

One morning while standing in my kitchen enjoying a coffee, I glanced up from the mug to notice a small bundle lodged in the corner where the walls and ceiling meet. It appeared to be the work of an insect, most likely a nest or cocoon. I was immediately met with a feeling of revulsion, although the cluster was small and insignificant, my space had been invaded by an uninvited guest. I had no idea how long the nest had been there or what it contained. In short, there was something *wrong* with my home. This experience prompted me to think about the space around me, and my relationship to the apartment.

I thought about how my home could be changed by the objects and activities found within it. This foreign body had become a component in my living space but at the same time altered the whole. In The System of Objects Jean Baudrillard writes, "...functionality is the ability to become integrated into an overall scheme. An object's functionality is the very thing that enables it to transcend its main 'function' in the direction of a secondary one, to play a part, to become a combining element...within a universal system of signs."ⁱ The House-Art Space project attempts to use the functionality of the apartment and artists' works in a new manner. My living space is reordered into a contemporary gallery and the work shown in it become objects in a domestic space. Where my apartment ends and the artists' work begins starts to overlap and bleed in this new arrangement. The two components can no longer be read separately but instead become an amalgam of daily life and art exhibition.

Each artist in the show deals in some matter with privacy or domesticity and all the work collides with domestic space – some inhabit this space comfortably while others break it open, making it different or uncanny. Christy Thompson and Jeremy Drummond's pieces both situate themselves in a home and their work draws strength from this association. Thompson's stalactites grow mysteriously from the ceiling, feeling simultaneously familiar and otherworldly. Her creations combine materials to create hybrid forms, ones that may grow and flourish or perish in the survival of the fittest. Her objects are often produced with natural materials, yet have a synthetic association making them polymorphous and polyfunctional.ⁱⁱ They seem produced by unrelated elements and capable of yet unmapped uses. When stumbling upon her intervention one has the same visceral response as discovering a wasp's nest dangling over your head; yet this nest is constructed from your lampshade and daily newspaper.

The same response can be felt with Drummond's video work. His videos explore the dream of suburban living and how these fantasies are marketed to consumers. 'Suburban Discipline' outlines the shortcomings of this lifestyle, contrasting our mediated experience with the reality of suburbia's components. However, both views are equally unreal or distanced when viewed through a television screen. Suburban landscape has become a generic set upon which the daily life of suburbanites play out. In this context, Drummond's images cease to be 'home video' and become yet another televised story about suburban experience to be consumed by a suburban audience. His video 'Junkmail' focuses on the desires sold to this demographic by mixing mass media images with text gleaned from Internet 'spam' mailings. These tapes explore our fixation with media representations of our living spaces, bodies and sexual desires. Drummond reorders the flow of information found in home movies and marketing campaigns in order to expose their participation in social conditioning, a conditioning that tells us what we want and how to live it.

Anne Walk and Shinobu Akimoto's contributions to the exhibition take more covert approaches. Anne's performance feels comfortable in a domestic space but inevitably breaks it open with the offer to remove the piece from the apartment. What begins as a storybook and performative act, can function solely as language and physical or emotional contact. Walk relies on sharing and exchange with her participants, the work is free to evolve and develop more layers of meaning and association with each person's experience. She is there to facilitate an event, one that is open to collaboration, rewriting and exchange with her 'audience'. Walk combines images, language, narrative and intimacy into an event that is free to move wherever the participant is most comfortable. Her practice is a refreshing in the face of the current cultural and social climate by allowing for and encouraging moments of shared experience, disclosure and honest feeling between good friends or complete strangers.

The subtlest addition to the show is the work of Shinobu Akimoto. Her practice is based on her fascination with lifestyle and its relation to artmaking/working. Akimoto proposed to bring no existing work to the show and would instead intervene into my daily life as well as the larger curatorial project. She wanted to work in my space and leave something behind for me to live with for the duration

of the show. There is often a certain humour or ridiculousness to her work and at the same time a functionality. Her previous exhibits have included showing readymade items from IKEA that she takes from her home to exhibit, or builds from scratch to use for an exhibition and later utilize in her home. Akimoto creates a cycle of making and using, employing whatever means or materials available in her practice.

For this show she chose to subtly demarcate space in my apartment by painting it in a trendy grey-green. Her palette is the result of the botched mixes of designer colours, which she uses to point out the spaces she felt engaged with in my living space. She did not move anything, painting around the spots that were taken up or that she “didn’t like”. Akimoto uses “other people’s colours”ⁱⁱⁱ to mark out her spaces in another person’s home. The final result is a deceptively simple intervention into the entire living space. The slow realization of what is Akimoto’s work competes with the feeling that the paint was already there. The moment you look for it you realize you’ve been looking at it for some time. The green is tucked away, at home in the space, sweet, thoughtful and completely captivating.

All of the artists have set up situations that I have to live with in my apartment and I in turn am inviting others to view this new relationship. As a generally private individual I am opening my home to scrutiny by the public. The uncertainty of the site expects a viewer to snoop through my private spaces; due to this I must think of the show in a variety of ways, acting as curator, attendant and landlord. The exhibition is a chance to develop a site-specific show and extend the scope of contemporary art practices in the city. This special project provides a unique opportunity for the artists involved as well as the local arts community. I see the show as an occasion for a variety of events to intersect and co-exist in a single space.

Evidently, the cocoon is still there, I haven’t had the heart (or courage) to remove it.

ⁱ Baudrillard, Jean The System of Objects, Translated by James Benedict (Verso: London, New York, 1968/1996, pg. 63)

ⁱⁱ Baudrillard, The System of Objects, p. 32

ⁱⁱⁱ When working on the project Shinobu shifted between very carefully chosen sentences to describe her work and casual remarks. She said how she didn't like that area of the apartment or this part was so beautiful and even more beautiful because people won't see it. When I commented on it was a nice to spend an afternoon painting she responded that you almost forget why you are doing it.