



Woman Searching through a Cupboard,
1900-01
Oil on Canvas, 78 x 49.5 cm
Private Collection, Basel, Switzerland

i

I think I'll serve some toast today
Oh no, there is no butter
Perhaps I'll find some jelly or jam
Amidst the cupboard's clutter
Sadly to say there is
no thing
To spread upon my bread
I'm forced to poke this knife
Into my hungry head
I bet inside there is mayonnaise
And something like smoked ham
My eyes can serve as olives
To garnish the sandwich I am

Although it will probably detract from the more somber intentions of my initial bread imagery, I want to tell you to picture my entire ensemble as a triple decker sandwich. *The Architect & The Housewife* is in three parts. Two of those parts exist as discreet texts, published elsewhere. The remaining third of this book is also in three parts: i, ii, and iii, like three slices of bread together comprising the single ingredient which distinguishes a sandwich from a plate of cold cuts. I'm not even supposed to eat cold cuts, with or without bread, I've been advised by a medical professional not to eat cold cuts, but I'll come to that later. So, technically this book has five parts, which are actually only three parts, although ultimately it is just this one very distinct thing, and very designedly so. I am not a housewife. I am thirty-two years old and live alone in Los Angeles, with my cat, in a one bedroom apartment, which I rent for \$520 a month. I have never been a housewife. I support myself by selling my artwork, writing an occasional commissioned essay, and taking on random teaching assignments. I have never been a wife. I rent a small studio in Chinatown about four miles from my apartment, which costs me \$360 a month. One day when my studio was still in my living room, about four steps away from the kitchen, I was in the kitchen, but I was working, although drifting, mentally and physically. I had a dish-towel in hand, and the word housewife came into my mind. The word housewife was not alone though, it included three or four preceding words, like 'I' and 'am' and possibly 'such' and most assuredly 'a'. Type housewife into your internet search engine and you know what your results will be? Porno, porno and more porno, as in 'Horny housewives exposed!'. Despite this bleak testimony to the

word's obsolescence and belittling, unfavorable tone, that word 'housewife' continues to make itself at home in my head. It's possible she couldn't have made herself so at home without an 'architect', the companion term I've provided her. If you are like most of the imaginary people I have introduced them to, you will probably agree that they form a handsome couple, which reminds me of something. 'All women, whether mothers or prostitutes, share a single characteristic – "a characteristic which is really and exclusively feminine" – and that is the instinct of match making. It is the ever present desire of all women to see man and woman united'. (Ray Monk paraphrasing from Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character*). Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character* comes out of *fin de siècle* Vienna. According to Ludwig Wittgenstein's biographer, Ray Monk, this book had a strong impact on the adolescent Wittgenstein. Monk even titled his biography *The Duty of Genius*, a notion that comes directly out of *Sex and Character*. Not long after completion of his book, Weininger went into the house where Beethoven (Genius) died, and took his own life. Supposedly it was this self-conscious death of its author that gained *Sex and Character* its attention. Apparently, Weininger argued that in order to pursue the consciousness of the genius, man must 'resist the pairing instinct of the woman and, despite pressure from women, free himself from sex'. As antiquated as this sounds, it sure has a creepy familiarity.

I

In Los Angeles, in the spring, at a table, on the beach, Michael Lin told me about his last project *Interior* and showed me his plans for *Complementary*. We spoke of his interests in pursuing a dialogue between the public space of the exhibition and the private space of the domestic interior. He told me the project, *Complementary*, was to culminate in book form. If I wanted, I could contribute some text. Then and there I had a heading in my head, a heading in my head not altogether un-complementary in and of itself, under which a textual exploration of *Complementary* might fall. In Taipei, in summer, at a table, under some air conditioning, the heading that was in my head is going from my head now to the paper, towards that aforementioned book, which I have to assume you are now holding, in which case you are also about to encounter below the heading mentioned above, beneath which you will not find an analysis or interpretation of Michael Lin's *Complementary*. Instead you'll find my monologue, my contribution to the dialogue. But briefly, before I begin, I'm just going to pull a quote from a book I found lying on Michael Lin's desk. The book is by Oscar Wilde and it's called *The Critic as Artist*. I opened it up because on the cover, in addition to the title, it said: with some remarks on the importance of doing nothing and discussing everything, and my eyes landed on the following sentence: 'If you wish to understand others you must intensify your own individualism'.

The Architect & The Housewife

I have had complaints about my couch, which bisects my living room diagonally, orienting the viewer towards a rather delightful view overlooking the city and its backdrop of hills, behind which the sun can be seen disappearing nightly. Although not lacking a handful of admirers, the couch seems to provide inadequate comfort to most visitors, either they say so directly, or more often express their discomfort silently by choosing to make themselves comfortable at the kitchen table in the adjoining room, from which you only have a view of purple and pink flowers. The couch is a Danish Modern design, smaller than your average couch, with quite thin square cushions, extremely attractive actually. However, I don't think the design is the problem. The problem, rather, lies in the fact that directly behind the couch, meaning directly behind the head of anyone sitting on the couch, is my desk. It's technically just a table, a long one, slightly longer than the couch and only an inch or so taller than the top of the couch. The large rectangular surface of the desk is covered in that dark chocolatey-brown, fake wood veneer. Its edges are curved, lined with dark brown plastic trim about an inch thick. Its base, collapsible if necessary, is made of thin cheap metal, painted, of course, dark brown. Usually the entire surface of the desk is covered – my computer, loose papers, books and stacks of this and that. So, not only is it just a desk behind the seated person's head, but an unruly mess made up of stacks of loose papers that can and do easily stray from the boundary of the table-desk toward the head and shoulders of a

seated guest. It's a mess because it lacks any of the simple and ingenious design conveniences which might usually be incorporated into a well-made desk in order to keep papers and various other desk-dwelling items under control. I failed to mention that the table/desk lies flush with the back of the couch diagonally bisecting my living room in order to leave all possible wall space open. I use the desk for writing and the walls for making drawings, which I may as well tell you, are made up of writing. So you see this curious arrangement (of my couch and my desk, not my writing and my writing-drawing) is predicated on the fact that not only is my living room my living room but my living room also serves as my studio.

The dilemma of having a couch in my studio is perhaps an interesting one. If I can't get sufficiently engaged in a book, or making a drawing I might end up staring into space. You can't stare into space forever, so I might start to look around and begin thinking to myself, this house is too messy or not nice looking enough or those drawers should be cleaned out or perhaps if I got a different piece of furniture for over there I could rearrange this here and my life would run more smoothly. I am sparing you the details of my toil which aspires to productivity, suffice it to say it is not hard not to experience, on a regular basis, the loneliness, the anxiety, the constant urge to redecorate I imagined a housewife might feel.

The possibility of becoming an active consumer can drive me out of the house – once entering Ikea, or even Office Depot – wherever – the world opens up in terms of what me and my

home, office, studio can become. On two separate occasions I bought a pillow from a chain store called The Pottery Barn. Both times I resented the homogeneity of the store, but both times I thought to myself 'My head deserves the luxury this pillow has to offer'. The first pillow purchase actually can be broken down into two parts. Part one is I simply bought a pillow without a case at Ikea, the first throw-pillow I ever bought in my life, by the way. In the do-it-yourself spirit of Ikea¹, I planned to sew my own case out of something special. I don't really sew, but it seemed simple enough. Several weeks passed without me sewing a case. One day my father and baby brother drove into town. We planned to drive to the museum where one of my drawings happened to be hanging in an exhibition. We got in the car to go there but first we needed to eat. In our search for a meal we could all agree on we got completely off track and far from the museum. By the time we finished eating it was quite late and we were running out of time, and because adult things are harder to do with a six year old in tow, we ended up at the mall across the street instead of the museum. That is where the first shop that sucked me in spat me back out again with a baby blue angora pillow case. That was part two of pillow purchase number one. Pillow purchase number two is like this. I was feeling heartbroken and unable to work. My friend Laura, a painter, learned of my useless condition and decided I needed escape. She drove me to a heavily populated shopping area. We walked into a series of stores that sold housewares and took turns interpreting the merchandise. We ended up at The Pottery Barn and she bought a variety of blue floral pillows in different sizes

whereas I selected a large summery two-tone green silk. But this second trip to The Pottery Barn, with another woman artist instead of my father, coincided with the moment at which I recognized there was a novice homemaker-cum-consumer in me that was eager to get out and find a rug, an inoffensively scented candle or a pillow at precisely the time I should be sitting at the chocolatey fake wood table pushing through a difficult piece of work.

The kind of anxiety associated with working alone in a domestic environment is precisely what brought the housewife to mind. I have sometimes found myself envying a male friend, here or there, who happened to be engaged in large-scale art projects, out in the open air, or inside institutions with many people running around to ensure an imminent production. Was I not unlike a housewife, toiling within the confines of my home and serving as both hostess and docent of my tiny quarters? Were these men not unlike architects in that they were constantly carrying out plans – giving instructions, making constructions?

The impetus behind these categorizations had a little bit to do with the idea of couples. I knew of some couples in the art world where the female part of the couple happened to be engaged in works that were more studio oriented, in that they were either paintings or some other type of practice which typically has to be carried out alone in the studio whereas their partners were involved in projects that were sculpture-oriented and employed many more people in their realization. I thought about the studio works and how their viewing demanded a certain kind of intimacy and physical proximity to the viewer and how the men were

making work that – although in some cases dealing explicitly with issues of domesticity – surrounded a viewer, was public, or involved some kind of environment or activity that accommodated more people at one time than could stand in front of a painting or read a tiny text in a drawing on the wall. It wasn't that the females weren't getting as much attention as the men, it was just a difference which made me consider whether or not I was somehow involved in an extremely conservative, not to mention lonely, practice. The painter Laura and I decided to pursue this extreme binary of the architect and the housewife as a way of reflecting on and examining current art practices around us. This construction, as simplistic and reductive as it might sound, started to prove effective. In fact more than just elucidating differences in interior versus exterior sites of production, we began to consider whether 'interiority' and 'exteriority' were types of meaning-production as well, interiority evoking more of a Romantic tradition and exteriority being perhaps more in line with the avant-garde. Maybe, maybe not. I can imagine *The Architect & The Housewife* as a heading over almost any discussion regarding post-studio art practices which focus on decorative and design issues, whether in a public or private space. I can imagine its applicability to those works which seek to examine or at least evoke modernism's failures or successes, its utopian designs-for-living, or to those works which rely heavily on a public setting or large quantities of institutional commerce to bring the final product, object, and/or site into being, and last but not least those practices which seemingly overlook their complex reliance on the architecture and structure of the 'art

world', still insisting that the hand-made portable object is capable of producing meaning within its limited frame.

But first, back to basics. I presume a housewife is someone who will stay and maintain the home, decorate, arrange, rearrange, prepare, wash, put things away, bring them out again – the house not being a site of accumulating production but a site of a series of simultaneous productions which bear no evidence of productivity – save for the fact that the home isn't falling apart. A supposedly good housewife maintains a busy environment which should appear as if nothing has ever happened. Nothing is being built *per se*. The architect, on the other hand, solves problems the public doesn't think about but which affect their consciousness of the environment, from things as essential as material, lighting and scale to more socially articulated needs like safety, cost, codes etcetera.

The exteriority I have so far mentally ascribed to 'the architect' has to do with elaborate extensions, disruptions and transformations into and of material reality. And, by extension, the act of writing, with a special emphasis on fiction, seems to demand very little in terms of outside space – no commerce, a budget of mostly just living expenses, minimal materials – not much of a production. The production doesn't extend into or employ much of the exterior environment. Publication and distribution are different matters entirely since the formal completion of the work of fiction does not depend on the realization of either. However in the case of this writing here I wanted to break out of the confines of a personal interior and experience Taiwan. Flying halfway around the

world to look at an exhibition and make a short piece of writing, for which I would receive a small payment, is a way for me, personally, to upset my imaginary position in my binary configuration. Recall the famous piece of writing by Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*. This text, written in 1928, was meant to address the slippery topic of women and fiction. In it she writes: 'A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction'. Isn't she suggesting that a main prerequisite to productivity is privacy? A woman, if she is occupying and/or upkeeping everyone else's rooms is going to have a difficult time getting any work done. Sure, she can enjoy many other 'rooms', consuming culture with the best of men, but when it comes to producing culture it might not only be a question of where she will do it but also a question of where you will consume it. Think of literature as an interior event, the mind or imagination being the place where the text unfolds. And consider the interior of the head – the particular bodily limits of your own perception and yet the seeming limitlessness of thought.

Now think of the interior of a home, to which a housewife has historically been expected to attend. Traditionally it is meant to provide her partner with a restorative and pleasant atmosphere so that he can continue his hard work in the public sector. Here I am talking about European bourgeois society around the turn of the century at which time something called 'Neurasthenia' was a common form of nervous exhaustion thought to be brought about by excessive use of the brain.² Businessmen were advised to temper their neurasthenia by going home to a completely soothing environment. Patterns found in

decorative art objects which adorned the home were meant to offer repose in the domestic setting.

The function of décor is not to arouse particular emotions, but to give the milieu a character in accord with the man who must live there, without compelling his thoughts to focus on the image of a concrete reality, without forcing them to be objective when the hour of subjective refuge awaits him.

(From an article entitled 'The Interior' from the journal *L'Art décoratif*, 1901)

Consider now the boundaries of the studio – not a home and not just a room. I came across a particularly striking phrase of Daniel Buren's in an essay published in *October* magazine called 'The Function of the Studio'. Here is Buren's phrase, his heading: 'the unspeakable compromise of the portable work of art'. The compromise Buren finds unacceptable is that if a work is produced in a studio it is automatically wedded to that space, it somehow lives perfectly in that space, yet its portability is some kind of breach in integrity, meaning that it compromises itself by having to leave its home and go to a supposedly neutral gallery or museum space. This is at once declaring that a work should completely take into account that the museum or gallery space is nowhere near neutral and that somehow if one denies the works' relation to its space, one is on some level choosing to ignore the values the museum/gallery architecture ascribes to the work and the work itself is simply a piece of merchandise that shuttles easily

from the studio into the marketplace. By the time I came across this I had already been ruminating on Michael's pillows. It is interesting how the paintings of the pillows conjure up both the portability of painting as a practice, as well as the portability of the pillows themselves, a major contribution to their use value. Also *Complementary* exhibits a self-consciousness of its status as exhibition. Not only does its intervention into the architecture offer a better view of outside to its viewers, it allows for more natural light to be shed onto the work, and that view is made available to you now seeing as how the show documented itself. O.K., so I have just put the ideology of institutional critique into a convenient nutshell but lets put scholarship aside for the sake of letting Buren's 'unspeakable compromise' resonate poetically under my compromising heading – granted it's an extremely subtle poetic.

There are a few ways to read the word 'compromise', one being more drastic than the other. The drastic way, which is surely what he meant, is 'to make liable to suspicion, danger or disrepute'. But I also think of a compromise as simply a settling of differences –for instance, something a couple must do to stay a couple. I have learned that the fabric used and reproduced in *Complementary* is a fabric associated with the wedding night. So, as it turns out, there are couples all over the place here and with a title of a show that means 'offsetting mutual lacks' you can bet there's no way to have a hermetically sealed art discussion, there have to be men, women, unhappiness, happiness, weddings, divorces, and sex. I mean I won't explicitly discuss these things I just don't want you to forget about the fact that a home is usually designed for a family which starts

with a couple, which is usually made up of two people who at some time in their compromising and complementary relationship have rolled around naked together on some pillows or some equivalent thereof. That reminds me of something. Adolf Loos, the Austrian architect, famous for his manifesto against decor, once wrote 'All art is erotic'. He didn't mean it as a compliment. Sure this is seriously taken out of context, but wait.

The architect, R.M. Schindler, also Austrian, designed his own residence in Los Angeles to be occupied by two couples. He seemed to be aspiring to a different kind of domesticity. Each couple would have their own bedroom and places in the house in which they did their work and studies, with several common indoor/outdoor living areas. The house is too complicated to describe here in detail but the pertinent part for our story is that the two couples did not end up occupying the place harmoniously and it ended up just being the home of Schindler and his wife, Pauline. Finally that couple, too, disintegrated. They divided the house and lived there, separately, together. His wife began to hang wallpaper and install carpeting, decorating her part of the house exactly the way she wanted, and here I might add that pink was her favorite color. Her husband would draft her letters which went something along the lines of 'I am sure you are familiar with the reasoning for my choice of materials and that what you have done is completely incongruent with my design and destroys the integrity of the structure', something along those lines, 'signed, R.M. Schindler, Architect'. So much for compromise.

Famous architects throughout history have also been known

to design chairs. Adolf Loos, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Eero Saarinen, Frank Gehry and so on, even Schindler. The specificity of the challenge lies in the intimacy with which a body is to interact with a chair, an intimacy far greater and literally more pressing than between a body and a building. Here there is a direct correlation with contemporary artists' desire to address private individual comfort from the standpoint of an extremely public and social oriented tradition. Domesticity, interior design, and private vs. public space surface as issues in the works of many young contemporary, internationally renowned artists (which might be squeezed into the 'architect' category), artists whose practices are in line with Daniel Buren's oppositional ideology. In a lot of instances the work directly involves seating: the upholstering of chairs, a pier on which to venture out, buy a pack of cigarettes, smoke and enjoy the view, a private island, the transformation of a public Donald Judd sculpture into a bench at which to sit with friends, drink alcohol and listen to music, a building turned into a lamp with a rug laid out in front of it. Some of these projects were taken from *The Sculpture Projects in Münster, 1997*, which culminated in a five hundred and forty page catalogue of the exhibition. Interestingly enough, Daniel Buren not only participated in the project but contributed a manifesto-like text to the catalogue. I was reclining on a rug under a lamp next to a stack of art catalogues at Michael's house leafing through this gigantic catalogue thinking about how despite the fact that Buren's critique of the portable object is now pretty much the dominant ideology, there surely is no shortage of the most portable object of all time, the

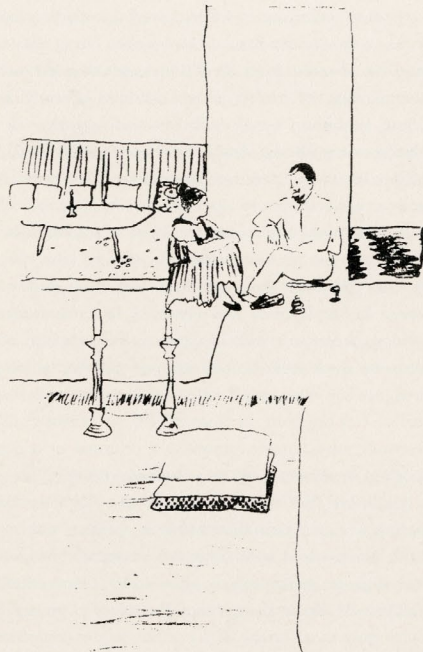
book, and here I refer specifically to the art catalogue, which ensures that a work – no matter how problematic or ephemeral, no matter how casual or whimsical – remains a work of art, and a portable one at that.

Another book I happened to find at Michael's house, aside from the Oscar Wilde one, was *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art* by E.H. Gombrich. This book is so great I'm sad to have to go back to L.A. without it. Several days after picking up Wilde's *Artist as Critic* (which sort of gave me the go-ahead to be myself in this piece, so to speak) I started reading the Gombrich book. I couldn't believe its pertinence. Just that day I had come so close to buying a different book by Gombrich, my first one by the way, as with the Ikea throw pillow, but I decided, it'll be cheaper in the States. And now here was Gombrich again, this time tempting me to just copy half of his book by hand and put it in the catalogue instead of my own writing. And not only that. Right at a critical point where designers were considering themselves equals with painters he quotes *The Critic as Artist* (auspicious or what?):

"The art that is frankly decorative is the art to live with. It is, for all visible arts, the one art that creates in us both mood and temperament. Mere colour, unspoiled by meaning, and unallied with definite form, can speak to the soul in a thousand different ways. The harmony that resides in the delicate proportions of lines and masses becomes mirrored in the mind. The repetitions of patterns give us rest'.

Now bear with me, I am about to put that Loos business about all art being erotic into context for you. According to Gombrich 'the emancipation of pattern design into a dependent art with growing pretensions foreshadowed the divorce between decoration and functional fitness'. He quotes Loos, who vehemently requests the divorce, from his 1908 essay *Ornament und Verbrechen*. But before that he briefly points out that as early as 1892 the American architect, Louis Sullivan, had written: 'it would be greatly for our aesthetic good if we should refrain entirely from the use of ornament for a period of years in order that our thoughts might concentrate acutely upon the production of buildings well formed and comely in the nude'. Here it sounds like Sullivan is only calling for a friendly separation instead of a divorce. And I know with Sullivan they get back together, and I know this because I know Sullivan was obsessed with decoration until his very old age because in fact I happen to have a tattoo of one of the drawings he made after he had stopped making buildings. So, you can imagine my excitement when I first read those few sentences heretofore left out from in front of 'All art is erotic': 'The man of this century who tattoos himself is a criminal or a degenerate.... The urge to ornament one's face and everything within reach is the very origin of the visual arts. It is the babbling of painting.' According to Gombrich abstraction in painting didn't occur until after this complicated and competitive intermingling of decorative art with high art. And speaking of babbling, I have babbled on long enough but I'd like to bring this full circle if I can, and bring your attention now to an image of a perfect couple, a perfect marriage,

Charles & Ray Eames at home



where the gesture of placing a pillow in just the right spot has made history.

'*Charles & Ray Eames at Home* [drawing reproduced here] shows three pillows of the same size placed on top of each other, on a rug, on the floor, offering contrasts in color and tone. At other times, more pillows were used and the grouping was placed slightly differently on the rug and in relation to the other objects. On the *Sofa Compact* in the late 1960s and for much of the 1970s, two patchwork pillows complemented each other and contrasted with a larger striped one'.³

Notes

1 Possibly traceable back to the Larsson's, a big influence in Swedish design movements. See 'The Ideal Swedish Home: Carl Larsson's Lilla Hyttas' by Michelle Facos in *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, edited by Christopher Reed (Thames & Hudson, London, 1996).

2 This and the following quote come from the essay 'Hi Honey, I'm Home: Weary (Neuroathetic) businessmen and the Formulation of a Serenely Modern Aesthetic' by Joyce Henri Robinson. This essay can be found in the book, *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, edited by Christopher Reed (Thames & Hudson, London, 1996).

3 Pat Kirkham, *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century*, (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1995), pp. 188-189.

The day I arrived in Tai Pei to write that essay I got a severe headache, the sick kind, the kind that no amount of pain relievers will abate. I've had them for – what seems like – ever. I am quite accustomed to excusing myself from whatever room I happen to be in, seeking out a soft place for my head, getting it there, and awaiting normalcy. Since headaches involve pain that's seemingly located in the brain, confusion may ensue as to where exactly the unpleasant sensation originates. With mostly invisible symptoms, it is easy to think of the pain as more of a mental phenomenon and less of a physical one. And, of course, aches in the heads of women have commonly been associated with making excuses for not wanting to 'do it'.

"Nobody gets a f&*(#@\$@ headache every night of the f&*(#@\$@ week!!" says Greg to his wife Carol in Todd Haynes' film *Safe*. Carol and Greg, Carol and Greg, that sounds familiar. Why, of course, it's Carol and Greg Brady, the mother and father of television's legendary Brady Bunch. Oh yeah, Greg was the oldest son not the father, whose name was Mike. I hear it's well-known TV trivia that the actor who played Greg had an affair with the actress who played Carol – but that is neither here nor there. What's here now is one fictional couple by way of another: Carol Brady, Housewife, courtesy of 'Carol', environmentally ill housewife and Mike Brady, Architect, courtesy of 'Greg', businessman and husband of environmentally ill housewife. I had completely forgotten about the innumerable hours I spent as a youngster devouring canned ravioli

while watching not-so-hilarious antics unfold near the flat-files beneath the exceptional Brady staircase. Mr. Brady designed the house, you know, which had one of those floating staircases.

Back to reality. Occurring so close, as they do, to the locus of our imagination – I find headaches very intriguing, although experiencing them is not entirely intriguing, which is why I recently decided to seek 'professional' help. I mean, it could be something serious. On the other hand it could just be the price I have to pay for having a very slight gift of perception. I would understand if I were like a mathematician or a full-on genius – but really the scope of my suffering does not seem proportionate to the scope of my mind.

I recently found myself in a deserted square consuming some junk food while staring blankly at the façade of a building. Actually my stare was fixed on a plaque which claimed that the particular building to which it was adhered was, at one time, albeit a very, very short time, the home of Virginia Stevens Woolf. Another plaque announced George Bernard Shaw had lived in the building as well, but not at the same time. In any case there I stood at a supposed site of renown industriousness, holding a Dr. Pepper bottle between my lips as the usual suicidal thoughts wafted into my consciousness at the very suggestion of other people's achievement. Personally, I cannot stand the work it requires to ensure oneself a meaningful demise. Imagine: 'Frances killed herself on the porch of Virginia Steven's house, oh you know, Virginia Woolf before the Woolf, before the book'. That could work. But I'm still alive, at home now, in one of the two rooms of my own for which I am paying a total of \$880 each month. You might recall my saying that

my studio was in my living room and that that particular conflation, of my living room and my working room, was in fact initially responsible for all this housewife business. You might also recall that before that, I stated I paid rent for a studio separate from my apartment. Here's what happened. Before my trip to Taiwan, R.O.C. (which stands for Republic of China), not to be confused with the People's Republic of China, I went to Chinatown, not to be confused with China, and procured for myself a studio, which I hoped would serve much better as that proverbial room of one's own. In other words, before traveling a bazillion miles from home to China to expound on the aforementioned conflation, I traveled four miles to Chinatown and wrote the necessary check to eradicate said conflation. Might I add that having a studio did not make me feel less like a housewife, nor did it make me feel more like an architect. That reminds me of another amazing thing I read: 'In philosophy we are not, like the scientist, building a house. Nor are we even laying the foundations of a house. We are merely "tidying up a room"'

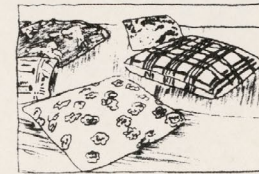
That's Ray Monk again, this time paraphrasing Wittgenstein. Wow, tidying up a room, what do you think of that? You need more to go on? Here's more: in an age in which the scientists have taken over, the great personality – Weininger's genius, can have no place in the mainstream of life; he is forced into solitude. He can only potter about tidying up his room, and distance himself from all the house building going on around him.

A scientist is like an architect, and a genius is like a housewife, and a housewife is an obstacle in the way of genius. Imagine how laborious it must be to simultaneously aspire to genius, keep

everything tidy, make love to an architect and denounce the notion of genius altogether. It makes my head hurt.

I needed a 'headache specialist'. The medical professional whom I said advised me not to eat cold cuts, was one such specialist. I found a paper he wrote called *On the Conditions for Entering and Maintaining a Creative State of Mind*. In it he writes: 'Using the analytic tool of the *container* and the *contained*, this study will probe the mental container of creativity and only indirectly be concerned with creativity, the behavior.', (William H. Rickels, M.D., 1998 [my emphasis]). What an appropriate man to look into my head. I went to him. He wrote me some prescriptions, gave me a little grid in which to chart my headaches along with a long list of foods to avoid; cold cuts and freshly baked bread were among them.

活生 女婦



Michael's pillows were tossed underneath the heading "Women's Lives" in one local newspaper.

影。畢竟第一樞柄頭是這樣的，催眠我心碎欲絕，無法工作，我的畫家朋友蘿拉（Laura）知道了我這種萎靡的情況，就決定我需要逃離一陣子。她載我去一個人潮擁擠的購物區，我們走進一家家專賣家庭用品的商店，並輪流批評那些商品。最後我們來到The Pottery Barn，她買了不同藍色花朵、不同尺寸的枕頭，而我則選了帶夏季色彩並有兩種綠色色調的一個絲綢大枕頭。這是第一次去The Pottery Barn，是由另一個女性藝術家而不是我的父親陪著我，這次經驗讓我明瞭到，在我應該坐在那張巧克力色的仿木餐桌邊完成一件困難的作品時，我

My leaves of grass, do assess
Before long
My lawn
Will be gone
A rectangle of dirt in its place
Is perhaps
A preferable space
To contemplate building a house
Or a home for yourself and your spouse

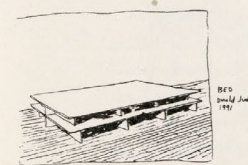
My greenness a grass does amass
How blades take up space
Across ground
Is profound
I have found
If you tend to agree
Join me
I'll leave a patch for your ass

思索是否「內在」(interiority)與「外在」(exteriority)也是意義產物的表徵；內在比較會令人想起浪漫主義傳統，外在或許就比較是與前衛主義並列。也許是，也許不是。我可以想像「建築師與家庭主婦」幾乎會成為所有以裝飾、設計為議題的後工作室藝術創作 (post studio art) 討論的標題，不論那些創作是在公眾或私人空間。我能想像這個標題，可適用於那些尋求檢視或至少喚起現代主義的失敗或成功的作品，也就是關於現代主義那理想式的生活設計；或者是那些仰賴公眾設施或機構的大量金錢來製作出最後產品、物件與／或場域的

II

The Architect & The Housewife: with regards to the artist Jorge Pardo et al. I entered 4166 Seaview Lane, the latest sculpture/residence of Jorge Pardo through the studio door. The studio is office-like but dusty and, surprisingly, it's cramped with large canvases, paintings in progress. It also has a balcony. I went out onto it to wait for Jorge to get off the telephone. It was a beautiful day up there at Seaview Lane, although I could not exactly see all the way to the sea. I looked down and saw another artist/writer pull up, then park his car. He's come to talk with Jorge. Me, I came not so much to talk but to soak up the atmosphere. I left the studio through a different door leading straight to a stairway and bookshelves which run along the staircase near what seems like a front entrance. I am calling it the front entrance because there is some vinyl lettering on the glass to the right of the door which used to announce, for the MOCA exhibit, 'Jorge Pardo 4166 Seaview Lane', but now just reads 'do a view' or something like that. Anyone coming in the 'front door' would find themselves in the center of a mildly sloping staircase cum library. There seems to be a random selection of books in the shelves, which are dusty because of this being a construction site. Approaching the partially filled dusty shelves gives a sense of an ending rather than a beginning. Because of the dust and because of the randomness, the contents of the shelves seem as if they have been left behind, as if the place had been recently vacated, instead of soon to be inhabited.

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圖中上座階梯的厚實的牆壁強迫你必須停下來。圖中
米·魯斯·亞托爾茨 (Le Corbusier) / 羅維·艾維爾
(Miss van der Rohe) / 雷蒙·羅迪歐 (Eero
Saarinen) / 丹羅致·羅賓 (Frank Gehry) 斯·羅迪歐
這件畫作，有這種特殊的結構原因，是這種結構的動
一種結構特性，這種結構比身體與建築物之間的距離通
更進而切實。當代藝術家，喜歡從極度公開與社交專
的傳統立點上來談個人的舒適，與這些挑戰是有重
的相互關係。美國住宅、室內設計、私人對廣大衆的
國時，最近許多國際知名的當代建築師家（他們可能
被歸入為「建築師」等類）的作品中呈現出來的議題，
與這件圖畫，亦有的意圖到圖畫正相反。

It wasn't long before a bouquet of sorts began to come into focus, prompting me to pluck the following four books from their dusty green resting places: *The New Feminism in Twentieth-Century America*, Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, a history of Cuba, and a book published by the Museum of Modern Art by the architect Robert Venturi. I experienced an excitement with the bouquet – a little bit of self-congratulatory pride and/or whatever you call that distinct satisfaction one gets right after placing flowers in a vase and stepping back to admire their effect. I saw some underlines and margin notes in the Bachelard book which enticed me, although I was kind of having a hard time picturing Jorge writing in a book, I don't know why. Inside I see he has scrawled 'HOW DOES HE KNOW' next to this sentence: 'The house has become a **natural being** whose fate is bound to that of mountains and of the waters that plough the land' [Jorge's emphasis].

The other writer, Jan, and Jorge converged on the steps, where I sat admiring my bouquet, and we all began talking. I

talked the least as they discussed critical writing and the fine art graduate programs of Los Angeles, local writers and former teachers like Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe and Timothy Martin. I admit I was drifting outside of the conversation because of a certain self-consciousness about my lack of verbal agility, and admittedly I was awed by the casualness with which they conjured specifics from their memories. Finally we dispersed and I climbed the remainder of the staircase to settle into what might be called a living room. Because of all the art school talk, my book bouquet seemed to have wilted. I guess because for the entire duration of our historically specific discussion I had my finger holding open a feminist essay written in 1913. Ah, feminism, that damned anachronism. It reminds me of a something I read to my students the other day in order to affirm their anxiety in the face of rampant historicizing, or what they prefer to call elitism: '... in an artistic field which has reached an advanced stage of this history, there is no place for naïfs; more precisely, the history is immanent to the functioning of the field, and to meet the

望你忘記一個事實，那就是家通常是為從一對夫妻開始的家庭而設計的，通常是由兩個人所組成，有時在他們妥協與互補的關係中，會有有枕頭之類的地方一起裸身翻滾。那讓我想起一件事。曾言反對裝飾而知名的奧地利建築師阿道夫·路斯 (Adolf Loos) 曾說過：「所有的藝術都是色情的。」這句不能不在裝潢中談。這話聽起來斷斷可憐，但請聽他一個。



1898 Adolf Loos

objective demands it implies, as a producer but also as a consumer, one has to possess the whole history of the field'.

Now I have just picked up *The Poetics of Space* and saw that on the title page the name of its owner is penciled in and it doesn't say Jorge Pardo, it says Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, underneath which is included his phone number. 'Hi Jeremy, this is Frances. I wanted to tell you that Jorge stole your book, well maybe "stole" is too severe, perhaps he just didn't want to give it back since he had some kind of indecipherable brainstorm on the blank page in the back'. Of course I didn't call. I was glad to see Jeremy's book on Jorge's shelf. I liked it there a lot, especially with the sewing machine humming in the background the whole time as Mrs. Pardo worked on a bed covering and curtains made with the fabric her son designed. In blue-ball point pen Jorge has written 'Dream/Nature' and bracketed the following passage, with enthusiastic arrows book-ending the italicized portion: 'The flower is always in the almond. With this excellent motto, both the house and the bedchamber bear the mark of an unforgettable intimacy. For there exists no more compact form of intimacy, none that is more sure of its center than a flower's dream of the future while it is still enclosed, tightly folded, inside its seed'.

For those of you reading this in Cantz's Jorge Pardo book, you will not have just read my three other small chapters also entitled 'The Architect & The Housewife', which precede this text in my very own book of the same title. So, you don't know what I have had to say about Pillows and Paintings as portable objects, Pauline and Rudolph Schindler, couples and

compromise, but now you do know that this is a fragment, and very decidedly so. The whole to which I refer not only contains this 'catalogue essay' (I use the term loosely) but another 'catalogue essay' for someone else. I think it is important for you, dear reader, to know what I have done, if not precisely why I have done it. I think it might be appropriate to quote again from *The Poetics of Space*, only this time not from Jorge's underlines. The following is a passage I had to refrain from underlining because the book did not belong to me, it wasn't even Jorge's to mark up, if you recall.

'The Dialectics of Outside and Inside: Entrapped in being we shall always have to come out of it. And when we are hardly outside of being, we always have to go back into it. Thus, in being, everything is circuitous, roundabout, recurrent, so much talk; a chaplet of sojournings, a refrain with endless verses'.
(Gaston Bachelard)

Now let's go back to the bedchamber. I said my painter friend Laura took me pillow shopping at The Pottery Barn when I was feeling heartbroken. Although it is a true story my intention was allegory, and at the time I had no idea that she was working on a collaboration with Jorge that involved four bedroom sets and four paintings of pillows. I'm sitting on her couch in her studio; in fact I'm leaning against her Pottery Barn pillows, but what I see across the room is the actual pillow on which is pictured the image she painted repeatedly to hang above Jorge's beds. So, I shouldn't have said 'four paintings of pillows', I should have simply said 'four paintings,'

because how were you supposed to know they came from pillows? Well, I'm telling you now. The actual pillow is embroidered, certainly homemade. It has a beehive on it and a bunch of bees hovering around it. Around the hive are flowers and/or weeds. On it there are also strawberries, looking a lot like hearts, two ladybugs and a slug, none of which made it into the paintings. It's just bees and their house, I mean factory, no birds here. Did I mention Laura and Jorge were a couple at the time? The status of interpretations based on biographical cues is not high, I know, and it hasn't been since 'the death of the author'. I tend to think, however, that biographical cues are unavoidable once anyone has enough interest to look closely into their 'field of cultural production', or as the old saying goes 'the personal is the political'. Back to the - bedchamber! Pae White is an artist who has collaborated with Jorge on many occasions over the years, in and out of couple-dom. She recently designed the interior of a new art space in L.A.'s Chinatown, where Jorge is currently exhibiting a posthumous collaboration with furniture designer and friend Bob Weber. Jorge's blown glass lamps hang in groups of three (and one group of two) in place of the large white globe lights Pae has assigned to the exhibition space. If you pass beyond the constellation of lamps and furniture into the back room, there is a fish tank on the staircase. Pae made the tank with the gallerist, Steve Hanson. Inside the tank the three-tiered gallery has been recreated, toilet facilities and all. The lights are depicted with Ping-Pong balls glued to plastic sticks that hang from the 'ceiling'. They no longer hang perpendicular but bow irregularly as the balls fight to float to the top. Tiny crabs and puffer fish compete for turf within.

Remember how Schindler's two couple utopian dwelling didn't work out for the two couples, and how it didn't even work out for Pauline and Rudolph Schindler either? Well it didn't work out for Laura and Jorge and it didn't work out for me and the 'architect' in my life either, and I can't even tell you what happened to Michael back in Taiwan. As for Rudolph and Pauline, it's worth considering that Pauline invested in more than an irreverence for her husband's smart, stark interior. Her dream was to make her home a 'democratic meeting place...where millionaires and laborers, professionals and illiterates, the splendid and ignoble meet constantly together'. And do you remember the aborted museum visit I spoke of earlier, where instead of taking my father and kid brother to see my drawings in the museum (hanging in a show with Cy Twombly no less!) we went to the mall? Well I finally invited that same twosome into my studio the other day. My brother, ignoble little guy, was quick to point out: "this isn't a 'studio' this is just some junky old room".

I haven't yet bothered to tell you about how I read *The Fountainhead* in High School, the book where Ayn Rand's genius-hero, Howard Roark, modeled after Frank Lloyd Wright (I always pictured Bowie), battled mediocrity and the cult of consensus at every turn, which included the bespectacled commie critic, Toohey, rhymes with phooey. I also didn't tell you that I wanted to be an architecture critic in college, after writing an impassioned essay about the International Style building in which most of my classes were held. All I did was get that tattoo I mentioned, remember,

Louis Sullivan, who, as you may know, was Frank Lloyd Wright's teacher. I have a history of not getting around to things. I got the number of a hypnotist from Jorge, the one who hypnotized him to stop smoking. I wanted Jorge's hypnotist to hypnotize me not to procrastinate writing the text which he had asked me to contribute to his book. After four smoke-free months, Jorge's back on the tobacco. As for me, I never experienced any benefits from the attempted reprogramming of my subconscious mind; the hypnotism failed to make even the slightest dint in the wall between me and my work. I keep thinking it's because I lied to the woman. She told me, 'You will enter into a deep sleep as soon as you feel your eyes rolling to the back of your head. Nod when you feel your eyes rolling to the back of your head.' My eyes didn't seem to be doing anything out of the ordinary and I was getting impatient for the deep sleep, so I just nodded 'yes' regardless. Then, not only did my procrastination not cease, but my headaches came more often. While in headache seclusion, one of the only acceptable combinations of light and noise is *I Love Lucy*. Recently, while attempting to distract myself from myself, or quite simply, my pain, I was watching a rerun or two. It dawned on me that Lucy McGillicutty-Ricardo was probably the single-most prominent housewife in my world courtesy of Ricky's world, show business. She was continually lured by the laudability which went hand in hand with her husband's line of work. She paced the cell of her tidy apartment until she could no longer help herself, driven, as she was – by celebrity – to the point of outrageous desperation. Is that the 'housewife' I feel like 'such' 'a'?