history) so that they form what Bourdieu would describe as a ‘habitus’,
a place identifiable by its own logic of practice.[Bourdieu 1998:8] For the purpose of this paper the ‘habitus’, (the ‘proper’ space of home), is illustrated in the formal limitations of domestic architectural plans and building regulations that forms the site in which the institution of family resides, presided over by law. The construct of a
‘habitus’ is a tool of analysis used to study a social group within everyday contexts. Certeau would prefer to delimit this concept through an ‘ensemble of procedures.’ The latter are schemas of operations and of technical manipulations.’ [1984:43]

I have chosen Certeau’s [1984] discussion on ‘strategy’ and ‘tactic’ to address the ‘proper’ space of home. Strategies and tactics offer insight into the political process of the bricoleur to subvert dominant systems of power. Certeau ‘call[s] a ‘strategy’ the calculus of force-relationship which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institute) can be isolated from an ‘environment’.’ [Certeau, 1984:xix] It is the isolating factor, the field of expertise, which has a ‘proper’ place of enquiry that needs to be disrupted. ‘Proper’ places tend to reflect a central point of view, or a standardised set of responses that close down pluralist debate. Disrupting ‘proper’ places allows the ‘weak’ momentary access to power through tactical maneuvers. Certeau describes this disruption as a ‘tactic, a calculus which cannot count on the ‘proper’ (a spatial or institutional localisation), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance.’ [Certeau, 1984:xix]

So the dominant system is seen as establishing ‘strategies that seek to create places [of] conformity’ [1984:29], while ‘tactics do not obey the law of the place, for they are not defined or identified by it’. [1984:29] The tactic then has a freedom from the constraints of a formal identity that a strategy may never be able to obtain. The strategy’s immense complexity and scale of operations make it visible, unable to execute a quiet ambush.

In designing ‘Melissa’, Perception Builders designated different areas of domestic practice throughout the home. Kitchen for cooking, bathroom for bathing, bedroom for sleeping. They could not foresee that the bathroom would be used for the brewing of beer, with the bath being utilised as a sterilisation unit. Nor could they

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4 "The habitus is this generative and unifying principle which retranslates the intrinsic and relational characteristics of a position into a unitary lifestyle, that is, a unitary set of choices of people, goods,
have known that the kitchen would become an artist's studio. While the design of the home remains unchanged, the activities performed cannot be identified so easily, as the space becomes re-orientated by the task for a short period of time. Tactics rely on the clever 'utilisation of time, of the opportunities it presents and also the play that it introduces into the foundations of power.' [Certeau, 1984:38]

It is my objective to corrupt these systems of power from within. Tim Dant elaborates on Certeau’s concept of bricolage as being:

combined with ritual practices, habits and routines out of which the shape of everyday life emerges. These actions of people are not reducible to individual choice, but neither are they wholly determined by learned patterns of action. Rituals may be followed knowingly because it suits the purpose at hand but these purposes might lead to a modification of the ritual, of material objects or of skills to meet a varying situations or even to bring about variations in action, experience or environment. This is why the practices of everyday life are treated as 'arts'; the agent uses a skill of making, or making do, not to create form nothing, but to creatively adapt both ways of doing things and material things themselves. [Dant, 1999:72]

I am interested in applying the concept of bricolage, 'ways of making do' to the process of art production as it relates to my home, as well as the textual production of my research. This concept is important because it allows me the opportunity to steal fragments of time and space (materials) from a lived experience that does not consist of a singular purposefulness, but consists of a plurality of tasks that exceed the boundaries of the traditional conceived space of the expert. The lived experience of my art practice then reflects the routine of 'home duties'. For inherent in the title 'home duties' are a multitude of performed activities. This makes grocery shopping at the local supermarket an exercise in bricolage as the cardboard boxes, the residue from shopping and consuming, become incorporated into my visual research. As Certeau writes '[s]uch an objective assumes that ... users make (bricolent) innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own rules.'[Dant, 1999:37]

CATFISH AND COLTRANE: A CONVERSATION ABOUT MAKING A
HOMESITE

In the South, people often call home, the place where one grows up, the origin of family roots, the homesite. At reunions, the homesite is the place for family gatherings, fish fries in the yard, and the late night ‘do you remember when’ sessions on the porch. Homesites can travel like people and packages. Any place where objects of remembrance are collected - model ships, family photographs - or rituals of everyday life are practiced - cooking fried catfish from old recipes, making lye soap - can provide spiritual entree back to one's homesite. [Harris/Berke 1997:55]

Figure 7, I can't do dot painting and I don't want to be a modern male painter

Home is a building and a body and a memory, things and smells, textures, sounds, sights. Home is an institution, a strategy, a stage where tactical manoeuvres are played out. It is confined and defined by physical limitations yet offers the continuous exploration of self. ‘A home is much more than a shelter; it is a world in which a person can create a material environment that embodies what he or she considers significant. In this sense the home becomes the most powerful sign of the self of the inhabitant who dwells within.”[Csikszentmihalyi, 1981:123]

HOME AND SELF-EXPRESSION: EXERCISES YOU CAN DO

24
YOURSELF  
(DIY Psychotherapy)  
WHAT HOME REALLY MEANS TO YOU  

When you feel centred and relaxed, open your eyes and put down a symbol of what your home means to you. Start with whatever core image comes to mind— it might be a heart, an oasis, or a box. Put this in the centre of the page, and then continue with whatever other images, colors, shapes, or words emerge. Don’t censor yourself! Be sure and have plenty of colors available; the shades you choose—warm, cool, sober, vibrant—may say as much about your feelings as the shapes and words you put down. [Marcus, 1997:77]

‘Melissa’, I can think to give you no other name because I’ve known you by that name for many years. I didn’t give it to you, a building company did, maybe someone in marketing who knew the importance of the personal symbolism present in naming. That feeling of familiarity that comes from calling someone by their first name. ‘Melissa’ you suggest an intimacy that I cannot reciprocate.

The picture I drew in response to the exercise started as a simple circle surrounded by words that are the amalgamation of many homes in which I have lived. The circle became a representation of a daisy with part of the petals removed. He loves me, he loves me not. Or maybe I didn’t need to finish the image to make reference to the daisy.

It flowers in spring. The yellow petals make the cool pastures into a bed of golden warmth. Lying in the bed, I hear the continual humming of bees at work. The smell of meadow is pungent in my nostrils. It’s a weed, an exotic foreigner introduced into the Australian landscape. I would sit in the pastures making the daisies (common and prolific) into chains—pick, punch a hole in the stem, thread next daisy through hole, then wear as jewellery, an ephemeral garland that has long since withered into dust.
So you see ‘Melissa’, I was looking for a home with a big kitchen that had the smell of baking coming from the oven; the warmth of a fireplace; a home surrounded by a garden. You’ve done quite well, the boys’ bedrooms could have been bigger, and French doors instead of sliding doors would be divine. I appreciate the fact that you don’t complain about the mess. You are most accommodating.
AND AWAY

I want to talk about the political importance of being able to locate home even when I was mobile, away from home. Different aspects of home and self become visible outside their usual context. This alternate perspective became apparent on a recent trip to the wheatbelt town of Kellerberrin to visit an art exhibition organised by IASKA (International Art Space Kellerberrin, Australia).

FLASHBACK. I write now from a motel room, a temporary home for the motor traveller that still accommodates most of the original 1970s textures, patterns, and colours. I walk into the bathroom and the laminex on the vanity is immediately recognisable. The deep blue marbled surface is the same as the laminex my stepsister has on her kitchen bench. Her home was my home for a short time in the 1980s when I lived with my father and stepmother.

The Nyungah boys I was talking with at Tammin during Kathy Barber’s video projection onto the silos, said they had only been in town the day before, and the day before that, and the day before that. I interpreted that to mean 4 days and they seemed happy with my formal ordering of time.

The older boy was eight. He said he wasn’t very big for his age because a cousin had thrown him into a door, you know; the point edged side of the door, and split his head open. Blood spurted out, up in the air, all over the place. I said it sounded a bit messy. He said, ‘yeah; had I ever been to Sydney?’ I said, ‘only to the airport—in transit.’ He said, he had to go to Sydney to have his head glued back together. As we watched the projection we talked
further about Nyungahs being poor people, Cathy Freeman, Muhammad Ali, Michael Jordan, and Bruce Lee. I asked if he knew any of the faces in the video, as they were people from Kellerberrin. He said he thought that some were Nyungah, but he didn’t know them. He hadn’t been to Kellerberrin. I said it was about 20 kms, could he walk that far? He said he could run it; that he could run millions of miles very very fast, and so could his brother. I wanted to believe. I wanted to run the millions of miles all around the world with him. I wondered if it was his spirit that was running or his physical body that had travelled those miles.

He said he’d lived in Northam, with an Uncle, but people had complained and they had to move. Before that they had lived with an Aunty, and people had complained so they had to move. And before that, they lived with another Aunty, but people had complained and they had to move. The Nyungah people are very poor, he said.

We sat in the dirt by the side of the road and watched the video on the giant silos, which made the images of people into giants. A truck went past capturing part of the image for a moment before releasing it back onto the surface of the silos. He said he’d seen a dead person looking out from the silo. I said, ghosts are all around us as I remembered a talk by Steve Pile, a geographer, presenting a paper at Habitus. Pile spoke about the ghosts of our cities being carried forward into future

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5Habitus 2000: A Sense of Place, was a conference held in Perth, Western Australia, 5th - 9th September, hosted by the School of Architecture, Construction and Planning, Curtin University of Technology. Dr Steve Pile is currently senior lecturer in Human Geography in the Faculty of Social Science at the Open University, UK. His paper was titled The Urbanisation of Dreams.
developments. Ghosts of unresolved situations constructed into a city, a memory that is forecast in the faces/objects/streets of others. Should we not mourn, then move on?

I'm writing this in bed, not my bed, others' bed. The brown studded fake leather vinyl bed-head is attached to the wall. The light is sneaking in through the nylon lace curtains and the gap in the velvety green drapes.

A truck towing part of a house from one place to another passes by the window of the motel.

Gravity dresses the town of Kellerberin in a fine red gown of dust.

Figure 8, Envelop

The under side of my body is warmed by an electric blanket. A thin checked wool blanket and a floral bedspread, circa 1985, are trying to retain the warmth.
The fridge is still humming and Pauline is asleep in the other bed. The Nyungah boys didn’t have a bed, or a mattress, but they did have doonas to sleep on and in. I said, good that’ll keep you warm. It was a cool night, clear, still and now the morning was fresh.

That morning I had awoken from a dream that saw other people challenging my subjectivity, I woke up saying, I like guys.

My boys, the lads, they’re at home.

BREAKFAST ROOM

A popular tradition warns against recounting dreams on an empty stomach. In this state, though awake, one remains under the sway of the dream. For washing brings only the surface of the body and the visible motor functions into the light, while in the deeper strata, even during the morning ablutions, the grey penumbra of dream persists and, indeed, in the solitude of the first waking hour, consolidates itself. He who shuns contact with the day, whether for fear of his fellow men or for the sake of inward composure, is unwilling to eat and disdains his breakfast. He thus avoids a rupture between the nocturnal and the daytime worlds - a precaution justified only by the combustion of dream in a concentrated morning’s work, if not in prayer, but otherwise a source of confusion between vital rhythms. The narration of dreams brings calamity, because a person still half in league with the dream world betrays it in his words and must incur its revenge. Expressed more in modern terms: he betrays himself. He has outgrown the protection of dreaming naïveté, and in laying clumsy hands on his dream visions he surrenders himself. For only on the far bank, from broad daylight, may dream be recalled with impunity. This further side of dream is only attainable through a cleansing analogous to washing yet totally different. By way of the stomach. The fasting man tells his dream as if he were talking in his sleep. [Benjamin, 1979:45]

A truck with part of a house being towed from one place to another passes by the window of the motel room.

That’s two parts now.
The dialogue written above was carried out on the road verge, outside the constructs of gallery and home, where the buildings facade became a backdrop to the conversation. It embodies for me a discussion that illustrates the importance of being able to locate home using devices like memory and the symbolic embedded in the familiarity of objects and materials. The need for security - love, safety, warmth, a dreaming place - are found in home sites. While in the street, we must confront other people's reality.

They [buildings] form much-loved reference points and navigational 'fixes' in people's lives, and they tell us a great deal about their way of life, their customs and aspirations. [Chitham, 1980:2]

The European perspective of home, while being prefaces in physical materiality, can reflect a plurality of sites through association, where 'the heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus it is that of the theatre brings onto the rectangle of the stage, ... a whole series of places...' [Documenta, 1997:p268] as Foucault describes in his essay, Of Other Spaces. Built out of memory, this is a European construction of space that becomes constituted through materiality and occasion. Symbolism is present and active but constructed largely through a tampering with the environment. 'Our symbols are material-buildings, cities, fences and monuments' writes Amos
Rapoport [Barcant/Buchanan, 1999:60] an architectural theorist. This concept contrasts quite dramatically with ‘Aboriginal symbols’ of home that ‘are largely non-material’ [Barcant/Buchanan, 1999:60].

Bob Hodge, in his essay, White Australia and the Aboriginal Invention of Space, offers the ephemerality of distance as a major building block of the Aboriginal homes.

The further away people are, the less clearly they are visible and audible. So distance acts like a glass wall of varying opacity. In European houses, doors and windows exist to make walls semi-permeable, but the number of apertures is fixed in the design, the only flexibility being whether the doors are opened or closed, and whether the windows have curtains open or not. With space as walls, the difference between wall and aperture is indistinguishable. As two people come closer together, it is as though the wall between them slowly grows transparent and opens. As darkness falls, visibility also decreases, and spatial walls rise up. [Barcant/Buchanan, 1999:66]

The contrasts between the ephemerally spatial construct of an Aboriginal home, act to reinforce the concrete spacial design that occurs in modern European homes. The rigidity of European homes is both visually and philosophically different from the cultural construction of the Aboriginal home. The formlessness of an Aboriginal home acts as a corrupting function to the designed space of European homes, and as a threat to that spatial organisation, the logic has been to try and convert Aboriginal space to European forms of order. ‘But the same basic principles apply in both cultures-space signifies social meaning, and social meaning modifies the meaning of space, underpinned by a set of agreed rules.’ [Barcant/Buchanan, 1999:69] Both cultures have codes that describe how ‘home’ operates in their society.

As darkness falls, the European family converges on the private space of home. The lights come on, revealing the separate spatial fixtures of the home’s design, so that it becomes a stage, lit for a theatrical scene where the entrances and exits of the family can take on a dramatic scenario similar to a soap opera. The interior, artificially lit, continues to maintain the separate functions of the individual rooms that are apparent during daylight hours. Whereas the Aboriginal home, constituent of the same space as day, is reconstructed spatially by nightfall - there is no inside or outside.
The maintenance of the interior environment beyond daylight hours, as in European homes, adds to the economy of home. A reflection of public policy on the economy of home can be seen in the introduction of cheap electricity during the dreaming hours of night. The dishwashers, washing machines and hot water systems can be programmed to maximize public economy. Domestic space is corrupted by public economy so that 'the real economy of household is shown in the art of gathering all leftovers, so that nothing is wasted. I mean leftovers of time as well as material...' [Force, 1988:91]

A truck with part of a house being towed from one place to another passes by the window of the motel room. That's the third and final part now.

Figure 10, Envelop
VIEW FROM LOUNGE ROOM WINDOW

In my home, nobody argues over who will get the mail. There’s always the possibility of a surprise, the chance that you will need to open the envelope to know its contents. Sure, you recognise the bills and most of the other mail, periodicals, advertising, promotions, but occasionally, you have to look inside to find out who sent it, and why. So it’s that one in a million chance that keeps us returning to the letterbox in the hope for the unexpected.

Can you read the address in the window?

Figure 11, Untitled Drawing
Dear Kerry, (this is always a good sign, an indicator of something personal especially when it’s hand written.)

Figure 12, Untitled, Installation Detail

Can you please provide Craftwest with your GST details on the forms enclosed as these will directly affect your artist payment for the Sucked in Window project. (Oh well, at least I’m going to get paid.)

Thanks Mark
To Whom It May Concern,

The envelopes start to become rooms for me. Some of the rooms have windows. Others have patterned wallpaper or plain. Normally you can only see from the outside in, but as the rooms concertina across the building the internal structure is revealed, so when the external light (sunshine) is turned on, a view from the window into the garden becomes visible.

Figure 13, Untitled Installation Detail

Yours Sincerely, Kerry.
JULY 31, 2000

JOB NO: 3402

MRS WILKS
12 PIMELIA GROVE
THORNLI 6108

Re: TERMITE SERVICE 12 PIMELIA GROVE THORNLI
Fee: $110.00

DEAR SIR/MADAM (Well you know this is going to be boring, and quite possibly expensive.)

THE ANNUAL TERMITE INSPECTION/MAINTENANCE SERVICE ON THE ABOVE HOME IS NOW DUE. (It's as I expected costly and not particularly interesting. Never the less I continue to anticipate the arrival of mail.)

THIS SERVICE IS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE ON-GOING PROTECTION FOR YOUR PROPERTY AND TO RECTIFY AREAS WHICH HAVE BEEN DISTURBED AND WOULD ALLOW TERMITE ACCESS TO TIMBER IN YOUR HOME. IT IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR HOME MAINTENANCE AND WILL ENSURE AGAINST UNFORESEEN EXPENSES AND THE INCONVENIENCE IN REPLACING ROOF TIMBER, CUPBOARDS ETC.

THE GUARANTEE PERIOD OF THE SERVICE IS 12 MONTHS AND ANY CALL OUTS DURING THIS PERIOD ARE FREE OR CHARGE.

PLEASE DON'T LET YOUR COVER LAPSE, PHONE OUR OFFICE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO ARRANGE A CONVENIENT TIME FOR THE SERVICE TO BE CARRIED OUT.

YOURS FAITHFULLY
BUG BUSTERS PTY LTD

PS: BUG BUSTERS ARE AN AUTHORISED INSTALLER OF THE SENTRICON COLONY ELIMINATION SYSTEM. WE HAVE ENCLOSED A PAMPHLET EXPLAINING THIS SAFE AND EFFECTIVE SYSTEM OF TERMITE CONTROL. IF YOU WOULD LIKE ANY FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT OUR OFFICE.
THE ABOVE PRICE INCLUDES GST

A.B.N. 98 930 548 693
Each room is a time capsule that folds and collapses onto the other.

Figure 14, Untitled Installation Detail

Figure 15, Untitled Installation
The window is built into the wall, or the wall is built around the window, I am not sure which. Looking through the window, I see Jamie planting kangaroo paws in the dirt with a small hand trowel.

Western Australia's emblem is the curious kangaroo paw, *Anigozanthos mangles*. Its botanical name comes from the Greek word meaning 'opened flower' and refers to the way the perianth splits open. Probably the most widely known of all is the green and red kangaroo paw, *A. mangles*, which is common in the bush land around Perth and grows freely on the sandy plains from Geraldton to Albany. This striking plant produces its crest-like head of brilliant green flowers, each six to seven centimetres long, on thickly furred, crimson stems up to a metre in height in winter and spring. [Coutts, vol. 9:10]

The front garden has roses and cocos palms established in it and the kangaroo paws are planted in front of them replacing the silver-beet that I planted last year. I can hear the screech of the brakes from the rubbish disposal truck as it moves up the grove. The hydraulic arm automatically operated by the driver from the cab, extends to grab the green wheely bin around the middle, lifting it with a jerk, so that its contents are emptied into the enclosed tray of the truck. The arm sets the bin down with a clank, then moving on to the next bin.

![Figure 16. Flesh Winnow](image)

Shit, I forgot to put my bin out. Oh well!
Figure 17, Flesh Winnow

Flesh Winnow, I made for studio 2 in PICA (Perth Institute Contemporary Art.) The work was intended to be a Duchampian pun on Fresh Widow which in turn was a pun on French Window; playing with English text by removing French letters quite possibly. The vinyl covered the transparent panes of glass in the window, making the window an ironic symbol for visibility. This is a site specific, measured construction that offers a flattened, two-dimensional view instead of the cityscape perspective usually visible. The pressed flower petals were intended to reinforce the flattened layout of my subjectivity (see fig. 24, p49) that was situated on an adjacent wall. The petals winnow out, leaving a closed internal view; decorative window dressing, perhaps?
Figure 18, Flesh Winnow

PS. There is a practice that occurs on the other side of the window, an art practice.
BEDROOM

The desk, the bookcase, the bottle, the lipstick tray, all were there just as before, just as if she had simply gone off to school as usual. He opened a drawer of her desk. An old oil-smeared ribbon had been thrown in there. He picked it up and sniffed it. Presently he stood up and opened the sliding partition. Three large wicker travel-cases, tied with cord, were waiting to be sent off, and beyond them in a pile lay the bedding that [Ono] normally used - a mattress of light green arabesque design, and a quilt of the same pattern, with thick cotton padding. [Suzuki] drew them out. The familiar smell of a women’s oil and sweat excited him beyond words. The velvet edging of the quilt was noticeably dirty, and [Suzuki] pressed his face to it, immersing himself in that familiar female smell.

All at once he was stricken with desire, with sadness, with despair. He spread out the mattress, lay the quilt on it, and wept as he buried his face against the cold, stained, velvet edging.

The room was gloomy, and outside the wind was raging. (Sept. 1907)

[Katai, 1981:95]

(Warning: the names have been changed to protect the innocent.)

Material objects they hold these memories.


‘was noticeably dirty’. Lived objects get dirty. They are soiled and the soil contains the subject⁵. Used objects contain the subject - so to present someone’s subjectivity you have to air their dirty linen, reveal their discards. In presenting the personal, I present my subjective discards as political. In terms of economic value, the most insignificant material I can find is dust, household dust. It stagnates on still surfaces, fixed structures.

⁵The subject, in this instance, is the user; the person who has made contact with the object. Through a process of interaction the subject soils the object, the contact records a familiarity, leaving behind traces of a persons subjectivity on the object. Certeau writes, ‘These modes of use - or rather re-use - multiply with the extension of acculturation phenomena, that is, with the displacements that substitute manner or “methods” of transiting towards as identification of a person by the place on which he [sic] lives or works.’[Certeau, 1984:30]
(Conceptual artwork - if I could keep everything in a continual state of flux, dust would not collect. Imagine walking into a room where everything is in continual movement, even the dust. A gravity free chamber.)

If we can abstract pathogenicity and hygiene from our notion of dirt, we are left with the old definition of dirt as matter out of place. This is a very suggestive approach. It implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is a system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. This idea takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity. [Douglas, 1978:35]

In this passage, Mary Douglas discusses dirt as ‘matter out of place’. When dirt is visible in the context of a home, it appears as a nuisance to order, disrupting traditions of good house keeping. Dirt for me is symbolic of postmodern ambiguity, visible only on the surface of modernity’s systemic order. Modernism can be seen as devising systems of order articulated through a language of specificity, category, and long-term characteristics, which seek to reveal power and knowledge. ‘They are in turn linked to ideas like ‘truth’ and ‘reason’. Power is exercised as an intentional strategy...’ [Pearce, 1995:141] Then postmodern dirt, can be seen to defy modernity’s logic, obscuring the clearly defined categories of modernism, corrupting ‘truths’ visibility.

Dirt, in this context, can also discuss the precarious relationship feminism has to
post-modernism; for in cleaning away the dirt, we make ourselves transparent in the classification of matter. If postmodernism 'cannot be clearly located in a distinct and manageable set of personal relationships, and consequently individuals, enmeshed in power relationships like flies in webs, have no hope of extricating themselves by normal processes, because these would simply set up more of the same.' [Pearce, 1995:141] So, feminists implementing postmodern tactics can never be truly visible inside modernity without 'simply set[ting] up more of the same.' The matterlessness of performing unpaid home duties, dusting in particular, remains invisible to classification systems of contemporary capitalist society. However, outside that system of fictional reality we are free to re-contextualise ourselves. By producing dust works, I make myself visible as transgressive surface within the order of things, 'insinuating' myself as domestic chaos within the realm of public exhibition. Dust fragmentarily takes over the objects and spaces they occupy, neutralising them with a fine surface that obscures the objects identity.

Figure 20, Untitled Household Dust

When the dust settled, she could see an image of herself unlike any she had seen before. This was not the reflected image of a mirror but a self-portrait of
matter. As she ran her finger across the surface, the fibres of her are lifted onto her finger revealing the clear surface that had denied her visibility in the world.

Dirt is without purchase. It exists outside our commodified system of capital. In the collection process it can only be valued through the cost of time-labour and equipment. Is the materiality of dirt/dust still valueless? Upon exhibition the dust transgresses the aura of the gallery, valued now as culturally symbolic. When I apply it to the walls as drawing it continues to evade commodification as the marks are cleaned away after exhibition.

The value of dust, in particular Francis Bacon’s dust, has come to my attention in a recent article in *The Sydney Morning Herald, Chaos Transfer*, written by Mick Brown on the archaeology and the artist. Brown describes the ‘remarkable feat of conservation and reconstruction’ being carried out on Francis Bacon’s Studio at Reece Mews, South Kensington,

where the studio and its contents have been removed and transported to Dublin, Bacon’s birthplace... Working under the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art’s, consultant conservator, Mary McGrath, a team of 15 archaeologists and conservators... spent 10 days in the studio, methodically excavating, photographing and recording its contents. Every item was numbered, with a record of its precise location, its relation to other objects, its north south orientation, its height from the floor; so if F14 was a surface of a table, F14,1 was the book on top on it; F14,2 a photograph direct beneath that, F14, 3 a scrape of paper with a lunch date, and so on... McGrath’s final act as she left the empty studio was to sweep up all the dust, which is in a bag labelled ‘Bacon dust’. “I’ve said the last thing I’ll do as I back out of the reconstruction is scatter it all over everything. We don’t want it too pristine.”

[August 26, 2000]

From this article it would seem that the dust of ‘the greatest British painter of the 20th century’ has a cultural value and if it can be collected, an economic value. The Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery recognises that the place of creation, Bacon’s home/studio, is now considered to be as critically important as the exhibition of Bacon’s work; that one, the site of creation, will inform the other, the artwork. The lived experience of that creative process is also meaningful, and one of the materials, which signify that meaning, is the dust needed to contaminate the pristine. It should
be noted that Bacon's studio has been dormant since his death in April 1992, and while Bacon no longer works in that space, dust may well has continued to build up, creating a false reality.

He grew rich as a Dust (rubbish) contractor - coal dust, vegetable dust, bone dust, crockery dust - all manner of dust. *Our Mutual Friend* (Charles Dickens 1865: Chapter 2)

![Figure 21, Untitled Dust Mould](image)

**DIRT**

There is a tendency to think of dirt as merely unsightly, damaging to museum objects because it affects their appearance or, indirectly, because of the risk that must be taken to remove it. This is the least of the problem. Real damage is caused by corrosive and hygroscopic substances, which either attack materials directly or attract moisture to the surface. A dirty surface or material in which dirt has become ingrained may, in effect, be much wetter the ambient atmosphere. Excess moisture promotes chemical, photochemical, and biological deterioration. [Dudley/Wilkinson/Others, 1979:404]
KITCHEN

Sorting, cooking, cleaning. These constitute an active time frame that indicates process.

Gravity is the process by which I have made dust drawings in my home. Plastic contact paper, sticky side up, is fixed with sticky-tape to a horizontal surface with the objects that usually sit on the surface placed back on top. Then gravity goes to work, forcing the dust over the surface, recording the objects that occupy the space, not their details but their silhouettes.

Figure 22, Untitled Kitchen Table

Contour lines drawings - tracings - outlines - the details become ambiguous, hidden in the flatness of the marks they leave behind. The object's silhouetted floor plan becomes multifaceted; as a glass, a vase, or a bottle of vinegar could form the positive shape of the circle. Ambiguous or pluralist readings have been utilised to break down formalist structure of the circle allowing the viewer choice to interpret the image. I took a measured drawing of the front elevation of my home and it looked like a professional drawing of the front elevation of my home. It was
architectural research on measured drawing. I made the assumption that every thing was level and squared, structurally sound.

Measured drawings are usually made of buildings with historical or architectural value. It takes time to measure a building, a full morning to measure the facade. I used a 28Y/8 - 20m/66ft Rabone Chest... something, (the label is torn away), tape measure with manually wound retraction (no nasty springs). Robert Chitham [1981], in his book, *Measured Drawing for Architects*, was right when he said that taking a physical measurement of a building brings you an intimate knowledge of the structure. The rose bushes prove to be a thorn in my side. Not pretty.

Writing, the fundamental means of communication, is quite inadequate in the technical context of architectural [artistic] practice. A complete written technical description of a building is inevitably very long-winded, as every writer of specifications knows. Length defeats clarity but any attempt to reduce it breeds ambiguity. [Chitham, 1981:1]

After completing the set task, to make a measured drawing of the front elevation of my home, I decide to make a measured drawing of myself as a whole, illustrated as a two dimensional drawing. This also proved to increase the intimate knowledge of self - my right leg, upper thigh measurement being two centimetres wider than my left.
Figure 24, Flesh Winnow: Two dimensional measured drawing

After this I tried to illustrate Jean F. Lyotard’s\(^7\) theory on post-modernism in diagrammatic form and Jeanette Winterson’s\(^8\) novelistic style also.

Flattened cardboard boxes become floor plans, representations of rooms, a cube. They sit in piles on the half wall between the kitchen and the games room, waiting to be sorted, accessioned, and stored.

She asked the question, why are you presenting the boxes plain side up, I would have though the other side was more interesting?

\(^7\) My illustration of Lyotard’s theory on postmodernism is taken from an essay written by John Rajchman, Jean-François Lyotard’s Underground Aesthetics for October 86 Fall 1998:3-18. ‘There is a pleasure reading or rereading Lyotard that comes from seeing his concepts in this manner as points around which themes grow up and then go off in many directions at once, which belongs, I think, to the “paideia” of his work with its languid humor.’ [Rajchman, 1998:4]

\(^8\) See preface to Jeanette Winterson’s novel Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit.

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I guess it's the neutrality of the inside of the box; it's the internal view I'm interested in. Like the way Alison Rowely describes 'the blank in the page' in the catalogue Inside the Visible,

the works in section two of the exhibition, ... focus on the meaning of marking a blank surface, whether in drawing or writing, as the beginning of the process of symbolising the self and its engagement with the world. The blank surface can be the space of new beginnings, and of reconfigurations of what has gone before. [Harpley/Dufour/Cameron/Gooding, 1997:6]

The internal space of the box can be re-configured so it is a two dimensional floor plan which can be inverted so the interiors which were private can become the outside and vice-versa. It is interesting that they all form cubes, our basic building unit, but the layouts are quite different. Some describe the original function of the box; side pouring for rolled oats, or flip top for washing powder; others carry the stains of their former contents; while some are damaged in the collapsing process.

Is it the privilege of the visual over the textual that drives my practice? In simplifying the most complex and detailed concepts to a single measured drawing that can be assayed at a glance, am I not engaging in modern protocol.
LAUNDRY

It’s the little things that by themselves are invisible within our daily lives. It’s the little things that are discarded as waste. It’s the little things that when united form a large mass that challenge their individual significance. It’s the little things that matter. It’s the little things that when united form the big picture. It’s the little things that David Harvey calls militant particularisms. It’s the little things that are tamper evident. [Wilkes, 1998:n.p.]

Akiko Busch in Geography of Home writes ‘we tend to define home by the accumulation of possessions as much as place... Our growing need for storage has outstripped our closets’ capacities.’ [Busch, 1999:75] This desire to make visible the accumulative process of every day life has lead me to record collections of the insignificant:

Flower petals,
household dust,
beer bottle caps,
tamper evident seals,
aluminum can ring pulls,
gold aluminum pull-top lids,
cardboard packets,
grocery receipts,
plastic lids,
bread tags,
envelopes.

These collections are accumulated over time. They are purchased or gifted as a consequence of consumption, into my home. These items are not going to be recycled into replicas of themselves. They remain markers of life, lived at 12 Pimelia Grove, Thornlie, 6108, Western Australia, Australia. It is important to me that these items maintain their integrity, not to be undermined by their eventual transformation into art.

Susan Pearce summarises the general essence of collecting as they relate to a fictional narrative in her book On Collecting:
Collections are essentially a narrative of experience; as objects are a kind of material language, so the narratives into which they can be selected and organised are a kind of fiction, and it is no accident that both fiction and collection are a characteristically modernist European way of telling experience, with their formal and imaginative roots deep in cultural traditions of the long term. Like fiction, collections narrate worldviews of knowledge and moral understanding in relation to the individual hero or heroine, family and society, the past and the exotic. Like fiction, too, their ways of creating the narrative flow is open to analysis, and prove to be not a reflection of the nature of things, but a social construct in which apparent sense is created from a range of possibilities and discontinuities. [Pearce, 1995:412]

|------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Faded Brown Flannel Towel  
1 Worn Cream Hand Towel  
1 Striped Beach Towel  
2 Faded Yellow Bath Towels | 1 Single Bed Quilt Cover | 5 Plain Dyed Pillow Cases  
5 Floral Pillow Cases  
3 Patterned Pillow Cases  
1 Blue/white Checked Tea Towel  
1 Mustard Small Tablecloth |
| 1 Bright Orange Single Bed Blanket | 2 Black Single Bed Sheets  
2 Blue/white Checked Flannelette Double Bed Sheets | |
| 3 Floral Double Bed Flat Sheets  
1 Cot Sheet  
1 Cot Mattress Protector | 5 Fitted Single Bed Sheets | 1 Child Sized Sleeping Bag With Sports Design |

The linen sat neatly folded in pigeonholes built to partition the different sized articles of cloth. Regular holes were cut into the back panel of the shelving forming diagonal lines that criss-cross like the pattern on the inside of the envelope or the protective mesh screwed on the front of his bass amplifier to protect the inner speaker. The exposed face of the linen had the appearance of being bleached by light as if it had been sitting in the window for many years. Each parcel of linen had been bound by a nylon ribbon with the titles of the owners typed on it. In between odd folds of linen were paper sheets with flower petals adhered to them, similar to those floral papers used to line the shelves and draws of the closet. It was like the paper had been
caught up in the folding process. This linen was the excess accumulated in my linen closet.

The true passion of the collector is always anarchistic, destructive. For this is its dialectic: by loyalty to the thing. The individual thing, salvaged by him [sic], he [sic] evokes an obstinate subversive protest against the typical, the classifiable. Walter Benjiman, *In Praise of the Doll*, 1930. [Coles/Dion, 1999:31]
BACK SLIDING DOOR

'The trick is to recognise that in every textual production, in the production of every explanation, there is the itinerary of a constantly thwarted desire to make the text explain', writes Spivak [1987:105] on Derrida in the *Explanation and Culture: Marginalia*. The problem becomes more compounded for visual artists in that they rely on text as explanation to produce valid meanings for visually artistic processes of production.

CAUTION: STEPS

Work on good prose has three steps: a musical stage when it is composed, an architectonic one when it is built, and a textile one when it is woven. [Benjamin, 1979,p61]

Standing at the back sliding door, the smell of honeysuckle hangs thickly in the air, like the scent at a cheap perfume counter in your local pharmacy. The sweetness of the scent becomes saturated by the odour of bore water. My neighbours are irrigating their backyard, enabling them to sustain the artificial green of winter. This forces me to retreat back inside my home, sliding the door behind me, to avoid the foul smell of bore water that dyes its surrounds rust and tannic.
APPENDIX
Itinerary of Home

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Introduction

I am currently studying a Master of Creative Art by Research within the School of Art at Curtin University. This paper is derived from primary research initiated during my first year of study into my art practice as a master's student. The ensuing dialogue is generated from an inquiry into the working methodologies that surround Envelop, an artwork created as part of my research thesis.

Envelop

[1 Slide: Envelop, side full shot.]

I live in fear of methodology - haunted by the lack thereof - hoping that my equivocations between baking methodologies and academic methodologies will form some tight coherent theoretical premise that will form the basis of my research thesis. For my work is formed like a recipe - knowing I need sustenance to survive - I select the recipe or pattern paper and start to indulge my taste buds, while replenishing my essential nutritional requirements of life.

So some feminists become feminist thinkers, Mary Daly's Methodolaters, worshipping methodology, fearful of being wrong, believing in false idols, or, more likely, of desiring no idols at all, writes Joanna Frueh in Towards a Feminist Theory of Art Criticism. [Frueh, 1988,p256]

So how do I know which recipe to follow and what are my nutritional requirements?

[2 Slide: Rogan Josh]

To look more closely at these questions I would like to discuss the procedures used in the making of Envelop. (This should not be confused with the Making of Jurassic Park or that of Rogan Josh - 'Traditionally fatty meat on the bone was used for making Rogan Josh and it was slow-cooked in its own fat, with extra added for an intense flavour. In these days of cholesterol-consciousness, however, we avoid animal fat and use a minimum amount of oil.' [Panjabi, 1996, p54])

Sometimes you can't see the structures that envelop you, sometimes you can.

[3 Slide: Envelop, full front shot.]

The artwork Envelop has a very apparent visual structure; there is the assemblage of the envelopes
into a single rhythmic unit; that could resemble a woven piece of cloth or the brickwork of a wall. This is juxtaposed against the internal detailing that is exposed through new windows that are cut into the external surface, and replicated as the symbolic heart that lies across that surface. When cutting these windows I was aware of the reference they made to the paper stencil, the Japanese refer to as *katagami*, a silhouetted monochromatic formal structure that defies internal detail, but issues representational references.

[4 Slide: Japanese Design Stencil]
The *Katagami* or *pattern paper* is a paper stencil traditionally used for dyeing cloth. The textile stencil carries the quite and individual design of the handicraft person. It has the ability to reduce complicated representational ideas to simple forms. The silhouette of the stencil is a formal structure, that reduces the image to a simple homogenous form that will 'avoid visual confusion' [Blackmore, 1978, p7] to those who have the dialect to interpret that form. While allowing viewers without that knowledge of visual language variable or unforeseen possibility of misinterpretations that hopefully stimulate their interest.

[4 Slide: Japanese Design Stencil]
(The history of visual language in modern fine art has a specific knowledge grounded in painting and sculpture. However, I hope through the use of everyday materials or objects and their familiarities, which have a common representational language outside that specific knowledge; to undermine the hierarchies associated with that limited history of visual language within modern art. Allowing people to respond to the materials and the way they are organised to create a contemporary visual language of materiality that recognises simultaneously what is tangible reality - food, and what is ephemeral and transitory - hunger.)

[5/6 Slide: Envelop, cross and walking figure details.] In *Envelop* two silhouette figures or pictographs have been used to disrupt the logical rectangular window format, the *first aid cross* and the *walking figure*. These figures are taken from *The Journal of Typographic Research* Volume IV, Number I, Winter 1970 - An Investigation of the Design and Performance of Traffic Control Devices - by John Lees and Melvin Farman [p23/31]. Their research indicated that the *walking figure* was moderately well recognisable and concrete in its interpretation, while the *cross* also being moderately well recognisable, offered a more ambiguous interpretation.

[7 Slide: Traffic control signs.] This is peripheral research generated by a desire to investigate my initial resource material for this paper. The *cross* and the *walking figure* were originally chosen for their simple recognisable silhouettes that symbolise humanity within our modern western society.

[8 Slide: (Figure 8, see page 28) Envelop, internal details.] The envelopes - the ingredients - combined, are regular patternation that have the appearance of a
uniformity that is unstoppable. The familial relationships of the household are concealed like the internal pattern designs of the envelopes. These are the hidden structures that are often lost in the mass. [9 Slide: (Figure 10, see page 33) Envelop, edge detail.] Some edges are fixed; others are awaiting the continuation of the sequence to resume. This is a horizon line or mass that has arrived out of a collection process from August to the 4th of November, the date of installation at PICA, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art. To re-enforce the logical progression of the sequential patterning, only DL envelopes have been used to construct the work. (I wonder if the viewer will think these envelopes are the only ones the artist -me- had received.) I had to make a judgement.

[10 Slide: Envelop, full shot.]

‘Feelings and desires can hardly choose. They would like to choose, they would like not to choose, to possess incompatibles all at the same time: several skills, several possibilities, several futures, several loves.’ ‘Practically, the requirement to act and to make decisions imposes choice. But to choose is to make a judgment. We have no knowledge of the human actions which go on around us; they escape us just as our own selves escape us. And yet we must make judgments.’ [Lefebvre, 1991, p19]

The above passage from the forward of a Critique of Everyday Life by Henri Lefebvre goes on to discuss the necessary requirement within life to continually make judgements, while discussing the difficulties and dangers of the action of making judgements.

(But the telephone ringing impedes my line of thought; it’s someone from the Deaf Society wanting me to purchase tickets in their raffle. I said no, not at the moment.)

(Then Jamie, my son, asks, can magazines be placed in recycling, I said, yes, they can.)

Is it really truthful to say that magazines can be recycled? This is what I’ve been told by local government and the media - they provided me with the information on which to base my decision but should I trust them?

I digress.

The judgment or methodological procedure that led me to make Envelop was conceived out of an Itinerary of Home, the research title for my thesis, so how does the work Envelop situate itself within the title of my research?

[11 Slide: Envelop]

Antonio Gramsci states the starting point for critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and in “knowing thyself” as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in
you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. Therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory. [Foster, 1999,pNA]

I see the collection of envelopes sent to my home as such an inventory, relating directly to an itinerary, a line of travel, a route; and account of a journey whose destiny is my home. These objects are the record of the public face that arrives at my private residence; describing it’s location using public reference systems of name, number, street, suburb or town, city and postal code. These are officiated over by the stamp of authority, a signature of a monopoly. (It should be noted that the collection of envelopes is an ongoing process.)

[12 Slide: Envelop]
To discuss this work in isolation from the rest of my practice, while practical for the time frame of this paper, is highly problematic in regard to my working methodology. Because like a whole grain salad roll without margarine, a glass of low fat milk and a piece of fruit for lunch; this meal when seen in isolation would constitute a healthy diet. But, I may not have told you about the side order of chips, or the chemical analysis of the meal that revealed salmonella, or my poor eating habits of the past ten years, or alternatively that I have a chronic yeast allergy.

[13/14/15 Slide: (Figures 1, 2, 3, see pages 11, 13, 14) Cultured] This leads me to the photocopied pressed petals revealed in the envelope windows which reference a previous work titled, Cultured, that used the petals to allude to personal interventions that might signify to the viewer an occasion or an event. Originally, they were located on, or in, a series of grey garments, and again it was my intention to use them as a corporal disruption to the corporate facade that trespasses the envelopes exterior.

[16 Slide: (Figure 9, see page 31) Envelop] 
@ the heart of this matter of methodology is a simple cut and paste exercise that is for me a contemporary drawing or an installation. Which discusses through collection and assemblage one possible recipe that is an itinerary for my home. The conceptual aim - is to utilise other historical methods of production that are generated from activities that record life outside the traditions of painting and sculpture. (But may still make reference to them). These activities with regard to Envelop include; collecting and sorting the mail, making drawings or plans for installation, while researching textile design stencils as reference material. For like Sowon Kwon, a contemporary artist born in Korea, now living and working in New York, I am interested in the ‘social inscriptions of space. The narrative of taste, (and) how the choices we make about our environment are culturally informed, (while) exploring a media which (is) charged with metaphors of reproduction and imitation.’ [Butler, 1996,p9]
[17 Slide: Japanese Stencil Design]

RECIPE for ENVELOP

Ingredients:
- Double sided adhesive tape
- Paper Binders
- Photocopies of Pressed Petals
- Envelope
- Glue Stick
- Acetate - sheets
- Plastic
- Body
- Cellophane

Equipment:
- Scalpel
- Body
- Bandsaw
- Scissors
- Card
- Spirit level
- Stencil
- Photocopier
- Pencil

[18 Slide: Envelop]

Method:
- Collect and sort envelopes.
- Photocopy and enlarge envelope interior on to acetate.
- Using scalpel cut new windows, placing the card in the envelope to avoid cutting through to the back, then paste in new cellophane frames.
- Test adhesive envelope sequence on wall to work out placement and positioning.
- Insert and paste in pressed petal photocopies.
- Cut paper binders into approximately three lengths using band saw.
- Slide to envelopes right sides together into pre-cut paper binders; continue this process until you have reached desired length.
- Using a spirit level mark the first line for envelopes on wall.
- Cut adhesive tape and stick on backs of paper binders, remove tabs and stick to wall following spirit level line, placing the envelopes at a distance that allows them to curve out from wall.
- Work subsequent lines as above, alternating the sequences start in the middle of the above envelope.
- Stand back occasionally to admire your handiwork.
- Congratulations you have finished, attend the opening and have a drink you deserve it.

[19 Slide: Envelop]

Quiet: The hide track goes like this; there is a time factor that can consume the viewer or repel them. So they only take in the initial external surfaces and patternation and all internal detailing is lost.
QUESTIONS

What do you mean by the word 'concrete'?
Concrete, for me, is a material that embodies modernism. It is the substance on which modernism is founded. Strong and solid it has the appearance of strength and eternity, a symbol of the corporate identity. However, the mixture of aggregate, sand, cement and water, is as fragile as any butter cake, for an error in the recipe could result in a crumbling disaster like the Turkish earthquakes. I also see concrete as weighty, real and tangible, but not immovable or permanent. The colour grey, which I strongly associate with concrete, can denote the grey areas of possibility that exit within our society.

What is a 'patternation'?
Patternation is a continuous design element, or a formal ordering that suggests a sequence. The abstracted noun of a pattern.

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