

***"Sometimes I wish I could just phone home"<sup>1</sup>***

**Domesticity, an embodied bridge**

Alexandra Romy

MAS curating under the direction of Dorothee Richter

ZHDK - Zürcher Hochschule der Künste

17 May 2022

---

<sup>1</sup> Mira Schor, *Wet on painting, feminism, and art culture*, Duke University Press, Durham & London 1997, p.191.

<b>1. Embodied bridge as methodology</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Queer phenomenology	4
1.2 Individualizing encounters - Crossing the bridge	5
<b>2. House - Subversive domesticity</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 A history of the dichotomy inside/outside in Europe	7
2.2 Sexuality of space	8
2.2.1 Representing the feminization of the house	8
2.2.2 Becoming windows	10
2.3. Subversion as an embodied bridge	11
2.3.1 The practice of everyday life, Michel de Certeau	11
2.3.2. Jeanne Dilman, 23, quai du commerce, 1080 Bruxelles	12
2.3.3 Embroideries	13
<b>3. Home - Dwelling in the artwork</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1 The concept of "oeuvre-habitats"	15
3.2 Dwelling into artworks, Carla Accardi, Triplice Tenda, 1969	17
<b>4. Bringing domesticity in white cubes</b>	<b>18</b>
4.1 Sexuality of white cube	19
4.2. Mona Hatoum, Terra Infirma, The Menil Collection, Houston, 2017-18	20
4.3. Lili Reynaud Dewar, Ceci est ma maison, Magasin, Grenoble, 2012	21
<b>5. Species of spaces</b>	<b>22</b>
5.1 Institutional cooperations/Schedule	22
5.2 Artists	22
5.3 Exhibition concept [IMAGE 16-23]	25
<b>6. Conclusion</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>7. Bibliography</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>8. Images</b>	<b>30</b>

*"Never forget that a political, economical or religious crisis will be enough to cast doubt on women's rights. These rights will never be vested. You'll have to stay vigilant your whole life. — Simone de Beauvoir"*

*My bed* is a sculpture made by Tracy Emin in 1998. After a mental breakdown, Emin stays in bed for a few days, she is asleep and semi-unconscious [IMAGE 1]. When she eventually wakes up, she gets out of bed, drinks some water, goes back to the bedroom and can't believe what she sees; an absolute mess and decay of her life<sup>2</sup>. Stained sheets, empty vodka bottles, full ashtray, used razor and handkerchieves. At this moment it strikes, she has to move the bed into a white cube... *My bed* is a domestic object. It wants to reach.

Domesticity as an aesthetic is used by artists to convey a sense of familiarity (or unfamiliarity?) which aims at connecting. An aesthetic *"is understood to mean not merely the theory of beauty, but the theory of the qualities of feeling"*<sup>3</sup>. A domestic aesthetic would in this sense be channeled by artworks that *"feel"* domestic. Among many, Vito Acconci, *Convertible Clam Shelter*, 1990; Fischli & Weiss, *Haus (House)*, 1987 or even Bruce Nauman, *Room with my soul left out/room that does not care*, 1984. But what is domesticity? As a word, domesticity means the state of being at home, devotion to family, domestic duty, a state of intimacy, the contrary of public life, a dichotomy between inside and outside, between private and public. Domesticity relates to one's home or house. A *house* is a spacial concept, the space where we physically dwell. A *home* is an idea, a feeling that is not necessarily located in a fixed place<sup>4</sup>. Domesticity naturally incorporates a tension as a house can be a shelter as much as it can be a prison. House is a power structure as well as a space where subversive, day to day *"little"* tactics of habitat develop. Home is everything that is familiar enough to be dwelled in; a language, a smell, an artwork,...

Within this essay, I will attempt to demonstrate that a domestic aesthetic is an embodied bridge toward an individualizing encounter. After defining the concepts and methodology, I will firstly deconstruct the house as a spacial concept - historically constructed and represented as a gendered feminine space of confinement - ; and secondly the home as an idea - as a vector of familiarity (or even unfamiliarity?). In the case of the *house*, I will observe that the resistance stratagems mobilized against a forced domesticity are themselves habitable; therefore using a

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uv04ewpiqSc> last visited on 16 May 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol.5, pp. 350-404. Trans and ed James Strachey, Hogarth Press, London 1953.

<sup>4</sup> Chiara Briganti & Kathy Mezei, *The domestic space reader*, University of Toronto, Toronto Buffalo London 2012, pp. 3-5.

domestic aesthetic can be recognized as a subversive tactic by artists to reach. In the case of the *home*, I will elaborate on the idea of "*oeuvres habitats*" (habitat artworks), meaning works that are built to be dwelled in, built to be familiar. Moreover, as I am using a phenomenological methodology, I will try - through the case studies - to understand how artists have brought domesticity into white cubes and how their strategies are livable. Finally, I will elaborate on my personal project, *Species of spaces*, a group show presented within the Walgreen Windows, project space of the Bass, Miami Beach.

## 1. Embodied bridge as methodology

### 1.1 Queer phenomenology

Through this essay, I will use orientation and the concept of "*embodied bridge*" as a methodology.

*"An embodied bridge is a polymorphic agent aiming at facilitating individualizing encounters; it can be shaped as an exhibition space, a work of art, a curatorial practice, an aesthetic,... It is a phenomenological concept used to orient our bodies toward an encounter through a process of individualization. Encountering might be achieved by being oriented to familiarity, reintroduction of the body, habitat artworks, subversive domesticity...[IMAGE 2]"*.

As humans, we have a tendency to orient ourselves toward what is familiar, toward feeling home. Orientation is a phenomenological concept as familiarity is shaped by the "*feel*" of space or how spaces "*impress*" upon bodies. In that sense, the body becomes a tool for being oriented as it finds its way to feel home. In her book, *Queer phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed states that "*familiarity is an effect of bodily inhabitation*"; inhabiting a space therefore involves a constant a dynamic negotiation between what is familiar and what is unfamiliar (or uncanny). We constantly have to decide which way to go, and where to turn. Following Sara Ahmed, "*A queer phenomenology, perhaps, might start by redirecting our attention toward different objects, those that are « less proximate » or even those that deviate or deviant*"<sup>5</sup>.

Orienting ourselves within a domesticity aesthetic might therefore mean searching for familiar places, places we can dwell in, places that facilitate an individualizing encounter. It can either mean searching for a direct familiarity - inhabitable environments - or looking at what deviates from the traditional and fixed concept of domesticity, trying to inhabit its subversion.

---

<sup>5</sup> All ideas and citations of the paragraph are borrowed from Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, Duke University Press, Durham & London, 2006, p. 6-8.



## 1.2 Individualizing encounters - Crossing the bridge

As I use orientation as methodology, I need a destination, or at least a direction. I therefore decide to orient myself toward an individualizing encounter. As the individualizing encounter is my landing's place, I decided take a small detour in order to attempt a definition.

Following Baptiste Morizot and Estelle Zhong Mengual essay, "*l'esthétique de la rencontre*" (i.e. *the aesthetic of the encounter*<sup>6</sup>) the contemporary art world is let by a digestion paradigm. Based on the model of our mass consumption habits, we absorb and digest the works of art. The rhythm is hectic. Like in a supermarket - the authors claim - one of the main challenge is to catch the eye; used to consume products directly miscible with the consumers. The metabolic operation of consumption is this the new model of reception of the art works - we digest them<sup>7</sup>.

The authors aim at developing an aesthetic - the encounter aesthetic - tending to a appropriation of the cultural field with the public, though the concept of encountering. They differentiate between three types of encounters; the non-encounter, the false encounter and the individualizing encounter. The non-encounter happens when the artist decides, as a resistance tactic, to refuse any affectivity of effectivity. In order to avoid being digested, the work of art choose to be indigestible<sup>8</sup>. The false encounter happens with art works whose first function is to « *fulfill the identified and pre-shaped needs of the viewers, to relax them when they are stressed, confirm an opinion on the world, comfort them and make them secure in a instability context, or provide an emotional roller coaster* »<sup>9</sup>. The viewer has obtained what they were expecting. In this context, the work of art does not restructure our being but rather confirm our way of being. The work of art is instrumentalized to fulfill the emotion needs of the viewers<sup>10</sup>.

Finally, and in order to explain how the encounter happens, it is necessary to delve into Gilbert Simondon concept of individual. The western concept of individuals considers identity as stable and fixed. The rhetorical core of the individual is supposedly its identity. The idea of individualization as put by Simondon is rather to consider that the identity is being transformed over time, in a never ending process. The individuality is not fixed, and the transformation happens - according to Simondon - through relations. The identity is therefore considered in a relational perspective, constituted through a historical relationship to exteriority. Morizot and Zhong Mengual claim - using Simondon's theories - that the encounter with the artworks shall be considered as a process of individualization, with

---

<sup>6</sup> All ideas and citation of this chapter are borrowed and freely translated from Baptiste Morizot et Estelle Zhong Mengual, *Esthétique de la rencontre, l'enigme de l'art contemporain*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, Octobre 2016.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.44

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.75.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.75-78.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.75.

transfiguration effects<sup>11</sup>. Through the reception of the form, the viewer takes the shape of the encounter they experience with the work of art. Everyone of us has, one day, read a poem, seen a painting, crossed an installation and felt that this presence has been an individualizing event, that transformed something, even if we were able to explain exactly what it was, it happened slowly, almost behind our back. This work transformed a part of our ways of feeling, perceiving, acting. It made our bodies more sensible and clever<sup>12</sup>. The individual is not passively transformed through exteriority but its individualization is transformed through the contact with exteriority. An encounter may therefore happen with a work that modulate our trajectories of individualization<sup>13</sup>. Within the frame of an aesthetic, we shall consider that it is not the work of art itself that is individualizing; but rather its presence on one hand and on the other, a certain opening to transformation with the individual. The encounter itself is individualizing<sup>14</sup>. Therefore if the aesthetic is not anymore based on a fixed conception of individuality but rather on a process of individualization; the focus of aesthetics changes. The goal is not anymore to isolate the internal criteria of a work (as the artwork itself is not individualizing) but to isolate the conditions favorable to a reception, as an individualizing encounter. In this perspective the formal qualities of the work become a condition of facilitation, as well as any other connecting strategies, like the qualities of the exhibition space itself. Working and being oriented toward an encounter thus create a space to think a way of directing or redirecting the contemporary art toward the public, through the encountering devices. Through the embodied bridges.

## **2. House - Subversive domesticity**

In the present paragraph, I will attempt to demonstrate that the historical concept of domesticity incorporates the confinement of the women's body in a closed space, the space of the house. This matter is phenomenological as it is about how we - as bodies - negotiate with the house as a built space and with domesticity as an idea. I will therefore try to deconstruct what domesticity means through a history of the dichotomy inside/outside in order to understand how subversive practices emerged, notably by the way of phenomenological movies or the practice of embroideries. If - through a queer phenomenology - we want to orient ourselves toward what we can dwell in; then we shouldn't direct ourselves toward houses *stricto sensu*. We should rather be oriented toward subversion. Subversion is the dwelling practice that constitutes the embodied bridge in the territory of domesticity.

---

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.88-90.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.81-82.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.88.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

## **2.1 A history of the dichotomy inside/outside in Europe**

The dichotomy between private and public appears in Europe<sup>15</sup> during the seventeenth century, with the raise of "Modernity". During Middle age, privacy, intimacy and comfort are unknown and unneeded concepts<sup>16</sup>. Life was a public affair as what mattered was the external world and one's place in it<sup>17</sup>. The household could count more than twenty five persons and include family members, employees, servants, apprentices. Medieval crafts were open to women who were for example chandlers, painters, ironmongers, netmakers, shoemaker, smith of goldsmiths<sup>18</sup>. In the absence of restaurant, bar, hotels, the house served as public meeting place for entertaining and transacting business<sup>19</sup>. The city house of a burgher was usually composed of one or two rooms including a hall where every activity took place, they slept, worked, ate, received people. Bed (if existing) were traditionally big and shared. Around three meters was normal<sup>20</sup>.

During the seventeen century, two main factors triggered a change toward a newly conceived intimacy/privacy. First the privatization of the house - it is no longer a place of work -; and second a specialization of rooms and the apparition of the bedroom. Before Modernity no frontier existed between professional and private life, between the domestic and public sphere. *"The household was the center of both domestic and mercantile activity, the workshop was in the dwelling area and member of the household works together at their trade"*<sup>21</sup>. With the apparition of the rental accommodation, many people - builders, lawyers, notaries, civil servants - no longer lived and work in the same building<sup>22</sup>. The house became private. The specialization of the house - apparition of the bedroom - and the intimacy it created promoted the concept of the *"couple"*. Before Modernity, intimacy didn't exist as we know it today as the *"couple"* was sleeping with the rest of the household. Sexuality - and even the wedding night - was a public matter<sup>23</sup>.

The concept of *"decoration"* and the fascination with furniture also arises in the seventeenth century. Before, furniture would be simply an equipment that would be moved from one room

---

<sup>15</sup> More precisely in North Europe.

<sup>16</sup> Witold Rybczynski, *Home, A short history of an idea*, Penguin books, London 1986, p. 28

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>18</sup> Rozsika Parker, *The subversive stitch, Embroidery and the making of the feminine*, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, London New-York Dubin, reprinted and revised 1996, firstly published by The Women's press Ltd, 1984, p. 46.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>20</sup> Witold Rybczynski, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>21</sup> Rozsika Parker, *op.cit.*, p.46.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.46.

<sup>23</sup> Witold Rybczynski, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

to another, an object of use<sup>24</sup>. With the raise of Modernity, the concept of *Stemming* - the sense of intimacy that is created by a room and its furniture - arises. The house and furniture is not only functional anymore but it conveys the character of its owner, it mirrors their soul, an emerging interior life<sup>25</sup>. As per Rozsika Parker: "*Home brought together the meaning of house and of household, of dwelling and of refuge, of ownership and of affection. Home meant the house but also everything that was in it and around it, as well as the people, and sense of satisfaction and contemned that all conveyed*"<sup>26</sup>.

## **2.2 Sexuality of space**

---

### *2.2.1 Representing the feminization of the house*

One of the consequence of this emerging dichotomy between private and public is the feminization of the domestic space and the isolation of women inside the house. This recent sexualization of space can be witnessed in paintings. Before Modernity, women have mostly been represented as Madonnas, saint or biblical characters<sup>27</sup>. The dutch paintings of the seventeenth century invent a new subject of representation; the ordinary woman in domestic scenes. The house becomes a women's territory, a place for specialized work, women's work<sup>28</sup>. On the contrary, male work and social life move in public space, outside the house. Representing women isolated also became another new phenomena. Medieval paintings have been representing women working, but alongside other women or men, they never alone<sup>29</sup>. The novelty of isolating women has been considered by researchers a strategy from the church and modern authorities to subdue and domesticate women; the witches hunt, for example, is a concretization of this strategy<sup>30</sup>. As per Parker "*the deliberate withdrawal of women from men has almost always seen as a potentially dangerous or hostile act, a conspiracy, a subversion, a needless and grotesque thing...*"<sup>31</sup>. Women now had to stay in the house, alone.

Jan Vermeer painting, *Soldier and Young girl smiling* is a good example depicting the newly sexualized spaces [IMAGE 3]. As described by Norman Bryson: "*The man occupies the left part of the painting, open to the light outside, he he has just entered the domestic space, and still*

---

<sup>24</sup> Witold Rybczynski, *op.cit.*, p.39.

<sup>25</sup> Witold Rybczynski, *op.cit.*, pp.40-43, 36.

<sup>26</sup> Rozsika Parker, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>27</sup> Witold Rybczynski, *op.cit.* p. 70.

<sup>28</sup> Rozsika Parker, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>29</sup> Witold Rybczynski, *op.cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>30</sup> See for example Silva Federici, *Caliban and the Witch, Women the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, Penguin Books Ltd, London 2004.

<sup>31</sup> Rozsika Parker, *op.cit.*, p. 55.

*wears the dashing hat of the great outdoors; against the hat is placed a map, symbol of that wider space of commerce which belongs exclusively to men. While his formally crooked elbow and hidden features indicate some degree of unease at entering the lesser domestic space, no such awkwardness attends the girl - she, not he, is truly at home in the interior world"*<sup>32</sup>.

With the raise of Modernity, sexuality itself was influenced by the new dichotomy inside/outside. During Middle age, sex was mostly linked to the collective ends of procreation and perpetuating the family and species, it was therefore considered public - or non-private -. Furthermore, demonstrations in public was more frequent, also given that the bedroom - and privacy - didn't exist<sup>33</sup>. As of the seventeenth century, the one-sex anatomical model that was prevailing was challenged and replaced by a "two-sex" model following which *"the difference between men and women is not a matter of distinction along a common gradient but a radical separation based on fundamental physiological differences. Women are not an undeveloped and subordinate version of men; they are biologically and naturally different from them—the "opposite" sex"*<sup>34</sup>. Another rising dichotomy.

A striking visual example of this new sexual differentiation might be found in *"Artistotle's master piece"* - first edited in 1684 - ; one the most popular proto-scientific manual about sex, pregnancy, child birth, and the roles of husband and wife [IMAGE 4]. It integrates the realm of the book of secrets of woman bodies<sup>35</sup> and the medical justification for women's restriction to the home and exclusion from public office<sup>36</sup>. The frontispieces of the book represents *"The Effigies of a Maid all hairy, and an Infant that was black by the Imagination of the parents"*. In one of the representation, the protagonists (woman and child) are illustrated entering a doctor/scholar study. The doctor/scholar sits at his desk, he is writing. The protagonists just passed the door, from where we are, we can observe the outside space. This frontispiece is striking for several reasons. First, the representation of both inside and outside space symbolizes a new sexualization of spaces that becomes gendered as well as a certain differentiation between culture and nature. Second, the internalization of the male authority within the female mind, can be symbolized by the scene of reading/writing<sup>37</sup>, what doctor writes shall now be assimilated by the woman's mind. The border inside/outside is therefore reinforced both physically and mentally.

---

<sup>32</sup> Norman Bryson, *Looking at the overlooked, four essays on still life painting*, Reaction Books Ltd, London 1990, p.159.

<sup>33</sup> Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity (Public, Private, and The Division of Knowledge)*, Johns Hopkins University Press. Kindle Edition, Baltimore 2005, p.529.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.484.

<sup>35</sup> Michael McKeon, *op.cit.*, p. 144.

<sup>36</sup> Rozsika Parker, *op.cit.*, p.62.

<sup>37</sup> Michael McKeon, *op.cit.*, p.500.

In contemporary cinema - which is still dominated by a male gaze<sup>38</sup> - the dichotomy inside/outside continues to be produced, notably through the representation of Pandora's box myth<sup>39</sup>. The popular culture, and overall cinemas, is created around emotional myths that our collective subconscious recognizes but that are somehow still hard to articulate. Pandora is one of these myths. Pandora represents a mask of beauty, an alluring exterior of feminine and dangerous seduction. By addressing an image of secret, hidden, concealed space, Pandora's myth *"generates a divided topography of inside and outside"*. The interior might refer to interiority, *"the psychic spaces of desire and anxiety and the private scenarios of feelings, a female sphere of emotion within the female sphere of domesticity"* as opposed *"to a masculine space; an outside, the sphere of adventure, movement and cathartic action in apposition to emotion, immobility, encloses space and confinement"*. Following Laura Mulvey *"In Pandora's box, the secrecy is reified as a box. However, the motif of the female body as container may also refer to womb, the enclosing space inside the mother's body that provides and instant source of connotation and a "poetic of space" quite common in culture."* Pandora's myth embodies the juxtaposition of Pandora and the box, being the topography of the female body and an enclosing space<sup>40</sup>. Pandora's box might for example be illustrated by Halle Berry's bikini in *Die another day* (2006) directed by Lee Tamahori or by Marilyn Monroe's iconic white dress in *The Seven Year Itch* (1955) directed by Billy Wilder. The apparels themselves represent Pandora's box; through a male gaze aesthetic, we - viewers - observe with a scopophilic urge. As the scenes are filmed to make us feel like we peep through a key hole, the observed bodies are automatically felt "inside" - belonging to a feminine space - while we, spectator, the Eye, have the feeling of remaining outside, in a masculine space.

---

### 2.2.2 Becoming windows

We previously identified that the raise of the inside/outside dichotomy has resulted in the confinement and isolation of women in their houses. Let's go a step further and consider how women have become houses themselves.

When the house became feminine, the window became a gendered borderline. In most of the Dutch interior paintings of the seventeenth century a woman by her presence *"decorates"* the window. Seated at the window, she is engaged in reading or sewing. This kind of activity seems to warrant her presence in the vicinity of the window. On the contrary, the eighteenth or nineteenth century picturing dutch woman at the window becomes very rare. This could be the result of a change in the interior architecture of the houses that aimed at removing women from

---

<sup>38</sup> For a definition of male gaze see Iris Brey, *Le regard fining, une Révolution à l'écran*, Edition de l'Olivier, Paris 2020 and Laura Mulvey, *Visual pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Screen, vol. 16, autumn 1975.

<sup>39</sup> Laura Mulvey, *Pandora: Topographies of the Mask and Curiosity*, in *Sexuality & Space* edited by Beatriz Colomina, Princeton Paper son Architecture, New York 1992, pp.53-71.

<sup>40</sup> All ideas and citations of the paragraph are borrowed from *Ibid.*, pp. 53-71.

the windows, leaving their maids the task of controlling and opening the door. Only the low-class woman would then be able to appear and the absence of the high-class women would ensure the virtue of the house. Hence, by the end of the eighteenth century, the "window" attitude of a woman marked their status. During the nineteenth century, the goal of domestication of working-class women and privatization of working-class family life required the retreat of working-class women from the window. With the apparition of the bow window in the 1920, the limit between vice and virtue was at its most, with the apparition of window prostitution, where prostitute would wait near the bow window inviting men by knocking on the window pans. Needless to explain how in today's Amsterdam, windows and women are still strongly associated<sup>41</sup>.

It is well known that in western civilization, the window is a symbol for virginity. The unbroken windowpane transmitting the bright sunlight symbolizes the virginal hymen, the very symbol of maidenhood, on the contrary open window or broken pans, are depicted in paintings of married or deflowered women. In this context becoming window might mean the incorporation of certain patriarchal values to the architectural space of the house; symbolizing women's body as a window, a living borderline<sup>42</sup>.

Numerous examples of the body-house iconography are to be found in art history. Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010), for example, executed a series of drawing and sculptures during the period she raised her children, that she called *femmes-maisons* [IMAGE 5]. Bourgeois expresses - in a very straightforward way - the imbrication of the woman body and the house and the strong duality embodied in domesticity, between trap and shelter. Another striking illustration; Rachel Whitehead's (1963\*) windows or doors sculptures. *Daylight* was made in 2010 [IMAGE 6]. It is a "window-shaped" sculpture cast out of transparent pink resin. The transparency blurs the window as borderline and inverses what is inside and what is outside, what is visible or invisible. Pink evokes the color of the flesh. Pink is also - in the contemporary imaginary - constructed as a feminine color. With *Daylight*, Whitehead plays with inversion of the gendered gaze and borderlines.

### **2.3. Subversion as an embodied bridge**

---

#### *2.3.1 The practice of everyday life, Michel de Certeau*

In the last paragraph, we have analyzed how the space of the house has been constructed as a gendered feminine space to the extent that women have even been considered as a part of

---

<sup>41</sup> All ideas and citations of this paragraph are borrowed from : Irene Cieraad, *Dutch Window, Female virtue and female vice*, in *At Home, An anthropology of domestic space*, Edited by Irene Cieraad, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse & New York 1999, pp. 31-52.

<sup>42</sup> All ideas and citations of this paragraph are borrowed from *Ibid.*, pp. 31-52.

architecture, as windows. In this paragraph, we will conclude by exposing the notion of subversive or appropriated domesticity, a practice that breaks free from the established myth and assume how it functions as an embodied bridge.

In his essay, *The practice of every life*, Michel de Certeau theorizes the subversive quality of daily practices. Following his arguments, the day-to-day routine (cooking, reading, walking, inhabiting a neighborhood, tinkering, home activities) have always been adopted as resistance techniques. For De Certeau, living - and the act of using - becomes a constant way of appropriation. As living is never a passive activity, appropriation becomes a possibility to take ownership of our surroundings. De Certeau most famous example is the act of reading; he states that "[the appropriation of the text by the reader] makes the text habitable in the manner of a rented flat. It transforms the property of the other into a place borrowed, for a moment, by a passer-by... Tenants make a similar mutation in the flat they furnish with their gestures and memories"<sup>43</sup>. Appropriation thus transforms an estate into a borrowed or occupied space, a livable space.

By adopting subversive practices, by deviating from an imposed domesticity, the work of art becomes a space of resistance, a reorientation that makes it familiar and thus habitable<sup>44</sup>. We will analyze two examples of subversive practices that function as embodied bridges; phenomenological cinema, and the practice of embroidery.

---

### 2.3.2. *Jeanne Dilman, 23, quai du commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*

A phenomenological cinema, a cinema that would orient itself toward a subversive familiarity, an habitable cinema, might be a cinema that investigates the body outside of any enclosing space, outside of any boxes, outside Pandora's myth. In her book, *Le regard féminin, une révolution à l'écran*, Iris Brey<sup>45</sup> addresses the concept of female gaze as "a look that makes us feel the experience of a female body on screen". This concept responds to the male gaze theory developed by Laura Mulvey defined as "the assumption in visual and creative arts that the default or desired audience consists of heterosexual males, and inclusion of women in narrative or art should seek to please this audience with the objectification or sexualization of these depicted women"<sup>46</sup>.

In the movie, *Jeanne Dilman, 23, quai du commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* directed by Chantal Ackerman in 1975, we follow the day-to-day life of Jeanne Dilman, housewife and prostitute

---

<sup>43</sup> Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien, 1. L'art de faire*, Gallimard, Paris 1990, xlix.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p.55 & 64-65.

<sup>45</sup> Iris Brey, *op.cit.*, p.9.

<sup>46</sup> Laura Mulvey, *Visual pleasures, op cit.*



[IMAGE 7]. Jeanne lives with her son who studies in the Flemish high-school. During the 3 hours and 20 minutes of the movie, we observe Jeanne in her day to day routine. She peels the potatoes, closes the doors, switches the lights on and off, she combs her hair, makes the bed. Her routine is uninterrupted. The flat and the objects living in the flat and repetitively manipulated by Jeanne become actors on their own. Or is it Jeanne who becomes an object? The sounds of her heels on the floor and of the doors closing are disturbing. As spectators, we experience the movie with our bodies, even the act of waiting take us back to our corporealities. In the morning, Jeanne makes the bed of her son. Then, she makes her own bed and eventually places a towel on the coversheet. The towel is a work accessory, it is used as a boundary between her private life (the bed) and her work (prostitution). We don't see what happens in the room when Jeanne is working. When her clients leave, Jeanne puts the money in the soup tureen laying on the table. Every night for dinner, she moves the tureen to install the table cloth and dresses the table.

Jeanne Dilman is subversive for several reasons. First, it is a phenomenological movie that breaks with the standard and gendered conventions of filming. There is no male gaze. The plans are fixed, the camera never moves, it doesn't follow Jeanne, neither closes-up on any part of her body. We are just here, like we were inside the room, seated on a chair; instead of observing or peeping on her, we accompany her. Sometimes Jeanne gets out of the screen, then she comes back, she is busy with her domestic life and we follow her. Second, Jeanne herself is subversive as she blurs the category to which woman are supposed to belong as she is a housewife and a prostitute - one can traditionally only be one of them -. Third, the temporality, the day-to-day routine of Jeanne is filmed with a realistic frame time. When she cooks or take a shower, there is no cut, time is not artificial, not arranged up for cinematographic purposes, it is real. The temporality situates the movie in real life. It echoes our ways of inhabiting. Finally, at the end of the movie, Jeanne eventually breaks free by killing one of her client. After stabbing him with a scissor, she sits at the dinner table.

Jeanne Dilman is a subversive space that we are are invited to appropriate and inhabit with our bodies. Through an aesthetic of domesticity, she is an embodies bridge, she wants to reach and transform.

---

### 2.3.3 Embroideries

Firstly published during the second wave of feminism, *The subversive stitch*, by Rozsika Parker, aimed at deconstructing the essentialism that linked needlework with femininity. Parker develops the idea that woman embroideries has not been considered as "art", but rather as an expression of femininity. During the Renaissance, a division between craft and art emerged. On the side of craft, embroidery was a feminine activity, as women would stitch at home, as a hobby out of love. On the contrary, painting was considered art, because produced by men, in the

public sphere, professionally, for money<sup>47</sup>. Embroidery in that sense was used to signify sexual difference<sup>48</sup>.

Embroidery signifies both self containment and submission, is linked with women's powerlessness. Embroidery was also linked with women's sexuality as it evokes the stereotype of the virgin as opposed to the prostitute<sup>49</sup>. Following Parker *"No other activity so successfully promoted the qualities that renaissance man anxious to define sex difference, wanted in a wife, embroidery combined the humility of needlework with rich stitchery. It connotes opulence and obedience. It ensured that women spent long ours at home, retires in private yet it made a public statement about the household's position and economic standing"*<sup>50</sup>.

On the other side, embroidery has provided a weapon of resistance to the constraints of femininity<sup>51</sup>. It has sometimes *"lead women to an awareness of the extraordinary constraints of femininity, provided at times a means of negotiating with them, and at other times provoking a desire to escape"*<sup>52</sup>. This resistance can be found on many level. First of all, the mind space, the one dedicated to creation itself, a free and personal space - maybe a room of our own -. It can then be embodied in representing subversive subjects that don't depict the idea of femininity but women's potential for heroic actions - for example Esther and the Hanging of Jaman, Judith decapitating Holofernes, Joel driving a tent peg through Sizer's temple<sup>53</sup>. Finally, and since women were not allowed to be educated in art schools, it could be located in the development of alternative areas of practice, for example working with alternative materials such as shells, feathers, paper collage<sup>54</sup>.

Historical illustration of subversive stitches in the contemporary practice would in any event encompass Tracy Emin's iconic, *Everyone that I ever slept with 1963-1995*, a tent where Emin stitched names of people she slept with [IMAGE 8]. Renée Green, *Mise-en-scène, commemorative toile*, is an other striking example [IMAGE 9]. Green developed a fabric that she used to garnish eighteenth century furniture. The fabric mixes bucolic scenes of life with the atrocity of slavery. By displaying the furniture in a living room setting, Green deviates the power structure embodied in a violent domesticity and appropriates it. She changes the narratives.

---

<sup>47</sup> Rozsika Parker, *op.cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p.81.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.31.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p.99.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.120.

In the case of embroidery, the subversion against a forced/abusive domesticity is channeled by the artists in order to reach. As domesticity is historically constructed in violence, the only inhabitable place becomes what deviates from it. In developing tactics to survive, artists suggest alternative ways of inhabiting that become embodied bridges.

### 3. Home - Dwelling in the artwork

In the last chapter I have deconstructed domesticity as a power structure related to the - feminine - gendered space of the house and attempted to demonstrate that embodied bridges exist in the subversive practices constructed against this forced domesticity. In this present chapter I want to focus on the concept of "*home*" and attempt to demonstrate that artworks can be a place of dwelling, therefore they can facilitate an individualizing encounter. As stated before, a home doesn't depend on a house. "*Home is (...) a homeland, homeboy, homegirl; it is a mother tongue, the basis of an individual's identity in a sense of origin and place; home is where you come from, where your emotional nature is structured and protected, where you are best known and most anonymous*"<sup>55</sup>.

#### **3.1 The concept of "oeuvre-habitats"**

In his essay, *Espaces relationnels: le statut de l'oeuvre-habitat*<sup>56</sup> (i.e. Relational spaces: the status of habitat-artwork), Nicolas Bourriaud theorizes the concept of "*oeuvres-habitat*" (i.e. habitat artwork). For Bourriaud, artworks are traditionally designed in response or related to architecture (i.e. dwelling/living spaces), there is therefore a dilemma between art and architecture, being to understand which one contains the other. To solve this dilemma artists either define the artwork as a proposition of space built in monumentality, or suggest new ways of inhabiting what is already built. As architecture "*embodies human situations and social relationships*"<sup>57</sup> only the second proposition is inhabitable because it is the sole option for the artist to avoid submitting to an existing social order, a certain power structure embodied in architecture. As a consequence, an "*oeuvre-habitat*" would be an artwork that suggest new possibilities of dwelling, an artwork in which we can inhabit, that - through a certain familiarity (or unfamiliarity?) - feels like home. It is a kind of embodied bridge.

While architecture has been the matrix for art for centuries, this principle changes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the raise of the private market and with it, the apparition of portable paintings and sculptures. Later on, the avant-garde movements

---

<sup>55</sup> Mira Schor, *Op.cit.*, pp.191-192.

<sup>56</sup>All ideas and citations of this chapter are borrowed and freely translated from Nicolas Bourriaud, *Espaces relationnels: le statut de l'oeuvre-habitat* in *Formes et trajets*, Tome 1: Hétérochronies, Les presses du réel, JRP | Ringier, Dijon & Zürich 2018, pp. 152-162.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p.157.

considered architecture as an utopian fulfillment for their ideas, achieved in monumentality. In the 1960' the dilemma seemed solved with the apparition of "*in situ*" project. It however appears that - even within *in situ* propositions - the relationship between art and architecture only became fruitful when the building was questioned or its ideological foundations were questioned<sup>58</sup>, leaving the dilemma unsolved<sup>59</sup>.

For Bourriaud monumentality cannot work as a relational space, or - using embodied bridge vocabulary - it is not a condition of facilitation toward an individualizing encounter. In this sense, when artists build a space they own - meaning without considering how it is inhabited - then it should be regarded only as an auxiliary to private property, a "*petit-bourgeois*" apprehension of the space itself. The artist would only give us a tour of their house<sup>60</sup>, there is no encounter, the work cannot be inhabited because it is only built in monumentality, and it limits itself to respond to the existing power structures.

On the contrary, when the artist stops building in monumentality and try to destroy any form of alienation related to architecture by making propositions or project to allow us to inhabit what is already built, the work becomes familiar and therefore inhabitable. In this sense, the artist shall not be seen as an owner but rather a tenant, or even better, a squatter<sup>61</sup>. Intimacy shall be reintegrated as well as weak projects in a dynamic of meaning by using the house, the buildings, the urban space in their concrete reality of inhabitant situations<sup>62</sup>. When working through intimacy/familiarity artists generate shapes that are meant to create ways of inhabiting, what we call "*oeuvres-habitats*"<sup>63</sup>. When we can dwell into the artworks, through familiarity, they work as embodied bridges. In this sense, this theological conception of the work and its relations might be read and completed by Simondon's theory regarding individualizing encounters. It is only when the work might be inhabited through familiarity that it can perform as an embodied bridge.

Following Bourriaud, the brain-house of the artists is a internalized social model, it forms a domestic matrice, i.e. "*oikos-nomos*" from which the artworks unfold. The artists themselves become the neighborhood, building, shelter and allow us to experiment this possibility of dwelling. The strategies to reach might vary, Bourriaud cites for example Bruce Nauman who

---

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.152-162.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 153-154.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p.158.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.152-162.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p.159.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.152-162.

encounters through phenomenology; Gordon Matta-Clark and Rirkrit Tirvanaija through conviviality; Daniel Buren through criticism; Fabrice Hyber through scientific reflexions<sup>64</sup>.

As artworks are not themselves individualizing but only a condition of facilitation toward an individualizing encounter, I will not decide which strategy is successful and which one is not. I will however analyze an artwork that I - personally - want to inhabit, that work for me as a way of encountering.

### **3.2 Dwelling into artworks, Carla Accardi, *Triplice Tenda*, 1969**

Carla Accardi (1924 - 2014) was an Italian painter. Between 1965 and 1971, Accardi reshapes her practice in an attempt to overtake a certain hegemonic formalism and reach shapes that aim at fusing art and life. Accardi's practice is connected to the Italian feminism of the 60'. She describes her work as *"the pleasure of doing a useless product: a product that doesn't come from an activity that I have, that doesn't serve to relax me either, that is not a substitution, a product that is only doing this gesture, finding the time to do it, that's it. Afterwards - since we have learned to suffer, to really live in life - then, in these hours, we only put the thing we do"*<sup>65</sup>. Accardi expresses the idea that women's creativity was socially associated with traditionally depreciated practices as opposed to masculine *"important gestures"*. She criticizes a phallogentric conception of art which aspires to the sublime through a creative process that is detached from the material and subjective conditions of life. Accardi practice aims at deconstructing the myth of individual creativity by introducing elements that relate to life. She aims at relocating creativity from the idea of transcendence - or the artist as genius - toward material contingencies of human life. Opposing day-to-day gestures to the myth of individual creativity thus become a political gesture. Accardi is interested in useless gestures as a way to escape the masculine logic of productivity<sup>66</sup>.

*Triplice Tenda* is a full-size circular tent of clear plastic marked in patterns of pale-pink paint. *Triplice tenda* is an environment, where two people can enter at once [IMAGE 10]. Through the transparency of the material, *Triplice tenda* tests the distinction between interior and exterior; between the intimacy of the habitat and the public realm. By combining the use of modern materials and home decoration, *Triplice tenda* evokes a sense of domestic life and an architectural experience based on nomadism and precariousness. This work is not only an hybrid shape that intermingles painting, sculpture and architecture; it also presents itself as a space where it is possible to experience another way of inhabiting the world. In their articulation

---

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p.162.

<sup>65</sup> All ideas and citations of this paragraph are borrowed and freely translated from Giovanna Zapperi, *Carla Accardi, Le temps du travail et les gestes de la vie* in *Les Mots de la pratique, dits et écrits d'artistes*, under the direction of Christophe Viart, Le mot et le reste, Marseille 2018, p.184.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.177-190.

of the individual and the collective, Accardi's environments appear both as objects to be observed and as spaces where the subjects enter into a relationship with each other, proposing an active participation instead of a simple look. Cohabitation of the pictorial sign and the experience of space, which also indicates for her an overcoming of formalism, precisely because it raises the question of experience and therefore of the relationship between art and life<sup>67</sup>. *Triplice tenda* is a "*oeuvre-habitat*", an artwork built outside monumentality, but rather thought to host bodies, that triggers imagination and new narrative related to subversive ways of dwelling. For me it is an embodied bridge.

#### **4. Bringing domesticity in white cubes**

In the last chapter I developed the idea of "*oeuvres-habitat*" as a space built by artists to be inhabited, therefore functioning as an embodied bridge. In this present chapter I will develop further on what are the technics used by artists to bring a domestic aesthetic - gendered in femininity - into institutions/white cube - gendered in masculinity -. I will firstly analyze how the white cube is a masculine gendered space and secondly elaborate on two case studies where artists have chosen to reintegrated the body in order connect with the audience and transform the white cube in a livable space; Mona Hatoum at Menil collection (Houston, 2017-18) and Lili Reynaud Dewar, at Magasin (Grenoble, 2012). My point is not to create an essentialist case about the gender of spaces but try to understand how two differently constructed places (i.e. house, inside and white cube, outside) merge.

As a disclaimer, I will not develop on projects that have been using the house as exhibition space to create ways of encountering. We can nevertheless cite two of them; firstly *Womanhouse* was an installation and a performance space organized by artists Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro, and their women students of the California Institute of the Arts Feminist the program. It took place in an abandoned house in Los Angeles in 1971 and was the first public installation of Feminist art. Let's also mention the iconic "*Chambres d'amis*" curated by Jan Hoet, director of the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst in Ghent in 1986. Jan Hot chose to present 52 international artists in 58 private homes, outside the walls of the museum, taking art out of its institutional places and extending it to less normative and less consecrated places.

---

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 177-190.

#### 4.1 Sexuality of white cube

The white cube is the hegemonic form of exhibition space since the 30'<sup>68</sup>; still today, most of the institutions and galleries are white cubes. But how is it gendered? In her essay *"Pour une esthétique de l'émancipation"* (i.e. For an aesthetic of emancipation) Isabelle Alfonsi outlines that the white cube *"embodies and reaffirms the division between mind and body, that founds the occidental philosophy, valorizing what comes out of the mind - generally attached to masculinity - and undermines what is linked to the body - generally attached to femininity"*. She continues *"The white cube witnesses our presence as consumers rather than active or emancipated viewers, we don't live in the exhibition space when it presents the characteristics of the white cube"*<sup>69</sup>.

On the same idea of a body-ban and mind/body duality, Tony Bennett explains in *The Birth of Museum*, that *"museums treat visitors as, essentially, 'minds on legs'"*<sup>70</sup>.... *"The museum, that is to say, explicitly targeted the popular body as an object for reform, doing so through a variety of routines and technologies requiring a shift in the norms of bodily comportment. This was accomplished, most obviously, by the direct proscription of those forms of behavior associated with places of popular assembly by, for example, rules forbidding eating and drinking, outlawing the touching of exhibits and, quite frequently, stating - or at least advising - what should be worn and what should not. In this way, while formally free and open, the museum effected its own pattern of informal discriminations and exclusions"*<sup>71</sup>.

As the white cube's ideology is linked to a praise of the mind over the body, as an easement of the body through a body ban, and provided that the space of the mind is a traditionally linked to masculinity, the white cube might be considered masculine. Furthermore, provided that the white cube has been constructed as a space of informal discrimination, it is somewhere we are not allowed to dwell, it doesn't carry familiarity.

---

<sup>68</sup> The white cube aesthetic has various roots that come together in the Museum of Modern art of New York in the 30's. The typical display of the white cube would present white neutral walls (i.e. compared to previous practices of displaying on colored walls) for the reason that « the white 'neutral' container (...) permitted a flexible arrangement of the work on show and offered the visitor a calm yet dynamic viewing experience». In the typical white cube, the space is supposed to be as objective as possible, the preexisting characteristics of the space are therefore erased as much as possible. For a history of exhibition spaces, see Charlotte Klonk, *Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800-2000*, Yale University Press, 2009, p.138.

<sup>69</sup> Isabelle Alfonsi, *Pour une esthétique de l'émancipation*, B42, Paris 2019, pp. 50-56.

<sup>70</sup> Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum; History, Theory, Politics*, Routledge, London and New York 1995, p.6.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, p.100.

#### **4.2. Mona Hatoum, *Terra Infirma*, *The Menil Collection*, Houston, 2017-18**

Mona Hatoum is a London-based, Palestinian artist (\*1952). Hatoum's works often revolve around the idea of home and displacement. In the exhibition *Terra Infirma*, Hatoum investigates the Uncanny. "*As conceptualized by Sigmund Freud, (the uncanny) is an instance in which something is simultaneously foreign and familiar, evoking a sense of discomfort and even terror. Transforming the everyday through nuanced and playful interventions, the uncanny has long held the power to unsettle a secure sense of place and reality within the history of modern and contemporary art*"<sup>72</sup>. Hatoum's sculptures encompass a domestic aesthetic and thus a strong tension between comfort and danger, they situate themselves between ease and dread.

In order to bring a domestic aesthetic into the white cube, one of Hatoum's strategy was to reintroduce the body. As the artist explains, it is critical to display the artworks in relation to architecture<sup>73</sup>. With the view of merging artworks, body and architecture Hatoum plays with scale. For example, in *La Grande Broyeuse* [IMAGE 11] she reproduced a device designed to slice vegetables that she found in her mother's kitchen and she dramatically enlarged it in order for the central drum to be big enough to accommodate a body. Another tactic to reach is to play with the dichotomy between familiarity/unfamiliarity. *Misbah* [IMAGE 12] - on one hand - is a brass rotating lantern that projects shapes and light on the walls. *Misbah* feels very comforting as it a night light created to make us feel safe. On the other *Homebound*, 1999 [IMAGE 13] - a room size tableaux of kitchen utensils threaded together by a crackling wire of live electricity - feels very much dangerous for our corporealities, if we go too close, we might get hurt, this hazard is also embodied by the fence around the installation. Finally, Hatoum works on the dichotomy inside/outside - typically constructed with domesticity as we established before -. *Impenetrable* [IMAGE 14] is a "forest" of black finished still and fishing wire. We encounter the work by being invited to walk around it and see through it, but without being allowed to penetrate because we would injure ourselves.

In *Terra Infirma*, Hatoum attempts to reconcile domesticity with white cube firstly by merging artworks, body and architecture and secondly by emphasizing the tension, the dichotomy between familiarity and unfamiliarity. She might try to ask us, to what extend is the uncanny/unfamiliar habitable? To what extend - paradoxically - it works as an embodied bridge?

---

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.menil.org/exhibitions/247-mona-hatoum-terra-infirma> last visited on 16 May 2022.

<sup>73</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=304&v=H-xKU\\_v6Qc4&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=304&v=H-xKU_v6Qc4&feature=emb_logo) last visited on 16 May 2022.



#### 4.3. Lili Reynaud Dewar, *Ceci est ma maison*, Magasin, Grenoble, 2012

Lili Reynaud Dewar (\*1975) is a French artist based in Paris. *Ceci est ma maison*, *This is my House* is the title of a show held in 2012 at Magasin, Grenoble (FR). As we will see, this show blurs - on many levels - the distinction between an home/house and white cube.

First through the topography and performance. The exhibition follows a certain non logical map, or route created in order to disorient the visitors. Each room of the exhibition is named after a house room (living room, study, etc...). The route is disorganized and the signalization is emphasized by the number-sculptures. The number-sculptures are of various dimensions and installed to disturb the installation, sometimes placed in the middle of the room, they can also be seen as street numbers, which resonates with the dichotomy inside/outside. During the performances, Reynaud Dewar dances through the space of the exhibition, she moves and becomes herself an artwork, she literally fuses with the space [IMAGE 15]<sup>74</sup>.

Second through a feminist discourse. Reynaud Dewar treats the exhibition space as the only possible place of habitat for a women artist, even if the lease is limited and precarious. She treats the exhibition space as a house, but also considers the artist as a tenant, and not an owner. This position reacts to the Neo-liberal politics that promotes access to propriety, with the consequence that rents are increasingly expensive impacting on our relationship to space and domesticity<sup>75</sup>.

Renaud Dewar also addresses a certain kind of subversion toward an imposed domesticity. In a video and installation, *Céda's chairs*, the artist's grandmother - Céda- recounts how the only independent and "creative" space that she had as a housewife was the decoration of the house. It was only aspect of her life where she was financially autonomous, that is to say, although dependent on her husband, he did not care about the money spent on the "decoration costs" of the house and did not intervene in her choices<sup>76</sup>.

Third through the relation between art and design. In the *Ceci est ma maison*, the artist plays with an ambiguity between design objects/decoration and sculptures. Without searching any essentialist postulate about a kind of practice, Reynaud Dewar conducts a reflection on a certain marginality and confinement. The decorative as she perceives it, aims at articulating a discourse about gender, playing with the borders of taste, what is acceptable as sculpture. Blurring the border between design and art is a way of shaking the myth of sculpture history, mostly masculine. While addressing the presence of design in the exhibition, Reynaud Dewar uses the

---

<sup>74</sup> All ideas and citations of this sub-chapter are borrowed from Yves Aupetitallot, *Conversation with Lili Reynaud Dewar before This is my place*, Magasin, Grenoble 2012, pp.111-125.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 111-125.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 111-125.

term Trojan horse. She explains *"How a form that resembles a "camp" dressing-table to the point where it could be taken for one, utilitarian, entertaining, and referencing Art Deco in the bargain (I am thinking here of the Plaza dressing-table by Memphis which is shown in the exhibition), in reality conceals far more complicated intentions, and how that concealment allows this form to penetrate problematic spaces and destroy them from inside"*<sup>77</sup>.

Through the integration of her own body, in connection with the "prop" number-sculptures, Reynaud Dewar becomes furniture herself. In *Ceci est ma maison*, Reynaud Dewar uses her own physicality in relation with a feminist research about objects and neoliberalism as ways of encountering. She might become, herself, an embodied bridge.

## 5. Species of spaces

### 5.1 Institutional cooperations/Schedule

Species of spaces is a group show co-curated with Leilani Lynch including Annabelle Agbo Godeau, Maya Hottarek, Zoé de Soumagnat, Clifford E. Bruckmann, Lauren Coullard, Anne-Laure Franchette, Bella Hunt & ddc, Julie Monot, Pauline Cordier and Jessy Razafimandimby. Species of spaces takes place in the Walgreen Windows, the project space of the Bass, contemporary art museum in Miami Beach. The Walgreen Windows takes the shape of two storefront windows attached to a drugstore. Spaces of spaces is on view from the 29th November 2021 to 30 June 2022.

The Walgreens Windows project space is funded by Walgreens, in partnership with The Bass. Featuring site-specific projects by emerging and local artists on a rotating basis, this collaboration furthers The Bass' mission to share the power of contemporary art through experiences that excite, challenge and educate.

### 5.2 Artists

**Annabelle Agbo Godeau** lives and works in Düsseldorf (GER). Agbo Godeau was born in France in 1995. After her DNASP at the Beaux-Arts de Paris in 2018, she moved to Germany to study with Ellen Gallagher at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. Her work has notably been the subject of two solo exhibitions in 2021: *A spectacular woman* BPA Space, Cologne; *Stop searching (I got everything you need)*, Sonneundsolche, Düsseldorf. Agbo Godeau is nominated for the Revelations Emerige Prize in 2021 By cutting and pasting fragments from various sources onto the surface of the canvas, Annabelle Agbo Godeau creates fantastical settings

---

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 111-125.

where a profusion of symbolic details, ambiguous texts and false pretenses are in dialogue. Her paintings draw from internet subcultures, 20th century fetish content and mythological tales.

**Anne-Laure Franchette** lives and works in Zürich (CH). She holds a DEA in Contemporary art History from University Paris 10 (FR), a MFA Fine Arts from Zürich University of the Arts (CH) and works as a research assistant at Luzern University (Cultural Studies). In her practice, Anne-Laure Franchette explores contemporary urban textures and narratives through botany, landscape and urban design, temporary construction structures and sites. She is especially interested in questions of labour, representations and manifestations of hierarchies of dignity (related to beings, objects or practices), as well as strategies of self organization and representation. She is part of the interdisciplinary study group TETI (textures and experiences of trans-industriality), whose activities involves workshops, exhibitions, talks, walks, cooking and publications. In 2013 she initiated both the Zurich Art Space Guide, a listing of artist run spaces, and VOLUMES, an organization researching and showcasing art publishing practices. [www.annelaurefranchette.com](http://www.annelaurefranchette.com)

**Julie Monot** lives and works in Lausanne (CH). Monot holds a Bachelor's degree in Visual Arts from HEAD in Geneva (2017) and a Master's degree in Visual Arts from ECAL in Lausanne (2019). Her artistic practice is inscribed in different mediums such as installation, sculpture, performance and video. Her research has, among other things focused, on the limit zones of bodily exteriority and its modes of representation. The notion of figure is part of her specific interests, because this notion is polysemic and shifting, but especially, because it allows a figural space, a critique on our social constructions. The accessory of transformation, the costume, the prosthesis, the body "furniture" and its objects in connection with a praxis are part of her daily reflections. Monot previous shows include Cabinet Studiolo, Milan (2022); Fondation Thalie, Brussels (2021); Centre culturel suisse, Paris (2021); Walgreen Windows, The Bass, Miami Beach (2021); Mumok, Vienna (2021); L'Arsenic, Lausanne (2021); La ferme de La Chapelle, Genève (2020); La Becque, La tour de Peilz (2020).

**Bella Hunt & ddc** is an French-American duo of artists living and working in Marseille, France. The duo explores vernacular lores and popular folklore offering an idea of ornamentation as care; in its relationship with nature, life and humanity. Bella Hunt & ddc encompasses a domesticity aesthetic fusing high and low culture and designing a new narrative through an historical lingo. Bella Hunt & ddc previous exhibitions include, Everyday gallery (Antwerp, 2021); Manifesta (Marseille 2020); Musée Regional d'art contemporain d'Occitanie (MRAC) (Sérignan, 2019); Fondation Ricard price curated by Neil Beloufa (Paris, 2018); Pré-capital notably curated by Nicolas Bourriaud at MOCO Panacée (Montpellier 2017); Truth and consequences (Geneva, 2017).

**Lauren Coullard** lives and works in Paris, France. Coullard holds a BFA from Ecole Supérieure d'Arts de Paris-Cergy (FR) and MFA with distinction from Chelsea College of Art &

Design of London (UK). Previous exhibitions include, Les Limbes, Saint-Etienne (FR); Doc, Paris (FR); Palomar Project curated by Elena Cardin (FR); Mountains, Berlin (GER); A.ROMY, Geneva (CH); Lily Robert, Paris (FR); Galerie Vallois, Paris (FR); C4RD, London (UK); Silicon Malley, Lausanne (CH); New Bretagne Belle Air, Essen (GER). Her work was featured in Artforum, Libération, Daily Lazy, Beaux-Arts Magazine, Tzvetnik and others.

**Jessy Razafimandimby** is a Swiss and Madagascan artist living and working in Geneva (CH). Razafimandimby's practice encompasses painting, drawing, sculpture and performance. Formally, Razafimandimby takes references from a bygone world, including interior design, architecture, jazz music and cinema from the 1960s and 1970s. In his work, Razafimandimby addresses social and family interactions, questioning the myths constructed around domesticity by the society and the individuals. Razafimandimby is one of the winners of the Kunstpreis Kiefer Hablitzel 2021 - Swiss Art Awards. He has had solo shows at Sans titre (2016), Paris (2022); Art au Centre Genève, Geneva (2021); 13 vitrine, Renens (2021); Espace HIT, Geneva (2021); Arsenic, Lausanne (2020); 1.1., Basel (2020). In 2023, the artist will be the subject of a solo exhibition at A.ROMY, Zurich.

**Maya Hottarek** lives and works in Biel/Bienne Switzerland. Hottarek's work interacts with various media and usually revolves around a certain topic. A fundamental interest of hers is to articulate the complex interactions or synergies between the individual, society and the economy, to explore network systems. Hottarek relates all of these themes to our basic needs, including Nature, for example, which she considers the most fundamental need. Inspired by everyday life. Hottarek attempts through various methods to filter the simplicity of existence, and questions the notion of perception. Hottarek previous exhibitions include, A.ROMY, Zürich, CH (2021); Krone/Couronne, Biel, CH (2021); Kunsthalle, Basel, CH (2020); Public art Biennale, Morcote, CH (2020); Burial of the white man, with Exile gallery, Vienna, AUT (2020); Sattelkammer, Bern, CH (2019); Sonnenstube, Lugano, CH (2019 and 2021); Ballostar Mobile, Bern, CH (2019); Testdrive, Nicosia, Cyprus (2018); Documenta 14, Kassel, GER (2017); Kunsthalle, Bern, CH (2017); Kunsthaus Langenthal, CH (2017). Hottarek is notably in the collections of Canton of Bern and Basel, as well as in Museum Allerheiligen.

**Clifford E. Bruckmann** lives and works in Zürich. Bruckmann applies this variant of qualia theory - the study of the subjective experiential content of an experience - to objects and situations characteristic of the Western present: Vacation homes, sports halls, mass-produced furniture or airports. In this way, he creates a common ground for shared experiences with viewers. These settings function as strategies for the equally artificial and controlled production of subjective memories, whose claim to truth Bruckmann thus critically questions.

**Zoé de Soumagnat** lives and works in Paris. In the work of Zoé de Soumagnat, these two dimensions – society against intimacy, lightness against texture, figure against background – come together to represent the heterogeneous complexity of a desire passing in a continuous

rhythm from image to sculpture, from dream to reality. Here geometric abstraction slides menacingly towards representation; light textures (rubbed, brushed, transparent) penetrate deep blacks while overlaid images float like screens across the canvas, souvenirs of art and painting. Meanwhile the references to comic-book lines, to the urban strokes of neon signs, to the flatness of textile motifs and to feminine archetypes become channels for a seriousness, an anguish and a black irony. De Soumagnat previous exhibitions include Les Bains Douches, Alançons, FR (2020); Unanimous consent, Zürich, CH (2022); Zone Mista London, UK (2017); Edouardo Secco Comtemporary, Florence, IT (2016).

**Pauline Cordier** lives and works in Geneva. Pauline Cordier's sculptures are composed of elements directly extracted from the daily context, reproduced objects, assumed forms, found fragments. The elements are contaminated to reinvent new forms and exploit different materialities impregnated with the sensations of our daily encounters. The artist's practice is to explore the potentiality of these elements by interpreting them, modifying them and determining them with regard to the place that welcomes them. The space in which these different forms are received is a factor attributed to his production. This work is anchored in an approach to sculpture as an expression of a language specific to the space where it is found. Depending on the space, this language is hypothetically sought after and takes measures that determine the layout, writing and enunciation of these creations. Last exhibition include Art az centre, Geneva, CH (2022); Les Halles, Porrentruy, CH (2021); Circuit, Lausanne, CH (2021); A.ROMY, Geneva, CH (2020), Salon de Montrouge, FR (2019).

### **5.3 Exhibition concept [IMAGE 16-23]**

*"To live is to pass from one space to another, while doing your very best not to bump yourself"*<sup>78</sup>.

*Species of spaces* is an exhibition based on the an attempt to feel Geroges Perec's typology of spaces; to assess it with the body. The book invites us to interrogate space *"or better to read it"*. Following Perec *"what we call everyday life is not an obvious fact but a blindness, a form of anesthesia"*<sup>79</sup>. Perec's description goes from the space of a page, to the bed, apartment, country side, world. In one of his list, Perec elaborates on what is for him uninhabitable, he enumerates: *"towns that smell bad, the architecture of contempt or display, thousands of rabbits hutches piled one above the other, the airless, the small, the mean, the shrunken, the very precisely calculated, wall with broken glass, judas windows, reinforced doors, townships, the corridors of the Métro, public baths, hotel bedroom, prisons, old people's homes, school playgrounds, converted attics, exclusive small garden, exceptional value,..."*<sup>80</sup>. *Species of spaces* is based on

---

<sup>78</sup> Georges Perec, *Espèce d'espaces*, Editions Galilée, Paris 1974.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, back cover.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p.89.

description, there is no conclusions or generalizations. *Species of spaces* is a soft drill at the end of which we would possibly be able to feel the habitable as well as the inhabitable.

Describing the exhibition, we would begin with the space itself, which already encompasses a tension and feels somehow misplaced. The Walgreen Windows exist in a peculiar territory. It is an interstice between a drugstore and a museum; between the street and the building; between inside and outside. To describe further, the windows are inhabited by artworks that seem to belong in the sphere of domesticity. A pair of blue and yellow suspended hammocks made out of hair; a row of engraved mirrors with flowers or geometrical shapes; three tools for the garden made out of turned wood and copper; a painting on wood where a medieval portrait mixes with depiction of architecture; a ceramic bag hanging from the ceiling on which mushroom began to grow; a large blue painting inhabited by a party; a chair dressed with a sacred veil and a painted tray; a mighty chandelier; a vase that looks like a fish; a stone carpet; a few big towels stating various slogans.

In the windows, the artworks are gently arranged in still life, they are sorted by friendship, placed following their affinity with each other and with the space. Still lives - in general - are subversive by nature as they "*reverse the scale of values in which what is unique and powerful in the world is the pre-ordained object of the gaze, while that which lacks importance is overlooked*"<sup>81</sup>. Still lives are about the infra-ordinary, the everyday space. They also aim at creating nearness through designing a proximal space of gesture; gesture of eating, of sitting, of gardening<sup>82</sup>. They create a haptic space. On the other hand, still life encompass a dichotomy; while being familiar they are still uncanny. "*While they bring into consciousness and visibility things that perception normally overlooks the visual field can come to appear radically unfamiliar*"<sup>83</sup>. "*They are a strategy to estrange what is familiar and everyday*"<sup>84</sup>.

Located in the public space while remaining enclosed, the integrity of the window space attempt to create a bridge between inside and outside, between private and public, between different gendered space. *Species of spaces* is built as a descriptive list of artworks that recall the uncanny and familiar, set up in a sculptural still life. *Species of spaces* attempts to address the body and create an encounter that fuses art and life. It becomes an entity on its own. It wants to be an embodied bridge, it wants to reach.

---

<sup>81</sup> Norman Bryson, *op.cit.*, p.63.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p.60-70.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p.60-70.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p.60-70.

## 6. Conclusion

Through a development constructed around the concept of "*embodied bridge*" I have been wanting to depict the connection between spaces and bodies. As I imagine it, we are now crossing the bridge toward reaching individualization. What is interesting is therefore what comes next. If deconstructing the idea of domesticity within the frame of an aesthetic makes us *feel* the uninhabitable as well as the habitable, we might be willing to outcome where we come from and rethink the gender of spaces. We might be willing to change the habit of digesting artworks, or exculpate them of our made up categories. We might let them live without imposing any constructed ideas, any fantasies. We might be willing to - naively - wish for a reconciliation, a reorientation to the public. By using the concept of orientation, or by wanting to be orientated toward something built in familiarity, something that encompasses the body, this movement operates.

In this sense, *Species of spaces* situates itself at the end of the bridge. The works are infused with a domesticity aesthetic that reflects the overlooked poetry of every-day-life. By deconstructing a certain history of domesticity - which, as a disclaimer has not been comprehensively made through this writing - we might reshape our ways of doing, of inhabiting, relating with spaces. By reintegrating the body through haptic gestures, we might be able to let go of historical dichotomies. This infra-ordinary thus becomes a strategy to be subversive, a tactic to modify our violent narratives, or - on the contrary - discover new places that we can dwell, not as owners, but as squatters. Now is time to let go of monumentality and find more occasions to "*phone home*".

## 7. Bibliography

Isabelle Alfonsi, *Pour une esthétique de l'émancipation*, B42, Paris 2019.

Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, Duke University Press, Durham & London, 2006.

Yves Aupetitallot, *Conversation with Lili Reynaud Dewar before This is my place*, Magasin, Grenoble 2012.

Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum; History, Theory, Politics*, Routledge, London and New York 1995.

Nicolas Bourriaud, *Espaces relationnels: le statut de l'oeuvre-habitat* in *Formes et trajets*, Tome 1: Hétérochronies, Les presses du réel, JRP | Ringier, Dijon & Zürich 2018.

Iris Brey, *Le regard fining, une Révolution à l'écran*, Edition de l'Olivier, Paris 2020.

Chiara Briganti & Kathy Mezei, *The domestic space reader*, University of Toronto, Toronto Buffalo London 2012.

Norman Bryson, *Looking at the overlooked, four essays on still life painting*, Reaction Books Ltd, London 1990.

Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien, 1. L'art de faire*, Gallimard, Paris 1990.

Irene Cieraad, *Dutch Window, Female virtue and female vice*, in *At Home, An anthropology of domestic space*, Edited by Irene Cieraad, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse & New York 1999.

Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol.5, pp. 350-404. Trans and ed James Strachey, Hogarth Press, London 1953.

Silva Federici, *Caliban and the Witch, Women the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, Penguin Books Ltd, London 2004.

Charlotte Klonk, *Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800-2000*, Yale University Press, 2009.

Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity (Public, Private, and The Division of Knowledge)*, Johns Hopkins University Press. Kindle Edition, Baltimore 2005.

Baptiste Morizot et Estelle Zhong Mengual, *Esthétique de la rencontre, l'enigme de l'art contemporain*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, Octobre 2016.

Laura Mulvey, *Pandora: Topographies of the Mask and Curiosity*, in *Sexuality & Space* edited by Beatriz Colomina, Princeton Paper son Architecture, New York 1992.

Laura Mulvey, *Visual pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Screen, vol. 16, autumn 1975.

Rozsika Parker, *The subversive stitch, Embroidery and the making of the feminine*, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, London New-York Dubin, reprinted and revised 1996, firstly published by The Women's press Ltd, 1984.

Georges Perec, *Espace d'espaces*, Editions Galilée, Paris 1974.

Mira Schor, *Wet on painting, feminism, and art culture*, Duke University Press, Durham & London 1997.



Giovanna Zapperi, *Carla Accardi, Le temps du travail et les gestes de la vie* in *Les Mots de la pratique, dits et écrits d'artistes*, under the direction of Christophe Viart, Le mot et le reste, Marseille 2018.

Websites last visited on 16 May 2022

<https://www.menil.org/exhibitions/247-mona-hatoum-terra-infirma>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=304&v=H-xKU\\_v6Qc4&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=304&v=H-xKU_v6Qc4&feature=emb_logo)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvo4ewpiqSc>



Image 1: My Bed, Tracy Emin, My Bed, mixed media and variable dimensions, 1999, Tate, London, Lent by The Duerckheim Collection 2015

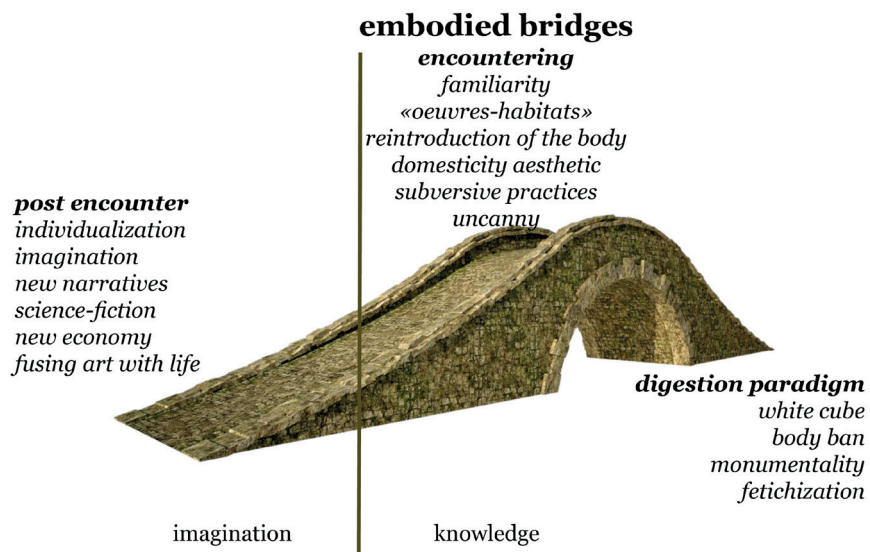


Image 2: Schema of embodied bridge concept



Image 3: Johannes Vermeer, Officer and Laughing Girl, oil on canvas, 50.5x46cm, 1654, Frick Collection New-York

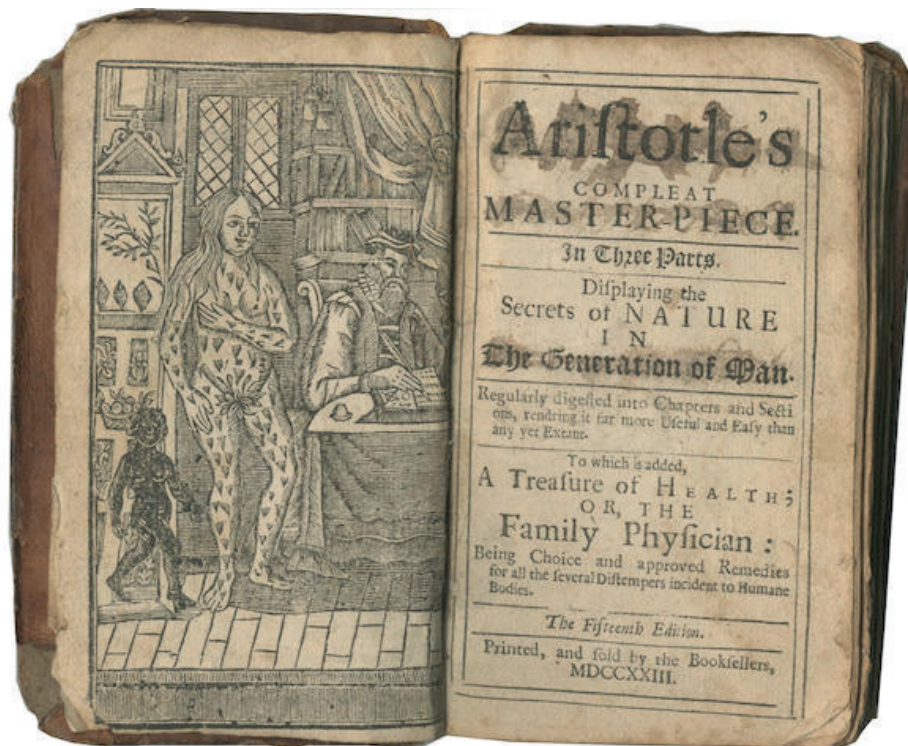


Image 4: Frontispiece, Aristotle's compleat master-piece, 12th ed (1722?), Wellcome Library, London





Image 5: Louise Bourgeois, *Femme-maison*, Oil and ink on canvas, 91.50x35.50cm, 1946-1947, Private collection, credit ADAGP, Paris

Image 6: Rachel Whiteread, Daylight, 2010, Resin, 142.9x80.9x16.cm, 2010



Image 7: Poster, Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles



Image 8: Tracy Emin, *Everyone that I ever Slept with 1963-1995*, mixed media and variable dimensions, 1995, destroyed.





Image 9: Renée Green, *Mise-en-Scène: Commemorative Toile*, Mixed media, dimensions variable, 1992-93





Image 10: Carla Accardi, *Triplice Tenda*, mixed materials, variable dimensions, 1969



Image 11: Mona Hatoum, *La Grande Broyeuse (Mouli-Julienne x 17)*, Mild steel, variable dimensions, 1999





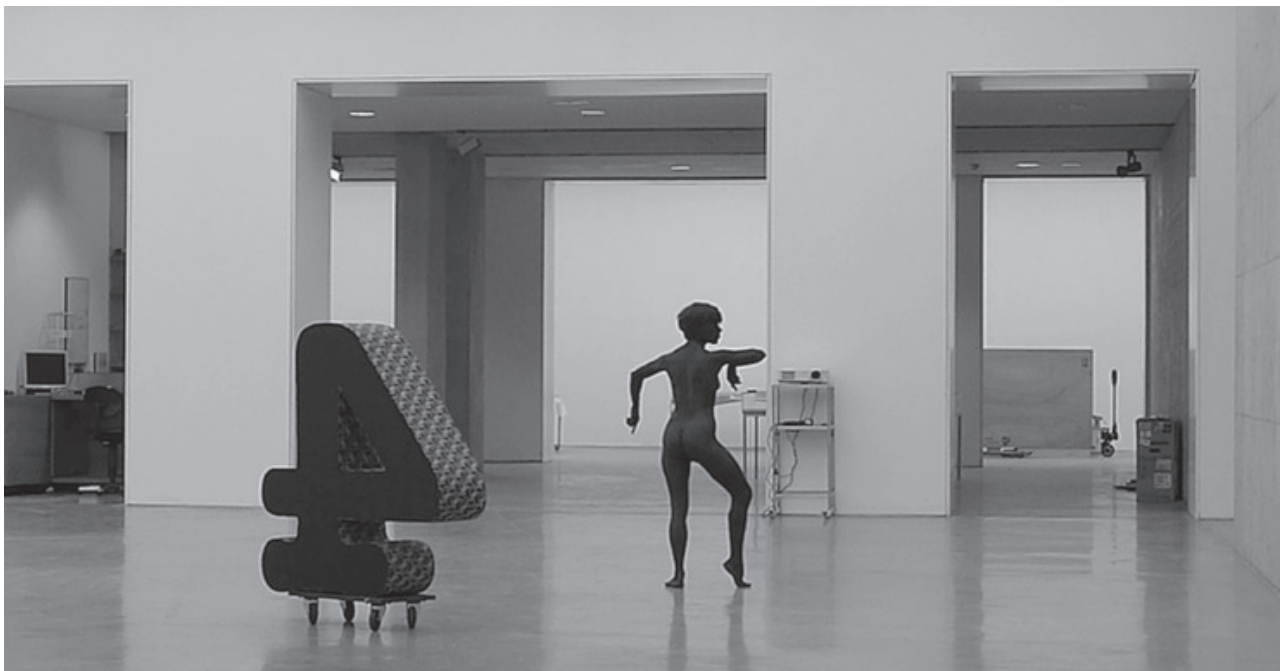
Image 12: Mona Hatoum, *Misbah*, Fixture plate, metal chain and electric motor 220 V, 2006-2007



Image 13: Mona Hatoum, *Homebound* (detail), kitchen utensils, furniture, electric wire, light bulbs, dimmer unit, amplifier, and two speakers, dimensions variable, 2000



**Image 14: Mona Hatoum, Impenetrable, Steel and nylon monofilament, 300x300x300cm, 2009**



**Image 15: Lily Reynaud Dewar, Ceci est ma maison, Magasin, Grenoble, 2012**





Image 16: Species of spaces, Walgreen  
Windows, Clifford E. Bruckamm, 2021-2022



**Image 17: Species of spaces,  
Walgreen Windows, installation view**



Image 18: Species of spaces, Walgreen Windows, Julie Monot, 2021-2022



Image 19: Species of spaces, Walgreen Windows, Annabelle Agbo Godeau, 2021-2022





Image 20: Species of spaces, Walgreen Windows, Annabelle Agbo Godeau, Jessy Razafimandimby, Pauline Codier, Lauren Coullard, Anne-Laure Franchette, 2021-2022



Image 21: Species of spaces, Walgreen Windows, Lauren Coullard, Anne-Laure Franchette, Maya Hottarek, 2021-2022



Image 22 : Species of spaces, Walgreen Windows, Zoé de Soumagnat, 2021-2022



Image 23 : Species of spaces, Walgreen Windows, Zoé de Soumagnat, Bella Hunt & ddc, 2021-2022