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At Home in the 60s:  
Images of the Home in American Art, 1960 - 1975

by

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And approved by

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

At Home in the 60s: Images of the Home in American Art, 1960-1975

By DONNA GUSTAFSON

Dissertation Director:  
Dr. Joan Marter

This dissertation investigates the use of the image of the home as image and subject in American art between 1960 and 1975, drawing connections between the social and political issues connected with housing, Civil Rights, the Woman's Movement, and the Cold War. Postwar representations of the American home were complex and multivalent, due, in part, to the housing crisis after World War II that was met by the suburbanization of the nation, and the newly energized postwar economy that brought the single-family, suburban home to the center stage of public and private life. As art historians have previously described, Abstract Expressionism created a masculine context for the American art world that excluded women and non-white, non-heterosexual male artists from creative agency. The decline of Abstract Expressionism gave rise to a re-engagement with images of domesticity, the home, and common objects of everyday life. Domesticity, seen as the anti-modern, played a significant role

in the iconography of the male dominated field of Pop Art and also in the work of artists outside of the Pop stylistic umbrella. Representations of the American home, and its corollary, domesticity, appear frequently in the work of Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, James Rosenquist, and Tom Wesselmann; and in key works by Nancy and Ed Kienholz, Hans Haacke, Dan Graham, Martha Rosler, and Romare Bearden. Through an interdisciplinary approach to the material, the works of art themselves, I set the image and symbol of the American home within an art historical and contextual history that reveals a preoccupation with issues of domesticity, visibility and invisibility, theatricality, surface and depth, public and private space, and how space is structured and represented. Gender politics and the representation of women is an important subtext throughout this dissertation coming to center stage in the last chapter's examination of Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro's collaboration with the students of the Feminist Art Program at Cal Arts in 1971-72, *Womanhouse*. I argue that *Womanhouse* should be understood within the larger context of the 1960s interest in the home as a subject for art. *Womanhouse* was both a feminist rebuttal to the sequestering of the woman in the home and a reaction against the art world's pilfering of the domestic as a neo-dada, anti-art subject. *Womanhouse* re-colonized the interior of the home as a feminine and feminist space and reclaimed it as an active showcase of female creativity.



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able aid of the librarians there. I owe particular thanks to Sara Harrington, at the Art Library at Rutgers; Ferris Olin, Head of the Margery Somers Foster Center and Co-Director of the Institute for Women and Art, at Rutgers; and Fernanda Perrone, Michael Joseph and Ron Becker, Archivist and Librarians of Special Collections and University Archives at Alexander Library at Rutgers. I am especially indebted to Ferris Olin who introduced me to the richness of the feminist collections at Rutgers and to Fernanda Perrone who generously shared her research on women's artists groups and provided access to the Miriam Schapiro Papers. The curatorial staff at the National Gallery of Canada, Ontario, kindly shared photographs and copied files for me. I am also indebted to the staff at the Archives of American Art, in New York and Washington D.C. My thanks also go to Paula Harper for sharing her reminiscences of *Womanhouse* with me and to Nancy Azara for sharing her files and memories of the New York Feminist Art Institute.

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- 5.23 Miriam Schapiro and Sherry Brody, *Dollhouse Parlor*  
Author's photograph

5. 24 Miriam Schapiro and Sherry Brody, *Dollhouse Kitchen*  
Author's photograph
- 5.25 Miriam Schapiro and Sherry Brody, *Artist's Studio in Dollhouse*  
Author's photograph
5. 26 Martha Rosler, *Beauty Knows No Pain: Cold Meat*, 1967-72  
Photomontage  
Dimensions variable  
Collection of the artist
- 5.27 Martha Rosler, *Beauty Knows No Pain: Hot Meat*, 1967-72  
Photomontage  
Dimensions variable  
Collection of the artist

## Conclusion

### Fig. Conclusion. 1

Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*, 1974  
Chromogenic prints mounted on board  
40 x 30 inches  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
Purchase, The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation Gift through Joyce and Robert Menschel, 1992  
Purchase, The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation Gift through Joyce and Robert Menschel, 1992

## Introduction

Revisionist views of Pop Art beginning with Sidra Stich's exhibition and catalogue of 1987, *Made in USA: An Americanization in Modern Art, the 50s and 60s*, Barbara Haskell's *Blam!*, and, more recently, Joan Marter's *Off Limits. Rutgers University and the Avant-Garde, 1957-1963*, have set Pop Art in the larger context of the decade's culture and interdisciplinary experiments.<sup>1</sup> There have also been many reassessments of Pop and the art of the 1960s in the context of gender, commercial, and political issues;<sup>2</sup> Cécile Whiting, Christin Mamiya, Kenneth Silver, Michael Lobel,<sup>3</sup> and Helen Molesworth<sup>4</sup> have been useful for my own review of the decade. In particular, I have benefitted from

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<sup>1</sup> Sidra Stich, *Made in USA: An Americanization in Modern Art, the 50s and 60s* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1987); Barbara Haskell, *Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism, and Performance 1958 - 1964* (New York and London: Whitney Museum of American Art in association with W. W. Norton & Company, 1984); Joan Marter, *Off Limits. Rutgers University and the Avant-Garde, 1957-1963* (New Brunswick and Newark, NJ: Rutgers University Press and Newark Museum, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> See Thomas Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties. American and European Art in the Era of Dissent* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996) and Francis Frascina, *Art, Politics and Dissent: Aspects of the Art Left in Sixties America* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Michael Lobel's recent examinations of Roy Lichtenstein and James Rosenquist have contributed a refreshingly analytic point of view to these two artists. See Michael Lobel, *James Rosenquist: Pop Art, Politics, and History in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009) and *Image Duplicator: Roy Lichtenstein and the Emergence of Pop Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Molesworth, Helen. *Work Ethic* (Baltimore, Maryland and University Park, Pennsylvania: Baltimore Museum of Art and the Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).

Whiting's two recent books on Pop Art, *A Taste for Pop: Pop Art, gender, and Consumer Culture* and *Pop LA: Art and the City in the 1960s*;<sup>5</sup> and Christin Mamiya, *Pop Supermarket*.<sup>6</sup> Both authors have researched and written on Pop Art in the context of the commercial sphere, and focusing on Pop as a knowledgeable partner in the dichotomy between high and low that is so present in the criticism of Pop in its early years. Kenneth Silver's complications of those dichotomies and his insistence on bringing hidden content to the surface has been an important model for my own thinking.<sup>7</sup> Christopher Reed's work on domesticity as a construction of anti-modernism has been fundamental to my readings of domesticity and the images of the home.<sup>8</sup> So has Susan Sidlauskas's work on nineteenth-century representations of space in painting and how artists in the late nineteenth century constructed interiority in interior space.<sup>9</sup> My understanding of metaphorical space as a construction of society and a reflection of personal experience has been informed by my readings of Gaston Bachelard and Susan

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<sup>5</sup> *A Taste for Pop: Pop Art, Gender, and Consumer Culture* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and *Pop L.A.: Art and the City in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Christin Mamiya, *Pop Art and Consumer Culture: American Supermarket* (Austin: University of Texas, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> I have also benefitted greatly from new research by scholars Gavin Butt and Richard Meyer whose work investigates the area between feminism and traditional art history in the art of the 1950s and the 1960s.

<sup>8</sup> Photography is notably absent from this survey of images of the home in the 1960s. One reason for the paucity of photographic images of home is suggested by Peter Galassi. "The street and its extensions-- the lobby, the airport, the beach -- serve up a smorgasbord of class and character, circumstance and behavior, all the while preserving for the photographer the anonymity and freedom enjoyed by the painter alone in the studio. The photographer may enter and leave the teeming arena at will, without asking permission or making an appointment or saying goodbye. And the material is so rich that the photographer may construct an image of life so varied and elaborate that we may never think to ask what is missing. Everything changes when the photographer enters the home, beginning with the difficulty of entering at all." Peter Galassi, *Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1991), 7-8. Galassi credits *William Eggleston's Guide*, an exhibition and book of forty-eight photographs published by the Museum of Modern Art in 1976 as an important shift in photography from the public realm (the street) to the home and the private realm (John Szarkowski compared it to a diary), 10.

<sup>9</sup> My thanks to Susan Sidlauskas for talking with me about interior space and domesticity and for suggesting the work of Gaston Bachelard and Susan Stewart.

Stewart.<sup>10</sup> Both explore the psychological dimensions of space. I have also found Fatima Mernissi's explorations of space in Islamic culture to be useful.<sup>11</sup> Mernissi's explications of how social space, both public and private, are divided by male and female domination, present a more formalized pattern than that in the West. Nonetheless, her analysis holds true to a significant degree.

In the post World War II era, the American Dream was visualized as a single-family, suburban home. Mythologized in the popular and commercial media as a primary site of American national identity, the home was a potent image for a generation of artists who had recently turned away from Abstract Expressionism to engage the visual world in a dialogue between high art and the images of everyday life. This theme unites the artists associated with New York Pop Art -- Claes Oldenburg, Tom Wesselmann, James Rosenquist, and Roy Lichtenstein -- and a larger group of artists whose work transcends the boundaries of American Pop.<sup>12</sup> Among these are Richard Artschwager, Romare Bearden, Richard Hamilton, David Hockney, Ed and Nancy Kienholz, Miriam Shapiro, Judy Chicago and the artists of *Womanhouse*, and Conceptual

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<sup>10</sup> Gaston Bachelard, translated by Maria Jolas, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994) and Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987).

<sup>12</sup> There are a few works by Andy Warhol that can be interpreted within my context of home; one is the 1965 film, *Kitchen*, starring Edie Sedgwick. Another is the wallpaper that he produced for his exhibition at the Leo Castelli Gallery in 1966 and that he used again in his retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York in 1971. Kenneth Silver describes Warhol's use of the wallpaper at the Whitney, stating that he "transformed the public space into a jumbo-sized simulacrum of the domestic interior." See Kenneth Silver, "Modes of Disclosure: The Construction of Gay Identity and the Rise of Pop Art," in Paul Schimmel and Donna DeSalvo, *Hand Painted Pop: American Art in Transition, 1955-62* (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, with Rizzoli Publishers, 1993). Warhol, while an artist who collapses the domestic and the public, is not part of this study.

artists Dan Graham, Hans Haacke, and Martha Rosler. The recurrence of the image of the American home in the art of the decade suggests a resonance that radiates outward from many individual perspectives. Those perspectives include art history, visual and popular culture, architectural and feminist theory. Through an interdisciplinary approach to the material, the works of art themselves, I set the image and symbol of the American home within an art historical and contextual history that reveals a preoccupation with issues of domesticity, visibility and invisibility, theatricality, surface and depth, public and private space, and how space is structured and represented.<sup>13</sup>

The boundaries between public space and private space that the home suggests cut along gendered and political lines. Social history and feminism inform my approach, and a key text in my discussion is Elaine Tyler May's landmark study of American families in the Cold War, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, for her research of culture in the 1950s.<sup>14</sup>

Three issues which would have enormous ramifications for the art and culture of America in the 1960s-- life in the Cold War era (i.e., life with nuclear weapons and, in the decade of the sixties, the United States involvement in the war in Vietnam), the role of women, and the status of minority groups—are embedded within my discussion of the home in American art. The issue of housing in postwar America was not simply about building homes for Americans; it included political calculations (spreading the

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<sup>13</sup> Michael Fried's important essay on Minimalism and theatricality, "Art and Objecthood" first published in *Artforum* in June 1967) is part of the general preoccupation with theatricality and space in the 1960s. Fried's article can be found in Gregory Battcock, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc. 1968): 116-148.

<sup>14</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books/Harper Collins, 1988).

population outside of the cities so that if there was nuclear war, the country could survive), economic imperatives (the suburban developments were built with financing from the federal government), racist and patriarchal policies within the social, political and economic frameworks, and socially constructed commitments to the ideal of nuclear families in single-family homes. The home in America was idealized as a space of family intimacy where female agency was focused on nurturing children and providing a “haven in a heartless world” for the male breadwinner whose days were spent in work and competition outside the home.<sup>15</sup> The mid-twentieth century reification of those social and architectural theories that located women within the home and men in the public sphere were a revision of the wartime policies that encouraged women to enter the work force. As May reiterated in her study of Cold War families, the view of domesticity that dominated the decades of postwar America was an aberration—a specifically Cold War ideal that contained possibly threatening forces within the confines of marriage, domestic consumption, and suburban enclaves.<sup>16</sup> Housing, more specifically the lack of available housing in America, had been a preoccupation throughout the war years and when American GIs were discharged from Europe and came home to rebuild lives or start families, the problem became

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<sup>15</sup> There are many studies on the ideological basis of the home as a private space of feminine activity set in opposition to the outside world of commerce. One of the most interesting, because it complicates the simplicity of thinking about the home as a space of privacy, is Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

<sup>16</sup> See May, *Homeward Bound*.



exponentially worse.<sup>17</sup> Migrations of workers who had been recruited from the rural south to work in the war industries centered in the north during the war had set in place an unprecedented demographic shift that continued after the war, as families continued to move from rural communities to urban centers and from urban centers to new suburban developments.<sup>18</sup>

In Chapter One, I begin my discussion of the American home with British artist, Richard Hamilton's proto-Pop collage, *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* (1956). Although Hamilton is not an American artist, the source materials for his collage were American popular magazines, and his introduction of the American domestic interior as a subject for avant-garde art makes it relevant for my discussion of American images of the home in the 1960s. As art critic Lucy R. Lippard first noted in 1972, images of the home and domestic products were culturally inscribed as female, but there were no women among those achieving acclaim for these images.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See Donald Albrecht, ed., *World War II and the American Dream* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 1995) for a discussion of the housing of war workers during World War II and immediately after.

<sup>18</sup> The history of housing in the United States is, for the most part, one of crisis management. In the twentieth century, a shortage of affordable housing is a recurring theme in these discussions; the shortage assumed catastrophic proportions during the Great Depression when innumerable families lost their homes, their farms, and their means of livelihood. The acute suffering that the Great Depression brought on the middle class finally provided the push for the federal government to enter the housing market and the first steps toward a national housing policy were formed within this context. These steps would provide significant precedents for the administrations of President Harry Truman who called for a "Fair Deal" and pushed through The Housing Act of 1949 as a continuation of the policies of Roosevelt's New Deal, in the social legislation of John F. Kennedy's New Frontier, 1960-63, and in Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society, 1964-1968.

<sup>19</sup> Lippard, "Household Images in Art," in *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co. Inc, 1976), 56. Originally published in *Ms.*, March 1973, this is, I believe, the earliest discussion of women's household imagery and the Pop artists' use of domestic imagery. Lippard describes early images of Pop art as "pillaged" from women's experience. She also writes of the women of the late 1960s and early 1970s who used domestic imagery, including: Wanda Westcoast, Sandra de Sando, Rosalind Hodgkin, Ellen Lanyon, Irene Siegel, Marjorie Strider, and Mierle Ladermann Ukeles. In 1997,

There were several issues intertwined in this astute recognition; one was the masculinization of the American art world under the hegemony of Abstract Expressionism which constructed the identity of the artist in such a way as to make it impossible for women, gay, or minority artists to enter.<sup>20</sup> The second was the feminization of the domestic in opposition to this construction of high art.<sup>21</sup> Two significant cultural events feature in this entangling of the home in political and popular discourse. One was the so-called Kitchen Debate in an American suburban kitchen in Moscow between Vice-President Richard M. Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in July of 1959. The second was the highly publicized restoration of the White House by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy that was aired on television on February 14, 1962. Interviewed by *Life* magazine in 1961 while the project was still in process, Mrs. Kennedy remarked of her restoration, "Every boy who comes here should see things that develop his sense of history. For the girls, the house should look beautiful and lived-in."<sup>22</sup>

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Whiting also tackled the issue of "Pop's intimate liaison with a consumer culture coded as feminine in her study of Pop Art and gender. See Whiting, *A Taste for Pop*. See also, Martha Rosler, "The Figure of the Artist, The Figure of the Woman," in *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: MIT Press, 2004), 89-112. Rosler continues, "In fact, there was no space for women in pop (sic). Its main tasks required a silencing of women that was related to its ambiguous theater of mastery through the transcoding and rearrangement of magical images, many of them images of women."

<sup>20</sup> Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993).

<sup>21</sup> Clement Greenberg was key to this.

<sup>22</sup> Jacqueline Kennedy quoted in, "The First Lady Brings History and Beauty to the White House," *Life* 51 no. 9 (September 1, 1961): 56. Other articles about the restoration included "First Lady and the White House," *Newsweek* 40 (September 17, 1962): 71-8; "Mrs. Kennedy's Tour: Sights Along the Way," *US News* 52 (March 19, 1962): 70-1; "Mrs. Kennedy's White House," *The New York Times Magazine* (January 28, 1962): 10-11; "New Look at the White House," *Look* 26 (January 2, 1962): 22-9.

In Chapter Two, I discuss early Pop images of the American home, focusing on Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, and Tom Wesselmann, whose images of the home include the kitchen, the bathroom, and the bedroom. I approach each artist through one or a group of paintings; in the case of Lichtenstein the discussion centers on his representation of individual appliances and consumer goods associated with the home. In Wesselmann's case, I set specific works within the historical context of the 1960s, including the struggle for Civil Rights and the increasing invasion of the private space of the home by commerce, television, radio, and contemporary worries about surveillance. After 1964, representations of the home by American artists became more negative in tone; even Wesselmann shifts from a generally positive gloss on colorful consumer goods to a series of *Interiors* that are in gray, black, and white.

Chapter Three is devoted to Claes Oldenburg's self-defined "Home Period" from 1963-65. Its chief monument is the *Bedroom Ensemble*, based on a memory of a hotel in Malibu, his parents' bedroom, and a newspaper advertisement from the *Los Angeles Times*. Oldenburg's *Bedroom Ensemble* is seen to be a complicated transformation of the Southern Californian experience of home transplanted to the commercial space of the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York. Using materials and forms that were antithetical to both high art and the home, the artist disrupted the space of the gallery, and the masculine energy of Jackson Pollock's Abstract Expressionist painting style was referenced through the decorative surfaces of the ersatz materials. Continuing the exploration of Oldenburg's intellectual play on the domestic and the non-domestic, and the gender politics that are implied by such reversals, I superimpose Mark Wigley's

analysis of single-point perspective as a metaphor for the patriarchal control of space in the public sphere and theories of domestic architecture as a metaphorical containment for female sexuality.<sup>23</sup> By so doing, I place Oldenburg's *Bedroom Ensemble* within the context of contemporary architectural theories of gender and space.

In Chapter Four I move to a more general discussion to show the transformation of the image of the home into a more troubled image. A variety of artists unmasked the American Dream as a false promise that led to suppression of individuals at home and to war abroad. After the Gulf of Tonkin, the Vietnam War entered a period of intense escalation and increasing public mistrust. Riots in cities across the United States in the summers of 1964, 1965, and 1967 and the trend of the Civil Rights activists away from non-violence to a more militant protest, made the divisions in American society visible. In the wake of such social upheaval, the home, as an image and symbol of the American Dream, was used by a wide variety of artists to critique cherished ideas about the United States as a land of equal opportunity. I frame my discussions of the images of the home within the context of American race relations in the 1960s.<sup>24</sup> The suburbanization of America that occurred after World War II was set in motion by political, social, and economic motives. The benefits, however, were exclusively felt by white Americans, while racist-driven policies kept African Americans and other minority

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<sup>23</sup> Mark Wigley, "Untitled: The Housing of Gender," in Beatriz Colomina, ed., *Sexuality and Space* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1992).

<sup>24</sup>The Civil Rights Movement, whose key issues were jobs and housing, is a significant external factor to the culture of the 1960s, but there has been a notable lack of engagement of race issues in the art of the 1960s unless the artists' themselves are non-white with the exception of recent work by Martin Berger whose lecture on "Civil Rights Photography in the 1960s" at the Sydney Leon Jacobs Lecture in American Art at Rutgers University, March 4, 2009, explored the intentions of the white photographers and editors at *Life* and other magazines. See Martin Berger, *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

groups out of the new developments.<sup>25</sup> Ralph Ellison's description of black life in 1947 as "invisible" to the wider world was still relevant in the 1960s.<sup>26</sup> In this context, Romare Bearden's images of black life in Harlem, Pittsburgh, and in the rural south, as had been noted at the time, were political statements that verified the existence of an invisible segment of the population in American history, in art history, and in contemporary urban and rural life. Incorporating a discussion of Bearden's *Projections* of 1964 into the predominantly white, middle-class context of American art of the 1960s, is a way of integrating the image of the home in American life.

Chapter Five's focus is *Womanhouse*. After years of purposefully avoiding the home as a subject fraught with elements of the second-class status that women artists were fighting to overcome, Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro turned to the image of the home at the end of the decade in order to liberate women from their domestic relationship with the home and its machines. In the 1960s, the image of the home was deeply invested with what Betty Friedan described in 1962 as "the feminine mystique."<sup>27</sup> As Friedan argued, the feminine mystique was a social construction that sequestered women in the home and gave the public sphere to men. Her call to women to escape the trap of the home was a fundamental text of second-wave feminism and

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<sup>25</sup> This was related in the national press as early as 1963. Theodore H. White, "Power Structure, Integration, Militancy, Freedom No! Part II," *Life* (Nov. 29, 1963):78-93.

<sup>26</sup> Ralph Ellison, *The Invisible Man* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989, first published 1947). Ellison's classic story of a young black man's battle to find his own identity in a society that continually erased his humanity predates Bearden's work, however, Ellison and Bearden were acquainted and Ellison wrote on Bearden's work. Ellison had trained as a visual artist before turning to literature and as a young writer he supplemented his income with professional photographic work. It seems to me that Ellison, who wrote of Bearden's *Projections* as a counter point to the photo documentarian view of Harlem, saw Bearden's work as a means of showing the truths of Harlem, not the sociological facts.

<sup>27</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing Co, 1963).

an important document for the architects of *Womanhouse*. My study of the decade's embrace of the home ends with *Womanhouse*, an apt twist to the years of feminine entrapment in the domestic realm, and with the early feminist work of Martha Rosler. In opposition to the continuing trend to see *Womanhouse* within the constricted space of feminist scholarship, my discussion connects it to the art history of domestic imagery from 1960 through 1975. Notably, while *Womanhouse* was reviewed by the local non-art press in California and in *Time* magazine, it was not featured or reviewed in any art publications.<sup>28</sup> Thus, from the very beginning, *Womanhouse* has been seen as outside of the history of art; I relate *Womanhouse* to the continuum of interest in domestic imagery that began in the 1950s and seemed nearly ubiquitous in the decade of the 1960s.

Throughout, I have used a variety of approaches investigating popular culture studies, gender and architectural theory, social history, art history and criticism. In order to recreate both the history of the decade and the popular view of the historical events that marked the decade, I have surveyed the mass culture magazines of the period. In particular, I have consulted *Life*, *Time*, *Partisan Review*, and frequently consulted the *Reader's Guide to Periodic Literature*, for topics related to housing, home decorating, civil rights and housing, and Jacqueline Kennedy's redecoration of the White House. I have utilized the research and approaches of popular culture and American

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<sup>28</sup> At least, there were no reviews or mentions of *Womanhouse* listed in the volumes of *Art Index* from 1970-1975. Schapiro and Chicago were interviewed in *Art Journal* and published accounts of *Womanhouse* in the early 1970s, but these focused on pedagogy and issues about teaching women to be artists, not the art installation that was *Womanhouse*.

material-culture historians, Karal Ann Marling, Jeffrey Sconce, and Lynn Spigel.<sup>29</sup> I have also benefitted from architectural theorists, Beatriz Colomina, Dolores Hayden, Mark Wigley, and Gwendolyn Wright, among others.<sup>30</sup>

The legacy of Marcel Duchamp runs throughout my discussion of the art of the 1960s; his example of the readymade was an important precedent for the inclusion of domestic objects into the realm of high art. His legacy as a philosopher of modern art also plays a significant role in my approach. I follow Marcel Duchamp in believing that the meaning of a work of art must be deciphered by the spectator. Duchamp spoke in 1957 of this relationship between art and viewer: "All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act."<sup>31</sup> This understanding of the elasticity of art's meanings allows new generations to review and interpret the art of the past within the context of the present. While I am interested in artists' intentions and have tried to decipher these

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<sup>29</sup> In particular, I am indebted to the ideas and readings of popular culture found in these books: Karal Ann Marling, *As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1994); Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000) and Lynn Spigel, *Welcome to the Dollhouse: Popular Media and the Postwar Suburbs* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001).

<sup>30</sup> I have found the work of Beatriz Colomina, Mark Wigley, and Dolores Hayden particularly useful. See Beatriz Colomina, *Domesticity at War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: MIT Press, 2007); ed. Colomina, *Sexuality and Space* (New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 1992); Dolores Hayden, *Rediscovering the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work, and Family Life* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2002); Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003); and Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

<sup>31</sup> Marcel Duchamp, "The Creative Act," text of a paper given at the meeting of the American Federation of Arts Annual Meeting in Houston, April 1957, in Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson, eds. *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 140.

intentions within my research, I also try to address the ways in which spectators in the 1960s and since have interpreted these works.



## Chapter 1: Prelude to the 1960s: Just What is it That Makes Today's Homes so Different, so Appealing?

"Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing? Open planning of course - and a bold use of color." Advertisement for Armstrong Floors.

In this prelude to the art of the 1960s, I want to set out two distinct contexts for the American home and the ideal of domesticity in the years after World War II: one in the realm of politics; one in the realm of the art world. The context for the art about the home was part of the political context of the Cold War years, but it also had a specific meaning within the construction of Abstract Expressionist hegemony after the war. The identity of modern art as being in opposition to the domestic, or to the home, has a long history extending back at least to the nineteenth century. Domesticity, which could be considered an invention of the modern world's idealization of the home as a space of private retreat, is diametrically opposed to the idea of modern art, which is predicated upon the military metaphor of the avant-garde.<sup>32</sup> "In the eyes of the avant-garde, being un-domestic came to serve as a guarantee of being art."<sup>33</sup> Turning to the

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<sup>32</sup> See Christopher Reed, "Introduction," in Reed, ed., *Not At Home*, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

home as a subject for art was a subversive act aimed at the heart of Abstract Expressionism's ideal of masculine subjectivity.

During the postwar administrations of Harry Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson, housing was a flashpoint for battles between free market capitalism and government intervention in the market; or as it was often characterized by those opposed to government intervention—the difference between American democracy and socialism.<sup>34</sup> “The Kitchen Debate” at the American Exhibition in Moscow, 1959, in which Vice President Nixon defended the American political system to Soviet Premier Khrushchev by itemizing the increasingly prevalent electric appliances that gave the modern American home the advantage over a Soviet dwelling, made the connection between the American home and the Cold War explicit. The debate, which was widely reported in the media, located the home at the center of a political struggle between the superpowers.<sup>35</sup> Its centrality as an image of American propaganda invested it with cultural, political, and economic potency.

British artist Richard Hamilton's celebrated collage, *Just What is it That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* (fig. 1.1) is an early example of the re-introduction of the image of the home as both subject and image into postwar avant-garde art. Hamilton's view of the American home, conceived from outside of the

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<sup>34</sup> For example, in Senate housing hearings throughout 1947 and 1948 Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy and others opposed to federal intervention in the housing market attacked public housing and planned communities as un-American and socialistic. See Hayden, *Building Suburbia*, 130-131 and Rosalyn Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen, *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 87-116.

<sup>35</sup> Before he died, William Safire remembered his role in the “Kitchen Debate.” See William Safire, “The Cold War's Hot Kitchen,” Op-ed page of *The New York Times*, July 24, 2009.

United States, provides a perspective of the home exclusively derived from the iconography of the American printed media. The collage was originally created to be used as artwork for reproduction in the catalogue and as a black-and-white poster for the exhibition, "This is Tomorrow," at London's Whitechapel Art Gallery in the summer of 1956.<sup>36</sup> It has become a significant marker in the history of art because it predicted many of the important themes of American (and British Pop Art): the setting in the home, the traditionally gendered roles, the use of popular media (i.e., the television, advertising, and comic book image references), and the attention to such American themes as the space race. Kicked off in 1954 by the Soviet launch of Sputnik; the space race would be important for nationalistic American strivings in the 1960s.<sup>37</sup> *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* is a testimony to the potency of American consumer culture for European and American audiences of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>38</sup> The collage provides a useful point of departure for a discussion of images of

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<sup>36</sup> For a recent discussion of the Independent Group see Chris Stephens and Katherine Stout, eds, *Art and the 60s: This was Tomorrow* (London: Tate Britain, 2004); and David Robbins, *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1990).

<sup>37</sup> On May 25, 1961, President Kennedy gave a speech before a joint session of Congress announcing the goal of sending an American to the moon. For the space race in general see <http://history.nasa.gov/spdocs.html/#1960s>. For Kennedy's speech go to <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/JFK/Urgent+National+Needs+Page+4.htm>.

<sup>38</sup> In 1969, the British-American critic who was a key early analyst of Pop Art on both sides of the Atlantic defined the appeal of American pop culture on Europeans: "American pop culture was valued because it was the product of an economy more fully industrialized than Europe's. We looked at the United States as our expected future form, the country at a level of industrialism to which all countries were headed, through at various speeds. This outlook had a mood of optimism that is not in accord with present feeling, but the point remains that Pop Art is the art of industrialism and not of America as such." Lawrence Alloway, "Popular Culture and Pop Art," in Steven Henry Madoff, ed., *Pop Art: A Critical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 174. While Alloway's assertion that Pop is not necessarily American fits within his larger definition as work that developed independently in London and in New York, I believe that the American Pop artists were very clear about the American characterization of the art that they produced. American identity is a significant iconographical element of Pop art and plays an important role in the choice of the home as a subject.

American domesticity in art. To paraphrase Hamilton, I want to investigate just what it is that made the American home so appealing for artists. Key to this discussion is the cultural situation of the postwar years.

It has been definitively established by now that the United States government, through various arms of cultural exchange, exported American fine art as a tool in Cold War ideology.<sup>39</sup> In the postwar period, American exports included both popular and high culture products, and both were utilized in the Cold War's propagandistic terms to bolster American arguments for the free world's alliance with capitalistic democracy in opposition to the communist threat represented by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.). Between 1958 and 1964, American companies expanded their reach into global markets with much of their expansion centered in Europe.<sup>40</sup> Hamilton, and others in London's Independent Group (most importantly for our discussion of the significance of advertisements and the printed media, Peter and Allison Smithson and Eduardo Paolozzi), saw America as a view of the future distributed to the present through mass communication channels of advertising and glossy

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<sup>39</sup> There is a long history of scholarship in this vein. The first book-length study is *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art* by Serge Guibault. A recent article by Nancy Jachec, "Transatlantic Cultural Politics in the late 1950s: The Leaders and Specialists Grant Program," *Art History*, 26/4, (September 2003): 553-555, provides a new view of the role of the collaborations between museum personnel in the United States, in particular at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the U.S. government for the purpose of bolstering international support for the arts in the United States and also to present America as a free democracy where individual expression was encouraged and supported. She also summarizes previous scholarship which she characterized as the first and second waves. The "first wave" contains the essays by Max Kozloff and Eva Cockcroft, "American Painting during the Cold War" and "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War," respectively, and republished in Francis Frascina, *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, (London, 1985). The second wave includes Jeremy Lewison, "Jackson Pollock and the Americanization of Europe", in *Jackson Pollock: New Approaches*; (Museum of Modern Art: New York, 1999), David Craven, *Abstract Expressionism as Cultural Critique* (New York, 1999), and Nancy Jachec, *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism* (New York, 2000), among others.

<sup>40</sup> Christin Mamiya, *Pop Art and Consumer Culture*, 14.

magazines. Interest in these advertising images (which were imported into Great Britain after the war) extended beyond a desire for the products to a fascination with the visual aesthetics of the images, as witnessed by Hamilton's and Paolozzi's use of American magazine reproductions as source material.<sup>41</sup> Architectural historian Mary McLeod described Peter and Allison Smithson's interest in postwar American advertising as a means of moving past the ruined economy in Great Britain after the war and away from "the sterility of modernist abstraction." She also understood the Smithsons to be cognizant of what the new consumer society, referenced in these images from the mass media, meant for women.<sup>42</sup> Hamilton was also keenly aware of the role and representation of women in the newly emergent consumer society.<sup>43</sup>

The images that Hamilton used in *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* were from American magazines supplied by British artists

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<sup>41</sup> It is also important to note that Allison and Peter Smithson's 1956 article "But Today We Collect Ads" and that the magazines sent with food to Alison's family from America during the war were clipped and reused as raw materials for the work that the pair did with the Independent Group. See Colomina, *Domesticity at War*, 6-7.

<sup>42</sup> Mary McLeod, "Everyday and Other Spaces," in Debra Coleman, Elizabeth Danze and Carol Henderson, eds., *Architecture and Feminism* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996): 1-37. McLeod discusses the Smithsons and the Independent Group "They embraced American mass culture as a foil to both the deprivations of postwar Britain and the sterility of modernist abstraction, and were especially attracted to an element of mass culture that had been largely neglected in the first phase of the modern movement: advertising," 18. She also notes that the Smithsons were clear about the feminine aspects of this new mass culture. "The writing and designs of the Independent Group begin to suggest the double nature of consumption as oppression and liberation, and its particular meaning to women." McLeod also describes the Smithsons architectural domestic and public architectural practice as linking Huyssen's definition of mass culture as feminine with modern architecture, 20.

<sup>43</sup> Hamilton took note of the prevalence of the images of women in the home and began to refer to it in his shorthand phrase W.I.T.H. (Woman in the Home). Images like *\$he*, 1958-61, for example, were based on advertisements for products for the home that featured women. As Livingston remarks, Hamilton "carefully chose advertisements that promoted the joys of consumerism thorough an equation with feminine sex appeal, and he reinforced the sense of people objectified as commodities by treating the stylized figure and the fleshy pink refrigerator as hybrids of machinery and human form." Marco Livingston, *Pop Art: A Continuing History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990), 37.

Magda and Frank Cordell, and from the files of John McHale.<sup>44</sup> The production of the collage was a collaborative effort that included Hamilton, his wife, Terri Hamilton, and Magda Cordell. The two women were responsible for selecting and cutting images for the collage; they were guided by Hamilton's list of themes that he wanted to include in the work (e.g., communication).<sup>45</sup> The specific sources of these images have been identified by John Paul Stonard as magazines dating from 1950 to 1955.<sup>46</sup> Advertising copy for Armstrong Floors published in the *Ladies Home Journal* supplied the title. The same advertisement for Armstrong Floors supplied the image of the domestic interior space. Hamilton asserted that the rug was a blow-up from a photograph depicting a crowd on the Whitley Bay Beach. The image of planet Earth (also described by Hamilton as a moonscape) that creates the ceiling of the living room came from *Life* magazine (Sept 1955).<sup>47</sup> While these specific details and references to the world of media images connect his collage to American economic and cultural power, there is also a sense of playful anti-American sentiment in the exaggerated physiques and narcissistic poses of the couple at home.<sup>48</sup> In a way that would not be evident in American treatments of

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<sup>44</sup> As stated by Magda Cordell in David Robbins, ed. *The Independence Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 190.

<sup>45</sup> For a discussion of the genesis of the collage see John Paul Stonard, "Pop in the Age of Boom: Richard Hamilton's 'Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?'" *Burlington Magazine* 149, no. 1254 (September 2007): 607-620.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> The staircase is taken from an advertisement for the Hoover Company's new vacuum called "Constellation" and the Stromberg-Carlson TV is taken from a 1955 magazine advertisement. The copy of *Young Romance* that is used as a framed work of art on the wall of the interior space is an advertisement included in *Young Love* (no. 15, 1950). While Hamilton described the male figure as American Bodybuilder Charles Atlas, McHale described the figure as Irwin 'Zabo' Koszewski, winner of Mr. L.A. in 1954 published in *Tomorrow's Man* magazine, September 1954; the woman on the sofa who suggestively presents her upper torso for inspection has not been identified. See Stonard.

<sup>48</sup> Ben Highmore, "Richard Hamilton at the Ideal Home Exhibition of 1958: Gallery for a Collector of Brutalist and Tachiste Art," *Art History* 30 no 5 (November 2007): 712-737. Highmore argues that by 1958,

domesticity and the gender constructions of the home, Richard and Terri Hamilton and Magda Cordell poked fun at the extraordinary masculinity represented by the body builder and the equally exaggerated body of the nude woman on the sofa. The couple at home in this domestic paradise of new products were most emphatically not everyday people; like the objects that surrounded them, they were new and improved, and their artificial postures contradicted any claim to real life.

There are several points that I wish to take away from this discussion of Richard Hamilton's collage. Most significant is Hamilton's use of American commercial culture as the foundation of the formal and iconographical content of the collage.<sup>49</sup> This is one

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Hamilton's view of the American future for Britain is an ambivalent mix. "Here (Gallery for a Collector), commodity design culture as, partly, an American Dream, is presented as already ruined, already spoilt – a dream cast in a void. If to look from Britain to the US was, at times, to see the pleasure of a culture dripping with the promise of material happiness, in 1958 it was, for those on the cultural left, also to see the intensification of Cold War activity, to see the deathly struggle for supremacy, to see US nuclear weapons arriving on the shores of Scotland. Gallery for a Collector was an empty room where the outside was a mirage of an improbable dream, a dream which batted you back to the scattered field of *Homage to a Chrysler Corp.*, or on to the scarified surface of the Paolozzi sculpture. In this room, where the future was already ruined and where you dare not look towards the past, the present was hardly present at all." Ibid, 735.

<sup>49</sup> A difference between Hamilton's use of popular media as source material and the use of popular media by the American Pop artists that will be a significant focus of the following discussions is Hamilton's penchant for directly referencing his sources. While Hamilton often published a full listing of his source materials as an appendix to his work, the American Pop artists as a group insisted that they had no interest in any reference to advertising images, or in celebrating popular culture. In Hamilton's work and the American Pop works which also use the media for source material the question of how significant these references are has been raised repeatedly. Ben Highmore suggests that Hamilton's use of these collage elements can be understood as a tactic for representing the commodity culture through the presentation of pieces, in his argument, as synecdoches for the larger commodity culture of abundance that was quickly replacing the landscape of scarcity in Great Britain. The idea of these collaged references to advertising and commercial culture as synecdoches, is of greater value in analyzing some of the quirky compositional aspects of Hamilton's later work. The arguments raised by Highmore in his discussion of Hamilton's *Ideal Home* exhibition of 1958 are of relevance: "Attention to Hamilton's work is often directed to, and seduced by, the historicity of his source material. In various ways Hamilton produces work (and commentary on work) that actively invites and entices a certain form of iconographic art historical scholarship; the references to other artists and to the vast archive of industrial culture that Hamilton uses are nearly always meticulously laid out in publications that accompany the artwork. Whether this was designed to seduce the accountants of the history of art, or wrong foot them (what is there left to do now that all the tracking and tracing of materials has been done?) is, for this essay, beside

point of connection between his work and the work of the American Pop artists of the 1960s who also turned to the media's representations of the American home. Other qualities set Hamilton's image apart from American work of the 1960s. For example, the emphasis on the here and now, evident in Hamilton's selection of this image of the home is indicative of the aims set forth in the "Art of Tomorrow" exhibition. This sense of the domestic home as a space that looked ahead to the future is not a feature of the American artists' representations of the home that I will discuss in future chapters. Nostalgia, rather than present-ness is implicit in many of the representations of the home by American artists of the 1960s. In addition, Hamilton's representation of the character of American domesticity as a space of excessive masculine and feminine presence differs from domesticity as represented in images of popular culture (which were nearly always exclusively occupied by images of women) and by American artists.

Although postwar Britain and postwar America were culturally distinct, both countries were aligned in their efforts to construct a new art out of the wreckage of the past. The Independent Group had turned to American commercial and advertising imagery as a new visual language suitable for this task. At nearly the same moment, artists in the United States were also turning to popular imagery, which included mass media and images from the domestic sphere, as a means of reinvigorating American art. During the preeminence of Abstract Expressionism, as Michael Leja, Kenneth Silver, and others have argued, domesticity had been "written out of the critical construction of

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the point; what is evident is that Hamilton makes no secret of the materials out of which his artworks are fabricated and fashioned. But the seductive quantity and quality of the referenced material might actually limit enquiry into the historicity of the artwork." Highmore, 724.



post-war American art."<sup>50</sup> Abstract Expressionism, as Leja, noted, was "recognized, from its first accounts, as a male domain, ruled by a familiar social construction of 'masculine' as tough, aggressive, sweeping, bold."<sup>51</sup> Leja continued:

The functions served by Abstract Expressionism's aura of masculinity have also come into clearer focus: it was a crucial component of cold war U.S. national identity, differentiating the nation politically and culturally from European portrayed as weakened and effeminate. In some contemporary aesthetic theory it served to distinguish avant-garde painting from kitsch, also strongly gendered as feminine.<sup>52</sup>

Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg, the two most significant American art critics of the postwar years had each defined significant, avant-garde art as self-referential and process driven. In their estimation of what constituted important art and artists, the domestic had no place. In a discussion of early pop and the construction of a gay sensibility, Silver discussed Clement Greenberg's "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" as an important document of postwar criticism crucial to understanding the domestic as anti-modern. In the essay, Greenberg aligned an understanding and cultivation of art to an appreciation of process and defined kitsch as commodity culture.<sup>53</sup> He also identified these two opposing realms as masculine (art and process) and feminine (consumer goods): "if the avant-garde is allied with processes, according to Greenberg, it is an

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<sup>50</sup> Silver, "Master Bedrooms, Master Narratives" in Reed, *Not at Home*, 210. He continues: "The same domestic space that was mythologized and sold to a burgeoning post-war population, was under attack in the critical literature of American art." Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*, 256.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Silver, "Modes of Disclosure: The Construction of Gay Identity and the Rise of Pop Art," in Paul Schimmel and Donna DeSalvo, *Hand Painted Pop: American Art in Transition 1955-1962* (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, with Rizzoli Publishers, 1993), 200. Greenberg's "Avant-garde and Kitsch," first appeared in *Partisan Review* 6 (Fall 1939): 34-49. A later article pushed the binary into a three part distinction of highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow. Dwight Macdonald also provided a division of American cultural sophistication in his "Masscult and Midcult I," *Partisan Review* 27, no. 2 (Spring 1960): 203-233; and "Masscult and Midcult II," *Partisan Review* 27 no. 4 (Fall 1960): 589-631.

expression of production, of the world of men; if kitsch is allied with effects, again according to Greenberg, it is an expression of consumption, of the world of women.”<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, Andreas Huyssen identified modernism as masculine and anti-domestic and mass culture as its opposite, feminized expression. As Huyssen pointed out in his influential essay, Greenberg (and Adorno) are “uncompromising enemies of modern mass culture,” and modern mass culture is defined as modernism’s other.<sup>55</sup> In American art of the 1950s “the trope of the anti-domestic”<sup>56</sup> was effectively inscribed in the discourse of Abstract Expressionism as a means of separating high art from the production of kitsch. Nostalgia is an important characteristic of both kitsch and the domestic. It was also important to the production of postwar housing in America, dominated by tract home developers such as William Levitt and Sons who utilized mass production techniques to erect entire towns (fig.1.2). Nostalgia, and the desire for the domestic comforts of an idealized past, that Levitt and Sons exploited, effectively wrote modernist architects out of the housing debate.<sup>57</sup> Significantly, Levitt Town and suburban developments in general were reviled as examples of mass culture kitsch and as enclaves where women ruled until Robert Venturi and Denise Brown's reassessment of the modern-postmodern architectural debates in the 1970s.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Silver, "Modes of Disclosure," 200.

<sup>55</sup> See Andreas Huyssen, “Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other.” in Tania Modleski, ed., *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture* (Bloomington, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1986).

<sup>56</sup> Silver, "Modes of Disclosure," 201.

<sup>57</sup> See Hayden, *Building Suburbia*, for a discussion of the suburban home as the American Dream as a nostalgic vision of American home and family, not a modernist vision of new architecture.

<sup>58</sup> See Robert Venturi and Denise Brown, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1972).

Gavin Butt has recently reviewed the masculinization of American postwar art from the perspective of homosexual persecution which was actively pursued as a Cold War defensive policy. His study traced how the male figure of the artist became, through innuendo and suspicions, associated with homosexuality in the art world of the 1950s.<sup>59</sup> Among those within the art world who described the prevalence of homosexuals was the American regionalist painter, Thomas Hart Benton.<sup>60</sup> Butt suggested that

In a culture obsessed with national security, and in particular with the security of America's masculine and heterosexually gendered body politic, the figment of a secretive homosexual society at large in the art world perhaps went some way toward giving coherent expression to unsettling phobic anxieties.<sup>61</sup>

When Harold Rosenberg penned his essay, "The American Action Painters" in 1952, in which he described the Abstract Expressionist painting as "an arena in which to act," he, like Greenberg, set the production of art in terms of process.<sup>62</sup> For Rosenberg and others, Jackson Pollock, especially the photographs of Pollock at work by Hans Namuth that were first published in 1950 and soon became the iconic images of the artist at work, was representative of the new avant-garde (fig 1.3). Not simply an avatar

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<sup>59</sup> Gavin Butt, *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948-1963* (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2003) 45. Butt reviews two iconic photographs of the abstract expressionist painters, Willem de Kooning in his studio with Elaine de Kooning seated nearby and one of Hans Namuth's photographs of Pollock at work in his studio while Lee Krasner, also seated nearby, watches. As Butt notes, both representations of the married male artist show him to be an active presence in command of the space of his studio while the wives of the artists (who, of course are artists themselves) are represented in the backgrounds and in a passive state. His purpose in returning to these photographs is to suggest that the representation of these two male artists with their wives is a way of assuring a suspicious public that both Pollock and de Kooning were heterosexual masculine presences.

<sup>60</sup> See Butt on Benton's homophobia as symptomatic of the suspicions about the art world in 1950, 44-45.

<sup>61</sup> Butt, *Between You and Me*, 44.

<sup>62</sup> Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," *Art News* 51, no. 8 (December 1952): 22-23; 48-50.

of American freedom, Pollock was also the epitome of masculine authenticity-- the "anti-consumerist, anti-domestic, masculinizing construction"<sup>63</sup> -- that the next generation of artists sought to replace. Both Andy Warhol and Claes Oldenburg would symbolically overtake the potency of Pollock's legacy through a staged, re-rendering of his legendary dripped painting technique. As one critic provocatively argued, Warhol's 1962 exhibition at the Stable Gallery in New York provided the opportunity for the younger artist to "metaphorically step into Pollock's shoes."<sup>64</sup> Deflating the mythic view of Pollock's masculine body interacting with the medium in what has been repeatedly described as a dance, Warhol inserted the liminally gendered figure of a dance student. Oldenburg's personal encounter and overtaking of Pollock is found within his *Bedroom Ensemble*, to which I will return in a subsequent chapter.

Willem de Kooning's turn to figuration in 1952 to 1955 in his *Women* series created another sort of crisis within Abstract Expressionism. Greenberg took him (and those who followed him in moving toward representation and illusion) to task in his essay *After Abstract Expressionism*, describing this new "manner," as he put it, as "homeless representation," defined as "a plastic and descriptive painterliness that is applied to abstract ends, but which continues to suggest representation."<sup>65</sup> From Larry Rivers to Andy Warhol, the proto-Pop, sometimes called Neo-Dada, and Pop artists

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<sup>63</sup> Silver, "Modes of Disclosure," 202.

<sup>64</sup> Butt, *Between You and Me*, 119-122. In this reading, he follows Rosalind Krauss's understanding of Warhol's *Dance Diagram* paintings as "a mass cultural reworking of Jackson Pollock's drip painting."

<sup>65</sup> Clement Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism," reprinted in Carol Mashun, *Pop Art: The Critical Dialogue*, (UMI Research Press Ann Arbor and London, 1989), 28. Silver noted the odd turn of phrase, "homeless representation" as an ironic negation of the return of domestic imagery in post abstract expressionist art. It is an odd term to apply to art that combined representation and abstraction and it suggests the suppression of the home.

replaced revelation of the sublime through hyper-masculine process with images gleaned from popular culture. Since much of popular culture and commercial media was focused on the products and activities of the home, domesticity and the home began to enter into American art through what Robert Rauschenberg famously described as the "gap between art and life." The incorporation of everyday life as a means of reinvigorating the high arts by the American Neo-Dada and Pop artists was not unprecedented; the European surrealists had also turned toward the personal, the private, and the domestic in their disruption of early twentieth-century modernism. In fact, the use of the term, Neo-Dada, to describe the first explorations of common objects and subjects in the context of fine art in the mid-1950s, suggests a return to ideas about art as irrational and anti-aesthetic.<sup>66</sup>

Robert Rauschenberg's *Bed* of 1955 marks a key moment in American art's shift from painterly process separate and distinct from everyday experience, to the incorporation of objects as signifiers of actual, lived experience (fig. 1. 4). Described as "Rauschenberg's principle domestic icon,"<sup>67</sup> *Bed* is also one of the first re-introductions of domestic iconography in American postwar art. *Bed* is full of personal reference and situates itself in the sphere of the American bedroom, simply by the incorporation of pillow and quilt. Lisa Wainwright has shown that the artist's use of domestic imagery incorporated personal nostalgia associated with his boyhood home such as fabrics,

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<sup>66</sup>See Susan Hapgood, *Neo-Dada: Redefining Art, 1958-1962* (New York: The American Federation of Arts in association with Universe Books, 1994).

<sup>67</sup> See Lisa Wainwright, "Robert Rauschenberg's Fabrics: Deconstructing Domestic Space," in Reed, *Not at Home*, 200.

clippings related to family members, and representations of interior space.<sup>68</sup> Interior space in this work is implied, not represented. Silver reads *Bed* as a work that sits in the divide between home and studio, or between masculine processes of art-making set within the studio and feminine consumption of products set within the home. He also reads the bed as a veiled sign for Rauschenberg's own domestic situation, describing it as either a "renunciation of sex or its exhibition."<sup>69</sup>

The trope of the anti-domestic was more firmly written into the image of the home that Hamilton conjured up in his proto-Pop collage. This domestic space is not at all like the suburban domestic spaces that were symbols of the American Dream seen in postwar advertising (fig. 1. 5). Rather, Hamilton's *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes so Different, so Appealing?* provides an image of modernist architecture with open plan, skeletal structure, and window walls situated in an urban space. Beatriz Colomina's study of Cold War American architecture, describes the European view of postwar modern American architecture as "a frame for attractive objects, a shelf, a storage and display system so overflowing with objects that the architecture itself dissolved."<sup>70</sup> For Colomina, the Eames House, built by Charles and Ray Eames for their home/studio in 1949, is the postwar American house (fig. 1.6 and 1. 7).<sup>71</sup> Commissioned by *Art and Architecture Magazine* in the 1940s and 1950s as one of the series of Case

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<sup>68</sup> The element of personal and familial nostalgia that was prevalent in Rauschenberg's early works of the late 1950s and early 1960s was later jettisoned as the artist moved away from personal domestic imagery toward a wider incorporation of images from public life. See Wainwright.

<sup>69</sup> Silver, "Master Bedrooms," in Reed, *Not at Home*, 215.

<sup>70</sup> Colomina, *Domesticity at War*, 7

<sup>71</sup> See Colomina, "Reflections on the Eames House" in Donald Albrecht, ed. *The Work of Charles and Ray Eames: A Legacy of Invention* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2007); and Colomina, *Domesticity at War*, on the Eames house.

Study Houses, the Eames House was the best known and most widely photographed of all the model homes built to showcase architecturally sound solutions to the postwar housing crunch.<sup>72</sup> Like the others, it utilized new industrial materials, modernist ideas of open plans, large glass doors and windows that integrated interior and exterior space. Features typical of California modern architecture like reflecting and swimming pools, sun and shade patios, and car ports were incorporated into the designs. The houses were furnished with modernist, contemporary design; and interiors and exteriors, as well as plans, were prominently displayed in the pages of the magazine with texts providing insights into the photographs on view. The steel structure of the Eames House, bolted together in a day and a half from standardized components, was distinctly unlike the traditional wooden framed or brick walled homes of traditional America. The Case Study Houses were widely admired by architects and students of architectural history, but the general public's image of home remained nostalgic and rooted in an architectural past. As innumerable photographs of the Eames House show, it was characterized by the absence of architecture; rather than appearing as a solid shelter, it acted as a background or stage set for the objects and people who lived in the house:

"The Eames's displacement of architecture from a stable enclosing form to a lightweight, demountable, infinitely re-arrange-able storage system acting as the stage

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<sup>72</sup>The Eames House was Case Study House No. 8. Perhaps the most significant architectural experiments in postwar American domestic architecture were the Case Study Houses commissioned by *Arts and Architecture* magazine under editor, John Entenza, between 1945 and 1962. The project was announced in the January 1945 issue with eight commissions for single family homes to be built by eight California architectural firms. *Arts and Architecture*, under the leadership of Entenza, was devoted to modern architecture, and the architects chosen for the program were all modernists. For the Case Study Houses see Esther McCoy, *Case Study Houses, 1945-1962*. 2nd Edition (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1977) and Elizabeth T. Smith, *Blueprints for Living: History and Legacy of the Case Study Houses* (Los Angeles and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Museum of Contemporary Art and M.I.T. Press, 1989).

set for a relentless domesticity, a displacement that fascinated the world, was but the first step in an even more radical displacement into product design and the consumable image.”<sup>73</sup> The Eames House, as a prototype and export of American postwar architecture presented a vision of happy domesticity that utilized modern technology and architectural theory and embraced consumption. As such, it was a powerful ally of postwar advertising and Cold War culture.

The presentation through photography of the Eames House and the other Case Study Houses to the world worked in tandem with the many presentations in the mass media of consumer products for the home shifting the focus from the home as a sanctuary for the family to the idea of the home as a transparent space filled with consumer goods and open through mass media connections to the world. Hamilton’s *Just What is it Today* reflects a similar space of domesticity infused with modernism, technology, and consumption. The many photographs by the Eames of their home as well as their film, *House: Five years of Living* (thousands of still images of the home set up like a slide presentation) encouraged a reading of the new domestic architecture as a flat image. These characteristics would be significant for many of the artists of the 1960s whose images of the home were never meant to represent a secure and private domestic space, only a visual sign for the permeable boundaries of life in the decade. The sense of the architectural frame of the Eames House as “dissolved” is also important and reinforces the final point I wish to carry forth from Hamilton’s image to my discussion of American images of the home in the 1960s.

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<sup>73</sup> Colomina, *Domesticity at War*, 31.



Hamilton's *Just What is it That Makes Today's Homes so Different, so Appealing* represents the home as a space that is inundated with public imagery—in Hamilton's representation there is no private domesticity—home life is no longer a private retreat from the world of commerce. The result is the home as a theatrical space—a space that serves as a backdrop for the people who live within and the things that are accumulated; it is also a space without privacy.<sup>74</sup> In fact, the public realm has taken over the private world of the home. All manner of modern communications appear in the collage, printed newspapers, television, magnetic tape recorder, telephone, comic books, film, advertising, and photography. The couple at home are clearly cognizant of the viewer's role and pose directly for the camera/viewer. The ceiling has been opened up to incorporate the view of space implying that the home is open to the sky (or to the surveillance made possible by Sputnik). The original floor of the Armstrong Floor advertisement ends with the edge of the stairway wall, but Hamilton extended the represented interior by creating the illusion of an extended room beyond the edge of the stairway wall. This large open space is filled with more furniture and secondary figures who are distinct from the black-and-white photographic cut-outs of the couple. Images of varying human types appear throughout the living room; these include a televised image of a woman on the telephone, a painted portrait, crudely drawn comic book characters, a poster outside the plate window of Al Jolson, and a color advertisement showing a well-dressed woman vacuuming the stairs. Commerce has

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<sup>74</sup> The idea of the home as a stage can be traced to Walter Benjamin's discussions of the domestic interior in Paris in the late nineteenth century. Adolph Loos, and early modern architecture in general, situated the viewing of architecture within stage-like conventions. See Beatriz Colomina, "The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism," in Colomina, ed., *Sexuality and Space*, 73-130, for one discussion of these ideas. Also, Sidlauskas, "Psyche and Sympathy," in Reed, *Not at Home*.

invaded the home; the large billboard showing Al Jolson is placed so that the figure of the singer all but enters the interior domestic space. The television set, showing a woman talking on the telephone is also intrusive and is placed in such a way as to suggest her physical presence in the room.

The lack of private space that is emphasized in Hamilton's collage of 1956 is continued in the 1960s as mass media and advertising pushed further into the private realm with motivational research, increasingly sophisticated and persuasive advertising, and studies on human behavior.<sup>75</sup> American Pop artists who transformed private expression into dead-pan images taken from the commercial realm (e.g., Andy Warhol), further breached the wall between public and private. Warhol's exploration of celebrity through mass-media imagery revealed that there might not be anything behind a famous image beyond another famous image. In fact, much of his work and his crafting of his own image, was a means of showing that there was no longer a private in opposition to the public realm. The artists who produced images of the American home in the 1960s wrestled with this in a variety of ways, and the relationship between Pop and the home ran both ways. As American Pop moved out of the art galleries and into the arena of fashion, style, and interior decoration, published photographs and articles on the collectors of Pop Art became more prevalent in the mass media.<sup>76</sup> By 1966,

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<sup>75</sup> See Ernest Dichter, *The Strategy of Desire* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1960) for a positive spin on the explorations of psychology and motivational studies on the future of mankind and Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1957), for a negative view.

<sup>76</sup> Whiting provides an excellent summary of the articles on Pop collectors. See Whiting, *A Taste for Pop*, 82-85. See also, "At Home with Henry," *Time* 83 (February 21, 1964); "You Bought It, Now Live with It," *Life* 59 (July 16, 1965): 56-61; and John Rublowsky, "Collectors and Galleries," in *Pop Art* (New York: Basic

*Newsweek* could declare, "It's a fad, it's a trend, it's a way of life, it's pop."<sup>77</sup> In many of the articles in the popular press, the focus was on the collectors at home with their art, and the hanging of the works of art was often keyed to match the room of the house with the subject of the work. Thus, for example, Mrs. Kraushar is seen in her bathroom with *Bathroom # 1* by Wesselmann (fig. 1.8). Images of food by Oldenburg and others are hung in the dining room of the Kraushar house (1.9). Mamiya attributed the remarkable success of Pop to the way its early collectors, Robert and Ethel Scull and the Leon Kraushars, in particular, amassed their large collections quickly. Both men took charge of the family collections and would overrule their wives in purchasing decisions. As corporate executives, their interests in Pop were aligned to their activities in the commercial realm of business, not the private realm of leisure and self-cultivation that characterized the realm of art collectors before Pop.<sup>78</sup> As Mamiya has argued, Pop was in the "nexus of promotional strategies, commodification of art, and corporate mentalities."<sup>79</sup> The shift from the private collection seen only in the context of social circles and personal acquaintances, to the presentation of the art and the collector in his

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Books, 1965). The Scull and the Kraushar family collections are featured in "You Bought It, Now Live with It." Robert Scull and Leon Kraushar are both quoted and both revel in the public attention that their collections bring. Scull exalts, "Don't think I don't like all the attention. I love it." Kraushar brags, "I don't even look at the pictures. I just know that they're there and that I have the best and biggest collection in the world." np.

<sup>77</sup> Peter Benchley, "The Story of Pop: What is it and how it came to be," *Newsweek* (April 25, 1966): 56.

<sup>78</sup> Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London and New York: Routledge Press, 1995), discusses how museums of modern art assume a male identity in its viewers and creates a ritualistic experience of private freedom within the public realm. Her analysis of the space of the museum as a private arena outside of the domestic raises an intriguing complication of the old dichotomy of public and private. In her view, an inversion has occurred so that freedom is now possible in the private realm, not the public realm and advertising fills both spaces. See her discussion on modern art museums, 29-30.

<sup>79</sup> Mamiya, 147.

home in the mass media is another symptom of the collapse of the divide between the public and private realms.<sup>80</sup>

Two key moments of political theater are significant for any discussion of the image of the American home in the 1960s. One is the “Kitchen Debate” of 1959 between Vice President Richard M. Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. This unlikely scene of the two superpowers' representatives having a neighborly chat took place in an American Miracle Kitchen within a model suburban tract home in Moscow (fig. 1.10). The “debate” was not a spontaneous event but a carefully staged event orchestrated by the shrewd American politician.<sup>81</sup> The second momentous event was the renovation of the White House by First Lady, Jacqueline Kennedy, which was televised to a national audience in 1962. These events set the stage for a living history lesson in the private but very public American family home.

In 1959 the United States and the Soviet Union had agreed to exchange exhibitions on science, technology and culture in New York and Moscow.<sup>82</sup> The Soviet exhibition opened in New York at the Coliseum at Columbus Circle; the American exhibition, organized by the United State Information Agency (USIA), opened in Moscow in July for a run of six weeks. In advance of the American fair in Moscow, the Russian

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<sup>80</sup> See for example, Cecile Whiting, *A Taste for Pop*, 50-99, for a discussion of Pop art in the homes of collectors. Mamiya, *Pop Art and Consumer Culture*, 144-149, discusses the business of buying and selling of Pop Art.

<sup>81</sup> Marling suggests that Nixon's invitation to Khrushchev to pause in the model kitchen was carefully staged. “But it is worth noting that William Safire, a future Nixon speechwriter, was doing public relations for Macy's and the model house in Moscow and that photographer Elliott Erwitt was ready to shoot the exchange moment by moment.” See Marling, *As Seen on TV*, 275.

<sup>82</sup> See Marling, *As Seen on TV*, for a discussion of the reception of the American paintings of the exhibition which included Jack Levine's satirical view of military life, *Welcome Home*, 270-73.

exhibition was held in New York at the Coliseum and while it was covered in the press, there was no comparable dramatic moment that synthesized the relationship between the two superpowers.

The subtext for the fair was the competition of living standards between the two superpowers that David Riesman had described in 1951 as the "Nylon War."<sup>83</sup> While the organizers insisted that they wanted to present "a realistic and credible image of America,"<sup>84</sup> the presentation of the American consumer paradise that was visible at the fair was also meant to be a Trojan Horse of the American way of life, carefully calibrated to present the American housewife as the pampered counterpoint to the presumably overworked and dowdy Soviet woman worker.<sup>85</sup> The majority of displays were meant to appeal to the female consumer; among the events and displays were a fashion show, a working beauty salon where Soviet women could make appointments to have their hair done, cooking displays, and cake baking displays. Four kitchens were outfitted with American appliances ranging from those in use in an average home to those of the kitchen of the future, where the housewife could activate her appliances

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<sup>83</sup> Susan E. Reid, "Our Kitchen is Just as Good: Soviet Responses to the American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1959," in David Crowley and Jane Pavitt, *Cold war Modern Design, 1945-1970* (London: V and A Publishing, 2008), 156. Reid describes this as a "third front" and reminds us of Riesman's description. The Soviet Union took up the challenge laid down at the fair. Khrushchev's "Peaceful Coexistence," was published in *Foreign Affairs* (October 1959): 3-7. "Peaceful coexistence can and should develop into peaceful competition for the purpose of satisfying man's needs in the best possible way... We say to the leaders of the capitalist states: Let us try out in practice whose system is better, let us compete without war." The continuing relevance of Khrushchev's essay was suggested by its reprinting in Leonard Freedman and Cornelius P. Cotter, ed. *Issues of the Sixties*, (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1962, first published 1961).

<sup>84</sup> Hélène Lippstadt, "Natural Overlap: Charles and Ray Eames and the Federal Government" in Albrecht, *The Work of Charles and Ray Eames*, 160.

<sup>85</sup> This point of view is argued by Reid and her reading of the response of the Soviets to the American fair shows that they too saw it as a threat that might incite consumers to demand more of their government.

and machines without leaving her chair.<sup>86</sup> As Reid notes, the message of all four kitchens at the American Pavilion was the American housewife's liberation from the drudgery of housework and her freedom, the latter symbolized by her ability to choose the style and color of her kitchen.

Buckminster Fuller was selected to build the main structure, a geodesic dome which was to be an information building; another pavilion of glass would be a building for display of American products including the suburban model home by architect Stanley H. Klein.<sup>87</sup> An exhibition of American paintings and Edward Steichen's photography exhibition, "The Family of Man," were also sent as emissaries of American freedom and democracy (seen in the widely divergent points of view represented in the painting exhibition) and of America's good will toward the world (suggested by the photography exhibition that claimed connections between all people). Charles and Ray Eames were asked to create the slide show of American life, which would be shown in the geodesic dome on multiple screens. The slide show, like the fair itself, was an opportunity to show off the abundance and diversity of American life. The Eameses organized their images in eleven themes that revolved around typical work days and typical weekend days in America.<sup>88</sup>

The presentation of consumer items in a contextualized home setting, not as industrial products on view in an technological exhibition, also shifted the focus from

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<sup>86</sup> For images of some of these events and displays, see Reid.

<sup>87</sup> The fiction about this "average" American house extended to the point of the Americans attributing ownership and occupation of the house to a fictional American family, "the Browns." See Reid.

<sup>88</sup> On the Eames film and their role as early collaborators with the larger themes of the fair, see Lippstadt, "Natural Overlap," 151-166.

state industry to the lives of private families and from the impersonal to the intimate. Fittingly, the suburban home was at the center of this showcase of consumer products. The “Splitnik” as it was nicknamed by the Soviets, was a full-scale model cut in half to allow for maximum viewing opportunities. “In the department store tradition, appropriated by MoMA, it had been erected by a Long Island builder and furnished by Macy's Department Store.”<sup>89</sup> The “idealized image of postwar domesticity,”<sup>90</sup> represented by the house and its appliances and photographed, filmed, and discussed in America as the most popular exhibit at the fair, was by this time an issue of national identity. The single family, middle-class American home, mythologized as the one representation of a widely diverse America, showed American capitalism to be a successful economic system for all the people and elided any discussion of class conflict, urban and rural poverty, and non-nuclear families. In true propagandistic pattern, the American fair in Moscow, in all its manifestations, including the slide show by the Eames, focused on the strength of the capitalistic American economy and its benefits to a middle-class made up of all its citizens, suggesting that America was a classless and egalitarian society. While the Eameses strove to present the diversity of America and included images of the various ethnic groups and races that made up the population of the United States, there were no images of racial conflict or poverty shown at the fair. In fact, poverty was not acknowledged at home within America's postwar boom; it was not a significance presence in the printed media, or on television. For the majority of Americans, those who lived in suburbs, poverty was simply unseen. Poverty was real

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<sup>89</sup> Colomina, *Domesticity at War*, 54, notes the kitchen was designed by Raymond Lowey

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

only to the poor, and to those who lived in proximity to the poor, in the cities or in the hinterlands of rural America. "Poverty was America's most guarded secret."<sup>91</sup>

Perhaps as significant as the statements made by Nixon and Khrushchev in the model kitchen was the coverage of the Kitchen Debate in the American media. In the United States, Nixon and Khrushchev were the lead story appearing in *The New York Times*,<sup>92</sup> in *Life*,<sup>93</sup> *U.S. News and World Report*, and in *Newsweek*. The debate was also broadcast twice on the major national networks<sup>94</sup> and heard on the radio. Pitched as a competition between the two superpowers, capitalism opposed to communism, the setting for the confrontation was described by Nixon as "like those of our houses in California"<sup>95</sup>--an average home, "within the price range of the average U.S. worker."<sup>96</sup> Nixon stressed two points: the house's availability to all classes and the abundance of choice in the consumer products available to fill that house.<sup>97</sup> As Nixon pointed out "diversity, the right to choose... is the most important thing."<sup>98</sup> Later historians saw Nixon's emphasis on home ownership as a tool for control of labor unrest (from, for example, women who had been encouraged to give up their well-paying jobs in industry at the war's end to return to the home) that threatened the status-quo.

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<sup>91</sup> David M. Lubin, *Shooting Kennedy: JFK and the Culture of Images*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2003), 89.

<sup>92</sup> on July 25 and 26, 1959

<sup>93</sup> *Life*, July 27, 1959; and in the August 3 and on August 10, 1959 the story continued with coverage of Nixon in Russia. See "That famous debate in close up pictures" *Life* 47, no. 5 (August 3, 1959): 26-31, and "The Vice-President in Russia: A Barnstorming Masterpiece," *Life* 47, no. 6 (August 10, 1959): 22-35.

<sup>94</sup> 16 minutes long, on ABC, CBS, NBC 11 p.m. on July 25, and shown again at 7 p.m. on July 26, 1959.

<sup>95</sup> *The New York Times*, July 25, 1959, 1.

<sup>96</sup> *The New York Times*, July 25, 1959, 1.

<sup>97</sup> Nixon connected choice in consumer products with the ability to make individual decisions in a democracy.

<sup>98</sup> *The New York Times*, July 25, 1959, 3.



“In Nixon's vision, the suburban ideal of home ownership would diffuse two potentially disruptive forces: women and workers. In appliance-laden houses across the country, working-class as well as business-class breadwinners could fulfill the new American work-to-consume ethic. Home ownership would lessen class consciousness among workers, who would set their sights toward the middle-class ideal. The family home would be the place where a man could display his success through the accumulation of consumer goods. Women in turn, would reap rewards for domesticity by surrounding themselves with commodities. Presumably, they would remain content as housewives because appliances would ease their burdens. For both men and women, home ownership would reinforce aspirations for upward mobility and diffuse the potential for social unrest.”<sup>99</sup>

After the exhibition in Moscow, the model house was redesigned by Lowey into the Leisurama house and exhibited on the ninth floor of Macy's in New York.<sup>100</sup>

Of the many writers who describe the importance of the Kitchen Debate in terms of global competition and Cold War ideology, only Marling and Reid described the significance behind the multiple kitchens sent to Moscow. Marling notes that the multiple kitchens made it clear “to all who saw the photos that what was at stake in an era of atomic bombs was existence—home, hearth, all the most basic human functions.”<sup>101</sup> While three kitchens were typical of 1959 with appliances currently in use by American housewives; the fourth was a kitchen of the future “a futuristic display of household robots in the Glass Pavilion.”<sup>102</sup> This futuristic kitchen (fig.1.11) included a closed circuit television to monitor all rooms in the house, something that would be

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<sup>99</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, 164.

<sup>100</sup> By 1964, 250 of these had been built as beach houses on the tip of Long Island.

<sup>101</sup> Marling, 278.

<sup>102</sup> Marling, 276.

marketed to homes in the 1960s as an aide to mothers who might want to keep a constant eye on their children.<sup>103</sup>

Not long after John F. Kennedy won the presidency in 1960, he traveled to Berlin to meet with the Soviet Premier. He returned home disheartened enough by the political situation to encourage Americans in a speech to the nation on July 25, 1961 to build bomb shelters in preparation for a possible nuclear strike against the United States.<sup>104</sup> With the nation on heightened alert throughout the summer of 1961, *Life* magazine published a letter to the public from the President, and instructions to build a bomb shelter and survive an attack. The magazine insisted that with the proper bomb shelter and precautions, 97 out of 100 people could be saved.<sup>105</sup> Photographs of newlyweds preparing for a honeymoon in a bomb shelter,<sup>106</sup> families in their bomb shelters, and the array of canned and preserved goods that would sustain a family while in their bomb shelter, were disseminated in the popular press as a way of normalizing the horror of contemplating the world after a nuclear strike and of encouraging American housewives to stockpile goods for their family's well being (fig. 1.12). Just as the single-family home was presented as the solution to the housing crisis that gripped the nation after World War II, the American solution to nuclear threat was a well-

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<sup>103</sup> This representation of American domestic ingenuity had military and cold war application especially at a time when both the United States and the Soviet Union were worried about satellites in space and spy planes.

<sup>104</sup> The text of this speech is available on-line from the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, The Public Papers of the Presidents.

<sup>105</sup> *Life* 51, no. 1 (September 15, 1961). The letter from President Kennedy was published on page. 95; Pages 96-108 gave instructions on how to build a bomb shelter and tips on surviving a nuclear attack. See also, "Civil Defense: the Sheltered Life," *Time* (October 20, 1961) at [www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,917,872787-6,000](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,917,872787-6,000) (accessed 8/31/09)

<sup>106</sup> See "Their Sheltered Honeymoon," *Life* 47, no. 6 (August 10, 1959): 51-52.

stocked, single-family underground home. The sense of the family and home as a bulwark against attackers from without the United States and even within was fundamental to Cold War rhetoric. *Time Magazine* captured the urgency of 1961, quoting a Chicagoan fiercely ready to defend his family.

When I get my shelter finished, I'm going to mount a machine gun at the hatch to keep the neighbors out if the bomb falls. I'm deadly serious about this. If the stupid American public will not do what they have to save themselves, I'm not going to run the risk of not being able to use the shelter I've taken the trouble to provide to save my own family.<sup>107</sup>

An even more urgent warning to the American people by the President of the United States took place on October 22, 1962, when John F. Kennedy announced the crisis that was unfolding in Cuba over the discovery of secret Soviet missiles. The negotiations between the United States government, the Soviet Union, and Castro's Cuba brought the superpowers close to nuclear war before being resolved on October 28, 1962. The Cuban Missile Crisis was the most dangerous moment of the Cold War, and while the details of the brinksmanship that was displayed by both sides has only recently been fully understood as government documents have been declassified, the danger of the moment was made clear to the American public.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> See "Gun Thy Neighbor?" *Time* (August 18, 1961) ([www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,872694,00](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,872694,00)) accessed Aug. 31, 2009. Margot A. Henriksen, *Dr. Strangelove's America* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1997) discusses what she calls "the hysteria surrounding first the Berlin crisis and then the Cuban missile crisis" and the president's call for the building of civil defense shelters, 200-210.

<sup>108</sup> See, for example, "The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962: Fortieth Anniversary Conference" at National Security Archive at George Washington University at [www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/cuba\\_mis\\_cri/](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/cuba_mis_cri/) for a detailed chronology of the events, audio clips of the President and his advisors discussing the crisis, declassified documents from the United States government, and *Washington Post* newspaper coverage. accessed September 10, 2009.

The similarities between the family fall-out shelter (which in many cases was conceived of as an extension of the family home) and the single-family home were finally conjoined in the Underground House built by Jay Swayzee and sponsored by General Electric as a model home of the future at the 1964 New York World's Fair.<sup>109</sup> The Underground House was also featured in *Life* magazine in April 1964.<sup>110</sup> (fig. 1.13, 1.14). The Underground House promised to protect the American family against all threats, including bad weather, prying neighbors, and the bomb. It also isolated the family in a self-referential cocoon of its own making.

The second piece of political theater starred the accomplished young wife of John F. Kennedy. Jacqueline Kennedy's role in the visual theater of the Kennedy White House was substantial. David Lubin describes her as "a metaphorical movie star" and compares her celebrity in the 1960s with that of Doris Day and Elizabeth Taylor.<sup>111</sup> One of the most photographed women in America, she was on the cover of *Life* magazine eighteen times, beginning in 1953 when she and Senator Kennedy were photographed sailing off the coast of Hyannis Port.<sup>112</sup> The restoration and tour of the White House,

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<sup>109</sup> Swayzee was a military instructor who conceived of the Underground House as a means of protecting the American family from the dangers of the nuclear age. See Colomina, *Domesticity at War*, 275-292. Colomina interprets the Underground House as a new cave, a "hyper interiorized space" that excluded the outside in a radical reinterpretation of the house as a division between inside and outside. The trend in the twentieth century away from city planning to single-family home design is also evident in her comparison between the Futurama exhibits of 1939 and 1964. Futurama I showed a unified vision of the modernist city, whereas in 1964, instead of cities, the exhibit featured a series of single-family homes located underwater, on the moon, in the desert, or below ice. Colomina, *Domesticity at War*, 286.

<sup>110</sup> "Underground Dreamhouse: A Texan Lives 10 Feet Below the Surface," *Life* 56, no. 17 (April 24, 1964): 51-57

<sup>111</sup> Lubin, 7-14.

<sup>112</sup> Lubin, 41; according to Lubin only John F. Kennedy was on the cover of *Life* more frequently than Jacqueline Kennedy. A photograph of the cover appears on page 40. J.F.K.'s father, Joseph Kennedy, was a friend of the publisher, Henry Luce, and bragged about the correlation between his son's photographic appeal and how many more issues would sell with his face on the cover.

which the First Lady orchestrated in 1962, was shown on television and was also the subject of a book based on the television program.<sup>113</sup> The importance of this media event has not been duly noted.

Both the president and the first lady knew the importance of images and used the media to construct an image of an idyllic American family.<sup>114</sup> Elegant, vivacious, and photogenic, the first family was the subject of much adulation, and while Jackie Kennedy strictly controlled the media's access to herself and her children, photographs of the children with their pony, on the swing set that had been set up on the lawn, and under their father's desk, were published and disseminated to the American people (fig. 1. 15). *Life* magazine had already established the white middle-class family as the universal image of the American way of life, and the Kennedy family became an upscale version of this ideal.<sup>115</sup> Jackie Kennedy was an important ambassador for her husband's administration; she was also however, a housewife and mother whose devotion to her husband, her children, and her house linked her to the view of domesticity that

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<sup>113</sup> Perry Wolff, *A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1962), 9. The tour was an hour. The introduction to the book speaks of the significance of the White House for the nation, "the White House stands in the center of our public life," and the public's response to the television program, "On a single night in February 1962, almost one-third of a nation saw Mrs. John F. Kennedy conduct a television tour of the White House." A second book about the Kennedy renovation of the White House was published in 1998. See James Abbott and Elaine M. Rice, *Designing Camelot: The Kennedy White House Restoration* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1998).

<sup>114</sup> Joseph Kennedy's familiarity with Hollywood production and promotion and his role in creating the Kennedy family story has been told by many. The Kennedys point to the elder Kennedy's role in promoting his own political career and those of his sons by hiring photographers, film crews, and press staff. ) See Hellman, *The Kennedy Obsession: The American Myth of JFK* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), in particular, his chapter titled, "The Erotics of a Presidency," 113-143.

<sup>115</sup> Hellman, 132. For a review of the importance of *Life* and the themes that were presented in photographs and essays, see Erika Doss, *Looking at Life* (Washington D.C. and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

prevailed in the late fifties and early 1960s.<sup>116</sup> Her husband was the first president to use the private rooms of the White House to meet official guests and to allow photographers into these meetings. His use of the family rooms of the White House for business also blurred the line between the public areas of the White House and the private quarters of the family home.

Jacqueline Kennedy took pains to represent her restoration of the White House as a professional exercise in connoisseurship and historical accuracy, not a simple renovation of the home. The televised tour on February 14, 1962 was watched by 80 million Americans.<sup>117</sup> It followed a well-known trope in which the television acted as an invitation for the audience at home to participate in the activities represented on the screen (fig. 1.16). Cameras followed the First Lady as she moved from room to room showing the restoration as a work in progress and discussing current and future plans. She was simultaneously hostess and star, speaking of the history of rooms and the importance of individual works of art and furniture. A climactic moment in the program occurred within the State Dining Room when Mrs. Kennedy paused to read the inscription on the mantel (fig.1.17):

I pray Heaven to Bestow

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<sup>116</sup> Lubin, 77, described the First Family as an unhappy one and attributes Jackie's depressions in the early years of her marriage as more than her reaction to her husband's sexual philandering. Lubin connects it to the "lack of a meaningful career for her beyond that of housewife, mother, and beauty object whose chief function, in *Life's* terms, was to dazzle the voters' eyes."

<sup>117</sup> W. J. Rorabaugh, *Kennedy and the Promise of the Sixties* (Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), discusses the White House restoration, 129-130. The televised tour was also distributed around the world by the USIA (United States Information Agency). See Wolff, 249. The export of the film should be understood within the context of Cold War political propaganda and as a means of capitalizing on the President and First Lady's personal popularity overseas. Lubin describes the size of the audience as 45 million.

The Best of Blessings on

THIS HOUSE

and on All that shall hereafter

inhabit it. May none but Honest

and Wise Men ever rule under This Roof.

the best of blessing on this house.<sup>118</sup>

Coming on the heels of her husband's 1961 Housing Bill, her work on the White House inevitably drew connections between her own work as the first housewife (working for the good of her family and country) and that of the President's work for the good of all Americans and the world. For historian Barbara Perry, there were five areas in which the First Lady established herself within the larger sphere of her husband's presidency. First in Perry's list is her restoration of the official residence of the First Family.<sup>119</sup> The restoration of the White House was part of the cultural renaissance that the Kennedy Administration brought to the nation's capital. It was also Jackie Kennedy's very conscious staging of her own domestic role as the housewife who lived within the White House. Her restoration of the White House glorified the nation's home and added a patriotic note to home decorating.<sup>120</sup> Perry also argues that Jacqueline Kennedy's engagement in national politics is visible in the ways in which her work as

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<sup>118</sup> This inscription, carved into the mantel, was put there by Franklin D. Roosevelt and is a quote from John Adams's letter to his wife, November 2, 1800. Wolff, 102.

<sup>119</sup> Barbara A. Perry, *Jacqueline Kennedy, First Lady of the New Frontier* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004). The other themes that Perry associates with Jacqueline Kennedy are fashion, media relations, arts and culture and John F. Kennedy's presidential legacy.

<sup>120</sup> Several authors claim that the restoration of the White House led to a new interest in American antiques.

First Lady complemented her husband's work.<sup>121</sup> Her attention to fashion and the arts, and her focus on the White House as the cultural and political center of the United States were enhancements of the Kennedy presidency. The power of these symbolic events and presentations was disseminated by the media to a public that eagerly absorbed news of the glittering social gatherings and the quieter moments of the First Family. At the end of the televised program, the President made a guest appearance, commending his wife for her work on behalf of the country and future generations. Jacqueline Kennedy's artful presentation of the White House as a stage set for historic events of America's past, and family moments, helped American housewives to see their own homes in similar terms, a boon for advertisers who also presented the home as a space for theatrical display and role playing.<sup>122</sup> As historian Joseph Hellman acknowledged, Jacqueline Kennedy's "chosen project, the restoration of the White House based on a reverence for its history, offered a heightened version of the domestic role of the average housewife."<sup>123</sup> The attention paid to the Kennedy family in the White House, the photographs and the press coverage of family events and public dinners in

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<sup>121</sup> Perry, *Jacqueline Kennedy: First Lady of the New Frontier*.

<sup>122</sup> As a sort of parallel to Jackie Kennedy's domestic renovations, President John F. Kennedy spoke on July 25, 1961, on television before an estimated 50,000,000 viewers about the deepening crisis with the Soviet Union over the divided city of Berlin. In that speech Kennedy declared that the United States would meet force with force if necessary. In consequence of that possibility he would be requesting from Congress \$93,000,000 to protect Americans against the possibility of a nuclear war. "With those few ominous words about civil defense, set against a looming confrontation with the Kremlin, President Kennedy triggered off what was to become a national craze...: building fallout shelters for oneself and one's family in hopes of surviving attack in a thermonuclear war." Karp, [www.americanheritage.com](http://www.americanheritage.com). In the end, very few fallout shelters were built; more than one commentator points to the moral dilemma that the fallout shelters posed; the very real possibility of your neighbors asking or demanding space in your shelter was debated with religious fervor. Would murder of your neighbor be an acceptable price to guarantee food and space for you and your family in your own bunker? Still, the notion that the dangers of nuclear war could be averted by sheltering in an underground home for two weeks while the radioactive atmosphere cooled was a hot topic in the summer of 1961.

<sup>123</sup> Hellman, *Kennedy Obsession*, 133.



their home, and the restoration and tour of the White House that Jackie Kennedy undertook as one of her most public duties as First Lady also contributed to the sense of the American home as a public space of political and private theater. Thus, two carefully choreographed moments of political theater helped set the stage for the American home as the center of American political and cultural life in the 1960s. In both, the most important character was the American housewife who made the house a home.

Just what was it that made today's homes so different, so appealing to advertisers, to artists, and to the public? "Today's home" in the 1960s was a stage for the display of national and individual success; it was chock full of new appliances and gadgets, and it was open to view. The media's concentrated attention on the home to encourage spending, to encourage conformity, and to idealize the typical American family made the image of the American home "sticky with associations."<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> This is a term that artist Claes Oldenburg used to describe his own work of the 1960s which he believed would eventually come to mean something different after the individual associations that were known to contemporaries would dissipate.

## Chapter 2: At Home with Consumer Culture, 1960 - 1963

After World War II, American soldiers returned home to gather their own peace dividends— a home, a family, and for many, an education on the GI bill (fig. 2.1). As advertisements like this from General Electric made clear, the sacrifices that the war had demanded of U.S. citizens would be rewarded by a blissful future that included a traditional family in a home of their own with peaked roof set off from other houses in a suburban or ex-urban setting. The line of household appliances at the bottom of the text indicated that this home was merely an empty shell until it was filled with all the appliances that made it a home. Historian William O'Neill characterized the years after the war as a time when "Americans, and veterans in particular, were obsessed with housing because there was so little of it."<sup>125</sup> In a 1959 advertisement, another couple— younger in years but more sophisticated in consumer desires—dreamt of their own home with new and improved appliances (fig. 2.2). This is a vision of the ideal American home as a single-family house in the suburbs filled with new, American-made

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<sup>125</sup> William L. O'Neill, *American High: The Years of Confidence, 1945-1960* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 12.

appliances. The younger couple is a testament to the times. In the 1950s the average marriage age was lower than in the 1940s, and the house is much more substantial than the sketch in the sand of the earlier advertisement. Enormous changes in the housing market occurred between the end of the war and 1959; suburbs and highways had been constructed, and more suburbs were under construction. The home after World War II and into the decade of the 1960s was part of an emotional advertising campaign that combined relief at the war's end with a determined commitment to preserve the free world through the ongoing Cold War. Part of the advertising campaign around the home focused on domesticity and a strict division of labor, with the woman at home and the American male out at work earning money to support the family. As Colomina noted this model of the family was exported to the world, "the new form of domesticity turned out to be a powerful weapon. Expertly designed images of domestic bliss were launched to the entire world as part of a carefully orchestrated propaganda campaign."<sup>126</sup>

By 1960 the country had made the shift from war to peacetime production, consumer culture was in full swing, and the American hero of the Kitchen Debate was in fierce competition with John F. Kennedy to win the Presidency.<sup>127</sup> With the stirrings of racial and urban unrest as a backdrop, Democrat John F. Kennedy made housing a key issue in his campaign while Richard M. Nixon ran on Eisenhower's free market policies.

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<sup>126</sup> Colomina, *Domesticity and War*, 12.

<sup>127</sup> Stephen Ambrose, *Richard Nixon*, Vol. I (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 594. In the last presidential campaign debate of 1960, John F. Kennedy reminded viewers of Nixon's support for the Cold War competition in consumer products, "You yourself said to Khrushchev, 'You may be ahead of us in rocket thrust but we're ahead of you in color television' in your famous discussion in the kitchen. I think that color television is not as important as rocket thrust."

These were policies that many blamed for the recession of the late 1950s, the continuing decline in housing stock, and the lack of progress for African Americans.<sup>128</sup>

Civil Rights activists were also pressing for an end to discriminatory housing policies.

Although the new suburban developments had relieved the housing crunch for millions of white middle-class families, they had done nothing except exacerbate the problems of the inner cities and the increasingly rigid patterns of segregation in housing.<sup>129</sup>

As home furnishings and especially appliances became increasingly important commodities in the American economy and increasingly visible in the media of the

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<sup>128</sup> The Democratic campaign's platform included specific goals for housing. "A new Democratic administration will expand the federal programs to aid urban communities, to clear these slums, dispose of their sewage, educate their children, transport suburban commuters to and from their jobs, and combat juvenile delinquency. We will give the city dweller a voice at the Cabinet table by bringing together within a single Department programs concerned with urban and metropolitan problems... Today our rate of home building is less than ten years ago. A healthy expanding economy will enable us to build 2 million homes a year, in wholesome neighborhoods, for people of all incomes..." Nathaniel S. Keith, *Politics and the Housing Crisis Since 1930* (New York: Universe Books, 1973), 137. See Keith, 136-37, Ambrose, 588, and Robert J. Norrell, *The House I Live In: Race in the American Century* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) 162, on Eisenhower's civil rights record in contrast to Truman's efforts. In his campaign for the presidency, Kennedy organized a conference on housing in Pittsburgh and made promises to provide housing for all income levels. He also suggested that he would do more than the previous administration to alleviate housing discrimination. Kennedy's first State of the Union address on January 30, 1961, had placed housing, education, and health care for the elderly at the top of the list of "unfinished and neglected tasks" of the country. He appointed Robert C. Weaver, an African-American Harvard educated economist to his staff as Administrator for the Housing and Home Finance Agency and made plans to elevate Weaver and this position to the cabinet level. He was unsuccessful but Johnson succeeded in adding a Cabinet position for housing and promoted Weaver to head it.

<sup>129</sup> Norrell, 165, "As literally millions of public housing units were created in the two decades after the war, nearly all conformed to existing patterns of racial segregation—i.e., projects identified as black went up in existing black ghettos and those viewed as white were built in white areas." In the 1950s harassment of black families who moved into white neighborhoods and housing riots between blacks and whites in the border areas of segregated neighborhoods occurred throughout the country, but were not reported in the national press. "A study of newspaper coverage in the mid-1950s concluded that the New York Times and Detroit Free Press usually suggested that racial problems in their midst had been solved and that the Chicago Tribune mostly ignored local racial conflict altogether. This caused many Northerners to believe that American race problems were confined to the South, and it would cause them to be shocked at the violence in their own cities when racial conflicts in the 1960s received intense coverage." Norrell, 168, who refers to Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York, 1984), 31. For a review of how the postwar suburbs were constructed to keep out minorities, see Hayden, and Wright.

1960s, Pop artists seized upon their ubiquity and utilized them as subjects for their work. Christin Mamiya's study of American Pop Art and the consumer culture of the period after World War II analyzed the relationships between Pop imagery and the cultural and political imperatives of the 1960s: "Corporate strategies, government strategies, and personal interests all coalesced during the 1960s to create a nation of consumers."<sup>130</sup> She perceptively located the center for this drive to consume in the home:

The postwar period was one of affluence, dominated by corporate culture, and the pursuit of self-fulfillment became more entrenched as an integral part of the American lifestyle. As such, the home became a particularly critical arena in which much of the upheaval wrought by maturing consumer society was played out.<sup>131</sup>

Elaine Tyler May also discussed the integration of consumer society and the domestic front.

Consumerism in the postwar years went far beyond the mere purchases of goods and services. It included important cultural values, demonstrated success and social mobility, and defined lifestyles. It also provided the most vivid symbol of the American way of life: the affluent suburban home. There can be no doubt that the gender roles associated with domestic consumerism—homemakers and breadwinner—were central to the identity of many women and men at the time. It is also evident, however, that along with the ideology of sexual containment, postwar domestic consumerism required conformity to strict gender assumptions that were fraught with potential tensions and frustrations. Suburban homes filled with material possessions could not always compensate for the dissatisfactions inherent in the domestic arrangements consumerism was intended to enhance and reinforce. In fact, those very domestic arrangements,

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<sup>130</sup> Mamiya, 114.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

although idealized and coveted at the time, were the source of countless miseries.<sup>132</sup>

Roy Lichtenstein, whose images of domestic interiors date much later in his career,<sup>133</sup> produced a series of works that focused on individual household appliances drawn from commercial artists' renditions. Only *Bathroom* (1961) presents an image of a domestic interior space (fig. 2.3). The painting is clearly drawn from a commercial source; the simple black-and-white composition is a straightforward, frontal view of a bathroom interior delineating all the accoutrements of a middle-class bathroom. Diane Waldman described Lichtenstein's subject as the "middle class, and how it is courted by the media, covets products, and views culture."<sup>134</sup> To that purpose he collected advertising images into study notebooks and used these images as source materials for his paintings. Lichtenstein's images of the middle-class home fall into two categories: examples of individual appliances and enhancements for the home, and images of women at work in the home or waiting for a man.<sup>135</sup> Examples of the first type include *Rotobroil*, 1961, *Kitchen Range*, 1962, and *Curtains*, 1962. These are not, strictly speaking, images of the home, but those of furnishings that were intended for it, and they function as synecdoches for the commercialization of the home. *Roto-Broil* (fig. 2.4) was an all purpose kitchen appliance, the "ultimate kitchen tool of the 1950s." It

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<sup>132</sup> May, 181-2.

<sup>133</sup> Except for one interior view of the *Bathroom* from 1961, all of Lichtenstein's interiors of the home date to the decades after 1970. See Diane Waldman, *Roy Lichtenstein: Retrospective* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Rizzoli Press), 1993.

<sup>134</sup> Waldman, 77.

<sup>135</sup> Waldman points this out in her discussion of girls in his comic paintings. "He singled out images of women in the home performing domestic chores or waiting for a man." Waldman, 79. This also applies to his images of home products.

was produced by the Roto-Broil Corporation in Long Island City, Queens, New York, owned by the Klinghoffer family (fig. 2.5). In 1955, a new and improved Roto-Broil came out, the Roto-Broil 400, which was rectangular in shape and marketed with its own cookbook, "The Mr. and Mrs. Roto-Broil Cookbook." By 1961, however, the Roto-Broil was not a new appliance; in fact it had been superseded by newer kitchen appliances. Rather than assuming that Lichtenstein had a nostalgic purpose for selecting the Roto-Broil as the subject of this work, I would suggest that the narratives that had been woven around the object itself through advertising and contemporary press stories might have piqued his interest in the appliance. News stories concerning the Roto-Broil Corporation had surfaced in the 1950s. Lester Persky, head of his own advertising firm and later to become a movie producer (in 1965 he would introduce Andy Warhol to Edie Sedgwick), invented the hour-long infomercial to sell products, many of them domestic. In 1954 he purchased hours of coverage on two networks (NBC and CBS) for the Roto-Broil and "upstaged the 1954 election coverage." According to Guy LeBow's memory of the event, the next day's *New York Times* quipped that Roto-Broil had won the election.<sup>136</sup> These added references to the Roto-Broil product and its representation as a relic of the 1950s suggest that Lichtenstein's purpose in representing the Roto-Broil went beyond a reference to the home or domesticity. *Kitchen Range* (fig. 2.6) and *Curtains* (fig. 2.7) provide similar suggestions of Lichtenstein's attention to the less sophisticated aspects of contemporary commercial life. *Kitchen Range* is obviously

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<sup>136</sup> Guy LeBow, with an introduction by Ed McMahon, *Watch Your Cleavage, Check Your Zipper! Everything You Were Never Supposed to Know About TV* (New York: S.P.I. Books: A Division of Shapolsky Books, 1994), 37.

based on a crudely-drawn representation of a generic stove that does not celebrate the specific attributes or qualities of a new product. This stove is a simple sign for a domestic object, not an advertisement for a product. Domesticity and the home are more specifically invoked by the image of *Curtains*. The layers of curtain that conceal the architectural frame of the window suggest a feminine touch and the decade of the 1950s, as seen by an example of what the ad designated as "the new look" in home decorating, circa 1952 (fig. 2.8).

Examples of scenes of domesticity that featured women at work in the home or sequestered in the home include: *Refrigerator*, 1962 (fig. 2.9) ; *Washing Machine*, 1962 (fig. 2.10); *Step-on-Can with Leg*, 1961 (fig. 2.11); *Blonde Waiting*, 1964 (fig. 2.12); and *Brad, I Know How You Must Feel*, 1963-4 (fig. 2.13). The focus of these paintings is on the role of women in the domestic sphere and the advertising industry's use of images of women in the home to invite women to purchase home products. In Lichtenstein's re-interpretations of images of household products, the gendered construction of mass media and middle class ideals are complicated by their removal from their original context, and their isolation within the context of fine art imagery. Irony plays an important role in the transformation of imagery. Because the artist's models are not the objects themselves but the schematic images of advertising, his subject is removed from domesticity and instead grounded in how domesticity is presented. The idea of a housewife's self-fulfillment through the home was a key psychological strategy for advertisers who focused on women as consumers. Marriage was central to women as represented in the advertising media, and the designers of the advertisements and



promotions “invoke hopes, fears, joys and failures commonly associated with marriage to sell a wide variety of products.”<sup>137</sup> In the many advertisements that paired women with new appliances, new food and cleaning products, new grooming tools and cosmetics, the home was their arena of activity. The ideology of consumption that has been ascribed to the postwar period was fueled by an ethos of self-fulfillment that depended on a division of labor (and consumption habits) along class and gender lines. Published in 1962, Betty Friedan’s book, *The Feminine Mystique*, made it clear that middle-class self-fulfillment as represented in the media was not the reward of many women with well-stocked homes and new appliances in the suburbs.<sup>138</sup>

In *Refrigerator*, *Washing Machine*, and *Step-on-Can with Leg*, the home is the implied space of the abstracted and isolated image. In each case, the woman of the house is utilizing the appliance or tool in a way that suggests that the work is easy and carefree; housework has been elevated from a daily chore to a self-fulfilling activity-- exactly the illusion that Friedan uncovered in 1962. Lichtenstein's ironic representation of housework as something done with high heels, manicured hands, and a delighted smile pokes fun at advertising's representations of domestic bliss. It also drives a wedge between the physical labor of housework -- unpaid labor performed by the woman of the house -- and housework as it was represented in the media. In the media, a woman acted as a manager in the home by activating technology -- pushing buttons, flicking

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<sup>137</sup> Robert Atwan, Donald McQuade, John W. Wright, *Edsels, Luckies, and Frigidaires: Advertising the American Way* (New York: Dell, 1979), 5.

<sup>138</sup> Emily Braun, "Sex, Lies and History," *Modernism/Modernity*, 10/4 (November 2003): 729-56. Braun, 733, notes that Marshall McLuhan "debunked the industrial workings of the feminine mystique" by which she means the constant pairing of women with machines, including household appliances.

switches, or pulling instant meals from a refrigerator/freezer.<sup>139</sup> A key to advertising home products has consistently been to help the homemaker avoid the drudgery of housework.<sup>140</sup>

*Blonde Waiting* (fig. 2.12) and *Brad, I Know How You Must Feel* (fig. 2.13) are similarly focused on the distinct representation of gender roles that found the women at home and the men in the world. In these images, however, the source materials are comics, not advertising images. Taken from comics of love and romance, they focus on dilemmas of male-female relationships, and on occasion, the strained domestic relationship between mother and daughter, as seen in *Eddie Diptych* (fig. 2.14). The female protagonist is, in most cases, in a passive role -- either in tears, waiting, or caught in a psychologically ambivalent moment. As Whiting has remarked, the artist has removed the narrative and much of the setting to focus on the face or faces of the characters, which "serve as the traces of the effects of actions that have taken place elsewhere."<sup>141</sup> The setting of the domestic space amplifies her passivity and incapability. In these images, the home functions as a setting for the stereotypical female roles of the 1950s (since these are the comic books that Lichtenstein generally used as source material).<sup>142</sup> The home in advertising was required to play many roles—center for the

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<sup>139</sup> The idea of pushbutton technology in the home was investigated by Mamiya, 115-118. Braun also discusses the caressing hand in James Rosenquist's work and refers to Erving Goffman's discussion of advertising's use of the feminine hands with manicured nails and the delicate touch by feminine hands as sexual signs. See Braun, "Sex, Lies and History," 742, and Vivien Gornick, *Gender Advertisements* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979) for Goffman's readings of gendered signs in postwar advertising.

<sup>140</sup> Atwan, 5.

<sup>141</sup> Whiting, *A Taste for Pop*, 110.

<sup>142</sup> As Waldman and others have noted, Lichtenstein's comic images can be divided along strict gender lines: the war images, the science fiction subjects, and the action heroes are male; the love and romance,

intimate life of the family and the public presentation of the family's status. The home was also the stage for the enactment of the wife and mother's many roles.

Lichtenstein's use of melodramatic romance comics suggests an ironic unmasking of these overwrought heroines.

James Rosenquist created very few images of the home as a domestic space in his Pop works of the 1960s. This is in keeping with his collage aesthetic. Rather than focusing on one image, he typically combined several different images, using the juxtaposition of difference as a means of creating both mystery and impact. In the few home images that he produced, *Rainbow*, 1961, *Bedspring*, 1962,<sup>143</sup> *Untitled (Two Chairs)*, 1963, *Win a New House this Christmas*, 1964, *Dishes*, 1964, and *Front Lawn*, 1964, he uncharacteristically focused on a single image.<sup>144</sup> Emily Braun's recent study of Rosenquist's work interprets these few images of the home as "poignant,"<sup>145</sup> seeing in them "the garish glow of soon-to-be-outmoded decor and ad copy promoting dreams come true" that "betray the quiet mood of desperation."<sup>146</sup> *Rainbow* of 1961 (2.15) is

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domestic, and women in need of rescue are female. See Whiting, *A Taste for Pop*, 102-117. As she notes, "Lichtenstein's romance paintings, in contrast, almost always situate women in domestic settings," 104.

<sup>143</sup> Braun places *Bedspring* within the context of a discussion of gender and sexuality. The image of the woman's face is stretched with twine and attached to a stretcher frame that is painted to resemble a metal bed frame. She interprets this work as an image of a woman and a bed combined (beautiful woman leads to sexual desire, leads to bed) and suggests that the construction implicates the scopophilia of high art and because the source of Rosenquist's image is a photograph, the camera. Following her reading of the painted construction, I do not include this as an image of the home. See Braun, "Sex, Lies and History," 729-30.

<sup>144</sup> For photographic images of *Untitled (Two Chairs)*, and *Dishes*, see Judith Goldman, *James Rosenquist: The Early Pictures, 1961-64* (New York: Rizzoli and Gagosian Gallery, 1992).

<sup>145</sup> Braun, "Sex, Lies, and History," 742. Braun's characterization of James Rosenquist as a history painter for his time is right on target. She describes him as "a realist documenting the everyday surreality of American life, where in-depth coverage of radiation is followed by ads for lanolin-enriched skin cream, the manicured suburban lawns reap the benefits of jet-bomber engineering contracts, and one watches high-tech annihilation from the comfort of an easy chair," 733.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 733.

an image of a suburban tract home (represented by the use of aluminum siding) seen from the exterior. The broken window and the fork that seems to stab the window frame suggest a violent encounter within; "broken glass and a threatening fork puncture the serenity of the nuclear family pictures in *Life* and on the TV screen."<sup>147</sup> With its focus on the exterior of the home and suggestion of landscape, *Front Lawn* (fig. 2.16) is another view of the American home from the exterior. The long horizontal of the image presents a view of the winding path through the grassy front lawn of a suburban home from an extremely low vantage point, as if the viewer were lying prone on the sidewalk. Neither the house nor the front steps are even visible. Has the owner of the house exhausted himself in the stretch to attain the American Dream and collapsed just short of his goal? *Win a New House this Christmas* (fig. 2.17) is another poignant image that refers to the dream of a home in the suburbs and suggests that for some, the attainment of this dream is possible through luck, not other means. The context for Rosenquist's vision of a new house refers to the fashion for entries and contests, a conspicuous part of printed matter advertising by large multinational companies like Domino Sugar, Gillette, and others.

Two Pop artists, Tom Wesselmann and Claes Oldenburg, used the image of the American home as a subject of sustained inquiry in the 1960s. Oldenburg's Home period begins in 1964 and will be discussed in a separate chapter; Wesselmann, whose

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid. Braun notes that on the source collage that Rosenquist created as a mock-up of the painting, the artist scrawled, "Stabbing the Meat; blood in the rainbow."

early Pop works focus nearly obsessively on the home and the female presence within it is my focus for the remainder of this chapter.

In 1959, Tom Wesselmann stopped painting in an abstract expressionist style, turning to collage as a technique and to representational imagery as his visual format. His first subjects were interior scenes, and he soon focused on the nude in a domestic interior as his primary subject. By 1960, he had embarked on his series of *Great American Nudes* and established the key elements of his Pop style, combining references to art history with references to contemporary American life. The latter included settings recognizable as American homes with recognizably American goods and products. He also included American imagery and motifs, such as portraits of past presidents, images of recognizable urban centers (e.g., New York and Washington D.C.), and the recurrent use of red, white, and blue. In Wesselmann's mythologizing of himself through the character of his alter ego/biographer, Slim Stealingworth, he recalls that in late 1959 to 1960 he dreamed "red, white, and blue" and went on to clarify that he had not had a vision of the colors but had dreamed the words, red, white, and blue.<sup>148</sup> It is necessary to take Wesselmann's recollection with a grain of salt and

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<sup>148</sup> Tom Wesselmann/Slim Stealingworth, *Tom Wesselmann* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1980), 20. This is, of course, too close a reference to Jasper Johns (who famously replied when asked why he painted the American flag that he had dreamt it) to be a coincidence. It seems to suggest that Wesselmann has a sense of humor about himself and the art world, and secondly, that he pays attention to the artists of his own time and the texts that circulate about these artists. This is interesting because he seems to present himself as an individual outside of Pop working on his own, as Johanna Burton puts it, "A Rousseau among the Cubists," see Johanna Burton, "A Rousseau Among the Cubists: Tom Wesselmann's Un-Pop Procedures," in *Pop Art Contemporary Perspectives* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Art Museum and Yale University Press, 2007), 112-136. Tom Wesselmann's interview with Irving Sandler at the Archives of American Art, states: "I think to a great extent I am, or was, at least, a primitive painter because I'm wrapped up in my own excitement without being too aware of the implications of it."

connect his use of the colors associated with America to current events. As we have noted, the highly publicized Kitchen Debate of July, 1959, had made the competition between the consumer products of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. highly visible. In fact, advertisers themselves in the early 1960s connected American political iconography to new products in their advertisements. Wyler's Soups were consistently described as American (even blatantly ethnic soups like potato leek soup) and the printed ads were emblazoned with red, white, and blue (fig. 2.18). New cars were also connected to American patriotism through visual means in an aggressive attempt to connect patriotism to consumer goods (see fig. 2.19). Wesselmann's choice of American colors for his American series should be seen as an ironic comment on the fusing of patriotism and consumer incentive by the media and not as a whim of his subconscious; certainly a sophisticated audience would have suspected a tongue-in-cheek approach to the patriotism of his nudes and still life scenes set within the American home, as seen for example in *Great American Nude # 40* or *Still Life # 20* (fig. 2.20 and 2.21). It is also likely that the revived interest in American history and American antiques that was part of the Kennedy White House restoration lay in the background of Wesselmann's theatrical and vividly American images of the home.

By 1963, Wesselmann had developed several different series all set within interiors that seem to depict either small, urban (New York) apartments or suburban houses.<sup>149</sup> His views of the home focus on the private and feminized spaces of the

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<sup>149</sup> "All of Wesselmann's series from the early 1960s—the Great American Nudes and Little American Nudes, the Still Lives, the Bathtubs—depict interiors of the postwar suburban American home." Whiting, *A Taste for Pop*, 51. I believe that images of the interiors often suggest small New York apartments with

home including the bedroom and the bathroom (often occupied by a female nude) and the kitchen, a more public space also associated with the feminine realm. Rarely is there a woman present in the kitchen, although she is easily read into the space by the attributes of the appliances. It is within Wesselmann's views of the home that he aligns himself to the traditions of past art.<sup>150</sup> As he stated, "By choosing representational painting, I chose the history of art: I would paint nudes, landscapes, still lifes..."<sup>151</sup>

From the beginning, he set different types of imagery against each other as a sort of re-invented *trompe l'oeil*, in which different levels of reality: photographic, painted, actual (including television sets and radios that provided images and sounds of another kind), and artificial but three-dimensional parts, coalesce into a space that Brian O'Doherty described as "dead-pan," "bright and brash."<sup>152</sup> Wesselmann also drew from the sphere of art history, using reproductions of Matisse, Picasso, Mondrian, Modigliani, and others alongside commercial and advertising imagery and bits and pieces of actual interior space (like windows, carpets, sinks, and bathtub fixtures). Whiting's discussion of Wesselmann's reception by contemporary critics focuses on the threat that his collage technique aimed at categories of male and female aesthetic taste and spheres of influence. In her well-argued thesis, she described Wesselmann's juxtapositions of high

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bathroom and kitchens combined. See Wesselmann/Stealingworth, for Wesselmann's own references to Claire's apartment as a source for the interiors of his works.

<sup>150</sup> I concur with Johanna Burton. As Burton notes, Wesselmann himself consistently presented himself as an artist with a different perspective and point of view from the Pop artists with whom he was grouped. Critics tried to make sense of his protestations, but without any real success. Burton refers to Brian O'Dougherty's 1968 review in *The New York Times* as an example of a critic trying unsuccessfully to see Wesselmann as unaligned with Pop. See Burton, 116.

<sup>151</sup> Tom Wesselmann quoted in Danilo Eccher, ed. *Tom Wesselmann* (Rome: Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, 2005), 296.

<sup>152</sup> Brian O'Doherty, "Art: Pop Show by Tom Wesselmann is Revisited," *The New York Times* (November 28, 1968), 36, and reprinted in Madoff, 347.

and low—fine art and commercial imagery—as more than an attack on Greenbergian distinctions between value and kitsch, which were also understood as distinctions between male and female aesthetics. She argued that his constructions conflated masculine and feminine arenas of activity. Although Wesselmann would have disagreed with this reading, always maintaining that he had no purpose in his choice of materials other than a formal desire to create dynamic pictures, Whiting’s reading suggests a useful path of inquiry. Wesselmann’s American interiors should not be considered simply as an update on the traditional subjects of art. Neither should they be understood as participants in the “economy of domestic life.”<sup>153</sup> Although they do partake of commercial imagery, commodity products, and newly emergent forms of American popular food (hot dogs, canned fruits, and convenience foods), they are not re-creations of domestic space (2.21). There are two significant points of difference between Wesselmann’s images of kitchens and the many representations of kitchens in the print media; one is that, in general, the media’s representation of the kitchen is as a setting for the newest appliances, not a space where canned and packaged food is present. In addition, the kitchen in the media is generally linked to family activity; often the wife/mother is using one of her appliances (fig. 2.22). Rather than focus on the relationship between Wesselmann and the media or to past art, I will draw out the connections between his images set in the American home and contemporary events. As O’Doherty pointed out in 1968, “Since Mr. Wesselmann’s raw materials run from

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<sup>153</sup> Whiting, *A Taste for Pop*, 52.



svelte magazine nudes to canned goods, his subject matters cannot be unconsidered –it is the petty coinage of our daily lives.”<sup>154</sup>

It is also of interest to me to see how Wesselmann's representations of the home relate to the narrative of postwar American architecture and life that is presented by the Eames House and the Kitchen Debate—both images of three-dimensional architectural space in the form of a model home that was made known to a wide public through the intervention of photographic images. Model homes and views of homes without exterior walls featured prominently in 1960's American advertising (see for example fig. 2.23). These open views allowed advertisers to create staged scenes of home life that featured products in use by idealized American families. Wesselmann appropriated this advertising technique to create his own staged views of domesticity. Four interior scenes by Wesselmann set within the kitchen, the bedroom, and the bathroom will be our focus. In each of these works, the character of postwar American architecture as a space in which the boundaries between public and private have been dissolved is important. There is also, in each, an insistent reminder of American consumer diversity, which Richard Nixon had branded as an American's freedom of choice in 1959. Advertisers in the early 1960s used consumers' choice as proof of the superiority of the American system and as a ploy to continue to excite interest in a wide variety of products, as seen, for example, in Campbell's Soups advertisements for its many flavors of soup (fig. 2.24); this conspicuous consumption or abundance of goods was a key component of national identity. It set America off from the U.S.S.R. and from

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<sup>154</sup> Brian O'Doherty, "Art: Pop Show by Tom Wesselmann," in Madoff, 347.

Europe, and could be seen as visual evidence of the power of the American economy and political system.

Wesselmann's *Still Life # 30*, 1963 (fig.2.25) was purchased by Philip Johnson and given to the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1970. Characteristic of his early still life scenes, it is a kitchen still life organized along a strong horizontal and vertical axis. At center is a window with a view of the New York City skyline. An array of brand-named food products cover the blue and white checked tablecloth in the lower right, remarkably similar to the blue and white checked dress of a woman in a contemporary advertisement for a portable kitchen phone (fig. 2.26). Balancing this presentation of food is the pink refrigerator that stands in the left third of the painting. On top of the refrigerator sit three plastic replicas of bottled 7-Up and just beyond them is a framed reproduction of Picasso's *Portrait of a Woman* which is in the Museum of Modern Art's collection. The American motif, suggested by the American goods on the table, continues throughout the predominantly red, white, and blue color scheme. As in the presentation pieces of Dutch seventeenth-century still life paintings, an abundance of food spilling over the table into the viewer's space suggests both prosperity and cultural pride. A framed painting on the wall reminiscent of those in many Dutch still life scenes suggests the owner's sophistication and interests, and a window opens out on to the world beyond the room. But the similarities end there, and the push of contemporary

life intrudes on what might have been the settled tranquility of a Dutch interior scene.<sup>155</sup>

The kitchen as public space was initiated in the 1950s with the development of the open plan and portable appliances that made it possible for the housewife to dissolve the kitchen as a space apart (see fig. 2.27). If the space itself was “no longer a gendered space in any sense of the word,”<sup>156</sup> the appliances that were marketed to women for use by women took on a gendered character. In the 1950s, appliances were produced in a range of pastel colors; by the late 1960s these had shifted to copper, gold, turquoise, and avocado colors. (fig. 2.28). The three appliances that are present in *Still Life # 30* allow us to identify the space as a kitchen: refrigerator, sink and counter, and electric stove. All three are painted pink, and create a horizontal band across the lower half of the painting that extends in a vertical direction with the inclusion of the GE refrigerator door at the left. The artist added shadows and highlights to enhance the actual three-dimensional character of the refrigerator door. The pink appliances were out of date in 1963,<sup>157</sup> and their function here seems to be to emphasize their feminine identity. The rounded contours of the refrigerator door, in particular, suggest a feminine physical presence—very nearly an abstract nude.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> I have connected Pop still life scenes with Dutch seventeenth paintings of vanitas. See my article “Food and Death: Vanitas and Pop Art,” *Arts Magazine* (February 1986): 90-93.

<sup>156</sup> Marling, *As Seen on TV*, 281-2.

<sup>157</sup> Whiting, *A Taste for Pop*, 82. As Whiting notes, that shade of pink was in fashion in 1958 and the pressed Formica tiles were old-fashioned (wood paneling was in fashion in 1963). Since Wesselmann was writing to companies at this time to acquire the elements of his constructions, it is logical that he was using items that were out-of-date; obsolete advertising elements would have been discarded.

<sup>158</sup> I would argue that Wesselmann's choice of pink for the rounded contours of his refrigerator and the painted stove and countertop is a reference to the woman as appliance; the female body as kitchen

Wesselmann's presentation of the kitchen is as a space without walls, mimicking or referencing the open plan of the ideal American postwar home. Rather than any sense of a room, this and other kitchen still life scenes by the artist aggressively dissolve the architecture of an interior space and force all the three-dimensional space of the room into a vertical piling up of space. As was Wesselmann's intention, the paintings are so tightly composed that they expand forward into space without receding back. He described his process as one of creating pieces that were "compositionally static, locked up tight, unable to breathe" so that they might "explode on the wall."<sup>159</sup> He believed that "intensification would be realized by relying on the inherent power of the subject or object and its presentation-context."<sup>160</sup> Different types of representation, from the printed reproduction of the Picasso on the wall behind, the real refrigerator door, the collage of printed commercial images, the painted tablecloth, the plastic bottles of 7-Up and the plastic flowers on the painted window sill, help to keep the space of the painting between the surface and the viewer. This idea of space as aggressively pressing forward is an important formal device. It keeps the represented domestic space artificial and discourages the development of any empathetic relationship to the domestic scene.<sup>161</sup> Wesselmann pointedly denies space and the realities of three-dimensional

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interior which would also be a feature of *Womanhouse's Nurturant Kitchen* in 1971-72 (see chapter five).

<sup>159</sup>Wesselmann/Stealingworth, 17.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Whiting, in *A Taste for Pop*, argues for a reading of this mixed media collage/painting as a representation of "postwar precepts of moderation and good taste in interior design." I disagree. By so doing, she seems to confuse Wesselmann with an interior decorator (as if he is outfitting a working kitchen instead of creating a painting) and concludes that "*Still Life # 30* thus offers the fantasy of completely up-to-date appliances harmoniously and sensibly arranged in a pristine space." This, she continues, shows that the artist "appropriated the visual codes developed in women's home and service magazines to display tasteful spaces of consumption managed and directed by the efficient middleclass female homemaker and consumer," 56-57.

design in favor of a purely visual representation of space as symbolic, not actual.

Countering traditional images of kitchen still lifes, constructions like *Still life #30* have little to do with the representation of the home as a domestic space in which a narrative is established by the implied human presence. Rather, these images present a view of the home as a space stripped of privacy and inhospitable to human psychological engagement. No longer an image of a domestic space-- neither a space of traditionally female work nor a center for familial activity-- it is a simply a flattened space for ostentatious display of unremarkable objects. The bounty of nature and beauty of exotic objects has been replaced by a plethora of cheap goods, but it is an abundance of goods that resonate with an American character.

By 1962, Wesselmann had begun to include what he called “extensions”—sound, light, and televisions-- into his interior constructions. Both *Still Life #28* and *Still Life #31* of 1963 (fig. 2.29 and fig. 2.30) are similar in size and format; each includes images of past presidents, and working black-and-white television sets, and the same collaged pears and plants are found in both. In one, a window opens out to the Capitol Building in Washington D.C.; in the other, the landscape out the window is a view of what can accurately be described as “purple mountains majesty” a reference to the United States made through one of the country's patriotic songs, *America the Beautiful*.<sup>162</sup>

*Still life # 28*, with its blue and white striped tablecloth and large red star on a white square, presents another emphatically American interior. To the right of the star

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<sup>162</sup> Interestingly, during the Kennedy administration, a movement to make *America the Beautiful* the national anthem was in progress.

is a reproduction of a portrait of Abraham Lincoln; to the right of the portrait is a still life of fruit and plant foliage; nearly hidden in the lush foliage is a view of the United States Capitol Building. On the table sits the black-and-white television set, scattered groups of pears, a potted plant and two bottles of Ballantine Ale (all of these are collage elements).<sup>163</sup> In an ambiguous second room, a cat sits in a soft chair with its eyes trained directly at the viewer, echoing the full frontal and direct gaze of Lincoln. The connections between the image of Lincoln and the television suggest two subjects: one is the televised coverage of the Civil Rights Movement, which had reached a crescendo in late August of 1963 with Martin Luther King's March on Washington. That march culminated in a gathering at the Lincoln Memorial where King gave his "I have a Dream" speech to the crowd in the capitol. The march and the speech were televised to the nation and count as a turning point in King's fight for justice.

"Television networks carried the event live putting civil rights and African Americans into the living rooms of all Americans, black and white. At around the same time, the nightly news shifted from a fifteen minute slot to a thirty minute slot which demanded more images, and more dramatic, complex stories."<sup>164</sup>

There had also been violent scenes on television of dogs and fire hoses used to disperse peaceful crowds and of baton-swinging, white police officers. Images such as these had created a groundswell of support which led to action on the part of the Kennedy administration. The President gave a nationally televised speech on the moral

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<sup>163</sup>It is tempting to see these bottles of Ballantine Ale as another connection to Jasper Johns, whose cans of Ballantine Ale in bronze were an important and well-known antecedent for Pop art.

<sup>164</sup>The march coinciding with a big increase in television news focus on African Americans and their special concerns. See Norrell, 214.

imperative of fulfilling the promise of the Emancipation Proclamation and pushed Congress to pass his 1963 Civil Rights Bill.<sup>165</sup> It was only after Kennedy's assassination that the bill (which included a ban against discrimination in federal housing projects) moved successfully through both houses of Congress. By 1963, it has been estimated that "at least half of all Americans believed that civil rights was the most pressing problem facing the nation."<sup>166</sup>

Wesselmann's juxtaposition of Lincoln and the city of Washington D.C. with a television in 1963 suggests a reference to current events in America and, in light of Lincoln's importance to the iconography of the Civil Rights Movement, I would argue, a statement in support of civil rights activism.<sup>167</sup> A second reading, which seems not to have been the intention of the artist, connects the assassination of John F. Kennedy in November 1963 and the televised coverage of that event with the portrait of Lincoln and the view of the Capitol. The symbolic connections drawn between the assassinated

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<sup>165</sup> Five days after King's speech was broadcast live to the nation, NBC cancelled its scheduled programming to show a three-hour documentary on the Civil Rights Movement, *The American Revolution of '63*. This documentary was twice as long as any news documentary up to that time. "Television put Negro Americans into the living rooms of tens of millions of white Americans for the first time, wrote the president of NBC." Norrell, 214-215. Even more significantly, Norrell argued, it brought the Civil Rights Movement into black homes.

<sup>166</sup> Norrell, 213. Passionate participants like LeRoi Jones (later to become known as Amiri Baraka) characterized the events of 1963 as a war; See LeRoi Jones, *Home: Social Essays* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1966).

<sup>167</sup> In an interview with Irving Sandler at the AAA, Wesselmann reminisced about his childhood and focused on his support for civil rights for African Americans as the one thing that set him apart from others of his family and friends in Ohio. "I start thinking of little things that made me different from some of the people. I was always aware that in our high school we had black kids in our high school, but I think they kept them in their own classes. So we never saw them. They played for the school teams, but we really never saw them much. But I came to learn in time that the black guys had swimming on Friday afternoon. After everybody else had used the pool all week, they let the blacks swim in it. Then they'd drain it over the weekend and fill it fresh. I used to argue, I guess, with people, including my family. My brother was pretty vicious with me. I was arguing always in favor of Civil Rights." Oral History Interview with Tom Wesselmann, 1984 Jan. 3 - Feb. 8. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian.

Presidents Lincoln and Kennedy were brought out repeatedly in the drama of the death and funeral of John F. Kennedy in November of 1963. That this was an unintentional, but potent element of the painting is suggested by Wesselmann who spoke of his shock at seeing the Kennedy assassination on the television set imbedded in this painting while in his studio.

I myself saw one startling and rather moving moment after the assassination of President Kennedy, when a larger head of Kennedy appeared on the screen, almost as big as the head of Lincoln on the wall in the upper left corner of the painting. The brief event gave the work an emotional composition that it still retains for me.<sup>168</sup>

As in *Still Life #30*, this kitchen still life represents the American home as a site outside of intimate family life. The television is an intrusive element that disrupts the space of the painting and sets up a dynamic that pushes against the rest of the work. The television is an intrusive element in real life as well; events of American history, violence and demonstrations that struck at the core of the American dream thrust themselves into private life, making it impossible to maintain the neat separation between the home as a haven of emotional security and the outside world. The television as a harbinger of outside elements into the home also expresses the idea of the home as a space that is permeable, not protective. In television's early years, critics worried about the effect of outside influences brought into the home by television; children were seen as especially vulnerable to the dangers of these outside forces<sup>169</sup>.

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<sup>168</sup>Wesselmann/Stealingworth, 30.

<sup>169</sup>See Lynn Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and the Postwar Suburbs* (Durham and



The television was understood as an eye that brought in transmissions from outside the home, but television also created anxieties about what might be peering in. As television scholar Jeffrey Sconce has noted, "Such anxieties were particularly acute in the early 1960s as both the United States and Soviet Union raced to launch satellites into the stratosphere for the explicit purpose of surveying the world below to the smallest detail."<sup>170</sup> Televisions were also imagined as alien creatures with powers to see and possibly possess viewers. Artists, like Lee Friedlander, explored a human-like presence in television sets with surrealist images of a eye within the screen looking back at the viewer (fig. 2.31).<sup>171</sup> Some of Friedlander's black and white photographs of interiors showing televisions with eyes were published in *Harper's Bazaar* in 1963. As Whiting and Sconce note, televisions could be typecast in the popular imagination as "sentient beings, haunting homes, and even swallowing unsuspecting viewers into their electromagnetic field."<sup>172</sup>

Portable televisions began to be advertised in late 1963 as a new and convenient way to multi-task (as one ad put it, there would be no need to rush through dinner if the portable television was available in the kitchen). Wesselmann's use of the portable television set in these paintings in the kitchen is both an indication of the way that consumers would utilize multiple television sets and an imaginative appropriation

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London: Duke University Press, 2001), 185-218.

<sup>170</sup> Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), 144.

<sup>171</sup> Cecile Whiting, "It's Only a Paper Moon: The Cyborg Eye of Vija Celmins," *American Art: Smithsonian American Art Museum* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 37-53. Whiting writes about Friedlander in the context of discussion of Celmins works.

<sup>172</sup> Whiting, "It's Only a Paper Moon," 45. See Sconce for an in-depth discussion of postwar attitudes to television.

of Rauschenberg's incorporation of chance and time in a static work of art.<sup>173</sup> The push forward of the painting's space into the space of the viewer also suggests the open quality of the American home: open to viewer, to commerce and outside influences, and to government surveillance. The theme of surveillance, and in particular, the role of the government as a presence in the space of the home, underlies the choice of imagery from the watchful eyes of the past president and the stare of the cat, to the Capital Building seemingly camouflaged by the exotic foliage just beneath it. Again, the kitchen is presented not as a space of family leisure or work, but as a commercialized and politicized view of the private American home--a home under surveillance.<sup>174</sup>

*The Great American Nude* series, begun in 1961, was the central motif of Wesselmann's oeuvre until his death in 2004. Like the domestic interiors of the kitchen, the emphasis in these works is on the home as a space of commerce, permeable to outside forces, and without the boundaries that separate the public from the private. Wesselmann's revision of the genre of the nude female in a domestic space presented the "Americanized nude as a highly commercialized, objectified, and sexualized female being, in short as a secular muse for the affluent society."<sup>175</sup> The nudes have been discussed by a variety of authors, connecting them with pin-ups and with

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<sup>173</sup> Wesselmann, as was his pattern, refused to acknowledge the influence of Rauschenberg insisting that he had used real objects for a different intention.

<sup>174</sup> "While for men, the ideal American home is a haven from work, for women it is defined as a site for labor." Ellen Lupton, *Mechanical Brides: Women and Machines from Home to Office* (New York: Cooper Hewitt National Museum of Design, Smithsonian Institution and Princeton Architectural Press, 1993), 15.

<sup>175</sup> David McCarthy, "Tom Wesselmann and the Americanization of the Nude, 1961-1963," *Smithsonian Studies in American Art* 4, no. 3-4 (Summer-Autumn, 1990): 102-127, 103.

pornography.<sup>176</sup> Wesselmann himself, in discussions of his works of the 1960s revealed that the model for many of these nudes was his wife, Claire, and that his aim was to start from the image of the pin-up and move beyond it. Claire Wesselmann remained recognizable in these images and as the domestic partner of the artist situated his images of domesticity in a strange space between autobiography and soft-core pornography. As he related:

It annoyed the hell out of me that I would do these paintings of my wife, and this is the way I saw her: she would lie in bed and spread her legs, an enticing gesture; so I would do that. That's something that in fact she did or might have done or in fact something I wish she would have done or it becomes a symbol to me of what I want -- all those things one could just go on and on about on a psychic level. It had to do with my real relationship to this woman, but people would simplify it down to just pin-ups. It was like pin-ups. The frustration to me was how to make this different, how to make it be a pin-up and yet take it out of the realm of being a pin-up. It's a hard problem. I'm not sure I ever really came to grips with that one. I guess I was kind of overwhelmed with my own sincerity. I didn't know what else to do. At that time there weren't so many pin-ups. Of course, there were pin-ups and they weren't obscene ones like that with the legs spread. They just didn't have those things. They did have the concept. Anyway, that used to frustrate me. In fact, once I even wrote to somebody about that, commented about that, "This is my wife. She lies in bed; she spreads her legs. It's exciting. That's my wife." Then they'd take her individuality away -- don't let my wife do that; she's got to be some symbol of pin-ups or something.<sup>177</sup>

The *Great American Nude # 48*, 1963 (fig. 2.32) was described by Wesselmann as a key work "a kind of summary of many devices used."<sup>178</sup> The nude sits semi-reclined

<sup>176</sup>See for example, Donald Kuspit, "Pop Art: Reactionary Art," reprinted in Mashun, *Pop Art and Its Critics*, "his general grotesque objectification of the female body, on a calendar art model," 214.

<sup>177</sup> Oral History Interview with Tom Wesselmann, AAA.

<sup>178</sup> Wesselmann/Stealingworth, 33.

on an painted orange sofa in the background space that reads as a distant room; it is significant that the nude is presented in a distant room and that there are no walls to obstruct the view because it presents the viewer with visual mastery over the space. The pose of the figure is suggestive of her knowledge and acceptance of the viewer's presence; correspondingly, her body is offered up for view. The model for this figure is Claire, easily recognized because of her cropped blonde hair. As McCarty observes "he placed his lover on display, thereby offering her, and their implicit relationship with one another for public scrutiny."<sup>179</sup> Private moments of sexual provocation and mutual pleasure led to the representation of a liberated sexuality transposed into public view.<sup>180</sup> While this private pleasure may have been so constructed, the artist's representation of Claire as a generalized nude whose only features were her lips, breasts, and genitalia create a different impression for the viewer. The public displays of a private pleasure, in Wesselmann's terms "the real relationship," necessarily shifts it into the realm of voyeurism. The shift from private to public that Wesselmann enacted in his painting underlies many images of the nude in western art but more importantly, envisions the home as a space without privacy and without walls.

The space around the nude includes an actual rug, end table and a radiator; these are elements of the composition that push the space of the painting forward. The window, which was made to order, looks out on a cluster of urban buildings suggesting that this interior space is in the suburbs. Emphasizing this, there are major roadways

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<sup>179</sup> McCarthy, 117.

<sup>180</sup> Wesselmann's personal life was embedded within these images of Claire with whom he had begun a sexual relationship at about the same time that he had begun Freudian analysis and began to confront his ambition to achieve success as an artist. See Oral History Interview with Tom Wesselmann, AAA.

leading from the home of this nude to the city in the distance. This view of the suburbs as a bedroom community for a commuting male workforce was the dominant view of suburban living. Wesselmann's interest in making the window view as real as possible extended to his implanting a light in the window to counteract the shadow that the window frame would have caused. The space within the interior, however, with the exception of the real objects set within, does not function as a real space. The flat areas of blue painted under the window, behind the radiator, and table are repeated in the wall behind the nude—helping to bring the two areas of blue into alignment as the same plane in space. At the same time, the yellow wall above the blue foreground wall is matched by the yellow of the model's hair, and the yellow wall that should be the furthest back in space, behind the figure. Similarly, the red rug, which lies on the actual floor, extends up into the lower right to suggest continuity from the actual space of the viewer's world into the artificial space of the nude's room. These formal decisions made by Wesselmann are part of his desire to maintain a flat space to keep the viewer from physically or psychologically entering the space; thus privileging the eye above all other sensory organs. The artist maintained that his three-dimensional constructions were not environments.

And I kind of had this same feeling about my paintings at that time -- they were to be looked at; they weren't to be played with. I was definitely involved with the idea of brand new as Katz liked his painting. I wanted my rugs to be non-poetic, that is, no use, no shadow on them, no sign of wear and tear, no story, no history -- no nothing, just a rug, brand new. I needed a table -- I had one built brand new. I went very carefully about the matter of deciding how wide to make that rug, a lot of trial and error, because just a little bit too wide and it became an environment. I had to get it at just the point where it was not an environment. It

was an important concept to me at the time. I was very excited by the truth of it. Even though these things were three-dimensional, they were really two-dimensional. The third dimension was just an illusion to intensify the two-dimensional experience. In other words, I was saying they were three-dimensional, but they weren't supposed to be three-dimensional. And I didn't want people messing with them. So we finally had to put tape on the floor, then even a string. People thought they were supposed to walk on the rug and experience the feeling of walking on the rug. I didn't want them walking on the rug. They were supposed to look at the painting.<sup>181</sup>

The emphasis that Wesselmann exerts on maintaining distance between the viewer and the construction and in creating a three-dimensional space to be seen but not experienced relates his work to Oldenburg's *Bedroom Ensemble* of 1964 (to be discussed in a later chapter). Both artists set up an ideal viewpoint and control the viewer's experience of the three-dimensional space as a purely visual experience. In Wesselmann's case, the terms of that pleasure in the *Great American Nude* series have to do with the understanding of the home as the domain of feminine sexuality where the appetites and care and display of the female body are the primary functions; the male viewer is simultaneously in full control of the visual space and an outsider to the world of the feminine occupation of the home. This sense of the family home as a space dominated by female agency was particularly strong in the suburbs. Critics of the suburbs saw danger in the way that women and children ruled the suburban experience while the full complement of adult males, who were commuting to their jobs in the city, were absent. Surprisingly, the first significant stirrings of revolution against this gender-determined occupation of the home came from the male realm. In 1956, Hugh Hefner's *Playboy Magazine* recreated the home as a male domain with the "bachelor pad," as

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<sup>181</sup> Oral History Interview with Tom Wesselmann, AAA.

“Playboy’s Penthouse Apartment,” featured in the magazine.<sup>182</sup> Aimed at the urban male, the penthouse promised “a complete absence of bric-a-brac, patterned fabrics, pleats and ruffles.”<sup>183</sup> In place of such feminine interior details, the bachelor’s pad featured modernist furniture, technologically advanced kitchens, lighting and entertainment, and strong textures (fig. 2.33 and fig. 2.34). Wesselmann’s images of the *Great American Nudes* reinforce the view of the home as the realm of the female by a number of devices: the presentation of the interior space as a contemporary American suburban home, the presentation of the nude as formally locked into the composition, thus rendering her as part of the interior architecture or as the *Maison-femme* in Louise Bourgeois’s term (fig. 2.35). As a nude figure in both images, she lacks clothing and the ability to be narrated into past or future agency.

The companion piece to *Great American Nude # 48* is the *Great American Nude # 54* of 1964 (fig. 2.36).<sup>184</sup> whose subject is an African-American female nude. The same size and format as *# 48*, this construction represents an image of a dark-skinned version of Wesselmann’s typical American Nude. The title and the work’s place within the

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<sup>182</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1983) describes Playboy’s reclaiming of the domestic interior as a male space. Whiting also discusses the Playboy Penthouse Apartment in her article “Pop at Home,” in Reed, *Not at Home*, and the Playboy Weekend Hideaway in her book length study, *A Taste for Pop*, 91-93. In her text, she makes several important points including that *Playboy* first claimed the urban apartment as a masculine space, then the country house (not the suburban house), 91-92. She also points out that the Playboy’s Pad was emphatically modern and furnished with modern furniture, which clearly separated it from middle class suburban homes, and discussed Hugh Hefner’s taste for abstract expressionist painting and his citing of Pollock, de Kooning, and Kline as examples of high art. See *A Taste for Pop*, 232-234. *Playboy* Magazine is also cited frequently as an influence on Richard Hamilton.

<sup>183</sup> “Playboy’s Penthouse Apartment,” reprinted in Joel Sanders, ed., *Stud: Architectures of Masculinity*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 20.

<sup>184</sup> A second African-American nude appears in *Great American Nude # 49*. For an image see Wesselmann/Stealingworth.

context of Wesselmann's series of American nudes suggests that his interest here was not in an exotic representation of a racial type so much as the presentation of a conspicuously different view of the American woman as middle-class suburban housewife. In light of his comments about his support for equality between the races, this image can be read as a normalization of integrated suburban developments. A rare occurrence in the mid-1960s, but one that was an issue of lively debate and even violent confrontation.

The third room in the domestic interior that was an area of significant activity for Wesselmann's Pop work between 1961 and 1964 was the bathroom. Wesselmann's *Bathtub Collage # 3*, 1963 (fig. 2.37) is a three-dimensional space that includes actual elements of a conventional bathroom, including shower curtain, door, hamper, towel rack, rug, and tile. Wesselmann described *Bathtub Collage # 3* as "the most important of these bathtub works."<sup>185</sup> The nude figure at left, who is easily identified as Claire, is occupied in toweling herself dry after a shower and is presented as a full frontal nude whose only details are in the delineation of pubic hair, nipples, lips, and manicured nails. Unlike the reclining nudes within domestic interiors, the bathroom nudes suggest a narrative that does not explain the nudity; the nude woman is presented at home as part of a male fantasy of the housewife. In this fantasy, much of the woman's day is spent in grooming herself in anticipation of the return of her husband or lover. Other artists of the 1960s also used the bathroom as a subject: Roy Lichtenstein, *Bathroom*, 1961, (fig. 2.3), Claes Oldenburg, who, in 1964-65, created a series of works soft, hard,

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<sup>185</sup> Wesselmann/Stealingworth, 38.



and ghost versions of a tub, medicine cabinet, sink, and toilet (to be discussed in a later chapter), and Jim Dine. Dine's group of painting constructions that focused on the bathroom include *Black Bathroom #2*, 1962 (Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario). In several examples, Dine attached actual bathroom furnishings to a painted canvas. Rather than creating a sense of domestic space or narrative context, Dine's images of the bathroom follow Duchamp, updating the Dadaist's notorious readymade, *The Fountain*, with an up-to-date styling of America's fascination with plumbing. In contrast to Wesselmann's use of the bathroom as a space for a female nude, Lichtenstein and Oldenburg, and even Jim Dine's use of the bathroom and bathroom fixtures, focus on an American obsession with self-grooming, cleanliness, and a negation of bodily function, as represented by advertisements of the time.<sup>186</sup> Wesselmann, however, consistently uses the bathroom as an arena to situate the nude—consistent with art history's representation of the nude in a narrative context; "Venus at her toilette", for example, or "Susannah and the Elders," or in more modern terms, Degas's or Bonnard's views of women bathing.

The bathroom and its furnishings, or details of what took place in the bathroom, were not subjects of advertising in the early 1960s. My survey of *Life* magazine from 1960 to 1964 found few references to bathrooms and few advertisements for bathroom fixtures. The bathroom is the most private room in the house and clearly advertising

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<sup>186</sup> There may also be a suggestion of an homage to Duchampian ideas of American plumbing as works of art. Certainly this could be argued for Oldenburg whose attention to the fixtures of the bathroom seem connected to Duchamp's *Fountain* (urinal). Segal's *Woman Shaving her Leg*, 1963 (Collection of Mrs. Robert Mayer on long term loan to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago) is the closest to Wesselmann in its attention to a narrative and the re-creation of the space of the bathroom.

executives found it to be a difficult subject to address in public media. This is in marked contrast to the kitchen, which was prominently pictured as the center of family life, as the site for new and improved appliances, and as the command center for a housewife's control of the home. Feminine personal grooming is, of course, an important subject for advertisers in the 1960s; the subtext in these advertisements is a virtual manual for self-improvement (home hair treatments, deodorants and cures for bad breath, electric shavers), but none of these concerns apply to Wesselmann's bathroom scenes. Nor are they nostalgic views of the past; his scenes of the bathroom represent standardized, modern, middle-class bathrooms whose interest lies in their representation of a contemporary American nude in the midst of her toilette.

*Bathtub Collage #1*, 1963 (fig. 2.38), was purchased by the Kraushars and installed in their home where it was prominently featured as one of several pop paintings in the Scull's domestic interior. As in *Bathtub Collage #3*, the traditional image of a woman at her toilette has been conspicuously updated to the 1960s with its tiled bathroom interior. The nude, the towel, and the shower curtain are painted. The composition is defined by the horizontal grid behind the figure and the specific elements of the bathroom. A landscape seen through a fictive window above the toilet creates an exterior space to counter the interior space. A three-dimensional curtain separates this window from the flatly painted square of red that sits to the left. Red, white, and blue is dominant. Unlike *Bathtub Collage #3*, this image presents a figure seemingly unaware of the viewer.

There are elements of real bathroom fixtures: a red towel hanging on a metal towel rack, the tiled surface behind the figure, the toilet-roll holder and roll of toilet paper, and the altered toilet itself. The toilet seat is up, indeed, it must be in this position to remain within the confines of the painting. Notwithstanding the formal necessity of keeping the toilet seat up, the suggestion is that this bathroom is in use by male and female occupants. This is underlined by its photograph within the Scull home which is one of several photographs of Pop artworks in homes of their collectors that play with sexual flirtation between the women in the paintings and the men who have installed them in their homes.<sup>187</sup> As Whiting also points out, images such as this negate the stereotypical reading of the home as a female space by presenting the male collector as the dominant and active force as opposed to the inanimate and emphatically flat image of the female. The women, locked into the art on the walls, are also stand-ins for the images of women who grace the many pages of advertisements for the home. Like the stage sets of the home as seen on television and the stage, or the media's representation of homes without walls in order to better showcase the consumer products being sold, or the picture windows and backyard patios that brought suburban neighbors even closer than their urban counterparts, Wesselmann's images of the American home are constructed for maximum visibility. Nigel Whiteley's description

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<sup>187</sup>Whiting, *A Taste for Pop*, 90. "photographs of male collectors posed in their homes near their Pop-art acquisitions had a different effect; these images suggested flirtation, or even sexual trysts, between real men and depicted women, thereby violating the moral propriety of the conventional American home."

of British interior design of the 1960s as "arenas for performance" is another manifestation of the disintegration of the private spaces of the home.<sup>188</sup>

The suburban open-plan houses with picture windows and exterior extensions of yards and patios were marketed as the ideal family home. They allowed mothers to keep a constant eye on their children and also gave neighbors the opportunity to keep tabs on each other. More ominously, Soviet and American satellites were imagined as eyes in space that had the capability to watch what was happening in small-town America. In 1964 *The Naked Society* by Vance Packard and *The Privacy Invaders* by Myron Brenton, were published. Reviewed in *Life* in April 1964 by Robert Wallace, both books described how Americans were under surveillance by their own government, private business, and industry.<sup>189</sup> Packard's investigation of American society under surveillance included uncovering the use of spies and hidden recording devices in the work place, intrusive interviews and surveys in the public school system, and hidden cameras in stores and dressing rooms. He details the new technologies of closed-circuit televisions, miniature cameras, lie detectors, and written surveys that asked for intimate details from the participants. In the chapter he devoted to the diminishing of privacy in the home, he pointed to houses pushed closer together, to thin walls and floors, to open plans that eliminate the privacy of closed doors, surveillance equipment sold for

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<sup>188</sup> Nigel Whiteley, "Interior Design in the 1960s: Arenas for Performance," *Art History* 10, no. 1 (March 1987): 79-90. Whiteley's focus is on British interior design and pop, but his discussion is useful for American Pop as well. He discusses the domestic Pop interior, the Pop disco, and the Pop boutique. All three were aimed at the young, furthered the Pop lifestyle, and shifted interior design away from careful organization of the interior toward theatrical effect. "With Pop, the interior became an arena for performance rather than an area for artistic contemplation," 85. By the mid-sixties, the architectural group, Archigram, which was known internationally for its avant-garde production, was producing Capsule Homes and Living Pods (1964-5) that anticipate Andrea Zittel's designs for living.

<sup>189</sup> Robert Wallace, "Book Review: What Happened to Our Privacy," *Life* (April 10, 1964), 56/15, 11.

parents to watch their children, and surveillance toys for children who record their parents, friends, and siblings as a source of amusement.<sup>190</sup>

Between 1960 and 1963, Wesselmann's interior scenes are colorful, rambunctious, and celebratory of American economic and material strength. By 1964, however, as seen in the series of four grisaille *Interiors* (fig. 2.39), a more somber mood prevails. His still life scenes are quieter, he stops using a wide variety of different materials, and by 1964 he is no longer producing still life scenes except for those that are associated with the bedroom. These still life scenes, however, do not include food or commercial imagery; instead they are mostly painted and usually focused on personal accessories like keys, sunglasses, etc. By this point, the optimism of the early Sixties had begun to fade. Domesticity was also losing its glamorous sheen and American society's image as egalitarian, classless, and democratic was under siege. Michael Harrington's examination of poverty in America, *The Other America*, had been published in 1962 and reissued in 1963 as a paperback bestseller. Harrington's evocation of the pain of poverty and the scale of American poverty was shocking to many who had imagined that poverty in America was a thing of the past. According to David Lubin, President Kennedy discovered poverty when he read Harrington's book in 1962 and the book had such an effect on him that he "gave copies of the book to his domestic policy advisors and, with the avid consent of his brother Robert, the attorney general, nudged

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<sup>190</sup> "Not only are modern homes physically less private, but modern electronics are making it possible for parents to keep an eye on their children in other areas of the house—and for children to keep an ear on their parents." He continues, speaking of one of the most requested toys of 1962, Little Miss Echo, a doll that was fitted with a battery powered tape recorder hidden in her torso. Vance Packard, *The Naked Society* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1964), 150.

the alleviation of poverty onto the White House agenda."<sup>191</sup> In the November 22, 1963, issue of *Life* magazine, Betty Friedan, her family, and her new book, *The Feminine Mystique* were featured in what the magazine billed as a "Close Up." In that same issue, Theodore White wrote the first part of a two-part article on current race issues, calling 1963 the beginning of a move "toward an ultimate showdown."<sup>192</sup> Almost immediately after this issue came on the newsstands, President Kennedy was shot in Dallas, and the country went into a state of mourning. The youthful exuberance of the Kennedy administration faded into the Johnson administration's sober emphasis on alleviating domestic poverty, negotiating a successful solution to civil rights strife, and the escalation of the war in Vietnam.

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<sup>191</sup> Lubin, 89.

<sup>192</sup> Theodore White, "Racial Collision in the Big Cities", Part I, *Life* (Nov. 22, 1963): 100-108. Part II "Power Structure, Integration, Militancy, Freedom Now!" appeared in *Life* (Nov. 29, 1963): 78-93.

### Chapter 3: Transformations of the Domestic: Claes Oldenburg's *Bedroom Ensemble*

New York scares the hell out of me. When I ran for death to Los Angeles, I made the Bedroom as a demonstration of my necrophilia. On the walls are pseudo Pollocks, yard goods from Santa Monica. Whatever else this act suggests, I intended at the time to use Pollock as a symbol of Life, and his reproduction, removal by counterfeit and photography, as the symbol of death.<sup>193</sup>

Since the emergence of Pop in the early 1960s, Claes Oldenburg has consistently been named one of the significant artists of the movement, even as his work is described as different in form and content from the others.<sup>194</sup> Because of the unique qualities of his art and vision, this chapter will focus on Oldenburg and his Home period.<sup>195</sup> The works of this period fall into several categories. The first is the art and

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<sup>193</sup> "Jackson Pollock: An Artist's Symposium, Part II," *ArtNews*, 66, no. 3 (May 1967): 67.

<sup>194</sup> For example, whereas Lichtenstein, Rosenquist, Wesselmann, and Warhol are concerned with advertising, mass media, and specific techniques associated with the production and dissemination of commercial art, Oldenburg's Pop Art is quirky and personal in its techniques (painterly and expressionistic) and although it refers to contemporary, popular subject matter such as fast food, home products, and car culture, he does so in a way that is different from other Pop artists

<sup>195</sup> Oldenburg has continued to work on the theme of the home in his work after 1966, for example, *Houseball*, a prop from *Il Corso del Coltello* (1985), which was seen at the Guggenheim Museum in Soho, New York, in the exhibition *Four Rooms and a House Ball: Pop and the Everyday Object*, 1993; *Claes*

multiples related to *The Bedroom Ensemble* (fig 3.1) produced for the Sidney Janis Gallery exhibition of January to February 1964, "Four Artists/Four Environments," and the replicas made by Oldenburg of the *Bedroom*.<sup>196</sup> *Bedroom Ensemble* (the first of the three multiples that were constructed) was acquired by the National Gallery, Ottawa, in 1974 (fig. 3.2) ; a second version was made in 1969 and is owned by the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt (fig. 3.3). A third was built for Oldenburg's show at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1974 (fig. 3.4). Up to six replicas were originally planned for the six continents. In this way, the *Bedroom Ensemble* would become a series of works dispersed around the world, either as a means of participating in the minimalist concern with seriality and repetition, or more ominously, as a way of commenting on how the commodities of American culture were exported to all the world. It might also be an ironic acknowledgement of American culture's imperialist designs (in the commercial sense) on the rest of the world.

Another series of soft sculptures and drawings relating to the home was exhibited at the Janis Gallery (fig.3.5).<sup>197</sup> The *Bathroom Series* (fig. 3.6), which Oldenburg described as a continuation of the Home was begun in 1965 and exhibited at the Janis Gallery for the first time in March of 1966, is the third group of works to be subsumed under the category of the Home. The *Bedroom Ensemble* is the most

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*Oldenburg: The Haunted House*, an exhibition/installation in the Museum Haus Esters Krefeld in Germany, in 1987; and the *Music Room*, an installation at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2008.

<sup>196</sup> Oldenburg planned the *Bedroom Ensemble* as a multiple and envisioned them scattered across the globe. All the *Bedrooms* include the architectural anomalies that were present in the Sidney Janis installation.

<sup>197</sup> *Exhibition of Recent Work by Claes Oldenburg*, April 7 to May 2, 1964 (New York: Sidney Janis Gallery, 1964). See David Platzter, "Selected Exhibition History," in *Claes Oldenburg, An Anthology* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1995), 537, for a list of reviews of the show. A fully illustrated catalogue was produced for the exhibition.



significant piece of the Home Period, and will be the focus of this chapter. A pivotal work within his oeuvre, it marks the beginning of Oldenburg's shift from the expressionistic style of the early 1960s to his first use of technical fabrication, which would become his primary means of production. It is also extremely unusual in his work in that it is a self-contained three dimensional space set apart from the viewer, functioning only as a visual experience.<sup>198</sup> My discussion will approach the bedroom from three directions beginning with a view of the *Bedroom* as a logical digression from the previous installations/environments (i.e., *The Street* and *The Store*). I will also review Oldenburg's varied explications of the work, most significantly, his discussion of the *Bedroom Ensemble* as a work of minimalist art related to his experience of living in Venice, California, and his use of exaggerated perspective as an expressionistic technique related to his construction of visual narrative. I will also discuss how art history and domesticity intersect in this re-creation of private space within the public space of the Janis Gallery. The artist's pointed and specific references to Jackson Pollock in the work itself and in the verbal and written texts that surfaced in years after the original *Bedroom Ensemble* was produced provide a significant new reading of the *Ensemble*. To this end, I read Oldenburg's re-creation of domestic space as gendered

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<sup>198</sup> The importance of Jackson Pollock to Allan Kaprow and Claes Oldenburg was recently explored by Julia E. Robinson, "Claes Oldenburg: Monumental Contingency," *Pop Art: Contemporary Expressions*, (New Haven and London: Princeton University Art Museum and Yale University Press, 2007), 74-95. Robinson places Oldenburg in the debt of surrealist automatism which was also crucial to Pollock and Marcel Duchamp's readymades. Susan Hapgood also connected Oldenburg and Duchamp. See Hapgood, *Neo-Dada*. Duchamp's importance for Oldenburg is essential to an understanding of his transformation of the found object. Robinson's reading of the *Bedroom Ensemble* is different from my own; she reads it as "the ground of subjectivity itself," 81. Surprisingly, she does not mention Oldenburg's references to Pollock in his *Bedroom Ensemble*.

space and examine his disruption of the Greenbergian dichotomy of kitsch (female) and art (male) that was reviewed in Chapter One.

Oldenburg's interests in theater and the dramatic implications of space, environment, and time, as well as the relationships that are negotiated between audience and object, played a significant role in his early development and continue to occupy a central stage in the conception, production, and reception of his work.<sup>199</sup> After moving to New York from Chicago, in 1956, Oldenburg began to look for a way to combine his interest in theater with his interest in visual art production. To this end, he began to attend and participate in Happenings, by Allan Kaprow and Red Grooms.<sup>200</sup> In February, 1960, the first of his environmental installations, the *Street*, occupied the Judson Gallery along with Jim Dine's installation, the *Home* (fig. 3.7).

The *Street* "represented Oldenburg's first attempt to telescope painting, sculpture, and architecture within a single framework."<sup>201</sup> It also served as the setting

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<sup>199</sup>The artist's long standing interest in public art and the theater as a tool for the visual artist is evident both from a review of his work to date and from evidence gleaned from his own writings. Mark Rosenthal quotes the artist in 1961: "Painting has been private and lyrical for a long time, especially when true artists are not given large and public commissions. The mural, the environment, the pageant, the masque, the larger spatial, architectural forms are forms of art not without precedent. There comes a time when the artist wants to use these forms and directly involve his audience, directly influence and involve actual experience." Rosenthal, "Unbridled Monuments or How Claes Oldenburg Set Out to Change the World," in *Claes Oldenburg: An Anthology*, 255.

<sup>200</sup> In 1958, he traveled to see Kaprow's untitled Happening on George Segal's chicken farm in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and toward the end of 1959, he saw Kaprow's "18 Happenings in 6 Parts" at the Reuben Gallery. In an interview with Richard Kostelanetz, Oldenburg notes that by 1960 when he presented his first theater piece, "Snapshots from the City," he had seen performances by Robert Whitman, Red Grooms, Allan Kaprow, Dick Higgins and possibly George Brecht. "Claes Oldenburg," *The Theater of Mixed Means* (New York: The Dial Press, 1968), excerpted and reprinted in Steven Henry Madoff, *Pop Art: A Critical History*, 235-40, 235. For an excellent review of the interdisciplinary feeling of New York in this time period see Barbara Haskell, *Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism, and Performance 1958-1964*.

<sup>201</sup> Barbara Rose, *Claes Oldenburg* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1970), 37.

for a trio of theatrical pieces; in March of 1960 Oldenburg presented his first Happening *Snapshots from the City* in the midst of his gallery show. In December of 1960, he performed *Blackouts*, and *Fotodeath/Ironworks* followed in February of 1961. He characterized these three performances as having “a quality of desperation and misery about them; they deal with events of the street and its inhabitants, beggars and cripples”<sup>202</sup> and maintained that his theater was directly related to his painting and sculpture.

In a statement of 1970, Oldenburg takes much of the credit for his installation of the *Street* and Dine's installation of the *Home*.

As I remember it, Jim Dine was something less than an enthusiastic collaborator, which I found understandable. I imposed my idea for a show on him, I set out the area I wanted him to work in – by building dividers in the gallery, and I designated his area ‘The Home’ and mine ‘The Street.’ I described his as a ‘female’ area mine as a ‘male’ one. I presumed to inform him that an enclosure, a uterus-like form would better suit his expression, and in other ways leaned on him. ...During the construction I would ‘feed’ Dine –literally, by shoving debris I had gathered from the streets into the opening of his room. ...The accumulations rage was always easy to stimulate—it fills both space and time, without decision, without direction. It is an image of consumption and of American life.”<sup>203</sup>

As early as 1960, if we can take Oldenburg’s later statement as a truthful representation of an event that happened ten years before, he conceived of the home as a theme and characterized it as a feminine space while asserting a masculine identity for the street. Setting *The Street* in oppositional relationship to the *Home* (at least in

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<sup>202</sup> Kostelanetz, 236.

<sup>203</sup> Oldenburg, statement April 3, 1970 quoted in Ellen Johnson, *Claes Oldenburg* (Harmondsworth, England and Baltimore: Penguin, New Art, 1971), 59 and 14n.

the setting of the Judson Church gallery) suggests a reading of the *Street* as an image of homelessness or the anti-domestic, an interesting counter to the focus of his attention which after *The Street* was the interior space of *The Store* and the *Home*. His reading of American life as a "rage of accumulation" reflects his awareness of 1960s consumer culture. Exploring the American imperative to consume that featured prominently in everyday life would lead him to *The Store* and to his own version of the *Home*.

Essentializing the home as a space for accumulation of consumer goods was, as we have seen, a feature of Richard Hamilton's view of the domestic American interior, of Beatriz Colomina's reading of the Eames House as a transparent space for the display of consumer goods, and a constant feature of contemporary advertising. In advertising, the link between consumption and the home is a gendered discourse. Later, at *Womanhouse*, consumer culture as a gendered issue would also be a subject in such installations as Camille Grey's *Lipstick Bathroom* and Beth Bachenheimer's *Shoe Closet* (see Chapter Five).

In May of 1960, Oldenburg presented an expanded version of *The Street* in the Reuben Gallery.<sup>204</sup> The Judson Gallery installation was created from burlap bags filled with newspaper, paper bags, metal and wire constructions with ripped and torn pieces of painted and burned cardboard against walls and on the floor. In the Reuben Gallery, the installation of cardboard constructions that hung from the ceiling was less

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<sup>204</sup> *The Street* is an important early starting point for much of Oldenburg's subsequent work because it also marks the introduction of the long running preoccupation with Ray Gun. Ray Gun was an alternative identity for Oldenburg and other objects; it also served as the title for his first theater, the Ray Gun Manufacturing Company was the name for his store operation, Ray Gun was a hero, a thug, and many other things.

chaotic in appearance. In both exhibitions, fragments of words, cars, traffic patterns intruded into space from every angle and surface creating a vibrant, if dark, view of urban decay. Irving Sandler's review of the show found it "humorous and tender, but grim" and described the characters found in *The Street* to be "as abstract and as real as the human wrecks that inhabit downtown New York."<sup>205</sup> Rose described *The Street* as "a characterization of deprivation."<sup>206</sup> Recently, art historian Joshua Shannon argued for a reading of Oldenburg's *The Street* in the context of Robert Moses' urban renewal projects in New York, and specifically, in the area of Greenwich Village.<sup>207</sup> Although Shannon sees Oldenburg's position toward urban renewal as ambivalent at best, his work on connecting Oldenburg to the issues of housing and slum clearance provides evidence of a political context for *The Street* and the performances that took place in the installation. Viewers of *The Street* who lived in the area of lower Manhattan would certainly have understood the piece in that context. In addition, although Shannon does not take this connection forward in time, I would argue that his reading provides evidence of a larger context for which to understand *Bedroom*: the context of the built environment of city space and the interior spaces of architecture. Oldenburg's interest in space and the human environment is unequivocal: "The subject has been the space of my surroundings. My art is about spaces: a street, a room, insides."<sup>208</sup> In fact, Oldenburg's conception of space as the area contained by a room, or a street, or by the body, was an important precedent for women artists in the next decade who would

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<sup>205</sup> Irving Sandler, quoted in Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, 40.

<sup>206</sup> Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, 39.

<sup>207</sup> See Joshua Shannon, "Claes Oldenburg's the Street and Urban Renewal in Greenwich Village 1960," *Art Bulletin* 86, no. 1 (March 2004): 136-61.

<sup>208</sup> Barbara Haskell, *Object into Monument* (Pasadena, CA: Pasadena Museum of Art, 1971), 10.

wrestle with the house as a container and the female body as represented within that container.

The second of Oldenburg's environments was *The Store* which also appeared in two manifestations.<sup>209</sup> The first presentation of *The Store* was at the Martha Jackson Gallery in a group show, "Environments, Situations, Spaces," in the Spring of 1961. The second was as living theater in his new studio at 107 East 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (the Ray Gun Mfg. Co.), where Oldenburg displayed and hoped to sell the painted plaster objects that he created in his work space behind the exhibition/sales room (fig. 3.8). *The Store* was also the stage for a series of ten Happenings, presented under the auspices of the Ray Gun Theater, which took place between February and May of 1962.<sup>210</sup> Rose found a parallel between the emphasis in American manufacturing on armaments and the materialism in American society and Oldenburg's incorporation of his store (selling art as a commodity) within the framework of the Ray Gun Manufacturing Company. Just as GE was making weapons to deploy overseas, and selling consumer goods at home, so Oldenburg's Ray Gun Manufacturing Company (Oldenburg's weapons company), sold art in the form of consumer goods.<sup>211</sup> The painted plaster objects that were exhibited for sale at *The Store* ranged from food to lingerie and reflected the type of commercial

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<sup>209</sup> Johnson characterizes the Street as "male in essence" while the Store's "luxuriantly colored objects of cloth and plaster in undulating forms and glistening surface, were fundamentally female." Johnson, 16.

<sup>210</sup> Several of these were reviewed by Jill Johnston in the *Village Voice*, April 26, 1962, 10. Her reviews are reprinted in Mashun, *Pop Art: A Critical History*.

<sup>211</sup> Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, 64.

activity found in the neighborhoods of the Lower East Side of Manhattan.<sup>212</sup> Both Oldenburg's *The Store* and *The Street*, then, suggested his awareness of urban poverty and urban housing issues. There also was a real desire to draw attention to the inequities of the capitalist system as it played out on two levels of society.<sup>213</sup> One of these levels was the urban poor in downtown Manhattan, the other was the art-buying public living uptown. The connections between Oldenburg's art-making practice and his life are particularly evident in his early art and statements; for example, there is his comment,

I have always felt the need of correspondence between one's art and one's life. I feel my purpose is to say something about my times...for me this involved a recreation of my vision of the times.... I am making symbols of my time through my experience.<sup>214</sup>

The *Teddy Bear Monument for New York's Central Park North*, (fig. 3.9) is another example of Oldenburg's references to social issues in the context of the city. Described by Oldenburg as a monument of pathos and a political statement in support of change, the monument was an ironic transformation of a child's toy. The bear's paws

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<sup>212</sup>Notably, the merchandise on sale on the Lower East Side was not of high quality or of especially fashionable vintage, rather this was merchandise of questionable quality with utilitarian, not fashionable appeal.

<sup>213</sup>Setting up a gallery on the Lower East Side to sell his artwork would seem to suggest the artist's wish to bring attention to the need for new distribution systems of art and to enable art to be sold to a wider range of individuals than would be found at an art gallery. This brings Oldenburg in line with other artists of his generation who wished to find a new way to distribute art to a larger audience, the production of artists books and other multiples, for example, which were seen as ways to push art out of the galleries and into the hands of a broader audience. Oldenburg did participate in the Pop Art multiples that were sold in various ways. See Glenn, Constance W. *The Great American Pop Art Store: Multiples of the Sixties* (Santa Monica, California: Smart Art Press in association with the University Art Museum California State University, Long Beach, 1998). On the reinvention of the artist book as a democratic art form see, for example, Lucy Lippard, "The Artist's Book Goes Public," in Joan Lyons ed., *Artists Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook* (Rochester, New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985). See Joanna Drucker, "The Myth of the Democratic Multiple" in *Figuring the Word: Essays on Books, Writing, and Visual Poetics* (Granary Press: New York, 1998) for a re-assessment of that notion.

<sup>214</sup>Oldenburg quoted in Celant, *Claes Oldenburg*, 370.

are useless, signifying “the helplessness of the city person and specifically of the negro in New York. I mean to change existing conditions, and that may be why this teddy bear is sitting up at that end of the park which is the Harlem end.”<sup>215</sup>

After *The Street* and *The Store*, Oldenburg turned to the domestic interior. He described his shift from Street to Store to Home as a shift from line, to color, to volume. Ellen Johnson states,

While Los Angeles is thus partly responsible for Oldenburg's third major theme, the Home, of which the Bedroom Ensemble is the most ambitious individual work, that motif did not originate from any single stimulus; in fact it quite naturally evolved from the previous preoccupations. The Street, the Store... and the Home are the main arenas of our daily existence.<sup>216</sup>

As Johnson suggests, there is a logical progression between the three installations. *The Store* marks a transitional space between the public street and the private house. In addition, Oldenburg's conception of theatricality shifted from setting to setting; *The Street* was a poetic representations of urban space, and a stage where he also performed; *The Store* presented the theater of commercial life (or commerce as farce) in that the artist himself sat behind the counter as proprietor of the space selling illusions of consumer goods (the image of the object, not the functional object). In a dramatic shift of orientation between artist and viewer, the *Bedroom Ensemble*, removes the actors (including the viewer and the artist) from the theater. Or, perhaps more accurately, the space that Oldenburg had created to stage his events was removed to a distance, so that the viewer's experience was limited to a visual engagement. In

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<sup>215</sup> Oldenburg quoted in Johnson, 37, 44n. Notes from a lecture given in November 1966 at Bath Academy of Art, Corsham, Wiltshire.

<sup>216</sup> Johnson, 287.



both *The Street* and *The Store*, the viewer was encouraged to walk into the space of the installation and physically interact with the artwork. Thus, the work may be seen as a continuation and logical development of Oldenburg's desire to create a theatrical art of human dimension and is considered part of his New York period. The *Bedroom Ensemble* is fundamentally different from previous installations in that it exists as a visual representation separated from interaction with the viewer (fig. 3.2). The most striking element of the *Bedroom Ensemble*, however, lies in its celebration of the domestic, the emphasis on the artificial, and its deliberate distortions of single-point perspective. Donald Judd, one of the few to defend the work at its original exhibition, remarked laconically that "the furniture in Oldenburg's bedroom suite was not praised as it merited."<sup>217</sup> In fact, the *Bedroom Ensemble* in the Janis Gallery exhibition of 1964 was roundly criticized. G.R. Swenson found the show to be the "most ill-conceived show of the season and was particularly harsh in his condemnation of Oldenburg's contribution:

Oldenburg's new *Bedroom* was a disaster; instead of paint drips to maintain the work as distinct from mere life, the artist used plastic materials (including the sheets) and oddly angled furniture (from above the bed and chests are parallelograms)--and the gallery compounded the error by chaining off that room to make us look at it rather than letting us sense it. God-awfulness is the end, the means, and everything in between.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Don Judd, "In the Galleries: Claes Oldenburg," *Arts*, (September 1964): 63. Judd's praise of Oldenburg's minimalist work is not surprising in that Oldenburg's *Bedroom* is, in Oldenburg's estimation, a work of minimalist art.

<sup>218</sup> G. R. Swenson, "Reviews," *ArtNews* 62, no. 10 ( February 1964): 8.

Sidney Tillim's review was a tongue-in-cheek description of the nightmare he had when he crawled between the sheets of Oldenburg's plastic bed.<sup>219</sup> Lucy Lippard provided a serious review pointing to the continuing theme of consumerism that was implicit in the *Bedroom* while also situating the review in the private realm of bedroom activities. Unlike Tillim, she did not imagine sleeping in the bed, she imagined the bed to be an evocation of the "kind of love or dreams that would be made between plastic sheets."

It is seen as through a show window, the customer is roped off from the monumentally monstrous bedroom in slick gray, black, white and vile marbled turquoise. All the furniture is rhomboidal, and the whole is highlighted by white vinyl sheets, zebra upholstery, leopard raincoat and identically patterned "all over" pictures. This dazzling nightmare of expensive futility is far removed from the artist's usually expressionist digs at commercialism and is far more chilling. Straight out of the "modernistic" twenties, untouched by human hands, it evokes the kind of love or dreams that would be made between plastic sheets.<sup>220</sup>

These references to the subject matter of the *Bedroom*, rather than the transformations that Oldenburg had enacted, seem to show how radical the idea of situating a bedroom of any kind in a blue-chip uptown gallery was in 1964. Clearly, the distinctions that had prevailed in the abstract expressionist art world of the late 1940s were still in place and Oldenburg's double dose of kitsch and domesticity presented a more difficult obstruction than the expressionistically painted plaster foodstuffs that Swenson and Lippard both referenced in their reviews. The shift away from the period of

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<sup>219</sup> Sidney Tillim, "Jungian Din," *Arts Magazine* 38, no. 6 (March 1964): 63-64. The review begins, "Last month I had a terrible nightmare. I dreamed I walked into the Sidney Janis Gallery and fell asleep on a bed. The bed was plastic, the sheets and spread were plastic, the throw rug was plastic..."

<sup>220</sup> Lippard, "Review of Janis Gallery Four Environments by Four New Realists, *Artforum*, 11, no. 9 (March 1964): 18-19.

expressionistic handling of paint, the “hand-painted pop”<sup>221</sup> period of *The Street* and *The Store* was connected to Oldenburg's temporary move to Los Angeles where he explored the character of the city, worked on the *Ensemble*, and experimented with a new interest in making "sculpture out of furniture."<sup>222</sup>

Claes and Pat Oldenburg moved to Venice on September 1, 1963, and stayed for eight months. While in Los Angeles, he had a solo show at the Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles in October of 1963, and performed *Autobodys*, a Happening that invoked the spirit of Southern California's driving culture by employing automobiles as scenery, stage lighting, and performers in the parking lot of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics in Los Angeles.<sup>223</sup> In a city known for its car culture and its suburban character, it is not surprising the Oldenburg produced works that connected these two aspects of Los Angeles. Oldenburg described Los Angeles as a place that embodied "the paradise of industrialism."

LA is many things and many things to many people. To me it is the paradise of industrialism. LA has the atmosphere (my selected part of it) of the consumer, of the home, the elegant neat result, like the frankfurter in its non-remembered distance from the slaughterhouse. In New York, in Brooklyn, I see all the degradation and slavery and terror of production as contrasted with the floating and very finished product on TV. Alternating dreams and alternating themes to me are the circumstances under which a thing is made vs. the end product (and its circumstances of presentation). I was attracted

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<sup>221</sup> See Schimmel and DeSalvo, *Hand-Painted Pop* for a description of the kind of art encompassed by this term.

<sup>222</sup> Oldenburg, "Interview with Claes Oldenburg," *Craft Horizon* 25 no. 5 (September/October 1965): 55.

<sup>223</sup> *Autobodys* was an urban Happening in downtown LA that included melting ice, cars, and audience participation. See Cecile Whiting, *Pop L.A.*, "Confronting a sprawling metropolis built around the car, he re-imagined, in *Autobodys*, the function and rational organization of the parking lot." 170. For a script, description, and photographs of *Autobodys*, see Michael Kirby, *Happenings: An Illustrated Anthology* (Dutton: New York, 1965).

that is seduced by and drawn to the Ice Age, as an antidote to the germanous rotten but living deaths of New York. My problem and that of others I think is the love of mechanism even as one flips around in the next moment and denies it.<sup>224</sup>

The major undertaking of the eight months in Venice was the planning and fabrication of the *Bedroom Ensemble*. It was the first time that Oldenburg worked with a professional collaborator and he noted the shift in his interests as he described himself as an artist who looked toward the future, not to the past for new means of production:

The assumption of machine style, in production or in the actual creation, symptomatic of a changed way of life for the artist who will join with the technician and manufacturer in the near future.<sup>225</sup>

Similarly, the involvement of technicians provided him with a disengagement from his previous processes. It was not, however, a radical break with the past, as he had been working with his wife, Pat Oldenburg, in a similar way in the production of the soft sculptures for several years.<sup>226</sup> The more radical shift occurred in the change from the anthropomorphized soft sculpture and expressionistically painted plaster works to the more minimalist, sculptural emphasis of the *Bedroom*. Oldenburg himself noted that change:

To friends who expressed disappointment at this radical change in direction, I said that just because one finds one thing beautiful at one time (always in time), say the poisonous botany of the Lower East Side, doesn't mean one

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<sup>224</sup> Oldenburg, 1966, quoted *Claes Oldenburg, An Anthology*, 174.

<sup>225</sup> Oldenburg statement 1966, quoted in Rose.

<sup>226</sup> "Interview with Claes Oldenburg," *Craft Horizon*, 56. Oldenburg talks about the importance of Pat Oldenburg's intensity in the sewing of the pieces as the same quality as the intensity of craftsmanship that Nieuhaus brought to the successful completion of the *Ensemble*. He also talks of how his Happenings are like these other works in that he enjoys reaching out to others and incorporating them into the piece, just as he reaches out to incorporate the world in his art.

can't at another time love its opposite, say the cemeteries of Formica strewn in the opium mists on the western shores.<sup>227</sup>

The first *Bedroom Ensemble* was made in Los Angeles by H. Nienhuis, a Dutch carpenter, and other craftsmen in the Venice, California, area.<sup>228</sup> The elements that make up the ensemble include a bed with zebra-striped backboard and two zebra throw pillows. The pillowcases and sheets are made of white vinyl and the bedspread is a "quilted black plastic."<sup>229</sup> Two night tables of blue marbled Formica sit on either side of the bed. White cylindrical lamps with blue-marbled lampshades, in the form of simple geometric tubes, sit on each nightstand. The patterns of the Formica and those on the lampshades of "oil and water patterned sheets made for endpapers of books" suggested "water like fluidity and frozen depths."<sup>230</sup> On the furniture are two powder boxes with lids, one perfume bottle, one ashtray, one radio, and one clock. All of these are generalized and geometric in design and painted white. A fake zebra upholstered loveseat sits in the room with a women's leopard-skin vinyl coat and a black vinyl handbag casually placed upon it. The vinyl coat was made from a commercial pattern.

The dresser sports a large round mirror made of metal; like so much else in the room, the effect is to bring attention to the fact that the object is non-functional--the mirror is not really a mirror, but a reinvention of the form of a mirror without its

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<sup>227</sup> Oldenburg, quoted by Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, 94.

<sup>228</sup> It was not made by Richard Artschwager, as has been repeated in the literature including in the recent book on Pop Art by Marco Livingstone, *Pop Art: A Continuing History*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1980). See "Interview with Claes Oldenburg," *Craft Horizon*, and Oldenburg Letter to Diana Nemeroff, May 17, 2000 in NGC Collections Files.

<sup>229</sup> Lippard, *Pop Art*, 109.

<sup>230</sup> Coosje van Bruggen, *Claes Oldenburg: Nur ein anderer Raum* (Frankfurt am Main: Museum für Modern Art, 1991), 40.

function. The two white, round powder boxes and the five, folded men's shirts in pastel colors made of muslin that emerge from the opened dresser drawer imply the occupation of the room by a couple, as both male and female personal objects are purposefully put on display (fig. 3.10). This opened drawer is the only one that slides open; the others have handles, but do not function. The five stuffed shirts are nearly the only soft elements in an otherwise hard-edged, black, white, silver, and blue room. Knowing Oldenburg's penchant for word play and humor, it is conceivable that these "stuffed shirts" are a visual pun on the character of the man who co-inhabits this room. On the floor is a dark floor rug with a small, white, fluffy (and stuffed with kapok) throw rug on top. The Venetian blinds cover the windows behind the bed. Printed fabrics, "ordinary textile with a black embossed pattern like an imitation Jackson Pollock"<sup>231</sup> were stretched onto canvas stretchers and hung on the grey walls (fig. 3.11).<sup>232</sup>

The furniture is rhomboid in shape (fig. 3.12). Sketches and models produced by the artist show his experimentation with the effects of exaggerated perspective (fig. 3.13). His first model for the *Bedroom Ensemble* within a viewing box, like a miniature stage, demonstrates that he has already focused on the use of animal-skin patterns. Another early model (fig. 3.14) shows part of his thought process as he moved from soft to hard furniture and began to work with a skewed, exaggerated perspective. In the diminutive model, which includes the floor of the stage or set, are various pieces of furniture that occupy different aesthetic formats. Elements that would remain as the

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<sup>231</sup> Lippard, *Pop Art*, 10.

<sup>232</sup> There are four small fake Pollocks hung as a group and two larger fake Pollock paintings. The gray was the exact shade that Janis had chosen for his gallery walls.

final conception include the bed, the dressing table with mirror, and the chaise lounge which is already draped with the leopard pattern of the woman's coat that is found in the final installation. The soft armchair, the oddly placed coffee table and the armless easy chair would all be discarded from the bedroom. The model for *Bedroom* is not yet a bedroom, but already the exaggerated perspective, the animal skin-fabric motif, the dressing table with its round mirror, and the trace of the female occupant represented by her discarded coat, have been identified as significant elements. Two published studies for the *Bedroom* focus on the bed (fig. 3.14, 3.15). In both, the artist has worked up an illusionistic rendering of a bed within a room using white chalk on a black ground--an inversion of his usual process which is to draw on white paper. The schematic line drawings have areas of smudged chalk; in one drawing the bed is empty, but looks to have been occupied, in the second there seems to be a body asleep under the blanket that is draped over the mattress. Both are images conceived as seen from the bird's eye perspective of modernist European art; correspondingly, both use the near corner of the bed itself to situate the radiating lines of single-point linear perspective.

Oldenburg's choice of a bedroom as his subject suggests his interest in exploring a private, domestic space and a space of vulnerability where the consciousness is allowed to dissipate and the realm of the subconscious gains ascendancy.<sup>233</sup> Oldenburg revealed that *Bedroom Ensemble* was inspired by memories of his childhood home, including his memory of an encounter with, "a famous motel along the shore road to

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<sup>233</sup> Oldenburg described the bedroom as "the softest room in the house and the one least identified with conscious thought." Oldenburg statement in *San Paolo 9: United States of America in Museum of Modern Art*, Sao Paulo, 1967-68, 92. From NGC Collections Files.

Malibu, 'Las Tunas Isles' in which (when I visited it in 1947) each suite was decorated in the skin of a particular animal, i.e., tiger, leopard, zebra. My imagination exaggerates but I like remembering it that way: each object in the room consistently animal."<sup>234</sup>

Using a motel, especially an exaggerated memory of a motel of fantasy suites, as a source for the *Bedroom* added another complication to the sexualized reading of the room and complicated the inherent dichotomy of public versus private space that the room implied. A motel that is remembered for its animal-skin decoration is the kind of hotel that would seem to cater to a clientele interested in fantasy, in sexual role playing and seduction as a game involving predator and prey--the kind of motel that could have been associated with the sexual philosophy of, as Rose suggested, *Playboy* magazine.<sup>235</sup>

The *Bedroom Ensemble* was also a meditation on the relationship between *Eros* and death.<sup>236</sup> That this was an essential element of the work is evident in the artist's

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> See Rose, 93. In Oldenburg's notes he attributed the motel to his original inspiration: "According to his notes, its original prototype was a famous motel along the shore road to Malibu, which he had seen on a trip to the West Coast in 1947; each suite was decorated in keeping with a *Playboy* safari fantasy, with the skin of a particular animal—tiger, leopard, zebra. The impression this made was augmented by fantasies regarding his mother's dressing table, or dressing tables in general." Oldenburg himself suggested that the decoration of the rooms was "sort of a pre-*Playboy* experience." "Interview with Claes Oldenburg, *Craft Horizons*, 55. *Playboy* began publication in 1953. Oldenburg had an early connection with *Playboy*. Bruggen relates that Oldenburg had sent some of his early commercial drawings to *Playboy* for publication but had been rejected which led him to fine art rather than commercial art. Coosje van Bruggen, *Claes Oldenburg, Nur ein anderer Raum*, 7. Sarah Clark-Langager, *Sculptural Tableaux of the 1960s: Edward Kienholz, Claes Oldenburg, George Segal* (Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 1988), 330, described the *Bedroom* as a "new surrealist grotto" and also related Oldenburg's story of being influenced by this California motel of the last 1940s with rooms decorated in skins of different exotic animals.

<sup>236</sup> "With the *Bedroom Ensemble*, he synthesized meanings: "Bedroom as tomb," drawing on the traditional conjunction of *Eros* and death while joining both in a memorial/monument structure. But it is typical of Oldenburg to be contradictory and provocative." Mark Rosenthal, "'Unbridled Monuments' or, How Claes Oldenburg Set Out to Change the World," in Celent, *Claes Oldenburg: Anthology*, 256. Oldenburg has never denied the importance of erotics in his art; on many occasions he discussed his objects and environments as either male or female and made comparisons in his sketches, his conversations, and his statements about the erotic appeal of everyday objects. His attention to the fetishistic nature of consumer objects which was typical of his works of the early 1960s continued in the



continued reference to the *Ensemble* as a tomb: in 1967 he described it as "a rational tomb, pharaoh's or Plato's bedroom," and in 2000 he again referenced "its tomb-like nature."<sup>237</sup> It is also relevant to the importance of Jackson Pollock who is represented as a trace or ghost within the space of the installation.

The references to Jackson Pollock were an important aspect of the *Bedroom's* larger meaning. Oldenburg had participated in the *ArtNews* roundtable artists' discussion of Jackson Pollock and spoke unequivocally about the importance of Pollock's work on his own development.<sup>238</sup> His discussion centered on Pollock's skeins of paint which he likened to cords of electric energy that acted almost as a conduit for the living presence of the artist. He further connected these energetic lines of paint to the essence of life and pointedly spoke of his use of fake Pollock designs which he had found in a fabric store in Los Angeles in order to signify death. The *Bedroom*, in Oldenburg's original conception, was connected with the stilling of energy, with death, embalming, and in light of his comments on Pollock, a very specifically American vision of death by automobile accident.<sup>239</sup> Oldenburg clearly saw Pollock himself as an archetypal image of an American artist; in that same discussion he described Pollock as

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*Bedroom Ensemble*, a room which is typically a secluded, private space located within the most interior spaces of the architectural frame that is the home.

<sup>237</sup> Sao Paulo, 1967. Letter from Claes Oldenburg to Diana Nemeroff, May 17, 2000. National Gallery of Canada Collections Files.

<sup>238</sup> "Jackson Pollock: An Artist's Symposium, Part II," *ArtNews*, 66, no. 3 (May 1967): 26-29, 66-69.

<sup>239</sup> This links Oldenburg to Warhol whose silkscreen paintings of car crashes were also gruesome images of American death. *Bedroom*, in its references to Jackson Pollock's death, is part of Oldenburg's new turn to car culture in Los Angeles, as seen in his *Autobodys Happening* and his focus on the Chrysler Airflow, the theme that he would pursue after the Home period.

"American Painter, Painter of Life, Painter of New York,"<sup>240</sup> and intertwined the themes of death, American culture, and Pollock.

That Pollock was very much on his mind is also evident in his characterization of the room at the Janis Gallery, in which he was to install his *Bedroom* as a "vault-like space."<sup>241</sup> In an interview with the staff at the National Gallery of Canada, he spoke of the importance of the art historical context in which he found himself.

And he [Janis] had reserved this one room which meant a great deal to me because it was the room where Duchamp had shown, and de Kooning had shown his *Women* for the first time. This room had a history, and it had a door on the side which was marked "private"--this was the door to Sidney's office and this was made a part of the Bedroom Ensemble. The Bedroom Ensemble was not just a construction from Los Angeles, it was a construction from Los Angeles placed into a New York context. So that the colors of the walls came from Sidney Janis and the door marked "private" was reconstructed each time that bedroom was shown – and you had the feeling that in there was Sidney, working on some new Mondrian deal. So many wonderful shows had been in this room, that it was nice to come in there, especially with the Pollock yardage, you know, because Sidney had, of course, once been the person who showed all these Abstract Expressionists, and then (sic) he shifted his interest to Pop Art, they all left the gallery.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> "Jackson Pollock: An Artists' Symposium," 27.

<sup>241</sup> Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, 93. Oldenburg's quote is "The Bedroom Ensemble had to have the vault like presence of the front room of the Sidney Janis Gallery. What was already there was in mind 3000 miles sway: the air conditioner, the blinds that shut out the light, and the mysterious door marked *private*, as I plotted the room on my floor in the stucco replica of St. Mark's in our phony Venice."

<sup>242</sup> Oldenburg, interview at the National Gallery of Canada, clip 6.

Oldenburg does not mention it, but in light of his interest in Pollock, it is significant to note that Pollock returned to exhibit at the Janis Gallery in 1952. In a sense then, Oldenburg is creating a ghostly presence or trace of Pollock in the room in which Pollock himself exhibited. This was not the first time that Oldenburg had linked death to stillness or reproduction. For example, in his Happening entitled, *Photo-Death, Snapshots from the City I*, he made the comparison between photography and death explicit. In interviews, he had spoken of stillness as death and photography as death. It is telling that Ellen Johnson, one of Oldenburg's most insightful early supporters, described the *Bedroom* in this way:

the dwelling of Eros becomes a chamber of death. It is embalmed in the falsity of both reason and appearance, in the chilling geometry of perspective illusion, and in the synthetic nature of the entire decor, with its manufactured tiger and blue marble Formica furniture, black vinyl bedcover and textile Tobeyes or Pollocks.<sup>243</sup>

Coosje van Bruggen described it as both "dead and alive."<sup>244</sup> The prevalence of death in descriptions and discussions of the *Bedroom* suggest the way in which the stasis of the room; its stillness and sense of private enclosure resemble the silence of the tomb. That silence could also be the silence of a photograph or an unoccupied room or stage. Briony Fer used the term "mis-en-scene" to describe the *Bedroom Ensemble* and correctly, I think, suggested its connection not to theater, but to film. She interprets the installation as "empty like a set which either has been or is waiting to be

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<sup>243</sup> Johnson, 28.

<sup>244</sup> van Bruggen, 43.

occupied.”<sup>245</sup> She insightfully described the use of materials-- as literal but ersatz— sheets of vinyl, fake furs, plastic and Formica surfaces as a “dream map of commodity culture and its projected desires.”<sup>246</sup> She also reminds us that Donald Judd praised the installation as “a thorough corruption of all its sources,”<sup>247</sup> continuing “even a corruption of the readymade aesthetic that seems to drive it.”<sup>248</sup> She further describes the artist's act of distorting the furniture to reflect an extreme use of single-point perspective as “an illusionistic conceit, but one which seems to mimic not just a 'real room' but the pulling out and panning shots of the camera in the distended surface of the bed.”<sup>249</sup> The connections with photography go on; even the purposeful geometric distortions of the installation are corrected by the camera in photographs of the piece. As Fer also points out, photographs of the *Bedroom Ensemble* are not simply documentation of the installation, “the photograph of the installation is, as it were, already structurally embedded in the experience of the installation from the outset.”<sup>250</sup> If we take that to be one of Oldenburg's objectives, the *Bedroom Ensemble* is a liminal piece that aimed to capture the future transformations that the camera could work on the installation itself.

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<sup>245</sup> Briony Fer, “The Somnambulist's Story: Installation and the Tableau.” *Oxford Art Journal* 24, no. 2 (2001): 75-92, 81. One of the points that Fer raises is how stillness creates tension in the viewer's relation to film; she references Laura Mulvey, “Death 24 Times A Second: the Tension Between Movement and Stillness in the Cinema”, *Coil* 9/10, 2000 unpaginated.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>247</sup> Donald Judd, written in July 1966, in *Donald Judd: Complete Writings, 1959-197*, (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; New York: New York University Press, 1975), 192.

<sup>248</sup> Fer, 82.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*

Oldenburg had, at this point in his oeuvre, clearly connected photography with death; he had also connected death to his flight away from New York to Los Angeles and spoken at length about death in his references to Pollock. All of these are ways in which he psychologically fixed the idea of entombment into the structure of the tableaux. Another point concerns the difference in intention between Oldenburg's theatrical installations of *The Street* and *The Store*, and the film industry centered in Southern California which is clearly evoked by the photographic qualities of the *Bedroom Ensemble*. Oldenburg has made a point throughout his career of connecting his work to each geographic location; Los Angeles represented for him a place that was focused on the home and also a land of industrialized, even fake materials, and the *Bedroom Ensemble* encompassed both. I would argue that the *Bedroom Ensemble* is, on one level, a visual essay on the imagined but false glamour of a Hollywood movie set complete with actual distortions that are transformed by the camera into what passes for truth.

The use of advertising as the model for the *Bedroom* provides yet another layer of meaning to Oldenburg's work—and also serves to link this piece in particular to Pop ideas (in a way that much of his other works cannot be linked). Notebook pages from 1963 show that he took particular interest in how furniture was displayed in advertisements (fig. 3.15 and 3.16). Many years after the creation of the bedroom, Oldenburg described it as a “three-dimensional photograph....it's also a concentration of

how it looks in a store window or something, you see a bedroom display. They will show the bedroom as if it is being used-- suggested as being used."<sup>251</sup>

Advertising imagery is also implicated in this shift from expressionistic, theatrical activation of space as seen in *The Street* and *The Store* to the empty stage set of the *Bedroom Ensemble*. Whereas in both of the previous installation/environments, human activity was present either in the form of the artist acting as proprietor of his store or in the fragmentary characters that made up the human element of *The Street*, the human presence in the *Bedroom Ensemble* is only implied by the fake leopard coat draped over the fake zebra covered sofa, the purse casually left on the chair, the rearranged throw pillows on the bed and the partially opened drawer of the dresser. Rose notes that the *Bedroom Ensemble* was "inspired by ads in the Los Angeles Times that showed blocky shapes in exaggerated foreshortening"<sup>252</sup> and remarks that the distortion of the furniture is due to the artist's decision to design the furniture so it conformed to the illusion of one-point perspective. Depending on where the viewer is situated in relation to the bedroom, the furniture looks to be either extremely long or extremely short. Her original review of the exhibition at the Janis gallery connected Oldenburg's work with German expressionist films of the 1920s. Rose's reading of the *Bedroom* in the context of German expressionist films of the 1920s, a medium that was silent, black-and-white, and psychologically charged, provides another connection between Oldenburg, photography, and film.<sup>253</sup> It also provides support for the reading

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<sup>251</sup> Claes Oldenburg, Interview at the National Gallery of Canada, clip 6.

<sup>252</sup> Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, 93.

<sup>253</sup> Rose, "New York Letter," *Art International* 8 no. 3 (April 25, 1964), 53.

of Oldenburg's *Bedroom* as evidence of the change in his work from theatricality based on human action to a new filmic theatricality based on a purely visual reading of space. In this new model of theatricality, interior space is experienced as a space of stillness and the viewer's role is one of watching and waiting. This is very much the experience of the viewer of cinema.

The *Bedroom Ensemble* is also a work of art that takes on the contradictions in American life between private and public. In 1962 Oldenburg wrote, "the erotic or sexual is the root of 'art'" and spoke of trying to invest the object with an intensity, "...in Am. (America) at this time, toward substitutes, f.ex. (for example) clothing rather than the person, fetishistic stuff, and this gives the object an intensity, and this is what I try to project."<sup>254</sup> One of the small but telling details of the *Bedroom Ensemble* is the door marked "private" that is part of the installation (fig. 3.17). In the original installation at the Janis Gallery, this was the door that led from the public viewing space to the private office where Sidney Janis worked. It is part of the installation at the National Gallery of Canada, and outside of the original context it suggests another doubling, or possibly tripling, of meaning. Oldenburg has taken pains to indicate that this bedroom is occupied by a male/female couple. The leopard coat and purse are clearly female attributes, the pastel colored shirts spilling out of the dresser are male. Neither is present, but the arrangement of the objects in the room seem to suggest that they are within the vicinity and a woman will be returning to the room to pick up her coat and

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<sup>254</sup> Germano Celant, "Claes Oldenburg and the Feeling of Things," in Celant, *Claes Oldenburg, An Anthology*, 13.

bag. The artist has spoken of the *Bedroom* as an exercise in minimalist geometry, and implies that this is even more significant in that he has chosen the softest room, the room where the least amount of conscious thought is exercised, to be the carrier of minimalist, formal concerns.

I would like to make one more point about the physical construction of the *Bedroom* as it is installed at Ottawa, which is the installation that Oldenburg originally intended and preferred until 2000 when he wrote the National Gallery of Canada to suggest that they rework the wall that restricted viewing of the piece (to be discussed below). *Bedroom* reproduced all the architectural details of the room at the Janis Gallery-- windows and Venetian blinds, the heating pipe that is visible, and the specific moldings that were found in the room. In Ottawa, a conspicuous element of voyeurism was present as it was in Oldenburg's original installation.<sup>255</sup> A confining wall was constructed so as to remove the viewer from the physical space of the room "so you could not look into the bedroom, except through a fairly limited aperture."<sup>256</sup> In this way, Oldenburg restricted the physical and spatial configuration of the *Bedroom* into a sight/site. This is a reading of architecture as apprehended by vision-- a view that modern architecture made explicit in its close relationship with photography, architectural drawings, and the presentation of the master architect's design as a

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<sup>255</sup> Contrary to the artist's intentions and wishes, the *Bedroom Ensemble*, has been recently taken out of the galleries and placed in storage. See letters from Claes Oldenburg to Pierre Th  berge of March 29, 2000, and to Diana Nemeroff, May 17, 2000, in NGC Collections Files.

<sup>256</sup> Oldenburg, National Gallery of Canada, interview, clip 9.



miniature model to be examined as an object of art.<sup>257</sup> This understanding of architecture privileges the eye over the body, and is a key element of the constructed spaces of both Oldenburg and Wesselmann who each controlled access to the three-dimensional space of the work of art as if it were two-dimensional. Contemporary feminist architectural historians argue that the definition of feminist architecture lies in the relationship established between body and space. As Deborah Fausch noted, the refusal of bodily interaction within the realm of architecture is antithetical to a feminist vision of architecture, an architecture that she describes as one which "fostered an awareness of and posited a value to the experience of the concrete, the sensual, the bodily--if it used the body as a necessary instrument in absorbing the content of the experience."<sup>258</sup> Following this notion of architectural space as gendered, we can align both Oldenburg and Wesselmann within the masculine construction of architectural space as a visual form. With the eye of the viewer assumed to be male and the subject of the eye, the female within the architectural enclosure.

Oldenburg is renowned as a wordsmith; his early years were spent as a writer, he was (is) a prolific reader, and his early scripts and notes are full of double entendres and poetic riffs.<sup>259</sup> Surely the standard nomenclature for this room, occupied

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<sup>257</sup> Colomina, *Domesticity at War*, talks about this in her discussion of the importance of postwar American architecture, especially in the dissemination of the Eames House and the other Case Study Houses to Europeans as examples of modern American domestic architecture.

<sup>258</sup> Deborah Fausch, "The Knowledge of the Body and the Presence of History-- Toward a Feminist Architecture," in Debra Coleman, Elizabeth Danze, and Carol Henderson, eds. *Architecture and Feminism*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press), 42.

<sup>259</sup> This wordplay makes it difficult to interpret his own texts as evidence of his intentions. His written and, often, spoken texts are best understood as poetry, not explaining, but existing alongside his visual works. Oldenburg's penchant for obscuring his purpose is discussed by Mark Rosenthal in "Unbridled Monuments," in Celant, *Claes Oldenburg: An Anthology*, 255-263. For example, "These divergent ways of

by both male and female partners, as the master bedroom, played a part in his thinking. The master bedroom is a bedroom of erotic space; it is the room in which the marital bed is located; in Oldenburg's version it also functioned as a strange homage to the recently deceased master of American painting, Jackson Pollock.<sup>260</sup> The term, master bedroom, also suggests the patriarchal order, and patriarchal notions of mastery in the bedroom and within the home. To this end, it is surely significant that the absent woman's coat and purse, her attributes, are formed of black vinyl and fake fur, the same materials as the *Bedroom* suite's furniture. These attributes also match the color scheme of the Home, black, white, and blue. In contrast, the male's attributes, bursting forth from the drawers in a show of vitality, are in pastel shades and are clearly separate from the room's décor; in fact, they cannot be contained with the dresser drawer. Oldenburg's representation of the female occupant of the bedroom as physically similar to the interior decoration of the room links his characterization of the bedroom space as the space of the female body. In effect, he links the woman with the house as Louise Bourgeois's *Femme-Maison* had done, but without the inherent critique that Bourgeois presented in 1947. His contemporary, Tom Wesselmann, whose own view of the bedroom elided the difference between the woman of the house and the house itself also evoked the woman-as-house construction. For both of these artists, the bedroom was a space of male/female occupancy, but there was a distinct difference in how male and female attributes were presented. The male presence was announced by active

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describing his work are perhaps deliberately obfuscatory, for it is often the case that Oldenburg's choice of subject is too replete with content not to have been arrived at deliberately. In fact, his favorite sources in the mid-1960s evince a sublime merging of form and content. " 257.

<sup>260</sup> Pollock died in an automobile accident on Long Island on August 11, 1956.

forces; in Oldenburg's bedroom, the masculine shirts erupting from the drawer, while the woman's empty coat passively reclines on the divan. In Wesselmann's bedrooms the male is outside the bedroom looking in. In Oldenburg's the furniture is hard, and all the feminization of interior space (texture, veiling fabrics, and ruffles) have been replaced by an aesthetic that derives from mass production and new technology. Both artists create an erasure of the woman of the house and replace her physical and psychological being with a sign. The home is transformed from the stereotypical domestic space of female industry and consumer accumulation to a space emptied of feminine presence except within an erotic context. The home in both Wesselmann's and Oldenburg's representations is taken over by masculine activities of transformation so that the domestic is erased from the home's image and replaced by a new visual construction of masculine mastery in the domestic sphere.

Surveillance, which was an issue that Wesselmann addressed in his representations of the home, is also an element of the *Bedroom Ensemble*. Placing the artificial construction of the bedroom into contemporary theories of architecture and gender provokes another reading of Oldenburg's *Bedroom Ensemble* and the domestic architecture that he used as a model. Architecturally and historically speaking, the bedroom is one of the inner rooms, a place of family intimacy and privacy, but more generally, a room that has been constructed in order to domesticate the female.<sup>261</sup> In architectural terms, the bedrooms of the house are typically located in the interior

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<sup>261</sup> See Mark Wigley, "Untitled: The Housing of Gender" in Colomina, ed., *Sexuality and Space*, (New York: Princeton University Press, Princeton Papers on Architecture, 1992), 327-389.

space of the home, where the women and children are confined both to protect and to isolate them from outside, public activity. In an intriguing essay, historian Mark Wigley follows the architectural development of the private dwelling from fifth-century Greece (Xenophon's *The Economist*-- a treatise in which he contrasts man's activity with woman's supposedly innate stillness, which makes her more suited for home) to Leon Battista Alberti, whose extraordinarily influential fifteenth-century treatises on architecture *On the Art of Building in Ten Books* were so important to architecture's elevation from mere building to an art. Wigley argues that private architecture has been constructed with a gender-specific bias, noting

architecture's complicity in the exercise of patriarchal authority by defining a particular intersection between a spatial order and a system of surveillance which turns on the question of gender. Women are to be confined deep within a sequence of spaces at the greatest distance from the outside world while men are to be exposed to that outside.<sup>262</sup>

Later he states "...the role of architecture is explicitly the control of sexuality, or more precisely, women's sexuality, the chastity of the girl, the fidelity of the wife. Just as the woman is confined to the house, the girl is confined to her room. The relationship of the house to the public sphere is reproduced on its interior."<sup>263</sup> As the wife is responsible for inner surveillance of all within the home -- children, female relatives, and possessions -- the male is responsible for surveillance of his wife and of the exterior walls. This gender-specific reading of surveillance in the home provides an intriguing entry into a discussion of Oldenburg's representation. In his construction of the

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 332.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 336. Later in the essay, Wigley reminds the reader that Alberti suggested a private door between the husband and wife's bedrooms. While there is no reason to assume that Oldenburg knew this from a reading of Alberti, it is a pleasing coincidence or a telling detail that Oldenburg purposefully marks a door private leading out of this bedroom into another imaginary space.

*Bedroom*, vision is the only means by which the visitor can participate; thus, the viewer re-enacts the traditional roles of the male homeowner and the female occupant as surveyors of space within the intimate realms of the home. *Bedroom Ensemble* was constructed, Oldenburg stated, so “you could not look into the bedroom, except through a fairly limited aperture.”<sup>264</sup> The chain that purposefully hits the viewer at just below the knee reminded the viewer of two things; first, that the *Bedroom* was a private space (emphasized by the door marked private in the installation) and secondly, that it is a view of a room, not a space to be entered (fig. 3.18). The idea of surveillance, of the audience as voyeur, is an integral part of the experience of the installation. The situation that the artist set up was an invitation to the viewer's own imagination. “The fantasy isn't in the object. The fantasy is in the eyes of the viewer.”<sup>265</sup> One implied fantasy is that of the return of the figures to the room and the return of life and activity to a moment frozen in time.

Oldenburg's use of an exaggerated one-point perspective in the construction of the *Bedroom Ensemble* offers an avenue of investigation that also turns on arguments posed by Wigley's discussion of sexuality and space. One-point perspective was invented in Renaissance Italy by the architect Brunelleschi and codified by Alberti.<sup>266</sup> It is a system for rendering three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface so that the space of the canvas or wall becomes transparent, like that of a window. As Wigley pointed out in his essay, an architectural vision informed the theory of perspective; an

<sup>264</sup> Oldenburg interview, National Gallery of Canada, clip 9.

<sup>265</sup> Oldenburg, “Interview,” *Craft Horizons*, 23.

<sup>266</sup> Wigley, 361. Alberti published Brunelleschi's experiments on perspective in his *De Pictura* which functioned as a kind of handbook for students.

architectural understanding of space led to a system used to present architecture on a flat surface. Because perspective subordinates architecture to painting, it also makes a visual response to architecture, rather than a spatial, bodily response, appropriate.<sup>267</sup> Thus, perspective and the visual theory of architecture “cannot be separated from the over-determined space of the study (or 'studio') which detaches the theorist-father-husband-artist from the world precisely in order that he can master that world by viewing it through some kind of disciplinary frame, whether a painting, a theoretical manuscript, memoir, or account book.”<sup>268</sup> Perspective's purpose was to create a realistic representation of space. Wigley's argument turns on the notion that vision, architectural space, and constructions of gender (which result in the cultural mapping of sexuality) are intertwined and cannot be separated out one from the next. Architectural space both reflects and creates gender differences. The vision of one-point perspective is constructed by architectural space, and sexuality is defined, and defines, the function of architecture and space in a cultural context.<sup>269</sup>

Whereas one-point perspective was introduced and continued to be used as a means of effecting an illusion of real space in a contrived space, Oldenburg's use of perspective is meant to create a distortion of real objects in real space. Consistent with his interests in transformation, he uses perspective to upset expectations and invert preconceptions. By enclosing the *Bedroom* within a recreation of the original room at

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 362.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid. Wigley illustrates his point with images of *St. Jerome in his Study*, and *A Draftsman Drawing a Nude* c. 1527, both by Dürer, as representations of Alberti's perspectival device. It seems to me that Oldenburg's representation of perspective and his transformation of three dimensional space into a false, but seemingly correct representation of two-dimensional illusion is also at work here.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 365.

the Sidney Janis Gallery and keeping viewers from entering that space, he enabled the viewer to experience an invisible theory as a pronounced visual presence; in essence he made two invisible systems of social convention visible. One invisible system was the cultural dichotomy of public and private which he disrupted by his insertion of a domestic, private space inside the public, commercial space of the gallery. A gallery, it should be noted, that modeled itself on domestic space to present the art on the walls as suitable and appropriate for any prospective buyer's own domestic space. By exaggerating the system that is one-point perspective, he made it visible as a trick used by both artists and advertisers. That he meant the *Bedroom* to be construed as a site of visual apprehension is evident both in his desire to keep all viewers out of the room and in his use of false materials that have a visual but not a bodily presence. As Oldenburg admitted, "It's the suggestion of human presence that works. But if you put an actual human being in there, the whole thing is gone....because this is the kind of reality that if you intrude it vanishes."<sup>270</sup>

The Oldenburgs moved back to New York in 1965 and found a large studio at 404 East Fourteenth Street. Here he continued to work on the theme of the *Home*, creating works that were hard and geometric in form like the *Bedroom Ensemble*, (although not covered in artificial textures and materials), and he returned to soft sculpture making soft versions of the *Toaster* (1964), *Dormeyer Mixer*, *Fan*, *Juicer* (all 1965), and *Hard and Soft Lightswitches* in 1964. The Bathroom Suite included hard prototypes in cardboard, and soft sculptures in white and blue vinyl, that were shown at

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<sup>270</sup> Oldenburg interview, National Gallery of Canada, clip 3.

the Janis Gallery in March of 1966 (fig. 3.19). The sculptural group included soft toilet, soft bathtub and shower, soft washstand, soft scale, and soft medicine cabinet. While the soft set functioned as a group, a sort of “Bathroom Ensemble,” in that they were all of the same vintage porcelain age, Oldenburg never aligned them as an installation; instead each would be sold separately. He did, however, imagine them as garden sculpture (fig.3.20). The notion of death and the tomb that was so closely connected to the *Bedroom Ensemble* is carried through in the drawing that shows the elements of the bathroom in a landscape, standing erect like tombstones in a green graveyard, or eighteenth century follies in a private garden. That exhibition of 1966, which contained works on the theme of the bathroom, introduced a new theme, the *Chrysler Airflow*. This new theme took Oldenburg out of the *Home* period and into an exploration of the car (suggested earlier in his *Autobodys* performance in Los Angeles). The *Bathroom Series* continued the minimal color scheme of the *Bedroom Ensemble* of white, black silver, and blue. The use of vinyl also connected the bathroom group to the *Bedroom*. Oldenburg wrote of the bathroom series in 1966:

The bathroom happened to be something I started in California in '63, but I was never able to solve the toilet because I never could find an example of the toilet, the kind of toilet that I wanted to use. There are so many toilets. And I also couldn't solve the problem of the bowl because I hadn't found Styrofoam and I wasn't able to carve this bowl in any medium. I just didn't get around to it. So that was hanging over from a previous time, that was one of the things on the list – the Bathroom. Besides, that was consistent with my desire to continue to make the house.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Oldenburg, 1966, quoted by Celant, *Claes Oldenburg, An Anthology*, 223.



The *Bathroom Series* is clearly a continuation of the ideas and representations of intimacy, domesticity, and how society regulates the physical functions of human sexuality, consumption, and elimination of waste. *The Bathroom* series also returned Oldenburg to his previous method of production; that is to say, these were fabric sculptures. Gravity worked on these sculptures and the anthropomorphism that had distinguished Oldenburg's earlier soft sculptures was again evident. It is also tempting to see Oldenburg's and other artists' sudden emphasis on the bathroom as a comment on the contemporary efforts of Civil Rights Activists to win equal access to public accommodations for African Americans. Segregated bathroom facilities were a visible front in the battle for equal access to public facilities, and in the sense of breaking down barriers at the most private level, the bathroom had resonance.<sup>272</sup> In 1964, LeRoi Jones's play (later he was to change his name to Amiri Baraka), *The Toilet*, was on view at the St. Mark's Playhouse in a double bill with *The Slave*. The play used the setting of a high school boys bathroom to present a brutal encounter between white and black societies (partially redeemed in the end by kindness).<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Oldenburg never spoke of the bathrooms in this way, but he had indicated his support for Civil Rights in his *Teddy Bear Monument* for Harlem.

<sup>273</sup> In 1964 four of LeRoi Jones' plays were produced in New York: *The Baptism*, *The Toilet*, *Dutchman*, and *The Slave*. *The Toilet* was presented at St. Mark's Playhouse in a double bill with *The Slave*. *The Toilet* took place in the boys bathroom of a high school. In the play, a white boy is beaten and left bleeding on the bathroom floor. In the final scene, a reconciliation of sorts occurs. See Amiri Baraka, *The Baptism and The Toilet*, (New York: Grove Press, 1967) for the play. While it is unlikely that Oldenburg saw this play, he may have heard of it from his New York acquaintances who were interested in avant-garde theater. It is also relevant simply as another example of the bathroom taken out of the context of the private home and placed in an art setting for the investigation of American culture.

Oldenburg's reference to his "desire to continue to make the house" suggests that he intended the *Bathroom Series* as a continuation of the *Bedroom Ensemble*. The bathroom was an architectural space that was developed in order to regulate the inhabitant's body and keep the architecture from becoming polluted with human waste. It became a multi-purpose room for washing, preparing one's toilette, and the elimination of the body's waste. It was among the most private of spaces in the house.<sup>274</sup> Oldenburg's attention to this aspect of the home was thus in keeping with his focus on appetite and desire, sexuality and private space. In turning next to the *Chrysler Airflow*, in the autumn of 1965, for his next investigation, Oldenburg had moved beyond the bedroom and bathroom, two rooms associated with the private centers of the home and away from the spaces associated with feminine activities. The *Airflow*, as Rose noted, was related to the *Bedroom Ensemble*, but was, significantly, a return to earlier preoccupations with the male body and its doubles.<sup>275</sup>

In the *Bedroom Ensemble*, Oldenburg had performed multiple transformations. The first transformations were from the childhood experience of his parents' bedroom and the teenage encounter with the motel room (which is not a bedroom, but a room rented for the night for the purposes of a bedroom). Another transformation is that of the bedroom into a bedroom-suite stage set that might be seen in a store window to entice consumers into imagining themselves within it.

Oldenburg also transformed the commercial artist's drawn advertisement and

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<sup>274</sup>See Wigley, 344, and his argument for the "invention of personal privacy."

<sup>275</sup>Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, 100. Claes Oldenburg wrote, "Of all the doubles man has made of himself, the car (in Swedish, Karl is guy-autobody) is the most ever-present, competitive and dangerous. Also the one which most naively represents man. Our robot."

commercially photographed images of manufactured bedroom furniture. Finally, in art historical terms, Oldenburg had transformed himself. His move from New York to Los Angeles provoked a significant shift in his subject and style. It marked the end of his apprenticeship with abstract expressionist preoccupations with expressionistic paint and theatrical activations of space as Kaprow and Oldenburg had defined Pollock's legacy.

In March of 1999, Oldenburg visited Ottawa and was able to see the *Bedroom Ensemble* installation again. A letter that he subsequently sent to the Director of the National Gallery in March of 2000 demonstrated his continuing engagement with the *Ensemble* at Ottawa. Noting that the original installation at Ottawa, in 1974, was "based on a doctrinaire reconstruction of the original site, the Sidney Janis Gallery of early 1964,"<sup>276</sup> he allowed that his thinking had changed. "I feel that this is no longer a requirement and that opening up the view as in Frankfurt would greatly enhance the Ottawa installation."<sup>277</sup> He concluded with a statement that reinforced his earlier representation of the *Bedroom Ensemble* as "monumental and timeless" and suggested that the work should be seen outside of the context of the 1960s, feeling it was "wasted in its presentation as just another item in a Pop Art collection."<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Claes Oldenburg letter to Pierre Théberge, March 29, 2000. National Gallery of Canada Collections Files

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 4: De-Constructing the American Dream, 1964 - 1967: Urban Issues, Civil Rights, and the Vietnam War

While great expanses of suburban homes rose in developments outside of cities, and urban whites moved out to these new communities, African Americans who had migrated north by the millions were forced to settle in the deteriorated central cities abandoned by the new suburbanites.<sup>279</sup> Overcrowding of traditionally African-American neighborhoods was exacerbated by racist policies like red-lining and discrimination by realtors and bank officials, creating a housing crisis for urban minorities.<sup>280</sup> The urban poor were segregated in public housing that was erected in increasingly dense ghettos, meanwhile, moderate and middle-income African Americans, with the financial ability to purchase a home in the suburbs, were shut out. In the late 1940s and 1950s, harassment of middle-class black families, who out of

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<sup>279</sup> Between 1930 and 1960 many of the poor, both black and white, moved from the rural south to the urban north. They settled in northern cities where they hoped to find jobs in the war and postwar industrial economy. Historian William O'Neill, notes that, in the 30s, half of the poor were farm workers; by 1960, the rural poor counted for only 15 percent while 55 percent were urban. O'Neill, *American High: The Years of Confidence, 1945-1970* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 19. Michael Harrington's classic study of poverty, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*, first published in 1962, is the significant study of poverty of the period, and he writes about urban and rural poverty, the effects of long term poverty and the helplessness of the poor to break free of the disadvantages that surround them.

<sup>280</sup> For example, Levitt's Housing practices explicitly refused to rent to, or allow its owners to sell to, African-American families.

desperation tried to integrate into white neighborhoods, was common.<sup>281</sup> Housing riots between blacks and whites in the border areas of segregated neighborhoods occurred throughout the country, but most were not reported in the national or local press. In the 1960s, when these events would become newsworthy and the subject of television and newspaper coverage, many Americans outside of the South were shocked to discover that racial violence was not exclusive to the South. "This deficit of knowledge misled many northerners to believe that American race problems were confined to the South, and it would cause them to be shocked at the violence in their own cities when racial conflicts in the 1960s received intense coverage."<sup>282</sup> By the mid-1950s, however, the Civil Rights Movement and the national press's interest in it had gathered momentum; by 1960 the connection between racial strife and issues in housing and education was made.<sup>283</sup> In 1963 Theodore H. White published a two part article on racial strife in which he discussed the confrontations between black and white in the South, and the problems of segregated housing and education in the northern cities.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> "From 1949 to 1951, an estimated twenty thousand black families purchased and occupied property outside of the 'established Negro community.' During this time there were over one hundred documented assaults--bombings, arson, mob attacks--on black-owned homes in predominantly white areas of Chicago, a pattern that was repeated in cities around the nation." Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York and London: The New Press, 2009), 390.

<sup>282</sup> Studies of the press coverage of housing and race issues in the mid-1950s "concluded that the New York Times and Detroit Free Press usually suggested that racial problems in their midst had been solved and that the Chicago Tribune mostly ignored local racial conflict altogether. Norrell, 168, makes reference to Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York, 1984), 31

<sup>283</sup> By 1961, the racial component of the housing and education crisis were established facts. *Issues of the Sixties*, for example, a compilation of essays on problems needing solutions for a successful America to move ahead, included six articles on civil rights legislation and enforcement; two of these dealt specifically with housing. See Leonard Freedman, ed., *Issues of the Sixties* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1962, first published 1961).

<sup>284</sup> Theodore H. White, "Racial Collision in the Big Cities, Part I," *Life* (November 22, 1963), 100-108, and "Power Structure, Integration, Militancy, Freedom Now! Part II," *Life* (November 29, 1963), 78-93. This

Urban riots in Harlem, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, Rochester, Elizabeth, and Jersey City in the summer of 1964 ushered in a national discussion on the problems of the inner city: housing, education, and jobs. The *Time* Magazine cover of July 31, 1964, featured an artist's representation of the streets of Harlem, New York City. The accompanying story described the housing crisis in Harlem in horrific terms, speaking of rats, decay, and overcrowding.<sup>285</sup> Although the initial explanations for these outbursts of violence in the city tried to fix the blame on outside agitators,<sup>286</sup> the federal study led by Otto Kerner, Governor of Illinois, which became known as the Kerner Report, concluded that the riots were due to conditions within the ghetto. The Kerner Commission ominously claimed in 1968 that "our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white-- separate and unequal."<sup>287</sup> In 1962, Michael Harrington's book on poverty in America had also warned of a division in society; in his terms there were two Americas; the "other

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was also the issue of *Life* devoted to the death of John F. Kennedy. The cover of the next week's issue, December 6, 1963 showed the funeral of J.F.K. In Part I, White also discussed the changing demographics of the cities of the North and predicted that the populations of seven out of ten of the largest American cities would be predominantly black. He also claimed that the black population in New York and Philadelphia had doubled between 1940 and 1960, it had tripled in Chicago and Detroit, and in Los Angeles, the black population had increased five-fold. These enormous increases in population were forced to remain within the boundaries of segregated neighborhoods.

<sup>285</sup> "Nation: Central Harlem is no place like home. It occupies only a 3.5-sq.-mi. wedge of upper Manhattan, but 232,000 people are packed into it, 94% of them black. Its worst streets are so crowded that if the same density prevailed throughout New York City the entire population of the U.S. could be jammed into just three of its five boroughs. It seethes with life and frequently boils over in violence. Its drug addiction rate is ten times higher than New York City's, twelve times higher than the nation's. Its murder rate is six times higher than the city's. "This is the jungle," says a Harlem woman, "the very heart of it." *Time*, "Nation: No Place Like Home", July 31, 1964.

[www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,873963,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,873963,00.html) accessed 9/20/09.

<sup>286</sup> For example, in a discussion of the Harlem riot of 1964, William Epton, described by *Time* Magazine as a "disgruntled Communist" was sentenced to prison for his role in inciting the violence. See "Mao's Man in Harlem," *Time* <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,842305,00.html>.

<sup>287</sup> The Kerner commission was widely discussed and while it contradicted the first readings of the cause of the riot (outside agitators were blamed), it was seen as an accurate assessment of the problems in Watts and other urban ghettos. Paula B. Johnson and David O. Sears, "Black Invisibility, the Press, and the Los Angeles Riot," in Kenneth L. Kusmer, *The Ghetto Crisis of the 1960s: Causes and Consequences*, (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1991), 283.

America" was poor and invisible.<sup>288</sup> In 1971, Hans Haacke's deconstruction of the network of real estate dealings in New York City, his "real-time social systems"<sup>289</sup> (fig. 4.1) would document both sides of this society as well as the financial link between the poorly housed and the cultural elite.<sup>290</sup> Bringing the invisible into clear view was a leitmotif of the art of the decade.

By 1964, to anyone who was paying attention, it was clear that the American dream was being dismembered along economic, gender, and racial lines. Pop artists continued to use household furnishings and appliances as a means of referencing the home and the role of domesticity in the political and economic life of the country; however, the spirit of Pop (reflecting the general turn in 1964 toward a more sober assessment of America) turned to darker subjects, including the assassination of President Kennedy, crime, car crashes, the war in Vietnam, and street violence.<sup>291</sup> Wesselmann's shift from colorful still lifes to a series of four gray, slightly ominous interiors suggests a new circumspection about American consumer society that was

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<sup>288</sup> Harrington, *The Other America*.

<sup>289</sup> The phrase is his own.

<sup>290</sup> Shapolsky et al. *Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971* and Sol Goldman and Alex DiLorenzo *Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*. These two works caused the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York to cancel the artist's scheduled exhibition in 1971. They were shown in an exhibition of the artist's work organized by the New Museum in 1986. See Brian Wallis, ed., *Hans Haacke, Unfinished Business* (New York: New Museum, 1986).

<sup>291</sup> One example of this turn to celebrating, or at least bringing the darker aspects of American society out into view is Andy Warhol's contribution to the 1964 World's Fair, featuring photographs of the F.B.I.'s most wanted men. The portraits were whitewashed soon after the opening of the fair for obvious reasons. These portraits have also been interpreted as homosexual innuendo reflecting on gay sensibility and Warhol's personal desire. See Butt, *Between You and Me*. For more on Warhol's contribution to the fair see Richard Meyer, *Outlaw Representation: Censorship and Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art, Ideologies of Desire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 128-147. On Roy Lichtenstein's references in his comic paintings to the Vietnam War, see Joan Marter's interview with Roy Lichtenstein in *Off Limits*. Stich refers to this shift toward a darker mood as a shift from the American Dream to the American Dilemma, 162-206.

confirmed by the series of works devoted to landscape and based on the image of a Volkswagen Beetle in 1964 (a car most emphatically not American-made and clearly not a celebration of American consumer production). He turned away from references to social issues and consumer culture to focus nearly exclusively on the female nude in a variety of situations. Lichtenstein's work of the mid 1960s continued to mine comic strips for images of love and war and also turned to classical ruins, landscapes, and other artists as inspiration. He, too, turned away from domestic appliances and home products as subjects for his paintings.

Other artists who were outside of the immediate Pop group, but aligned with them in their turn to contemporary imagery, found the home to be a subject for examination. The dream of a single-family house in the suburbs was critiqued by such images as Richard Artschwager's *Untitled, Tract Home*, 1964 (fig. 4.2). Based on a real-estate advertisement and painted with acrylic on celotex (a new industrial building material that was as artificial as the dream house depicted), the grisaille image is suggestive of the colorless lives that critics of the suburbs presumed were led in such homes.<sup>292</sup> Stich relates this image of a tract home to the American obsession in the 1960s of moving up (purchasing a bigger house in a better neighborhood in a constant updating of the American dream) and describes it as "an ironic memento of the typical

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<sup>292</sup> Another example of Artschwager's image of suburban tract houses is *House*, 1966, acrylic on celotex with metal frame reproduced in Richard Armstrong, *Richard Artschwager* (Whitney Museum of American Art and W.W. Norton: New York, 1988), 40. There are also many instances of Artschwager's use of domestic-type furniture; for example, tables and chairs, dressers, mirrors, as the subjects of his transformations of furniture into art.



first house purchases, the first rung on the socioeconomic ladder of success.”<sup>293</sup> In a similar de-mythologizing of the suburban home, Joe Goode’s *House Paintings*, a series of 1961 -1963, depict small drawings of real-estate listed homes set within large color fields (fig. 4.3). Goode, who studied with Robert Irwin and Ed Ruscha at the Chouinard Art Institute,<sup>294</sup> typically produced these paintings by laying down a monochromatic field. He then set his drawing in the center. As with Artschwager’s image of a tract home, Goode’s representation of the American home is neither celebratory nor a representation of an actual house. Both artists took their images from the real-estate markets and the representations of homes that appeared in the media and focused their critique on the home as a commodity to be bought and sold, not as a space of family intimacy or private life. Their emphasis on an artificial, mediated representation of the home points to their disillusionment with the American dream of a single-family house in the suburbs and all that the image implied. Their ironic take on the image speaks not to the American home as a lived reality but as a deflation of the symbol of the home as the coveted object of ownership. Rather than the mythic view of the suburban neighborhood as a place where families would thrive, where children would play under the watchful and loving eyes of their mothers, and where the commuting husbands and fathers would return to recharge themselves in the loving embrace of family life, both artists suggest the isolation of the suburban home and the deadening of spirit that conformity yields. Indeed, an ominous quality of closure is implied by these

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<sup>293</sup> Stich, 61.

<sup>294</sup> Ruscha’s photographic book, *Some Los Angeles Apartments*, of 1965, was another deadpan representation of the ubiquity of the mass-produced American home.

homes—that the world within these homes is one of quiet desperation. Abusive family relations, frustration, and stress lurk in the shadowy representations of these isolated and seemingly secret spaces. Whereas Friedan’s analysis of family life in suburban homes that brought “the problem that has no name” to light focused on the plight of educated and unhappy white middle-class housewives, other social critics criticized the suburbs for social conformity, superficiality, consumer life-style, and a lack of meaningful community.<sup>295</sup>

Both Artschwager and Goode present an elegiac sense of loss in their representations of the suburban single-family home. A recurring dilemma found in the popular literature of the time is the loss of family and community that a young family had to endure in their move from the city to the suburbs and the isolation that resulted from such a move.<sup>296</sup> The artists’ focus on the exterior and the lack of any human dimension in the representation of the images stands in marked contrast to the views of the home as an open dwelling that featured so prominently in advertising, in descriptions of model homes, and in Wesselmann’s early views of the home. The ranch style was one of the most popular types of suburban dwelling in the postwar building boom. It was a new type of domestic architecture combining modernist features like

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<sup>295</sup> For example, William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man* (Garden City: NY.: Doubleday, 1956); John Keats, *The Crack in the Picture Window* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957); Richard E. Gordon, et al, *The Split Level Trap* (New York: Dell, 1960); Robert C. Wood, *Suburbia: Its People and Their Politics*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958). Dolores Hayden has investigated suburbia’s history from its origins in the nineteenth century. See Hayden, *Building Suburbia*. A more positive view of suburbia was recently presented at the Walker Art Museum. See Andrew Blauvelt, *Worlds Away: New Suburban Landscapes* (Walker Art Museum: Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2008).

<sup>296</sup> See Lynn Spigel, "The Suburban Home Companion: Television and the Neighborhood Ideal in Postwar American," in Colomina, *Sexuality and Space*, 185-217, for an engaging and insightful discussion of how television brought the outside world of experience and friendships into suburban living.

the horizontal emphasis of Frank Lloyd Wright's prairie houses and integration of interior space with traditional clapboard, shutters, and wide porches. The picture window was an important design feature in 1960s domestic architecture, and it mimicked the television's window on the world.<sup>297</sup> Prized for its ability to integrate interior and exterior space, it provided a view from inside the home to the outside; in many suburb developments, however, these windows looked directly out onto a neighbor's window, lessening the sense of privacy for both homeowners. This is emphatically not true in the representations of the single-family home by both Artschwager and Goode, who isolate the image of the house in an indeterminate space. Their closed representations of the home decisively separate interior from exterior space and neighbor from neighbor.

James Rosenquist produced an image of the American home as a typical floor plan with light bulbs attached, titled *Floor Plan* (fig. 4.4). Rosenquist also created a multiple of this work called *Small Doorstop*, 1963-67.<sup>298</sup> The artist recalled the genesis of this work in an interview with Jeanne Siegel in 1972.

*Floor Plan* came from knowing an ex-convict who, when I visited him in his home, used to wander around the house looking out the curtains and knocking over furniture and going from room to room turning on and off the lights – he was very nervous and watching out for people. So I tried to invent a randomness machine like a tilting pinball table that would light up in sequence and then go off again, but I always came up with a sequence that would return very quickly, so it ended up as a painted floor plan with light bulbs hanging from it like a chandelier.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Spigel, "The Suburban Home Companion," 187.

<sup>298</sup> For an image see Constance Glenn, *The Great American Pop Art Store*, 29.

<sup>299</sup> Rosenquist, "Interview with Jeanne Siegel," *Artforum* (June 1972), reprinted in *James Rosenquist*,

Rosenquist's association of this image with that of an ex-convict is ironic, and telling in its suggestion of how fear of surveillance played a role in the representation of *Floor Plan*. His model was a new home with modernist integrated space moving from room to room and from upstairs to downstairs. In his recollection, the artist juxtaposed the lack of privacy in these open interior spaces with the idea of surveillance and the fears of a suspicious home owner. Vance Packard's warnings about the increasingly prevalent surveillance of American citizens at home, at work, and at school provides a counterpoint for Rosenquist's ironic view of the privacy and safety of home. His narrative also confounds the typical stereotype of an ideal family within an idealized suburban home.

One example of how the generation of artists who came to age in the late 1960s began to see the suburban home and all it implied is aptly presented in John Baldassari's painting, *Wrong*, 1967 (fig. 4.5). Baldassari had himself photographed by his wife, artist Carol Wixom, in front of their suburban home. He transferred the photographic image to a canvas and paid a sign painter to block in the letters "wrong" below. The self-portrait showing him posed in front of his house with the word "wrong" directly below him, at the least signifies his unhappiness in suburban America.<sup>300</sup> In the context of the anti-war movement, student demonstrations, race riots, and the newly militant civil rights movement, it is easy to see the image of the home as more than an autobiographical statement of personal preference. By 1967 there seemed to be a lot

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(Valencia: IVAM, Centre Julio Gonzalez, 1991), 207.

<sup>300</sup> See Ann M. Wolfe, *Suburban Escape : The Art of California Sprawl*, (Santa Fe, New Mexico and San Jose, California: Center for American Places and San Jose Museum of Art, 2006), 21.

wrong with American society, a society that had, since the end of World War II, seen itself as a traditional family centered in a single-family home.

While the mythic image of the suburban house was under attack from artists like Artschwager, Goode, Rosenquist, and Baldassari, there were also artists who used images of the home in an urban setting. Large-scale housing complexes, not individual homes, were the subject of Dan Graham's *Homes for America* (fig. 4.6), published in *Arts Magazine* in December 1966 – January 1967.<sup>301</sup> First presented as a slide show of approximately 20 slides set in a single carousel at Finch College Museum of Art in 1966, in an exhibition titled "Projection Art," the nondescript, lower middle-class homes were photographed in New Jersey, New York, and Staten Island. The projection piece and the published article combined minimalist systemic inquiry, architectural critique, and playful logic. Graham's original layout merged the visual experience of place that photography could capture within several networks of textual information. The text that the artist supplied criticized these large-scale housing complexes which he described as "the new city." He located a disruption between the mass-produced housing built by developers and the idea of the home as a space specific to an individual's needs. Pointing to the lack of connection between these homes and nature, he described them as "rootless."

They are not built to satisfy individual needs or tastes. The owner is completely tangential to the products completion. His home isn't really possessable in the

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<sup>301</sup> The original article that appeared in *Arts* magazine removed all of Graham's photographs except for an image taken from a brochure for a Florida project and instead reproduced a Walker Evans photograph, *Wooden Houses*, Boston, 1930. See *Dan Graham Work: 1965-2000*, Museu de Arte Contemporanea de Serralves: Porto, 2001), 102.

old sense; it wasn't designed to "last for generations," and outside of its immediate "here-and-now" context it is useless, designed to be throw away. Both architecture and craftsmanship as values are subverted by the dependence on simplified and easily duplicated techniques of fabrication and standardized modular plans. Contingencies such as mass-production technology and land-use economics make the final decisions, denying the architect his former "unique" role. Developments stand in an altered relationship to their environment. Designed to fill in "dead" land areas, the houses needn't adapt to or attempt to withstand nature. There is no organic unity connecting the land site and the home. Both are without root—separate parts in a larger, predetermined, synthetic order.<sup>302</sup>

The distinctions that he emphasized to separate these homes from architecture (not built to last beyond today, no root in nature, no individuality) identify them as found objects in the landscape of popular culture. Graham's isolation of these homes outside of their developments brought focus to their individual character (or lack of character).<sup>303</sup> As such the piece is a critique of mass American popular culture through the image of the home; however, the attack is not on the people who live in these houses, the attack is aimed at the capitalist system that strips away the humanity of the home and makes it just another mass-produced item to be bought and sold on the market.

Artschwager noted the emergence of large housing complexes in two works of the early 1960s: *Lefrak City* of 1962 (fig. 4.7) and *High Rise Apartment* of 1964. Both representations depend on newspaper advertisements for the source images of the buildings. Like the *Tract Home* of 1964, both are on celotex and in black and white. The

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<sup>302</sup> Dan Graham, *Rock My Religion: Writings and Art Projects, 1965-1990*, edited by Brian Wallis, (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1993), 21.

<sup>303</sup> Brian Hatton, "Dan Graham in Relation to Architecture," in Marianne Brouwer, ed. *Dan Graham: Works 1965-2000* (Dusseldorf: Richter-Verlag, 2004), 317-328, 317. Hatton describes Graham's use of architecture in this piece as a cliché, suggesting that "an identical hyper-formalism was seen to structure both minimalist art and the housing industry," 318.

choice of LeFrak City as the named subject of one painting may have to do with the publicity that surrounded the enormous project. Described as a city within a city, LeFrak City in Queens, New York, is a forty-acre complex of five sections, each with four eighteen-story apartment towers. Originally built for the middle-class, the complex had such on-site amenities as shopping and recreation facilities. Samuel LeFrak, the real-estate mogul who built it and also owned over one hundred buildings in New York City, headquartered his empire there. LeFrak City was first occupied by renters in 1962. By 1962, Samuel LeFrak had been accused of discriminatory housing. LeFrak and his housing practices had been in the media in 1961 and 1962 when suspicions about discrimination led the Brooklyn chapter of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) to stage a sit-in, in 1961, at one of his offices. Although the developer admitted that discrimination had been practiced in the six counts charged, the corporation denied it was practiced as a policy and blamed individual employees.<sup>304</sup> Artschwager's selection of LeFrak City for his subject in 1962 would have had resonance for New Yorkers and others with regard to civil rights and housing issues in the city at large.

Urban riots exploded again in 1967 and included five days of rioting in Detroit.<sup>305</sup>

The violence brought national attention back to the problems of the inner cities. Claes

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<sup>304</sup> See Roger Sanjek, *The Future of Us All: Race and Neighborhood Politics in New York City*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2000), 53- 55 for a discussion of LeFrak City from its origins to its current form.

<sup>305</sup> At the conclusion, 1189 people were injured, 43 were dead, and over 7000 under arrest. [http://www.67riots.rutgers.edu/d\\_index.htm](http://www.67riots.rutgers.edu/d_index.htm) for an analysis of the Detroit Riot in 1967. When polled shortly after the riot, black Detroiters listed police brutality and poor housing as the causes of the riot. (Detroit Free Press. 1968. "Return to 12th Street: A Follow-Up Survey of Attitudes of Detroit Negroes". Detroit Free Press October 7). Part of the lack of housing was a result of the city's urban renewal programs which pulled down housing to built freeways through the city. Ironically, urban renewal which was meant to solve the housing crisis of the cities contributed substantially to the lack of housing for the

Oldenburg's representations of New York City in his two installations of *The Street* and some of the props that he created for performances, for example, *Upside-down City* (fig. 4.8),<sup>306</sup> were among the earliest works by artists of the 1960s to expose the gritty realities of poverty in the city. His *Proposed Colossal Monument for Central Park North, New York City, Teddy Bear*, 1965 (fig. 3.6), similarly aimed a socially conscious eye directly at civil rights activists' complaints. He described this proposed monument as "an incarnation of white conscience; as such it fixes white New York with an accusing glance from Harlem....I chose a toy with the 'amputated' effect of teddy paws—handlessness signifies society's frustrating lack of tools."<sup>307</sup> Significantly, Oldenburg's monument came soon after the Harlem riot of 1964.

There are also examples of work by African-American artists like John Biggers whose *Shotgun Third Ward #1*, 1966 (fig. 4.9) focused on specifically black neighborhoods and housing, bringing visibility to a housing type outside the norm of the white, suburban or middle-class city. Biggers's painting depicts a shotgun house from Houston's Third Ward, an historic black neighborhood and the home of the artist at the time. The shotgun house is an early adaptation of African architecture to American life. This particular painting is an important work for Biggers in that it is the first of many to include three symbols that were of long-term significance to him: the wheel, a

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poor. For a discussion of urban renewal of the 1960s in the context of the century's attempts to create housing, see Gwendolyn Wright. There were riots in 125 cities during the summer of 1967. The riots in Newark, New Jersey (which lasted for four days), and Detroit, Michigan were the most destructive.

<sup>306</sup> It is tempting to read *Upside Down City* as a reference to the "Up-side-down welfare state" described by Michael Harrington as "helping those who need aid least." See Harrington, *The Other America*, 155-156.

<sup>307</sup> Oldenburg, quoted in Rosenthal, "Unbridled Monument," in Celant, *Claes Oldenburg*, 258.



neighborhood of shotgun houses, and a candle.<sup>308</sup> In 1966, shotgun houses were understood by the white middle class as substandard urban housing and associated with ghetto life; although they were not originally built as housing for African-Americans, they became centers of African American urban life in the southern states in the wake of the shift of white communities to the new car-oriented suburbs. Biggers's contribution to the view of the American home in the 1960s is a specifically ethnic view that was invisible in the popular white media. If the shotgun neighborhoods of Houston had been visible, they would have been included in journalistic and photographic studies of mid-twentieth century America that documented pockets of poverty and deprivation. In contrast to photojournalism's leveling of such neighborhoods within a larger theme of poverty and deprivation, paintings like this stand as a counterpoint by emphasizing the culture of community that knits communities together. Biggers's image complicates the symbol of America that the white, middle-class suburban home represented. Ominously, this painting shows us a burned church and the reaction of the neighborhood inhabitants who have gathered in the street as witnesses to the event. An older man protectively holds a candle within a lantern, women watch over children who are dancing and playing in the street, and the houses in the background embrace both the burned church and the individuals in their midst. The burned church and the crowd that gathers around it suggest connections to recent events; most

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<sup>308</sup> See Regina Perry, *Free within Ourselves: African-American Artists in the Collection of the National Museum of American Art* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution in association with Pomegranate Art Books, 1993), 36-39.

obvious of these is the firebombing of the Sixteenth Street Church in Birmingham, Alabama, on September 15, 1963, that killed four young African-American girls.

The images of the American home by artist Romare Bearden in the 1960s were also focused on contemporary African-American urban life. An abstract painter in the 1940s and 50s, Bearden shifted to representation in 1963-64; his decision, like Tom Wesselmann's turn from abstraction to representation, was facilitated by the technique of collage.<sup>309</sup> Unlike Wesselmann, however, Bearden's work of the 1960s was directly driven by social and political events. These collage works of the mid-1960s were significant not only for Bearden's work but for other black artists who worked to create a black vision of modern art in the late twentieth century. Thelma Golden describes Bearden's photomontages and projections of 1964 as "the beginning of the sophisticated approach to the project of black representation which would take hold and envelop black visual culture for the next three decades – and continue to do so."<sup>310</sup> They were begun at a critical moment in American history, "a time of revolution, the season when nineteen million U.S. Negroes demanded payment for the century-old promissory note called the Emancipation Proclamation,"<sup>311</sup> and the series is tied to his participation in the *Spiral* group. *Spiral* was a group of African-American artists that originated in 1963, in response to A. Philip Randolph's call for artist participation in the

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<sup>309</sup> The significance of collage as a method for the return of images of everyday life for Bearden, Wesselmann, and as a way of deconstructing ideology by Martha Rosler, is an interesting digression in a discussion of the use of images of the home that I will return to in a later study. I am particularly interested in how early Pop, often called Neo-Dada, recalled dada's deconstruction of social myths propagated by photographic images. On early Pop as Neo-Dada, see Susan Hapgood, *Neo-Dada*.

<sup>310</sup> Golden, Thelma, "Projecting Blackness," in Gail Gelburd and Thelma Golden, *Romare Bearden in Black and White: Photomontage Projections, 1964*, (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1997), 40.

<sup>311</sup> Gelburd, 17, quote taken from "The Negro in America," *Newsweek*, July 29, 1963.

civil rights struggles.<sup>312</sup> The first group exhibition of *Spiral's* members in 1965<sup>313</sup> announced their desire to be politically relevant by limiting the work in the exhibition to black and white; the foreword to the accompanying catalogue clearly stated their support of the civil rights marchers:

During the summer of 1963, at a time of crucial metamorphosis just before the now historic march on Washington D.C., a group of Negro artists met to discuss their position in American society and to explore other common problems. One of those present, the distinguished painter Hale Woodruff, asked the question 'Why are we here?' He suggested, in answering his own question, that we, as Negroes, could not fail to be touched by the outrage of segregation, or fail to relate to the self-reliance, hope, and courage of those persons who were marching in the interest of man's dignity...If possible, in these times, we hoped with our art to justify life."<sup>314</sup>

At the first meeting, Bearden hoped to convince the others to participate in a group effort. According to Emma Amos, he brought a bag full of cut photographs "an enormous picture file, all cut out in shapes."<sup>315</sup> Unable to sustain interest among the group for this effort, Bearden created a series of photomontages on his own, using magazine, newspaper photographs and reproductions from the history of art as his source material. Between mid-1963 through 1965, Bearden made twenty-four collages in small scale<sup>316</sup> which were later enlarged through a process of mechanical reproduction and titled as "Projections." The collages are notable for doing several things: they established a ritual context for black American life; they destabilized

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<sup>312</sup> See Gelburd, 18-20. On *Spiral* see Jeanne Siegel, "Why *Spiral*?" *ArtNews*, 65 (September 1966): 48-51.

<sup>313</sup> Based in New York, other members included Norman Lewis, Hale Woodruff, Charles Alston, James Yeagans, Emma Amos, Calvin Douglass, Perry Ferguson, Reginald Gammon, Alvin Hollingsworth, Felrath Hines, William Majors, Richard Mayhew, Earl Miller, and Merton Simpson.

<sup>314</sup> Foreword to *Spiral's* 1965 exhibition quoted in Myron Schwartzman, *Romare Bearden: His Life and Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1990).

<sup>315</sup> Schwartzman, 210.

<sup>316</sup> The original collages ranged in size from 5 x 10 to 13 x 19 inches.

photojournalistic stereotypes of black America (for many non-black Americans in the 1960s, the only experience they had of black life was what they saw on television or in popular journals, and these images were inevitably inflected with biased thinking about the black/white social divide) and they reinterpreted the history of art in black images.<sup>317</sup>

The interest of his dealer, Arne Ekstrom, encouraged Bearden to enlarge more of the collages and led to an exhibition in October, 1964, at Cordier and Ekstrom Gallery in New York and at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C. in October 1965. Using a Photostat process he enlarged the images to 3 x 4 feet or 6 x 8 feet, giving the small intimate collages a public presence.<sup>318</sup> "With their strong journalistic overtones the *Projections* are more radical than the collages and are prescient of large-scale photographic works undertaken by growing numbers of artists in recent years."<sup>319</sup> In fact, I would argue that the *Projections* were more radical than the collages on two counts: The *Projections* were radical as public political statements in the context of the civil rights marches of 1963-64; they were also subversive statements on an aesthetic

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<sup>317</sup> Lee Stephens Glazer, "Signifying Identity: Art and Race in Romare Bearden's *Projections*," *Art Bulletin*, (September 1994): 411-422, provides an excellent reading of Bearden's intention to disrupt the stereotypical view of African-American life. One of the many interesting points that Glazer raises is the notion of "temporal distancing," a technique used to deny the subject's ability to exist in the current time; this is one of the disruptions that Bearden uses in his images of African-American rural life. Glazer uses the collage *Mysteries*, as his example. Kimberly Lamm, "Visuality and Black Masculinity in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Romare Bearden's Photomontages," *Callaloo* 26, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 813-831, also makes the point that Bearden's layering of photographic images "destabilize the supposed truth of the documentary photograph," 822.

<sup>318</sup> Ruth Fine emphasized the collages as works of fine art in the tradition of Picasso and Bracque and speaks about ritual, woman in nature, personal memories. My intention is to focus on the Photostats, not the collages, as a response to Warhol, Rosenquist, Lichtenstein who were producing large and public work -- not small and intimate work. Ruth Fine, *The Art of Romare Bearden*, (Washington D.C. and New York: National Gallery of Art and Harry N. Abrams, 2003), 27-43.

<sup>319</sup> Fine, 30.

level. Bearden used popular culture and photo-journalism (*Life* and *Ebony* were two sources) as the building blocks for his visual re-creation of African-American life in collage. The *Projections*, however, were large, black-and-white reproductions of the original works and, on an aesthetic level, several steps beyond the mechanical processes that Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, and James Rosenquist had introduced into world of fine arts.

The photo static enlargements combined the formal languages of cubism and abstraction and the cinematic techniques of montage and jump cuts with the material traces of mass culture to create trenchant, enchanting visual narratives. Recognized as a special achievement by its first viewers, the Projection series has remained an anchor in art historical accounts of Bearden's artistic development—the turning point, as it were, between Bearden the painter and Bearden the collagist, or between Bearden the artist primarily devoted to the exploration of “universal” themes through painting and Bearden the artist acutely aware of the issues of race, identity, and their representation through a self-consciously modern art practice.<sup>320</sup>

In addition, the large scale of the *Projections* connected them with mural work and made it clear that Bearden and his awakened political self (Thelma Golden describes the *Projections* as “the articulation of his attitudes as an artist toward political and social upheaval”<sup>321</sup>) was going public with his support of the Civil Rights movement. The reproduction of the works into large scale and in black-and-white reads as the artist's equivalent of marching in the streets. They demanded attention, and the artist's refusal to remain within the realm of intimate scale suggested that he was willing to take his vision public just as the marchers had taken their local issues onto the national stage. They were also radical statements in their public portrayal of the often invisible

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<sup>320</sup> Sarah Kennel, “Bearden's Musée Imaginaire,” in Fine, *The Art of Romare Bearden*, 144.

<sup>321</sup> Golden, 41, 3n.

populations of segregated America.<sup>322</sup> Finally, the act of creating them in black-and-white was political (as Golden points out black and white was the “social obsession of the day”).<sup>323</sup> She aptly characterizes the decision “to approach the documentary within a ‘high art’ practice.”<sup>324</sup> While personal history and African-American experience served as the subject matter for the series, Bearden integrated black experience into the history of art by his study of and reference to the old masters of European art. In this way he situated his own practice as an African-American artist within the history of high art. Also keenly aware of the need to engage his audience, he stated, “I have incorporated techniques of the camera eye and the documentary film to, in some measure, personally involve the onlooker.”<sup>325</sup> Glazer describes the confronting gaze of the African Americans represented in the *Projections* as “a device to assert visibility” akin to James Baldwin’s use of direct address.<sup>326</sup> They were understood as a vision of black vernacular culture<sup>327</sup> and acknowledged at the time as political, even as Bearden himself tried to assert that they were not.

I create social images within the work so far as the human condition is social, I create racial identities so far as the subjects are Negro, but I have not created

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<sup>322</sup> In 1965 Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* was described as one of the most important books of the past twenty years. Gail Gelburd makes a connection between the novel and Bearden’s project to represent the African-American experience in United States. So does Kimberly Lamm who perceptively notes that Bearden’s figures are “never completely revealed, never completely visible or invisible, but suggest instead the inter-subjective, inter-collective and continual process of identity construction,” 822.

<sup>323</sup> Golden, 44.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> Bearden, “Rectangular Structure in the Montage Paintings,” quoted by Golden, 49, 10n.

<sup>326</sup> Glazer, 422. For example, as Glazer notes, a photo essay in *Life*, May 24, 1963, on Baldwin shows him actively engaging whites and the camera at various social events. He is also quoted as saying, “I’ve been here 350 years but you’ve never seen me.”

<sup>327</sup> Described as such by Golden. She refers to Bearden’s *Projections* as some of the first to engage black popular culture and makes it clear that she also reads his ambition as one of opening up formal possibilities of form and language, to move beyond simply documenting Negro life.

protest images because the world within the collage, if it is authentic, retains the right to speak for itself.<sup>328</sup>

Ekstrom wrote, "In these days of civil rights strife they are, on the sociological side, a unique statement of pride in tradition, dramatic in many instances but never a form of protest or agitation."<sup>329</sup> Washington critic Frank Getlein connected Bearden to the Mexican Muralists,<sup>330</sup> and Dore Ashton described his work as "a piercing, activist bill of particulars of intolerable facts;" *The New York Times* called it "propagandistic in the best sense."<sup>331</sup>

As Kennel perceptively noted, Bearden's *Projections* should be seen in the context of the media culture of the 1960s

engaged with the rhetorical and representational techniques of advertising, marketing, television, and cinema. Born of the pictorial detritus of mass culture and placed in the service of countering stereotyped images of African-American life, Bearden's photo static enlargements were regarded as topical, socially engaged, and aesthetically avant-garde.<sup>332</sup>

It is in the context of 1960s media culture that I will discuss the images of the home that are part of the *Projections* series.

Taking the city as his theme, Bearden provides a story of migration using his own family's experience in moving from North Carolina to Pittsburgh to Harlem. *Uptown looking Downtown; Evening, 9:10, 461 Lenox Avenue* (fig. 4.10); *Spring Way; The Dove; The Street* (fig. 4.11); and *Women in a Harlem Courtyard* all present a view of African-

<sup>328</sup> Bearden, quoted in Charles Childs, "Bearden: Identification and Identity," *ArtNews*, 25 (October 1964): 54.

<sup>329</sup> Letter from Arne Ekstrom to Darthea Speyer, September 25, 1964, files of Cordier and Ekstrom quoted by Ruth Fine, 41, 124n.

<sup>330</sup> Frank Getlein, *Washington Star*, October 4, 1965 F6. Quoted by Fine, 41.

<sup>331</sup> Both quoted in Schwartzman, 212

<sup>332</sup> Kennel, in Fine, 145.

American neighborhood life outside the ken of most white Americans. While most of the street scenes reference Harlem, there are others, for example, *Spring Way*, that are memories of his boyhood in Pittsburgh. Works like *The Street*, *Two Women in a Harlem Courtyard*, and *Dove* are views of the streets and doorsteps of Harlem as a community's home. The architecture of the city and the people who live within and socialize on the street are knit together to define a teeming, active, and vital center. Bearden's technique in creating these collages creates a sense of multi-layered, fully three-dimensional presence that viewers of the time remarked upon as more real than photographs. In some cases he reconstructed figures and faces by incorporating bits and pieces of reproductions of African masks or by cutting apart faces and reconstructing them with different features. By incorporating African masks into the present life of African-American people, he created links of culture, of time, of geography, and reasserted his personal and his community's claim to African art history. The collages speak to a sophisticated sense of society as a fractured vision of space and individual identities; they also argue for an understanding of social identity as a constructed identity. In Bearden's hands, collage is a means of subverting the media image, of taking it apart and reconstructing a new narrative from a personal and historically aware perspective. Thus, the scenes encompass personal memory, the traditions that are community held and passed from generation to generation, and documentary evidence of time and place, emphasized by titles like *Evening: 9:10, 461 Lenox Avenue*.



At the center of *The Street* (fig 4.11) is a young man wielding a guitar, to his left is a woman carrying a book or a Bible, to his right is another young bearded man. Around this trio of characters is a multitude of African-American people—young and old, male and female, active and passive--a variety of character types that document the life of urban communities; as Kimberly Lamm has noted, the image of Malcolm X appears in *The Street* appears.<sup>333</sup> Malcolm X, the charismatic leader of the separatist Black Muslim Movement, locates the image within a context of community activism. Beyond are the multistoried apartment buildings. People sit and congregate on the steps of these brownstones, and from out of upper windows children and older people participate in the life on the street. Many of the faces engage directly with the viewer. The American home in this image comprises the urban apartment blocks of a segregated community, a community that was invisible to outsiders. *The Dove* is another view of home as an urban community that spills out of overcrowded tenements and onto the streets where the jangling, jostling interlocking forms of the people and space communicate the positive energy and spirit of Harlem's streets as seen by one of its own.<sup>334</sup> *The Dove* was inspired by Pieter Bruegel the Elder's work, an artist that Bearden explicitly named as inspiration when he spoke of his aims "to paint the life of my people as I know it—as dispassionately as Brueghel (sic) painted the life of the Flemish people of his day."<sup>335</sup> In, for example, his *Two Women in the Harlem Courtyard*, based on

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<sup>333</sup> Lamm, 822.

<sup>334</sup> Bearden moved to Harlem with his family in 1915.

<sup>335</sup> Bearden quoted in Glazer, 419.

Pieter de Hooch, *A Courtyard in Delft at Evening: A Woman Spinning*, ca. 1658,<sup>336</sup>

Bearden is also punning between the Haarlem of the old world and the Harlem of the new.<sup>337</sup> Bearden's views of Harlem gave an image to the African-American home that was not tainted by the negativity of the Moynihan report,<sup>338</sup> but was instead a place of vitality, activity, and humanity; Ralph Ellison described Bearden's intention "to reveal a world long hidden by the clichés of sociology and rendered cloudy by the distortions of newsprint and the false continuity imposed upon our conception of Negro life by television and much documentary photography."<sup>339</sup> Golden finds a "metaphoric solution to the turmoil in the streets of Harlem and other inner-city communities besieged with riots during 1964."<sup>340</sup>

Bearden also provided views of home as a contemporary domestic interior.

*Evening 9:10, 461 Lenox Avenue* (fig. 4.10) is a scene of life at home centered around a game of cards. Understanding the context of black home life as represented by Bearden requires a reorientation of perspective from that of a dominant white society looking at images of itself to that of a minority looking outward at an often threatening majority culture. The conflicts between African Americans and white Americans in the mid-1960s had been brought to the surface, and both communities were aware of the

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<sup>336</sup> Glazer, 419.

<sup>337</sup> See Kennel, for Bearden's copies and references to past masters of European art.

<sup>338</sup> Patrick Moynihan's notorious report on the breakdown of the Negro family titled, *The Negro Family: The Case For National Action*, was published in 1965. The report post-dates these works by Bearden, but the publication of the report is the end date for Moynihan's research (and the government's concern for the problem). There were several years of discussion and research on the subject that predate the publication of the report.

<sup>339</sup> Ralph Ellison, *Paintings and Projection* (Art Gallery, State University of New York: Albany, New York, 1968), quoted in Fine 201. Reprinted in *Crisis*. Bearden Papers, Magazine clippings 1933 -1980 , Box 5, folder 7. Collections on line at AAA.

<sup>340</sup> Golden, 41.

often violent struggles that took place in the public sphere, on the streets of Birmingham and Newark, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Harlem, New York. Kellie Jones has described black home space as a space of private safety in a threatening public space:

Personal domestic space is a place where African Americans have traditionally been able to dream and thus create. In a world where labor and the public environment often meant inequities of talks, advancement and services or flat-out violence, the home and spiritual side of life was the place you could, to paraphrase bell hooks, come back to yourself, make yourself whole.<sup>341</sup>

Glazer has identified the art historical precedents for the composition of this collage in Velazquez's , *The Luncheon* (Hermitage, 1617-18) and Cezanne's *Card Players* (collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art)<sup>342</sup> Bearden's interior is cozy and familial, very different in tone from the images of the domestic interior by Wesselmann as seen in a comparison between the Bearden interior and Wesselmann's *Still life #28* (fig 4.12). Bearden's view is a private world of a family while Wesselmann's view is notable in the absence of any figures, or even suggestion of domestic life. While both artists look to art history to augment their view of contemporary interior space, there is an important distinction in the handling of tradition. Wesselmann most frequently uses images from art's past to signify his own allegiances to modernist masters and uses them to push against such elements of the present as the television and the details of the domestic furnishings. His interest is not in creating a narrative of domestic activity and space. Both artists use the past to situate a contextual understanding of the subject; Bearden's purpose is to universalize African-American experience, to bring the world of Harlem,

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<sup>341</sup> Kellie Jones, "To/From Los Angeles with Betye Saar." in James Christian Steward ed., *Betye Saar: Extending the Frozen Moment* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2006), 32.

<sup>342</sup> Glazer, 417-419.

out into the larger cultural sphere, and to that end Bearden's figures engage the viewer. The three figures who are centered around the card table in *Evening 9:10* lean back and turn their heads to make eye contact in an invitation to join in the intimate gathering. Out the window to the left is a view of the apartment blocks of Harlem. Because of the context of 1964, the civil rights marches, and the divisions between white and black that were played out in the media for all to see, the gesture of open civility is important.

Bearden created a multi-dimensional view of black life in America, and both the range of space in the sense of geography and time, in the shifts from agricultural to urban life, are found in the series of 1964 and in later works by the artist. The *Projections*, like Jacob Lawrence's *Migration Series*, utilized personal history as a means of representing a mythic journey toward freedom and opportunity. *Mysteries* (fig. 4.13), one of the most emotionally compelling of the *Projections*, is a view of an African-American family at home. In this image, home is a dilapidated, rural shack where several generations live together and eke out a living on the land. The women and children of the family are front and center, the father sits in the background, and outside the window, to the left, is a passing train. The reference in this image to the migration of Bearden's family and many other African-American families out of the rural south and into the concrete cities of the north in search of opportunity creates an historic past for the present. The rural shack is outside of time and while it may be drawn from a contemporary photograph of rural life, it reads as life untouched by change, progress, or history's march. For many, that was the state of African-American life in mid-twentieth century America. That very lack of progress was the Civil Rights

Activists' best argument for the call for the United States to make good on the promise of the 1865 Emancipation Proclamation.

On the West Coast, Edward Kienholz also turned his critique of American society to the subject of the contemporary American home. Born in Fairfield, a small town outside Spokane, Washington, Kienholz cultivated a view of himself as an outsider in the city and in rarified field of fine art.<sup>343</sup> In 1962, Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles showed *Roxy's*, a scathingly brutal vision of a small town brothel, and the first of Kienholz's large-scale installations, which he called tableaux. These tableaux were typically composed of a variety of found materials that Kienholz would find, barter for, or purchase in the streets and junk shops of Los Angeles. Described as an artist in search of a "poetic response to non-esthetic ideas using materials generally considered outside of the fine arts context,"<sup>344</sup> Kienholz spoke of his production as anything but art. As critics of the time noted he was "particularly interested in objects that were once used in the home, discarded and finally, as part of his work, reinstated and raised to a more honored position in the household."<sup>345</sup> The evocation of the past lives of domestic materials and objects was a crucial aspect of Kienholz's domestic scenes. The tableau became his favorite mode and he utilized its inherent theatricality to provoke a

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<sup>343</sup> He arrived in Los Angeles in 1953 as a young artist who had already made his way around much of the West working odd jobs. In Los Angeles he teamed up with Walter Hopps to open the Ferus Gallery; after a year and a half Hopps bought out Kienholz's share. The tableaux of the 1960s that established Kienholz's reputation as a powerful American artist who took on patriotism, religion, hypocrisy, domestic and racial violence, gender inequalities, and the war in Vietnam were: *Illegal Operation* (1962); *Back Seat Dodge '38* (1964); *The Birthday* (1964); *The State Hospital* (1966); *Portable War Memorial*, *The Eleventh Hour Final*, and *Five Car Stud* (1969-72), a grisly portrayal of white violence on black bodies.

<sup>344</sup> Donald Factor, "Edward Kienholz," *Artforum*, August 1963, 24, Box 1/file 41 Dwan Gallery Papers. AAA.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

“revolution of the everyday.”<sup>346</sup> The home and the American family, was a frequent subject. Believing in the didactic role of art and the social responsibility of the artist, he used two methods to engage his audience: he built an absurd but deeply felt reality and he created a three-dimensional space where the viewer was forced to participate in the work of art. Kienholz described his intention in an article in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1965:

The reason for a tableau is exactly that—to take the viewer in, where he has to step, touch, participate. It becomes a trail that commits a direction of thought. I try to disappear. The viewer may flee, but at some point he’ll have to reckon with what he fled from. Or he stays and thinks it through.<sup>347</sup>

Two tableaux from 1963-65 focus on the American home to explicitly detail the difference between the rosy view of American domestic life as presented by American boosterism and the sad reality of some lives. *While Visions of Sugarplums Danced in their Heads* is a psychological assault on the institution of marriage and its celebration of sexual exclusivity (fig. 4.14). It was first exhibited at the Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles (fig. 4.15) with *The Birthday* and *Back Seat Dodge ’38* in September and October of 1964 in an exhibition titled “Three Tableaux.”<sup>348</sup> The exhibition included two other pieces, however, the three tableaux, *Visions*, *Birthday*, and *Back-Seat Dodge* were clearly a three-part meditation on love and life with scenes set in the home, the hospital, and the automobile. Nostalgia plays a powerful role in Kienholz’s work. He often sets his

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<sup>346</sup> See Damon Willick, “Still Live: The Theatrics of the Kienholz Tableaux,” *Art Lies: A Contemporary Art Quarterly*, 63/Fall 2009, p 4, 4-8 [www.artlies.org](http://www.artlies.org). accessed 8/9/09 for a discussion of Kienholz’s use of theatricality in his tableaux.

<sup>347</sup> Kienholz, quoted in *Los Angeles Times*, “Family Entertainment Part IV,” October 22, 1965 np. Dwan Gallery papers, Los Angeles files, box 2/ file 5.

<sup>348</sup> The catalogue for the exhibition lists five works for sale: *Back Seat Dodge*, *Birthday*, *While Visions of Sugarplums Danced in their Heads*, *Bucket of Tar with Speakers*, and *Army and Soul*. All dated 1964. Dwan Gallery Papers, Los Angeles files, box 2, file 3.

scenes in the near past, as if to engage his audience's childhood memories. As he had done in *Roxy's*, the setting is not in 1964 but at a point closer to the end of World War II. The specificity of the time and place are directly related to the found objects that create the settings for the figures and to Kienholz's penchant for inscribing narrative details on surfaces within the tableaux. The birth of our John or Jane Doe (the everyman or woman that Kienholz uses as his protagonist) leads to adolescent and teenage lust that in postwar America found release in the privacy of parked automobiles (in this case a 1938 Dodge), leading in turn to an unkempt and unhappy marriage that confuses lust for love, and leads back to the birth of children into families fractured by selfishness and alienation. Tellingly, these dark visions of contemporary American life are set within the domestic frame of the home.

*While Visions of Sugarplums Danced In Their Heads* is a devastatingly bleak reinterpretation of the nineteenth-century Christmas poem, "The Night Before Christmas." The poem, first published in 1823, has been a favorite text of the holiday season ever since its initial appearance. In twentieth-century America the poem has been reprinted in a variety of children's books and family collections, and been adapted for radio plays and television productions. It is safe to say that Kienholz's ironic reference to the poem would have been widely understood and that many viewers would have had a memory from childhood experience of the poem; one ubiquitous image is from the series of *Golden Books for Children* (fig. 4.16). The particular verse that he quotes reads: "The children were nestled all snug in their beds while visions of sugarplums danced in their heads." In the poem, soon after, Saint Nicholas appears to

provide Christmas gifts and wish a “Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night.” In Kienholz’s *tableau*, the children are off stage and it is the adults who dream. Their desires are made visible to the viewer through the peepholes built into their enormous heads. Inside are miniature tableaux that are fitted with lights timed to go on and off, first one then the other, enabling the viewer of the tableau to peer inside the heads of the pair in bed. Coupled together but disengaged from each other, the two figures are lost in their own respective sexual dreams. Written across her head is the phrase, “Tell me you love me” and within her dream bubble are placed “six tiny naked male dolls, one black, and a male/female couple on the floor in coitus.”<sup>349</sup> The male figure, whose arms are tattooed with “USA” and “Mother45,” dreams of “a jumble of six, tiny naked female dolls engaged and straddling one another and a male doll.”<sup>350</sup> The unmistakable message is that the “sugarplums” that these two dream of are sexual encounters outside of their marriage bed. The dreary pallor of the installation, a selection of dark bedroom furniture and linens and other fabrics and bric-a-brac that the artist found in and around the junk shops and streets of Los Angeles, and the grotesque enlargements of the couple’s heads give physicality to a psychological disconnection between actual sexual experience and masturbatory sexual pleasure.

While the figural distortions are disturbing, the artist’s creation of the couple’s bedroom is even more distressing. The tableau includes a double bed, with night tables to either side, a woman’s vanity and bench, an armchair, mirror and two framed floral

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<sup>349</sup> This description comes from Jo Baer, “Edward Kienholz: A Sentimental Journeyman,” *Art International*, (April 1968): 45-49, 47.

<sup>350</sup> Baer, 47.



prints. A few pieces of fabric and clothing lie on the floor, the night tables are cluttered with cans of Coors beer, a radio (which is turned on and stays on during the exhibition of the piece), and a clock. Kienholz looked for furniture that had been used, marked by time and impressed with daily experience. These traces of human life were incorporated into his new *tableau* to provide the element of nostalgia and sense of history that he treasured as an important part of the theatrical event.<sup>351</sup> This sense of the accumulation of a life lived within interior space is tinged with the aura of female experience. The clutter of everyday objects was banished from the new modern interior of the twentieth century; its presence here is a sign of Kienholz's sympathies for interior domestic space as a space filled by accumulation.<sup>352</sup> The disarray of the used and tawdry in this bedroom adds a suggestion of dirt and a lack of domestic enterprise on the part of the couple who inhabit this room.<sup>353</sup>

The couple are represented twice in the scene; coupled together as three-dimensional forms in the bed and as ghostly separate images in the ersatz mirror/photograph above the vanity (fig. 4.17). In the mirror/photograph, the man is

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<sup>351</sup> "the fragile aura that exists on the surface of a piece and that was what they were after." Walter Hopps, *Kienholz: A Retrospective: Edward and Nancy Kienholz*. (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1996), 279.

<sup>352</sup> In Chapter 5, I also note the significance of accumulation and clutter to the content of constructed interiors at *Womanhouse*. A significant difference between accumulation as seen in this piece by Kienholz and the Beth Bachenheimer's *Shoe Closet*, for example, in *Womanhouse*, is that Kienholz's clutter presents a view of an economic class and a distinctly male and female accumulation of household stuff. In *Womanhouse*, the accumulations were female-centric, like lipstick, shoes, tampons and sanitary napkins. One other significant difference between Kienholz's clutter and that found in Pop and *Womanhouse* lies in Kienholz's presentation of home as outside the middle-class norm.

<sup>353</sup> Dirt and domesticity are not mutually compatible especially in the 1960s. Years of producing new domestic appliances for women that cleaned better, vacuums that reached farther, and soap and disinfectants that protected the family from germs had raised the standards of the housewife's labor. While these new products made domestic chores less onerous, the new standards made women, as the gender associated with the maintenance of the home, work harder with more tools to achieve that standard.

seen from the back sitting on the bed drinking; he is nude while the woman sits robed before the mirror brushing her hair. In both representations the husband and wife are isolated from each other, preoccupied with their own thoughts. Drips of paint and varnish form a patina of time and use over the photograph of the false mirror and the surfaces of the vanity table. A crucifix and a bust of the Virgin Mary are mixed with personal grooming items, helping to tease out a specific identity for the woman of the house. Frederick S. Wight, quoting Kienholz, described both actors of the tableau in these terms:

The man, back from World War II, has never had better than a warehouse job...Ran out of love for his wife years ago...She is sex starved...can't have lovers...wasn't brought up that way. Submits, but still doesn't love. In their heads are the phantasies (sic) that help masturbation along.<sup>354</sup>

Beyond the split between physical reality, as represented by the space of the room and the objects within, and the psychological reality represented by the miniature tableaux that provide us with a clue as to the preoccupations of the couple in the bedroom, the room itself breaks along fault lines of male/ female and dark/ light. This makes the lack of connection between the couple even more vivid. Time plays an important role as well. As Baer points out, *Visions* includes the "flow and conjunction of past, present, and future. There is the participial overlay of a sametime (sic) in a different place. And finally there is the conjunction of alternating sequences."<sup>355</sup> The circle of time that is created in the piece speaks to the boredom of being trapped in an unhappy home. There is another sense of time that is embedded in this work; the

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<sup>354</sup> Frederick S. Wight, unidentified text. Dwan Art Gallery papers, Los Angeles, Box 2, file 3.

<sup>355</sup> Baer, 47.

tableau looks back in time to the generation before Kienholz's own. The male character in this play is a returning GI for whom the promise of home and family as a reward for service and sacrifice has soured. In opposition to the representation of American sexuality and domesticity as found in Wesselmann's configurations of the American Dream, Kienholz's vision of the inner life hidden behind the closed doors of intimacy is a nightmare of repetition. In marked contrast to the representations of home as a social space of human connection and dynamic community life as seen in Bearden's views, Kienholz presents the American home as one of disconnection and disarray; deeply personal, this view of the inner sanctum literally holds up a mirror to expose a different truth. Domesticity and the home in this nightmarish scenario is also diametrically opposed to the vision of spooky glamour and ersatz newness that Oldenburg exploits so effectively in his own *Bedroom* of 1964.

Another work by Kienholz from this period centers on the experience of old age at home in America. Significantly, this image of an elderly American alone at home coincides with one of the most significant achievements of Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society, Medicare, which provided health care to all Americans over the age of 65.<sup>356</sup> *The Wait*, 1965, (fig. 4.18) is centered on a domestic drama enacted by an elderly female figure who is both menacing and pathetic. Described variously as "a lonely old woman...waiting for her death,"<sup>357</sup> "a poignant image of living death,"<sup>358</sup> or a spider in a

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<sup>356</sup> Medicare was signed into law as part of the Social Security Act of 1965. My thanks to Dr. Joan Marter of Rutgers University who pointed this out to me in conversation. Dr. Marter's long term investigations of the art of the 1960s as political art has been an important precedent for my own readings of Pop art.

<sup>357</sup> Robert Pincus, Edward and Nancy Reddin Kienholz, *Art on a Human Scale* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 7.

web, “the figure is paradoxically powerless, entrapped within a spider’s web of domesticity.”<sup>359</sup> The emaciated and fragile construction of cow bones, cast-off domestic objects, and taxidermied cat, waits either for death or a victim.<sup>360</sup> Kienholz described the tableau in these words:

I consider this particular lady as someone living today, very old and close to death. Modern times have passed her by and she lives only in the memory of her past life. The jars around her neck begin with her childhood on a farm and move on to girlhood, waiting for her man, marriage, bearing children, being loved, wars, family deaths, and then senility, where everything becomes a hodgepodge.<sup>361</sup>

*The Wait* also incorporated actual domestic furniture, including a wall that incorporates actual wainscoting and an electric socket, the artist’s own handmade wallpaper, wooden chair, braided rug, standing lamp, side table, bird-cage (with a living bird to be placed inside when the work is on exhibition), and a series of family photographs collected by Kienholz.<sup>362</sup> These framed photographs are arranged on the table beside her in a way that evokes both the past fullness and the current emptiness of the woman’s life; there are baby pictures, a picture of a middle-aged couple, and a

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<sup>358</sup> Pincus, *On a Scale That Competes*, 44.

<sup>359</sup> Hopps, *Kienholz*, 122. The spider analogy is a useful one. In any case it is interesting to see a female protagonist as the center of the work. While masculine elements surround her in the form of male portraits, the space clearly belongs to her. The spider’s web as a domestic space is a trope found throughout female representations. The spider is a sign for the female in many cultures including certain cultures of Native American peoples, like the Navajo who trace their introduction to the work of weaving to the Spider Woman who first showed Navajo women how to weave.

<sup>360</sup> The isolation of the figure suggests the archetypal figure of death who presides over decay; in literature, Charles Dickens, in *Great Expectations*, captured the archetype as a woman, Miss Havesham, whose wait was a sort of death in life predicated on her status as jilted bride. Her bitter renunciation of life, symbolized by her refusal to acknowledge the passing of time and her continuous presentation of herself as a bride, was also fueled by the desire for revenge and, in fact, she turns out to be the spider who waits patiently for her web to ensnare the hero of the story, Pip. The moment of her being rejected by her suitor metaphorically stopped time in her personal sphere defined by Dickens as her household.

<sup>361</sup> Kienholz quoted in an unidentified document written by Henry T. Hopkins, Head of Education, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Dwan Gallery Papers, Los Angeles files, Box 2, file 3, AAA.

<sup>362</sup> Pincus, *On a Scale That Competes*, 1990, 44.

formal portrait of a soldier in uniform. Beside her chair on the floor is a round sewing basket, described by the artist as “a souvenir from Atlantic City...a beautiful sort of basket like the one we had on the farm.”<sup>363</sup> On the footstool sits a sewing project given to the artist “by a woman who laid it down thirty-four years ago and never picked it up again,”<sup>364</sup> and immediately above her head, which is represented by a photograph of herself as a young woman in a oval frame within a glass jar that also includes a deer’s skull, is a portrait photograph that has been interpreted as a portrait of her husband.<sup>365</sup> Around her neck are trinkets and toys representing memories preserved like jellies and jams in the jars that hang like crystal jewels or charms (fig. 4.19). On her lap is a stuffed cat. The deathly stillness of the figure and her cat is vividly contrasted with the presence of the living, breathing viewer and the live bird in the cage. Unlike the tableaux of Oldenburg or Wesselmann’s constructions, whose emphasis is in the transformation of new objects from mass culture into high art forms, Kienholz draws directly from the detritus of the recent past to create spaces drenched in nostalgia and memory. *The Wait* recreates an interior of dark woodwork and muted fabrics redolent of the late Victorian age. Kienholz ignores references to popular domestic furnishings, to the new products available to middle-class Americans. Instead he invokes the traditions of an older time when home furnishings were the collected products of a family’s wealth. The idea of planned obsolescence or the shifts in fashion that would dictate a season’s color schemes have no part in this view of the domestic. Muted golds

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<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> Hopps, *Kienholz*, 122.

and browns suggest a heavily draped interior space, akin to an animal's lair deep within a cave. Whereas the furniture and fabrics clearly point to the past, the evident old age of the figure suggests that this is the present, albeit a present drenched in the past. This sense of human time as a continuum allows Kienholz to remark on old age as an embalming of the mind and body.

The formal hierarchical quality of *The Wait* is created through the emphasis on stillness, frontality, symmetry, and stable geometric interlocking of compositional lines and rhyming circles that enclose the central figure. The arrangement of the tableau suggests that visitors are few and far between; she sits alone with her jumbled memories. In effect, Kienholz is able to produce a moment of terrifying stillness within the confines of the domestic interior; "*The Wait* is an extraordinarily beautiful image of death and dying which slowly merges with the dusty world of domesticity."<sup>366</sup> Not until *Womanhouse* in 1971-72 (which included Faith Wilding's performance of *Waiting* as the sum total of a woman's life from birth to death) would the sense of domestic entrapment be as effectively portrayed.<sup>367</sup>

*The Wait* and *While Visions of Sugarplums Danced In Their Heads* introduce class identity into the representation of the American home. The worn and distressed furniture, the crocheted doilies and rag rug, the crucifix and saint, and the cans of beer

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<sup>366</sup> Hopps, *Kienholz*, 122.

<sup>367</sup> Ironically, the connections between domesticity as portrayed by Kienholz, who was a single parent bringing up two small children, and the feminist program that resulted in *Womanhouse* seem to align along similar paths. See Damon Willick, "Good Morning, my name is Ed Kienholz," *X-tra: Contemporary Art Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (Spring 2006) for a discussion of Kienholz's creation in the 1960s of a masculine artistic persona based on his emphasis of his outsider status as a farm boy, blue collar worker, and hunter/car. dealer/collector of guns. Later Kienholz would insist that all his work was a collaboration between himself and his third wife, Nancy Reddin Kienholz.

are clues to the economic status of the Americans at home in these tableaux. The American home in Kienholz's work is not the middle-class suburban home represented in advertisements, in television scenes of domesticity and in Pop Art or even of *Womanhouse*. Traditions and social conventions like patriotism, religion, and social conformity weigh heavily in Kienholz's view of this world. The emphasis lies not in the purchase and display of new consumer goods, but in the display of personal histories and the kind of narratives that accumulate day by day. Class and social status in these works are signifiers of importance for Kienholz; and they are used to effectively dismiss the assertions of cold war politicians that America was a classless society.<sup>368</sup> While Kienholz's exploration of the working class experience of home can be seen as a continuation of modernism's ongoing search for authentic expression outside of middle-class conventions, Kienholz's presentation as an extraordinarily masculine outsider in the city who reveled in his farm/blue collar identity would suggest that his interest in class distinction was one of sympathetic engagement. Kienholz, like Bearden, used the image of the home to make an invisible section of the American society visible.

Kienholz was patriotic, nationalistic; he collected guns and cars—attributes in the 1960s as they are today of a type of American masculinity associated with the frontier (fig.4.20). He was the mirror opposite of Andy Warhol who also exploited his blue collar origins as one element of his artistic persona; but where Kienholz fiercely exaggerated his masculine attributes, Warhol set himself apart through an exaggeration of his

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<sup>368</sup> This was one of themes of Richard Nixon's speech in the Kitchen Debate; it was also widely seen as a characteristic of the new postwar suburbs.

“swish” personality.<sup>369</sup> One of the ironies of Kienholz’s work from the 1960s is that they focus very often on the experience of women as victims of the gendered inequities in American life; *The Illegal Operation*, *Jane Doe*, and *The Wait* are examples of this. His tableaux of the 1960s also share in the more general disillusionments that he uncovered in postwar America. Kienholz (fig.4.21) was a single parent in the 1960s.<sup>370</sup> Typically, he spoke of his experience as making him “more of a man because he had to be both mother and father.” Not surprisingly, domesticity was a subject of great importance. The British artist David Hockney was responsible for bringing another revision of the American home to the surface. Hockney, who first visited New York in 1961, lived in Los Angeles from 1963 to 1968. Hockney’s choice of Los Angeles as his primary residence in the 1960s has been attributed to his understanding of Los Angeles as a center of gay activity.<sup>371</sup> He was also interested in the sun and in the open space of the city:

And as I flew over San Bernadino and looked down—and saw the swimming pools and the houses and everything and the sun, I was more thrilled than I’ve ever been arriving at any other city, including New York, and when I was there those first six months I thought it was really terrific, I really enjoyed it, and physically the place did have an effect on me. For the first time I began to paint the physical look of the place.”<sup>372</sup>

In 1998 in an interview with Lawrence Wechsler he also emphasized the physical space of Los Angeles as one of its prime attractions: “I often think, you know, why did I go to California all that time ago in the first place? At the time, I always said I’d gone

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<sup>369</sup> On Warhol, see Warhol, Andy and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol Sixties*. (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980). For a reading of Warhol’s homosexuality and his creation of an artistic persona see Gavin Butt and Richard Meyer.

<sup>370</sup> Jennet Eaton born 1960 and Noah Lawrence bon 1961. Kienholz was awarded legal custody of both children in 1963.

<sup>371</sup>“ His choice of Los Angeles over London seems to have had everything to do with his sexual orientation.” Whiting, *Pop L.A.*, 109.

<sup>372</sup> David Hockney, quoted by Whiting, *Pop L.A.*, 114.



because it was sexy, it was sunny. But Los Angeles is also the most spacey city in the world. You feel the most space. I was always attracted to its space as well. Always.”<sup>373</sup>

Hockney began painting images of American domesticity before he even arrived in Los Angeles; *Domestic Scene, Los Angeles*, 1963 (fig. 4.22) was completed in England and anticipated the actual images of Los Angeles that he would paint while in southern California. The scene is a composite:

the slip-covered chair and telephone were modeled after objects in London, the gargantuan vase of flowers was taken from an illustration in a women’s magazine, and the protagonists were “poached” from the photograph of a man, with an apron tied around his waist, scrubbing the back of another man, in the American, homoerotic magazine, *Physique Pictorial*.<sup>374</sup>

The California suburban pictures constitute a coherent series. The subjects of the Californian paintings are friends and acquaintances, private pools and private houses. Hockney focused on the characteristic aspects of the southern Californian home: the patio and pool as an extension of the American dream. He worked from photographs he took of homes and friends in the region, and also used real estate brochures, swimming pool sales materials, and mail-order catalogues<sup>375</sup> The California period marked significant shifts in the artist's work. Hockney switched from oil to acrylic paint and began to frame his paintings with white borders that emphasized their flat artificial space and provoked an association with snapshots. Three qualities are of interest within our context. One is his clear extension of the domestic interior into gay

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<sup>373</sup> David Hockney, in Lawrence Weschler, *True to Life: Twenty-five Years of Conversations with David Hockney* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2008), 101.

<sup>374</sup> Silver, "Master Bedrooms," 218.

<sup>375</sup> Andrew Causey, "Mapping and Representing," in Melia, Paul, ed. *David Hockney* (New York and Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 100.

representation; the second is, as Andrew Causey has suggested, his paradoxical representation of private homes as devoid of signs of ownership or domesticity;<sup>376</sup> and the third is the significant lack of space in Hockney's representation of domestic life in this most "spacey" of cities.

Hockney's representation of gay domesticity began in London when he was a student and reached a large fine art audience with his images of Los Angeles friends and their everyday lives. Art historians have connected Hockney's portraits and paintings with a personal album,<sup>377</sup> and many of the Los Angeles pictures fit into that autobiographical construction. While in Los Angeles, Hockney associated with "a subculture of gay aesthetes that included an array of artists, writers and expatriates living in Los Angeles."<sup>378</sup> His friends included Christopher Isherwood and Don Bachardy, Peter Schlesinger, and art dealer Nick Wilder, and their pools and patios served as models for his painted reconstructions of everyday life. Hockney's insistent flatness in many of these Los Angeles pictures seems to be a result of his compositional process, which was to insert figures or objects from one photographic source into another. This sometimes resulted in spatially strained juxtapositions. As Whiting points out in her study of Pop in Los Angeles, early critics of Hockney's work avoided direct criticism or even acknowledgement of the young, nude men populating the homes represented in

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<sup>376</sup> "A paradox emerges in these Californian paintings. Identifiable people, friends and art collectors who generally own the places where they are painted, are shown in situations that seem strangely impersonal, objectified as if belonging to no-one. The patios and pools are private spaces, but are unmarked by the signs of casual possession one might expect with private ownership." Andrew Causey, "Mapping and Representing," 102.

<sup>377</sup> See for example, Nanette Aldred, "Figure Paintings and Double Portraits," in Melia, ed. *David Hockney*, 69-88.

<sup>378</sup> Whiting, *Pop L.A.*, 121.

Hockney's Los Angeles works. "When the figures within these domestic settings were discussed, it was common for critics to dismiss them as superficial, even vapid seeing them more often than not as symbolic of the artificial lifestyle associated with Hollywood culture."<sup>379</sup> The young men in the pools were often naked, but the studied casualness of their activities contradicted an overtly sexual reading of the scene. The discomfort that viewers might feel at Hockney's representations of the poolside activities of non-traditional families was sublimated into symbolic rather than literal readings.<sup>380</sup>

*Peter Getting Out of Nick's Pool* (fig. 4.23) and *Portrait of Nick Wilder* (fig. 4.24), both of 1966, are two examples. In each painting the domestic setting is the patio and pool with the house as a screen that separates and isolates the activities in the backyard, thus providing privacy from street traffic or any neighbors. As Whiting has discussed, the pool and the backyard were areas of relative private space:

Interaction at the domestic pool was more private than at the beach and more intimate than in public areas of the house such as the living room and the dining room. Even so, gatherings around the pool of friends and family clad in their bathing suits maintained conventions of middle-class respectability, at least in the pages of mass-circulation magazines.<sup>381</sup>

Hockney's images of homes in Southern California are atypical in this survey. As seen in these examples, the homes are in the style of California modern utilizing industrial materials, curtain walls, flat roof lines, picture windows, and minimal

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<sup>379</sup> Whiting, *Pop L.A.*, 110-114.

<sup>380</sup> Reading life in southern California as artifice and ersatz was also a feature of Claes Oldenburg's *Bedroom Ensemble*. The difference, however, was that in Oldenburg's case, he initiated the critique of Los Angeles as artifice whereas for Hockney's work, it was the art critics who saw his representation as vapid.

<sup>381</sup> Whiting, *Pop L.A.*, 124.

architectural decoration. They are closely related to the Case Study Houses of the late 1940s that announced modern architecture's solutions to the postwar housing crisis.<sup>382</sup> In 1966 these houses seem to represent a rarified world where appreciation for the traditions of modernist architecture was a sign of an aesthetic sensibility that was directly opposed to the mass-produced housing stock as represented, for example, in Dan Graham's *Homes for America*. Choosing to site the *Portrait of Nick Wilder* in his backyard pool is a way of drawing attention to Wilder's personal and professional success in southern California's terms. Hockney painted this portrait of Wilder from photographs that Mark Lancaster took of Wilder in the pool up to his neck in water. The pose was Hockney's idea and he sent Lancaster into the pool to capture the right shot.<sup>383</sup> Choosing to represent Peter Schlesinger in Wilder's pool, in a way that emphasizes the privacy that the pool presented to his gatherings of friends, provided a new reading of domesticity that differed from the stereotypical view. The domestic space in both of these images is outside the confines of the home; the homes are merely flat architectural screens that augment the pools, the patios, and the lawns. Domesticity lies in the public areas of entertainment which, in southern California, are the exterior extensions of the house itself. These are the areas of domestic space that interested Hockney. *The Splash* (1966), *A Bigger Splash* (fig. 4.25), and *A Lawn Being*

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<sup>382</sup> On Case Study Houses, see Esther McCoy, *Case Study Houses, 1945-1962*. 2nd Edition. (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1977) and Elizabeth A. T. Smith, *Blueprints for Living: History and Legacy of the Case Study Houses* (Los Angeles, Cambridge and London: Museum of Contemporary Art, MIT Press, 1989).

<sup>383</sup> This portrait of Nick Wilder was significant for Hockney because it was, he remembered in 1976, the "first absolutely specific portrait I'd painted for many years." Nikos Stangos, ed. *David Hockney by David Hockney*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1976), 104.

*Sprinkled* (fig. 4.26) are also images of American homes, but they are bereft of any human presence. In each of these paintings, a series of horizontal bands form the compositional structure; in each case, the lowest horizontal band contains moving water, the middle range is defined by the parallel wall of a house, and the uppermost band is blue sky. The domesticity is hard to define in these works, but details like the small garden between the pool and the house in *The Splash*, or the chair that is precisely placed between house and pool in *A Bigger Splash*, or the careful placement of watering spigots in *A Lawn Being Sprinkled*, suggest the care and presence of a homeowner. The lack of what might be described as anti-modernist details—what might have been called "a feminine touch" in the 1960s — in these severe, almost minimalist renditions of home separates these images of the American home from representations current in the mass media and in many of the Pop images of the home from a few years earlier. In Lichtenstein's *Curtains* of 1962, for example, the artist stressed the feminine decorative touch in the excessively layered and frilled curtains that fall in swags over the structure of the window. Hockney's image of home in Los Angeles show window treatments in, for example, *Portrait of Nick Wilder*, that are as severe and modern in their clean geometry as the architecture itself.

Hockney's success in these works is two-fold; in the words of Kenneth Silver "the domestic, the gay, and the modernist are joined in a manner that is neither evasive nor anguished."<sup>384</sup> But Hockney was also able to move the domestic out of the frame of mass culture and feminine identity by focusing exclusively on the architect-designed,

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<sup>384</sup> Silver, "Master Bedrooms," 217.

Case Study Houses of the southern California landscape. Home in these views is purely exterior structure. The intimacy of the home is replaced by the exterior walls of the container, and the shift in point of view creates a formal vision of the house as part of the public environment. Interestingly, male domesticity takes place outside of the interior domestic spaces; the male purview of the exterior and perimeter, the public space of the home, has been maintained in this new view of masculine domesticity.<sup>385</sup>

Using the modernist home as a flat screen for the setting of activities within the domestic realm, but not associated with any domestic appliances, products, or activities relating to the maintenance of the home or the family within, gave Hockney the opportunity to present a new formal and iconographical view of the American home in the 1960s.

One image from Hockney's California period, that of the *Beverly Hills Housewife*, 1966, partially opens the home up for scrutiny (fig. 4.27). Once again, the home is in the modern style; the house and the woman are specific individuals.<sup>386</sup> The structure of the architecture and the painting is strictly horizontal; with large areas of glass creating an integration of interior and exterior space, elements that again push this view of the domestic into the realm of architecture, not domesticity. The woman, clad in pink and stiffly posed near the center of the work, stands between the house and the yard. She leans slightly back towards the orange carpet that covers the interior space as if she is being pulled back into the house. In contrast to the images of Nick Wilder and Peter, as

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<sup>385</sup> I'm thinking again of Wigley's analysis of gender and space.

<sup>386</sup> "In *Beverly Hills Housewife* I did a specific portrait and a specific house, a real place that looks like that. I worked from drawings and photographs." Stangos, 104.

well as unnamed young men in pools in Hockney's other works, she is associated with the interior of the home, defined by her identity as the housewife.

Hockney's California work of the 1960s also included portraits within domestic settings. *Christopher Isherwood and Don Bacardy* (fig. 4.28) and *American Collectors (Fred and Marcia Weisman)* (fig. 4.29) are both from 1968. Both paintings share important formal devices; for example, one of the couple looks directly at the viewer of the paintings, while the other looks directly at his partner. This creates a sense of isolation and connection between the two figures, but also forms a triangle of relationships between the painter (and the viewer) and his two models who relate to us and the painter who is implied within this triad on different levels. In both, the figures are also placed in the middle ground before an architectural wall that sets up a stage-like space. The domestic setting provides information specific to the characters of the couples. In the portrait of the Weismans, their art collection provides the primary attribute of their domestic space; for Isherwood and Bachardy, who sit side by side in identical chairs, with a bowl of fruit and stacks of books on the table before them, it is their shared interior, domestic space that resonates. While "domesticity, in Hockney's art, triumphs over sex,"<sup>387</sup> I would also suggest that the modernist, masculine narrative of architecture as flat surface, ideal form, and abstract, geometric clarity triumphs over the domestic and feminine attributes of the home.

The home and the consumer products that filled the home could also be utilized in a critique of the United States' increasing military involvement in Vietnam during the

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<sup>387</sup> Silver, "Master Bedrooms," 220.

decade.<sup>388</sup> Oldenburg continued to transform the familiarity of household form, like ironing boards, teddy bears, and in 1967, scissors. His *Proposed Colossal Monument to Replace the Washington Obelisk, Washington D.C., Scissors in Motion*, of 1967, took note of the aggressive policies of the government and the divisions in the social fabric.<sup>389</sup> Then in 1969, Oldenburg installed his *Lipstick (Ascending) on Caterpillar Tracks* in Beinecke Plaza at Yale University. While this has been interpreted as a transformation of an instrument of war (tank) into an instrument for love (lipstick), it might be more accurate to also see it in terms of the link between the domestic economy and war production—a theme that had been part of Oldenburg's presentation of the *Store*.<sup>390</sup> The *Lipstick*, which was commissioned by students and alumnae at Yale in celebration of the Second American Revolution (the student revolution) was widely interpreted as an anti-war monument.<sup>391</sup> Oldenburg's choice of lipstick and tank set the division between the domestic and the international theaters in stark, gender-defined terms. In this dichotomous view of American society, the lipstick stood as the symbol of Americans at home while the tank stood for Americans fighting in Vietnam.

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<sup>388</sup> For artists against the war see Lucy R. Lippard, *A Different War: Vietnam in Art* (Seattle: Whatcom Museum of History and Art and the Real Comet Press, 1990); Catherine de Zeghers, *Persistent Vestiges: Drawing from the American-Vietnam War* (New York: The Drawing Center, 2005); and Francis Frascina, *Art, Politics, and Dissent* for political activism in general. One of the most significant anti-war events in the decade was the Peace Tower that was organized by the Artists Protest Committee in downtown Los Angeles in 1966. The sixty-foot tower was designed by Mark di Suvero and covered with 400 panels sent in by an international roster of artists. For a discussion of the Peace Tower, see Frascina, *Art, Politics, and Dissent*. Artists in New York also came out against the war. January 29 to February 5, 1967 marked "Angry Arts Week," a multi-media series of events in dance, visual arts, and the spoken word protesting the war. See Lippard, *A Different War*, 12-18, and Frascina, *Art, Politics, and Dissent* for detailed discussions.

<sup>389</sup> See Rosenthal, "Unbridled Monuments," 254-263.

<sup>390</sup> Rosenthal, "Unbridled Monuments," 260. *The Store* was incorporated as the RayGun Manufacturing Company. See Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, 63, for her comments on Oldenburg's analysis of the link between guns and butter.

<sup>391</sup> See Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, 110-114.



James Rosenquist, who ranged widely in his choice of images, was an early critic of the war, and like Oldenburg, cognizant of the connections in contemporary American society between the military-industrial complex<sup>392</sup> and everyday consumer life. In 1963 he produced *Toaster*, a work that appeared on the cover of *Artforum* in April of 1964 (fig.4.30). *Toaster* was a transformation of a kitchen appliance into a box topped with artificial turf and wrapped with barbed wire; instead of the two slots into which one would place bread to be toasted, circular saw blades protruded. It was clear that this toaster was a lethal device, more like a weapon of war than a household appliance; he produced a similar object in 1967 which he titled *In Homage to Martin Luther King, Jr.* It is tempting to see both of these objects as ruminations on a siege mentality brought on by urban riots, the discussions about bomb shelters and winnable wars, and the vigilantism that produced violent clashes in neighborhoods where integration was pushed.

Rosenquist's major work of 1965 was the monumental *F-111* (fig. 4.31, 4.32). The 86-foot mural combined domestic consumer imagery that would be found in the typical American home (for example, packaged bread, canned spaghetti, a hair dryer) with the image of the "newest, latest fighter-bomber at this time" clearly marked by the phrase "U.S. Air Force."<sup>393</sup> As Mamiya has argued, Rosenquist's linkage between the military and American domestic life would not have been missed by a reasonably well-

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<sup>392</sup> President Dwight D. Eisenhower famously warned of the growing power of the military-industrial complex as he left office in 1960.

<sup>393</sup> Gene R. Swenson, "F-111: An Interview with James Rosenquist," *Partisan Review* 32, no.4 (Fall 1965): 589-601, 589.

informed public.<sup>394</sup> In the context of President Johnson's decision to order large-scale bombing of North Vietnam in 1965, Rosenquist's *F-111* might be interpreted as more than a generalized critique of the military/domestic symbiosis of American society and be discussed as an antiwar statement.<sup>395</sup> Rosenquist seemed to connect the production of the jet with the military's use of the F-111 in Vietnam.<sup>396</sup> Although Rosenquist's painting does not include the image of a home, it is relevant to our discussion because of his fragmentary or synecdoctal representation of the home as place of family (the well-groomed blonde child who sits under a hair dryer), the home as a place of food preparation and consumption (the angel food cake, canned spaghetti, and packaged bread), and the home as a place of warmth, security, and shelter (the light bulbs, wall paper, and umbrella).<sup>397</sup> The *F-111*'s subject is the totality of the military's intrusion into

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<sup>394</sup> Mamiya, *Pop Art and Consumer Culture*, 129. Mamiya states: "As Nixon had done verbally in the 'Kitchen Debate,' Rosenquist utilizes visual rhetoric to convey the symbiotic relationship between national defense aims and consumption in the home. Consumption was necessary to promote a healthy economy and therefore a strong nation, and conversely, a military commitment would ensure the free enterprise system." For a detailed discussion of James Rosenquist's *F-111*, see Mamiya, 125-129; see also Swenson, "F-111: An Interview with James Rosenquist," and for a recent perspective that discounts the connection of Rosenquist's painting with the Vietnam War; see Michael Lobel, *James Rosenquist: Pop Art, Politics, and History in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

<sup>395</sup> The *F-111* was controversial from the start. Secretary of State McNamara had overruled the joint military chiefs by ordering it to be built as a multitask plane. It was to serve the purposes of the air force and the navy. The plane was part of the Vietnam War's weapon development but was delayed by design issues and ran over budget. On its first mission to Vietnam, it was lost. Michael Lobel, *James Rosenquist, Art, Politics, and History in the 1960s*, discusses the *F-111* in detail.

<sup>396</sup> Swenson, "F-111: Interview with James Rosenquist," 599. Lippard discusses the painting as an antiwar painting: "Anticipating most artists' antiwar involvement, the 10' x 86' painting (later reproduced in a 3' x 25' print) was not originally viewed in that context. Rosenquist said that *F-111*'s huge size was "a visual antidote to the power and pressure of the other side of our society" and the artist's subjugation to materialism and militarism." See Lippard, *A Different War*, 35.

<sup>397</sup> Rosenquist spoke of his intent in combining images as a way of creating content that went beyond the images used: "If I use a lamp or a chair, that isn't the subject, it isn't the subject matter. The relationships may be the subject matter, the relationships of the fragments I do. The content will be something more, gained from the relationships. If I have three things, their relationships will be the subject matter; but the content will, hopefully, be fatter, balloon to more than the subject matter. One thing, though, the subject matter isn't popular images, it isn't that at all." G.R. Swenson, "What is Pop Art: Interview with James Rosenquist," reprinted in Madoff, *Pop Art: A Critical History*, 117.

private, domestic life. The *F-111* brings the war home, as Kienholz would also do in his *Eleventh Hour Final* of 1968 and Martha Rosler in her series of photomontages of 1967-1972.

Both Martha Rosler and Edward Kienholz produced work in the 1960s that combined imagery of the contemporary American home with specific references to the war in Vietnam. In Rosler's case, the artist clearly linked the materialistic, consumer-oriented American suburban lifestyle to the death and destruction overseas. Trying to be complex, rather than simplistic, Rosler took aim at the larger issue of American consumerism; she was not simply opposed to the Vietnam War, a war fought for what many considered an irrational logic having to do with Cold War theories of communist containment. This larger philosophical reading of the purposes of the war differentiated her work from artists such as Nancy Spero, who focused on the human tragedy and the weapons of war.<sup>398</sup>

Rosler's series, *Bringing the War Home*, was comprised of fifteen photomontages called *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful* and five photomontages called *Bringing the War Home: Vietnam*. She started to produce the photomontages in New York and continued after she moved to southern California in 1968. Her original intention was that the photomontages function as agitprop pieces, and she published them in counterculture newspapers and magazines and as photocopied flyers. *Tron (Amputee)* and *Vacation Getaway* (fig. 4.34) from *Bringing*

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<sup>398</sup> See de Zeghers, *Persistent Vestiges*, for a discussion of Spero's images that protested the American prosecution of the Vietnam War.

*the War Home: House Beautiful* appeared in the October 13, 1970 issue of *Goodbye to All That: A Newspaper for San Diego Women*. She described her process:

Then I began making agitational works “about” the Vietnam War, collaging magazine images of the casualties and combatants of the war—usually by noted war photographers in mass market magazines—with magazine images that defined an idealized middle-class life at home. I was trying to show that the “here” and the “there” of our world picture, defined by our naturalized accounts as separate or even opposite, were one. Although some of these works contrasted women’s domestic labor with the “work” of soldiers, others simply dealt with women’s reality and their representation: women with household appliances, or *Playboy* nudes in lush interiors. In all these works, it was important that the space itself appear rational and possible; this was my version of this world picture as a coherent space – “a place.”<sup>399</sup>

The first montage she produced was titled *Beauty Rest* (fig. 4.34). In that image a family of three reclines on a mattress that floats on a sea of water in a dilapidated room. The family and their “Beauty rest” mattress are in color while the rest of the image is in black-and-white. The family is adrift on one of their prized possessions while the world around them has collapsed into ruins. Reading a magazine or book, the woman remains passive while the father demonstrates to his son how an airplane dips and dives toward the ground; this difference of male and female realms, which in this image seems to suggest a connection between war games played by boys at home and their later activities as grown men, would become more pronounced in later images. Usual for the series is the ambiguous space of the interior. Later images in the series, for example, *Cleaning the Drapes* (fig.4.35), would also create a more convincing sense of rational space by creating a continuous flow from that of the viewer into the space of the collage. *Cleaning the Drapes* juxtaposes two incongruous realities. In 1960s

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<sup>399</sup> Rosler, *Decoys and Disruptions*, 353-355.

America, a young, slim, and well-dressed housewife removes dust and dirt from her window drapes with a new portable vacuum cleaner slung over her shoulder. This vacuum was advertised as a helpful tool for the housewife who had too much to do (fig. 4.36). Her weapon against dirt is mirrored in the rifles on the shoulders of the American soldiers situated just outside her window. The two soldiers stand in a fortified foxhole with sandbags forming one wall of their protective enclosure. As one perceptive critic noted,

The obvious question posed visually here is, How long will the woman's energetic cleaning of the drapes protect her from the "dirty" war outside? A less overt question is asked as well: How much longer will the soldiers remain alive after what looks like merely a lull in the battle?<sup>400</sup>

The drapes have been pulled back to show us what lies behind the economic power of the American middle-class; the war that fuels the economy and middle-class consumption.

Each one of Rosler's twenty images of the original series revealed the intimate connection between American domestic economic growth and foreign policy. By juxtaposing the high-end market of consumer goods that created a constant stream of liquidity to the economy with America's war in Vietnam, Rosler argued that support for the consumer society at home was directly related to the prosecution of the war abroad. The impetus for these images came out of the artist's own antiwar activism and is directly linked to her frustrations with the media's representation of the war.

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<sup>400</sup> De Zegher, *Persistent Vestiges*, 38.

"The images we saw were always very far away, in a place we couldn't imagine."<sup>401</sup> In the artist's simple but effective critique, she implicated fine art, modern architecture (fig. 4.37), domesticity, colonialist thinking, and most devastatingly, the status quo, visualized for many as the pursuit of the American dream. Rosler, who is known as an activist feminist and political artist, linked the patriarchal social policies of America with the international policies of the United States' government, in an interview with Francis Frascina in 1991:

the contrast between the conservative assumptions and patriarchal relations of United States domestic life, symbolized by the "living room," and the colonial carnage inflicted in the name of the United States became inescapable, both in political action and in visual representation.<sup>402</sup>

The clash of realities reverberated with heartbreakingly ironic contrasts like that of a Vietnamese woman cradling a dead child in her arms as she walks up a flight of carpeted suburban stairs. Because the scenes of the home were created as advertisements for specific products and ultimately as encouragement for participation in the American Dream, they were surely read then, as they read now, as theatrical spaces and the women (for they are all women) found within these spaces read as ciphers for the domesticated female; the juxtaposition is therefore not simply dream versus nightmare, war versus peace, fact versus fiction, but male versus female, there versus here, outside world versus the interior of the home. The artist emphasized the clarity of these dialectical oppositions so that they could function as propagandistic

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<sup>401</sup> Laura Cottingham, "The War is Always Home: Martha Rosler," text for exhibition catalogue, New York, October, 1991. [www.martharosler.net](http://www.martharosler.net) Martha Rosler: Reviews and interviews. Accessed June 20, 2009.

<sup>402</sup> Frascina, 50n.

statements in the street, so to speak, outside of the limited realm of an artistic critique of popular culture.<sup>403</sup> Their popularity as images of artistic worth was recently validated in an exhibition that juxtaposed the original series with newer work titled *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful, New Series* (2004), which combines images of the Iraq war with contemporary landscapes and interiors.<sup>404</sup>

All of the images used by Rosler in the series come from one source: *Life* magazine. This enabled Rosler to expand her critique outside of the realm of the war and the domestic into the realm of the media and specifically the media's subterfuge in presenting itself as providing an objective representation of the issues it purports to investigate. In consumer media, there is a divide between the news and the advertising sections of the magazine. As Cottingham writes "The divorce between war and home imposed by publishing's division between advertising and editorial, home features and war views, was also accepted by the viewer/reader of *Life*: irrational mis-reading, encouraged from without, is accepted from within."<sup>405</sup> Destroying the division between these two visions of the contemporary world makes it much harder for the reader to ignore the interconnectedness between the miseries of one population to provide the luxuries for another. Thus Rosler corrects the mis-read that *Life* magazine (and all entertainment and commercial media) encouraged in its viewers. Cottingham made

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<sup>403</sup> Rosler decided to present them as art in the 1980s and they have been seen many times in the context of anti-war images. She returned to the theme in the 1990s and produced a group of works referencing the Gulf War and again created a group of work in protest of the Iraq War. The two series have been shown together recently in an exhibition at the Worcester Art Museum (2004).

<sup>404</sup> Exhibition in New York and exhibition at the Worcester Art Museum, 2004. See Martha Rosler, "Place, Position, Politics," in *Decoys and Disruptions*, 355-359, in which she explains why she began to show the photomontages as art.

<sup>405</sup> Cottingham, "The War is Always Home."

another important point about these images. Rosler has purposefully aligned the images of home and war so that the images of war fit within the domestic spaces of America; the intent behind this careful cutting is to clarify her point that there is no disjuncture in inserting the war images into American life.

One of the points that Rosler noted when remembering her intentions for the series relates to how Americans at home witnessed the war at that time. "When I started making those works in the mid-1960s, we were just beginning to see war instantaneously. I was quite struck and shocked by the importation into our homes of televised images of a war taking place in what seemed like another world far away, without our really understanding what our role in the world was."<sup>406</sup> This sensation of being shocked by the images of the war brought into the living rooms also provoked Kienholz to create an antiwar tableau, the *Eleventh Hour Final* of 1968 (fig. 4.38, 4.39).

Kienholz used the home as the setting for his critique of American society because he saw the hypocrisies of American social life embedded firmly in the private life of family. The home was also the setting for an important statement against the war. Kienholz produced two large installations in 1968 that declared his opposition to the war in Vietnam. The first was *Portable War Memorial*, which was a more general statement against war; whereas the second, *Eleventh Hour Final*, was very specifically related to the Vietnam War.<sup>407</sup> Lippard makes two important points in her recent

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<sup>406</sup> De Zegher, *Persistent Vestiges*, 177-178.

<sup>407</sup> In 1965 Kienholz was pro-Vietnam war and would not participate in the antiwar actions of the artists associated with the erection of the Peace Tower; it was only later in the decade that he changed his mind and began to see the war in negative terms. See Frascina, 28.



discussion of the installation. She ties the image of the television to a quote from a 1983 interview with Carrie Rickey in which Kienholz states, "It hurts me; it really physically hurts me, to listen to the news."<sup>408</sup> The second point she makes is to note that the remote control cable to the couch "suggests where the responsibility lies."<sup>409</sup>

*Eleventh Hour Final* is a tableau-recreation of a suburban living room complete with wood paneling, mid-1960s/slightly Scandinavian modern sofa in synthetic blue velvet, matching coffee and end tables, and carpeting. A painting of a city skyline hangs above the sofa and on the coffee table are an ashtray, the television's remote, an arrangement of flowers, and a current *TV Guide*. The concern with time that runs through much of Kienholz's work is found in this telling detail. While the piece is on exhibition, the artist stipulated that the *TV Guide* be regularly replaced with a current issue. As in many American homes of the decade, the television set is the focus of the room. It is also the focus of Kienholz's critique. Whereas the room installation is a simulacrum of the real, the television set is encased in concrete and in the artist's words is a "concrete tombstone/TV set."<sup>410</sup> The title of the piece, *Eleventh Hour Final*, is a conflation of two American terms: "eleventh hour" refers to the final moments of a contest or conflict in which the outcome will be decided; the term also suggests the 11 o'clock news, which in the 1960s, was the news summary of the day's events. Watching the news at 11:00 p.m. was a ritual for many 1960s households; conspicuously, the clock on the wall behind the television tombstone is set at 11:00 o'clock. It was this television

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<sup>408</sup> Kienholz quoted in Lippard, *A Different War*, 37, 27n. The original quote came from Carrie Rickey, "Unpopular Culture (Travels in Kienholzland)," *Artforum* 21 (Summer 1983): 42-48.

<sup>409</sup> Lippard, *A Different War*, 37.

<sup>410</sup> Pincus, *On a Scale That Competes*, 67.

newscast that served as the arena for Secretary of State McNamara's famous body-count statistics. The idea of the body count as a means of measuring how the war was proceeding seems, in retrospect, a skewed notion that somehow it was comforting for Americans to compare the deaths of the enemy to the deaths of their own; as long as the number of Americans dead was lower than that of the enemy, the argument (or fiction, depending on your point of view) that the U.S. was winning the war could be objectively supported by facts. Kienholz's concrete television screen reads:

This weeks (sic) Toll

American Dead 217

American Wounded 563

Enemy Dead 435

Enemy Wounded 1291<sup>411</sup>

When the television set was turned on, a disembodied head of a young Asian girl became visible (fig. 4.40) The strategy behind the government's use of an abstraction, i.e., numbers, rather than names or pictures of the dead or wounded individuals, was clearly to separate the war from human suffering. Kienholz aggressively negated that cynical strategy by inserting the human head into the television screen, forcing a confrontation between the imagined viewers of his scene and the message of the mass media. Pincus sees the "mass media dissemination of information concerning the war

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<sup>411</sup> Pontus Hulten, *11 + 11* (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1970), np.

as the central theme of the *Eleventh Hour Final*.”<sup>412</sup> I would argue that, in fact, the central theme of the piece is only completed when the viewer is present to engage with the tableau. When a viewer is in the tableau, he or she is in the position of the imagined, but absent, owners of the living room. In 1968, the viewer would have been struck by the uncanny resemblance between actual, lived experience and the artist’s re-imagining of current reality. Recreating the experience of watching television and being receptive to the information about the war—being aware enough to understand the numbers of death and wounded as individual human lives—would enable many viewers to see their television set as a marker of death, a tombstone. This is in no way stated to minimize the power of Kienholz’s original vision; instead, I want to emphasize the visceral power of the image in the context of its time and place. The setting of the home was crucial to this power, for it was within the setting of the home that private thoughts about death and life, not abstractions of war, could be realized. As Kienholz said in *11 + 11 Tableaux*, “What can one man’s death, so remote and far away, mean to most people in the familiar safety of the middle-class homes?”<sup>413</sup> *Eleventh Hour Final* brings the innocent victims of war home to confront America in their safe space. This connection between home and death in the jungles of Vietnam is something Kienholz’s tableau and Rosler’s photomontages share.<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> Pincus, 67.

<sup>413</sup> Kienholz, quoted in Hulten, np.

<sup>414</sup> Peter Saul is another artist of the 1960s who conflated consumption at home with the prosecution of the war abroad. See David McCarthy, “Dirty Freaks and High School Punks. Peter Saul’s Critique of the Vietnam War,” *American Art: Smithsonian Institution* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 78-103.

One of the differences between Rosler's and Kienholz's approaches lies in the theoretical underpinnings of the concept of here and there. As Brian Wallis has noted, Rosler's montages play on our understanding of the Vietnam War as a "living room war" broadcast to viewers at home by way of television correspondents.<sup>415</sup> One of the important differences between Kienholz's *Eleventh Hour Final* and the montages by Rosler lies in the space of conflict. Wallis also notes that for Rosler, the war is not limited to the television screen but threatens the isolation of the domestic home:

The distance and mediation provided by television are collapsed, and the suburban home is converted into a type of panopticon bunker, its picture windows constantly exposing one to the nightmare landscape outside but affording only the most fragile protection. Yet with little or no intermingling between inside and outside, the suburban cocoon remains intact, if threatened.<sup>416</sup>

For Rosler, there was no real division between the events in Vietnam and American life as symbolized by the suburban home. War drives the engine of the consumer economy that creates the wealth, luxury items, and status-appointed homes of the American upper-middle class. Her target is the upper echelons of society; those who wield power in the country and who also reap benefits from a foreign war. When Rosler brought the war inside the home, she made visible an invisible link. She was unmasking a hidden relationship between the home as a very specific address in America and a war fought across the globe. It was an intellectual argument made with the power of images. She described them as "an overlap of spaces, actual physical spaces." She continued, "it's a question of who gets to live in the space and who gets to

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<sup>415</sup> Brian Wallis, "Living Room War," *Art in America*, 80 (February 1992): 105-107; 107.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

lie dead outside the windows.”<sup>417</sup> In contrast, Kienholz used the home as a metaphor to stand for homes across America that cut across racial, economic, and aesthetic lines. Kienholz took pains to make the living room of *Eleventh Hour Final* a space that speaks of repetitive use. The worn furnishings, the incorporation of actual space, and the necessity of the viewer’s encroachment into the space in order to fully comprehend the scene takes it out of the realm of abstract language and into the emotional space of the family home. Kienholz’s use of domestic space was as a bodily space, where the eye is not privileged over the other senses. This use of domestic space as a physical one sites his work nearer to the spaces and performances created by Judy Chicago, Miriam Schapiro, and the women of *Womanhouse*, than those represented by Hockney, Oldenburg, Wesselmann, or Rosler.<sup>418</sup> David Anfam argued that the Kienholzes “staked out an aesthetic terra incognita” of “concern with abjection, the scatological or the formless, the casting of models and negative spaces, the use of neon and issues of feminism, racialism, death, decay, and erotic angst” that later artists would explore.<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> Rosler, quoted in de Zegher, *Persistent Vestiges*, 38.

<sup>418</sup> Paula Harper was the first to tie *Womanhouse* to Kienholz’s work. See Paula Harper, “Womanhouse.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 10, no. 4 (Summer 1985): 762-781; Whiting does so as well in *Pop L.A.*, 195. “The theatrical settings of *Womanhouse* recall Kienholz’s own tableaux of the 1960s...Unlike Kienholz, however, the feminist artists inserted themselves physically into these spaces and implicated themselves in the social drama of the home by including Performance pieces set within the interior.”

<sup>419</sup> David Anfam, “Fallen Idols,” in Anfam, Rosetta Brooks, Edward Allington, *Kienholz*, (Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2006), 8.

## Chapter 5: Women's Work and *Womanhouse*

If the major Pop artists had been women, the movement might never have gotten out of the kitchen. Then it would have struck those same critics who welcomed and eulogized Pop Art as just women making more genre art. But since it was primarily men who were painting and sculpting the ironing boards, dishwashers, appliances, food and soap ads, or soup cans, the choice of imagery was considered a breakthrough.<sup>420</sup>

The California Institute of Arts (known as Cal Arts) Feminist Art Program's installation/exhibition, *Womanhouse*, in a derelict house in Hollywood, California, 1971-72, marked a dramatic return of women artists to the subject of the home.<sup>421</sup> *Womanhouse* (fig. 5.1) was ambitious in scope and unique in its confrontation of the actual space of the home as a setting for a series of interventions into the ideologies of the home. The project was neither the democratic collaboration of students and faculty that it presented itself as originally, nor the work of Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro

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<sup>420</sup> Lippard, "Household Images in Art," 56.

<sup>421</sup> The house and the exhibition were destroyed in 1972. In looking back at the documents that remain, which include a 40-minute film by Joanna Demetrakas, it is clear that certain aspects of the installation have achieved iconic status while others are more difficult to resurrect. The *Nurturant Kitchen*, *Menstruation Bathroom*, *Nightmare Bathroom*, and *Lipstick Bathroom*, the *Linen Closet*, and Faith Wilding's *Waiting* reappear in the literature and in reproduction over and over again. Less remembered are the skeletal sculptures in the garden and the bedrooms of Robin Mitchell and Mira Schor; no doubt because these are the least political statements of the house and those that provide less ammunition for writers focused on *Womanhouse* as a radical statement of feminist art.

assisted by students.<sup>422</sup> It stands as a meeting point of two generations; that of Chicago and Schapiro who were 32 and 48 respectively and the students of Cal Arts who were approximately 20 years old.<sup>423</sup> An inclusive view of the home, it included representations of appliances and home decorating, the housewife and the domestic myth, and it presented fully three-dimensional rooms of the house as theater, as tableaux, and as psychically charged space. Scale in *Womanhouse* ranged from the gigantic to the miniature; space was engulfing, private and protective, entrapping, labyrinthine, "museum-like,"<sup>424</sup> and claustrophobic; and although the house itself was renovated both inside and out, all the artistic and aesthetic efforts on the part of the artists were focused on the interior space. *Womanhouse* presented a vision of the home as a space of fantasy and memory; it seems appropriate to describe the endeavor

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<sup>422</sup> The text for *Womanhouse* catalogue was reproduced in Lydia Yee, *Division of Labor: Women's Work in Contemporary Art* (New York: Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1995), 67-69. Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro's text described it as "a repository of the daydreams women have as they wash, bake, cook, sew, clean, and iron their lives away."

<sup>423</sup> An important point raised by Arlene Raven and Paula Harper was that of the age of the students who worked on *Womanhouse* and their relationship to the housewife as model. Both Raven and Harper point out that the students' experiences were more as daughters of housewives than actual housewives. The cross-generational collaboration was fraught with emotional conflicts between mother figures and daughters. Judy Chicago described her conflicts with Miriam Schapiro in these terms and the conflicts that Faith Wilding and other students remembered included disputes about authority. Arlene Raven identifies the kitchen in *Womanhouse* in particular as a space of conflict over food between mother and daughter. See Arlene Raven, "Womanhouse," in Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, ed. *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1994); and Paula Harper, *Signs*. Whiting, in her study of Los Angeles in the 1960s points to the catalogue cover for the exhibition, showing Schapiro and Chicago framed in the entryway of the house as homeowners and parents, and interprets this image as an assertion of authority by the older artists. Whiting, *Pop L.A.*, 194. She also interestingly argues that "Womanhouse redefined standards of home ownership and renovation according to the evolving feminist ideas of the women artists involved in the project," *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>424</sup> Miriam Schapiro described the Dollhouse room at *Womanhouse* as the most museum-like installation in the house.

as a branch of "topoanalysis," Gaston Bachelard's poetic investigation of psychological space.<sup>425</sup>

Although *Womanhouse* has been discussed as a primary document of early 1970s feminism, an important model for feminist pedagogy and collaboration, and within the context of Southern California's performance art,<sup>426</sup> it has not been explored within the larger context of images of domesticity in the 1960s. Reed's assessment, in 1996, that "Womanhouse has gone unexamined -- and barely acknowledged -- by art historians, despite its anticipation of the themes and strategies for much subsequent feminist art" is, with the exception of a recent article by Temma Balducci, still accurate.<sup>427</sup> *Womanhouse* was ultimately a space of and for woman; it might be described as a stereotypical feminine space, set within the "sexualized, emotionalized, personalized, privatized erratic sphere of the home and bedchamber rather than in the structured, impersonal public realm."<sup>428</sup> I will examine *Womanhouse* from two perspectives: the first is as a labyrinth of unfolding spaces predicated on interiority and the revelation of what Bachelard might describe as "the sites of our intimate lives" and

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<sup>425</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 8. The term is his invention and he defines it as "the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives."

<sup>426</sup> Most recently by Whiting in *Pop L.A.*

<sup>427</sup> Haar and Reed, "Coming Home," in Reed, ed., *Not at Home*, 256. *Womanhouse* was hardly present in Cornelia Butler, *Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, (Los Angeles, Cambridge, and London: The Museum of Contemporary Art and the MIT Press, 2007). *Womanhouse* was mentioned in the Selected Chronology of All-Women Group Exhibitions, 1943-1983 compiled by Jenni Sorkin and Linda Theung, but was not featured in any of the essays. The only work from *Womanhouse* included in the exhibition was the *Crocheted Environment* by Faith Wilding (which is often called *Womb Room* in the older literature of *Womanhouse*). I refer to it as *Womb Room*. See Temma Balducci, "Revisiting Womanhouse: Welcome to the (Deconstructed) Dollhouse." *Woman's Art Journal* 27 no. 2 (Fall./Winter 2006):17-23.

<sup>428</sup> This description of a stereotypical feminine space comes from Mark Wigley, "Untitled: The Housing of Gender, Sexuality and Space," 330. He quotes the introduction to Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof, eds. *Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1989), 2.



presented through open doorways, closets, drawers and houses within houses. This focus on interiority (the personal and private sphere of the home as feminine space) set *Womanhouse* apart from any of the previous decade's explorations of the home.<sup>429</sup> Susan Stewart's reading of the body as a paradox of contained and container is at issue in every interior (and exterior space) but most peculiarly here at *Womanhouse*.<sup>430</sup> In addition, *Womanhouse* helped to introduce a new lexicon of subject matters and provided an early starting point for much of the craft-oriented art of the 1970s and beyond; it is also the ending point for seeing the home in purely male-oriented terms. To that end, I will also examine *Womanhouse* within the context of the previous decade's interest in the image of the home and domesticity. A comparison between the rooms in *Womanhouse* and representations of rooms by Tom Wesselmann, Claes Oldenburg, David Hockney, and Ed and Nancy Kienholz, demonstrates the extent to which the women artists of *Womanhouse* transformed the image of the American home from a space defined by exterior walls and/or an external point of view to a space of subjectivity and interiority. I conclude with Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) as an example of how one feminist artist renegotiated the terms of feminine domesticity in the wake of *Womanhouse*. As will be seen, visibility and invisibility in the house is an issue in *Womanhouse* and in Rosler's critique.

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<sup>429</sup> By exploring the hidden realms of the home (both in terms of physical space and psychological space), the women of *Womanhouse* turned the "house inside out." Arlene Raven, "Womanhouse," in *The Power of Feminist Art*, 61. On furniture's capacity to hide secrets see Bachelard, 74-89.

<sup>430</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing*, 104. See Susan Sidlauskas, "Psyche and Sympathy: Staging Interiority in the Early Modern Home," in Reed, ed., *Not at Home*, 67, on the meaning of this for interior space in paintings of the late nineteenth century. Because of the essential character of *Womanhouse* as a house, a space in which the visitors moved, I have adapted her analysis of represented space from a visual to a fully bodily experience.

The history of the Feminist Art Program and *Womanhouse* has been told from the perspective of both the teachers who led the program, Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, and several of the students.<sup>431</sup> Briefly, Judy Chicago organized the first Feminist Art Program at Fresno State University, California, in the spring of 1970 and taught the first class in the fall semester.<sup>432</sup> At Fresno State, Chicago tested her innovative ideas for a teaching program for women art students that would challenge and engage them, molding not simply women who were proficient in making art but women who had the drive, ambition, and perseverance necessary to compete against men in the art world. Chicago's recipe included the technique of consciousness raising<sup>433</sup> to explore the female experience (from these wellsprings would come new

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<sup>431</sup> Interest in *Womanhouse* has remained for the most part within the feminist community. Even the most recent revisionist view of *Womanhouse* by Balducci in *Woman's Art Journal* remains within the sphere of feminist art history. Her perceptive analysis of the many layers of *Womanhouse* sets it squarely between essentialist ideas about female identity and the social construction of femininity; these were already set out by Raven in her essay on "Womanhouse." "The relationship between biology and social roles underlay the content of *Womanhouse*, its rooms and activities," 51. Arlene Raven, who became the second art historian to work with the women in the Feminist Art Program at Cal Arts after Paula Harper returned to Stanford to continue her studies, was one of the first to write about *Womanhouse* as a project that used both approaches: biology as a determining factor and social constructions of feminine roles. The project remains such an interesting and contested exhibition/artwork because it is difficult to contain within one perspective. Even though *Womanhouse* has been destroyed, it lives on in the documents of the event, which include a film by Joanna Demetrakas, and individual installations and sculptural works from the house have been reconstructed and re-exhibited as individual works of art.

<sup>432</sup> Faith Wilding, *By Our Own Hands: The Women's Artist's Movement in Southern California, 1970-1976* (Santa Monica, California: Double X, 1977), 9. The program at Fresno State University was the first feminist art program in the country and its innovative structure was of interest to many. The students experimented with performance, collaborations, costume pieces and mixed media work. Judith Dancoff came from UCLA to make a film about the program, *Judy Chicago and the California Girls*; students were invited to present their performance art at the University of California, Berkeley and at the Richmond Art Center in Oakland. In the spring of 1971, the Fresno Program initiated a series of open house weekends and women artists from Los Angeles and San Francisco came to visit. Wilding, one of the artists associated with the Fresno and Cal Arts Feminist Art Programs dates the beginning of the women's movement on the west coast to the first weekend of the open house; she also marks that weekend as the end of the first stage of the Feminist Art Program as it moved into public view and ceased being a private enterprise protected from the "pressures and male standards of the art world," *By Our Own Hands*, 14.

<sup>433</sup> In a letter from Judy Chicago and Lucy R. Lippard to the West East Coast Bag (W.E.B.) representatives they provided a how-to manual for consciousness raising recommending that the group be at least six but

subject matter), strong female role models, and a separate room beyond reach of the patriarchal eye of the university so that the women students could be free to express themselves without fear of male critique.<sup>434</sup> Paula Harper described Chicago's goal as "not to teach the students to make art but to help them restructure their personalities into those of art makers."<sup>435</sup>

Chicago and Schapiro moved the program to Cal Arts in Valencia in 1971 and continued to use consciousness raising as a tool to inspire feminist subject matter and "the hybrid use of domestic, craft, and other non-art materials, and collaborative practices" that had been successful tools at Fresno.<sup>436</sup> Chicago taught classes in performance; Harper, a graduate student at Stanford University, was hired to teach art history; Schapiro taught painting and drawing; and graduate assistant, Faith Wilding, "led a consciousness raising group and a journal writing class."<sup>437</sup> In 1970, Cal Arts was a newly reinvigorated professional art school with a reputation for innovation. The head of the School of Visual Arts was Schapiro's husband, Paul Brach, and it was no

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no more than ten who should meet weekly at different houses. The hostess would be the leader of the session. In advance of the meeting, the topic would be decided and given to the group. Among the topics suggested by Chicago and Lippard were other women, work, goals, father, mother, siblings. Each member would speak about the topic in turn without interruption. After everyone spoke, a second round of discussion would begin with the first woman speaking for 5 minutes about her perceptions of what she had heard, and around the group. After everyone had spoken twice in this manner, the floor was opened to discussion of the topic, "as it had been revealed." Judy Chicago and Lucy Lippard letter to W.E.B. representatives in New York Feminist Art Institute Archives, Box 3, E.E.B. Correspondence, 1971-74, Special Collections, Alexander Library, Rutgers University.

<sup>434</sup> At Fresno, the young women had access to a theater off-campus; at Cal Arts where the program moved in 1971, the students had a communal meeting space, "the Feminist Studio," and their own studios with locks. In both programs, Chicago stressed character building and hard work to foster a sense of commitment and group identity. Performance was an essential tool in the education process.

<sup>435</sup> Paula Harper, *Signs*, 764.

<sup>436</sup> Faith Wilding and Mira Schor. "The Best and the Worst: A Conversation Between Mira Schor and Faith Wilding." (unpublished manuscript, 2008), 2.

<sup>437</sup> Harper, *Signs*, 764

coincidence that the Feminist Art Program (FAP) found a home there.<sup>438</sup> Wilding and Schor remember that the studio space was not yet available to the women at the beginning of the Fall 1971 term, however, Harper recalled recently that the decision to work off campus resulted from a desire to seclude the women in a space of their own.<sup>439</sup>

The idea for the initial project and the name have been credited to Harper who suggested that they get a house as a project space because so much of women's time and creative energy had been invested in the creation of homes.<sup>440</sup> From the beginning, the subject of the house was an exploration of domestic space and woman's activities in the home. Fantasies, memories of childhood, and personal recollections, drawn out through the technique of consciousness raising, would form the basis for the subject matter of the house. Certainly the choice of woman's relationship to and physical presence in the house as the subject for the first year's project at Cal Arts is significant. The image of the home was deeply invested with "the feminine mystique," a social construction that limited women to the home and gave the public sphere to men. Friedan's call to women to escape the trap of the home was a fundamental text of second wave feminism and an important document for the architects of *Womanhouse*.<sup>441</sup> After years of purposefully avoiding the home as a subject fraught

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<sup>438</sup> Schor described the "typical irony....that the FAP owed its centrality in the school -- good square footage at the core of the building-- to a man's beneficence, and describe it as "typical of processes Linda Nochlin described in "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" Wilding and Schor, "The Best and the Worst," 5.

<sup>439</sup> Harper, telephone interview with the author, July 6, 2009.

<sup>440</sup> While Harper's idea, as she described it, was more a celebration of the home as a female space, she recalled that "Judy took that idea and ran with it." Harper also remembers that the message of *Womanhouse* as entrapping, as a prison, came from Chicago while the celebration of the work of women in the home as seen in the dining room came directly from Schapiro. Telephone interview, July 6, 2009.

<sup>441</sup> I am referring to Friedan's publication of the *Feminine Mystique*.

with elements of the second-class status that women artists were fighting to overcome, Chicago and Schapiro turned to the interior space of the house in order to liberate women from their domestic relationship with the home. Part of the housewife's relationship with domesticity was evident in her role as consumer of goods for herself and the family. The pressure brought to bear on women to buy, to consume, to acquire new products to enhance the self and the home was apparent in many of the installations in the house: a literal piling up of tampons and sanitary napkins in the *Menstruation Bathroom* (fig. 5.2), excessive numbers of lipsticks and cosmetics in the *Lipstick Bathroom* (fig. 5.3),<sup>442</sup> and an overflow of shoes in the *Shoe Closet* (fig. 5.4) described the home as a repository of female accumulation.<sup>443</sup>

The house was, in Chicago and Schapiro's design, an enclosure of safety and a space of physical and psychological reconstruction—an apt metaphor for Chicago's ambitious educational program.<sup>444</sup> Miriam Schapiro's description of the genesis of *Womanhouse* reinforces the personal and emotional core at the center of the project:

We asked ourselves what it would be like to work out one of our closest associative memories—the home...It has been the base of operations out of

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<sup>442</sup> Lipstick as an emblem of feminine identity, and even masquerade, figures prominently in works by the Pop artists as well. For example, the *Lipstick Monument* at Yale University by Claes Oldenburg, the *Lipstick Stroke* that is Oldenburg's portrait of Marilyn Monroe, the smear of lipstick in Warhol's silk-screened images of Marilyn Monroe, the lipstick containers that sit on bedside tables in Wesselmann's late representations of the nude at home and in Lichtenstein's ceramic sculpture busts of female figures.

<sup>443</sup> The emphasis here on a specific type of product aimed at constructing and containing female sexuality is different from the accumulation of consumer items found in Pop Art.

<sup>444</sup> In this ambition, Chicago was in sympathy with Betty Friedan's critique of society's failure to prepare women to become fully responsible and productive members of society. Friedan lay much of the blame for women's inability to escape from the trap of domesticity and the home on society's infantilization of girls and women.

which we fought and struggled with ourselves to please others. What if we created a home in which we pleased no one but ourselves?<sup>445</sup>

In an interview with Moira Roth in 1975, Schapiro reinforced the private, personal nature of *Womanhouse* describing it as "a house of the dreams and fantasies of women" emphasizing the freedom that she hoped to explore in a house without any male control: "With no man to act as censor, what could a woman do in her house?"<sup>446</sup> With the project decided, the students and faculty found a suitable house, and in November 1971, the students began renovations on the house, which had been leased to the school.<sup>447</sup> The few exterior views of the now-destroyed house show it to be a beautiful old home with neo-classical architectural details. Interior images reveal a rambling succession of doorways and interior rooms which are very different from the open-plan systems of 1960s style architecture (fig.5.5). The succession of rooms -- there were seventeen rooms in the house -- allowed for privacy and separation, again in distinction from the open-plan homes popular in the 1960s. The choice of this house, whose condition must have been discouraging, is significant. Surely the house's labyrinthine layout of unfolding private spaces was appealing to these women who were looking to redefine the home as a space for female activity and fantasy. Privacy and spaces in

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<sup>445</sup> Miriam Schapiro, "The Education of Women as Artists: Project Womanhouse," *Art Journal* 31, no. 3 (Spring 1972): 268.

<sup>446</sup> Miriam Schapiro interviewed by Moira Roth in *Miriam Schapiro: The Shrine, The Computer, and The Dollhouse*, (La Jolla: University of California, San Diego, April 1-27, 1975), 14.

<sup>447</sup> As many histories and reminiscences have related, the young women were faced with an enormous task. The house had lain abandoned for years and was in complete disrepair. Before any of the artistic transformations could take place, the students had to repair windows and toilets, create walls, paint and clean. See Raven, "Womanhouse." Photographs of the women students replacing windows, painting with rollers, and working on the repair of the house can be found in Miriam Schapiro's papers at Rutgers University.

which individual women could retreat to day-dream and to work was a crucial aspect of the house.<sup>448</sup>

After putting the house into serviceable shape, the students, faculty, and visiting artists Wanda Westcoast, Sherry Brody, and Carol Edson Mitchell, turned their attention to the installations, tableaux, and performances that would be presented as the public display of the FAP's singular project. After six weeks of hard work and often painful collaboration, *Womanhouse* opened on January 30, 1972. Even before it opened to the public, the FAP hosted a meeting of the West Coast Women's Artist Conference on January 21 at *Womanhouse*. It was at this meeting that Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro presented their theory of central core imagery as a characteristic trait of woman's art.<sup>449</sup> Controversial from the start, central core imagery implied a fundamental connection between women's bodies and the art that women produced.<sup>450</sup> In *Womanhouse*, central core imagery was manifested in the house itself as a series of interior spaces, such as the womb and the birth canal, which featured prominently in the performance *Birth Trilogy*. Specific rooms in the house were also focused on woman's biological nature; for example, *Menstruation Bathroom*, by Chicago, and the

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<sup>448</sup>Schapiro and Chicago described the project as "a repository for the daydreams women have" in their *Womanhouse* catalogue. Betty Friedan also noted the importance of private space for women at home. In the *Feminist Mystique*, she had criticized the modern, open-plan homes of the postwar years because they never allowed the women who lived within in them to escape from domestic chores and children.

<sup>449</sup>"A Quickie Account of the West Coast Women's Artist Conference, np. *W.E.B. West East Coast Bag: An International Network of Women Artists Newsletter*, June 1972. New York Feminist Art Institute Papers, Box 3, W.E.B. Correspondence, 1971-4, Special Collections, Rutgers University.

<sup>450</sup>In the context of Schapiro and Chicago's experiences in the male dominated art world of the 1950s, in which they each achieved success by working in the dominant style (formal geometric abstraction), their focus on the visible differences between art by female artists and by male artists is understandable. Both artists associated geometric formalism with masculine hegemony and left it behind after their experiences with feminism. Central core imagery provided a theory of feminist abstract art, but it has been discredited by most feminist artists and theorists.

*Nurturant Kitchen* (fig. 5.6), described by Schapiro as having "flat, pink skin painted over the refrigerator, stove, sink, etc.," and the performance, *Birth Trilogy*.<sup>451</sup> Other works, like Faith Wilding's *Womb Room*, directly linked the interior spaces of *Womanhouse* to the interior space of the female body. Her use of crochet as the technique for the construction of her primitive hut/ female-centric home recalled the origins of architecture within the realm of textile and domestic craft. Bachelard described the emotional appeal of the hut as a poeticized view of home, overlaid with childhood memories and romantic fantasies;<sup>452</sup> Wilding's hut fits within those parameters but adds a female-centric point of view. Photographs of the artist sitting within her *Womb Room* could be read as the return of the woman to the safety of the original home or as a reclamation of architecture as a female art<sup>453</sup> (fig. 5.7). By navigating through the passages of the house and entering rooms like the kitchen and the *Womb Room*, the visitors might experience a cathartic experience (a rebirth) stimulated by the consciousness raising that had initiated the transformations of the house.<sup>454</sup> In ideological terms, this experience would lead to the renewal of the home, taking it from a space of entrapment to a space of female freedom.

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<sup>451</sup>Miriam Schapiro interview with Moira Roth, 14. Schapiro talked about the importance of consciousness raising in the *Nurturant Kitchen*'s conception and described the questions that she raised in the discussion with the students of "the problem of the kitchen." These included, "As young children, what did the kitchen mean to us? Who was our mother in the kitchen? Who were we? What were the symbols of all this?"

<sup>452</sup> Bachelard's view was a masculine view of the home as a full of nostalgic memories that located the woman as the mother at the center of the home.

<sup>453</sup> Raven described it in 1995 as "the symbolic location of intercourse, pregnancy, and birth." Yee, 54.

<sup>454</sup> Before *Womanhouse* closed on February 28, between four and ten thousand people came through the house and experienced the exhibition and performances (Judy Chicago estimated 10,000 viewers came through the house; other estimates are closer to 4,000.)



Discussions of *Womanhouse* as an image of domesticity have focused on the representation of the housewife within the house. Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* was an important influence on the thinking behind the house and, not surprisingly, the protagonist of *Womanhouse* is a white, middle-class suburban housewife trapped and isolated within the home.<sup>455</sup> Arlene Raven described her as "unbearably lonely, the tasks and implications of the home surround her in a complex, unified yoke."<sup>456</sup> The housewife is also the focus of several of the performances that were presented in the living room/theater of the house/gallery installation: *Ironing* by Sandra Orgel, *Scrubbing* by Chris Rush, *Waiting* by Faith Wilding, and *Cunt and Cock Play* by Judy Chicago.<sup>457</sup> The housewife is also represented within the house as a mannequin bride whose symbolic marriage to the physical structure of the house is suggested by her representation as a groomless bride on the upper landing of the staircase (fig. 5.8). The bride is transformed at the base of stairs into a housewife in a visual pun that shows the physical integration of her body into the structure of the house just outside the kitchen. The housewife also appears as the woman cast in sand in the *Nightmare Bathroom* by Robbin Schiff in which she is both immovable and subject to erasure; she is trapped in the shelves of the *Linen Closet* by Sandra Orgel (fig. 5.9), and in the dreary task of

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<sup>455</sup>Friedan famously described the home as a "comfortable concentration camp." See Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 283-309. There are several points of contact between Friedan's book and *Womanhouse*. First is the emphasis on the housewife trapped within the house, another is the housewife's excessive attention to sex as the means to self-fulfillment, which is used by advertisers to entice her to purchase beauty products to attract her husband and other men (in *Womanhouse*, this is the theme of *Leah's Bedroom*, the *Lipstick Bathroom*, and in the *Dollhouse*, the *Seraglio*).

<sup>456</sup>Raven, "Womanhouse," 58.

<sup>457</sup>For a discussion of performances at *Womanhouse*, see Moira Roth, "Autobiography, Theater, Mysticism and Politics: Women's Performance Art in Southern California," in Carl Loeffler and Darlene Tong, eds. *Performance Anthology: Source Book of California Performance Art* (San Francisco: Last Gasp Press and Contemporary Arts Press, 1989) 463-489. More recently, Whiting, *Pop L.A.*

ironing sheets as performed by Orgel. In all these representations, the woman is alone and enclosed within the inner walls of the architecture. This interior point of view is in opposition to images of the southern Californian homes that David Hockney painted beginning in the mid-1960s. Hockney's views typically featured the exterior extensions of the home where visitors and home owners relaxed and played outside the confines of the house. In Hockney's views of the home, the modernist architecture is a backdrop for the drama of the figure or figures outside the home. Even Kienholz, whose tableau, *The Wait*, is similar in its revelation of the inner psychological state of the woman represented in Wilding's performance, *Waiting*, differs in its crucial siting of the artist's point of view (fig. 5.10). Beginning at the center of the female experience and projecting outward, *Waiting* represented an authentic female experience whereas *The Wait* presented a sympathetic viewer's understanding of an older woman's lack of agency. Wilding's performance was a spare monologue without props or other actors. The monotone of her voice and the rhythmic rocking of her body emphasized her character's inability to break free from the constraints of her prison (which was defined within the context of domestic roles) and act of her own free will. Instead, she lived her life waiting for others to act. The distinction between the visual representation of *The Wait* as a construction of a single moment (that would expand out into a narrative of past and future moments through the process of the viewer's apprehension of Kienholz's details) and the performance, might be described as the difference between Kienholz's representation of physical form and Wilding's visualization of interiority.

As earlier representations of the home had done, *Womanhouse* focused on the bedroom, the bathroom, and the kitchen, specific areas of the house which are "hot spots" of symbolic resonance.<sup>458</sup> *Womanhouse* also investigated areas of the home that had not received attention from artists in the 1960s; for example, the *Dining Room* (fig. 5.11), the *Nursery* (fig. 5.12), and the bedrooms that were clearly meant to represent the dreams of the girl-children of the house.<sup>459</sup> Several areas in the house focused on the need for privacy within architectural enclosures (a room within a room). One of these rooms, the *Personal Space* bedroom by Janice Lester, included an architectural construction of private space (fig. 5.13). Ovoid in shape and designed as a windowless secret room, this is one of several explorations of the subject of a private room or the motif of the house within the house. The organic form of the private, interior room recreated architecture as a rounded, closed form (not unlike Wilding's *Womb Room*). In interior spaces such as this, the artists of *Womanhouse* reacted against the prevailing trends since the late nineteenth century, of the interior, domestic space as a stage on which individuals and their domestic interiors were understood to be on display as attributes or reflections of each other.<sup>460</sup> Susan Sidlauskas insightfully describes this representation of individual through domestic setting as "an enactment of a private

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<sup>458</sup> Unlike any of the representations of the home by male artists (with the exception of Jim Dine), *Womanhouse* takes into account the home as a space for children. A bedroom of oversized furniture and a rocking horse six feet high represents a child's perspective on space at home. Two of the bedrooms in the house, the *Leaf Room* and *Red Moon Room*, feature single beds and suggest their identities as idealized bedrooms for adolescent girls. The emphasis in both these rooms on nature as a nurturing presence and the moon as a sign for female strength were personal and individualistic expressions of domestic space by artists Mira Schor and Robin Mitchell.

<sup>459</sup> Jim Dine's *Child's Blue Wall*, 1962 (Collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery) with its blue painted wall reads as a bedroom for a boy.

<sup>460</sup> See Sidlauskas, 65.

identity."<sup>461</sup> In Lester's space, this enactment is disrupted and the home as a stage for viewing the individual within is closed off.<sup>462</sup>

The *Dining Room* also harbored hidden spaces. The room's architectural details included window seats and a central alcove (fig. 5.14). In its transformation, the alcove was painted with a still-life scene that recalled a work by Sarah Miriam Peale (fig. 5.11). The round dining-room table stood centered on the mural and continued the theme of abundance with a variety of hand-constructed food sculptures and tableware. The food as art motif should be seen as a reclamation of the subject of one of the stereotypical female painter's subjects, the still-life. Even more, the sculpture referred to the works of Pop artists like Oldenburg who had created his own food as art in the media of plaster and paint and soft sculpture. The mural and still-life scene on the table were also celebrations of woman's work in the home where the preparation of food was often an occasion for imaginative and artful activity. Above the table hung a chandelier fashioned from plastic and wire. The windows were covered by long, flowing floor-length drapes that both veiled the interior from prying exterior eyes and also enclosed the window seats to create private, hidden spaces. The cloth over the table, reaching the floor, changed the focus from the contents of the surface plane to a view of the table as a bodily form that enclosed space.

The women artists at *Womanhouse* also directed their attention to the closets and the interior spaces of drawers and, in the *Menstruation Bathroom* (fig. 5.2), the

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<sup>461</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>462</sup> Andrea Zittel's pod-like spaces for living come to mind as later, more sophisticated examples of this idea.

female body's natural functions which are typically hidden from sight.<sup>463</sup> Hidden in the drawers of the kitchen cabinets are collaged newspaper and photographic images that include references to women who had pursued dreams beyond work in the home and other images of escape.<sup>464</sup> For Bachelard, boxes, chests, and drawers hide secrets and provide access to interior states. Their representation in literature allows the reader to visualize the necessity and also the pleasures of keeping secrets hidden and private. Drawers, cabinets, rooms within rooms, and the house within the house are all in evidence at *Womanhouse*. All of these protect privacy and provide the space into which the interior eye (or the daydreaming eye) may be trained. Chicago and Schapiro specifically described daydreams as the content of the empty spaces of the house: "a repository of the daydreams women have as they wash, bake, cook, sew, clean, and iron their lives away."<sup>465</sup> In these evocations of spaces within spaces, in the opening of drawers and doors, even perhaps in the veiling of curtains that hide the architectural spaces of different rooms, the home environment as a private space was reclaimed by these women artists.

One of the most frequently reproduced and best known of the rooms at *Womanhouse*, the *Nurturant Kitchen* (fig. 5.6) is a complex study of the heart of the female view of home. It is a space for food preparation and delivery and is a place that

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<sup>463</sup> In Demetrakas' film, *Womanhouse* of 1974, the filmmaker interviews three uncomfortable men near *Menstruation Bathroom*. It is clear that the sight of the overflowing receptacle filled with bloodied (red paint) sanitary napkins and tampons provides a difficult subject for discussion. They struggle with the questions that are put to them; one of the interpretations that a man in the group puts forward is that the heavy flow of blood is a problem. I suspect that it was not so much the sight of sanitary napkins in the bin, but the sight of them overflowing the container and out of control that was most upsetting.

<sup>464</sup> The importance of the secret iconography of the open drawers is noted by filmmaker Joanna Demetrakas whose camera lingers over the open drawers in the course of the film.

<sup>465</sup> Chicago and Schapiro, *Womanhouse* catalogue.

requires constant cleaning and constant replenishing. The kitchen is the control center for the homemaker; from this space within the home she nurtures the family. To make the psychological connection between the space of the kitchen and the central role of the housewife/mother apparent, the artists painted the room and all its fixtures pink and affixed to the ceiling and walls, fried egg forms that metamorphosed into female breasts as they moved down the wall. The suggestion of the kitchen as housewife's body was further emphasized by the aprons hanging on the walls and the open drawers that revealed dreams of escape. Visualizing the hearth, the heart of the home, as the pink, breast encrusted body of the woman/mother at the center of the home exposes the invisible theories of architecture as constructed and gendered space. With the core of the home located in the central core of the female form, the architecture of the house moved out to embrace the outer rooms of the house. Wigley's reading of the history of architectural theory as an ongoing domestication of the female by the male through the allocation of the woman to the inner spaces of the home was made visible in this centering of the home in the bodily form of the woman of the house. In addition, the kitchen at *Womanhouse* was constructed as an enclosure that mimicked the body as a vessel with a central interior space. The whole house and the kitchen, in particular, required physical movement of the visitor through the room and the active participation of the viewer in the opening and closing of drawers and examination of nooks and pantries. In Fausch's terms, the kitchen and other spaces of passage and enclosure in the house were feminist architecture, architecture that "used the body as a necessary

instrument in absorbing the content of the experience."<sup>466</sup>

The differences between Wesselmann's view of the kitchen (for example, *Still Life # 30* (fig. 2.25) and the representation of kitchen space as seen in the *Nurturant Kitchen* are clear. Wesselmann's flat, modernist plane removes all space, collapsing the room into a diagram of abstract form. The food that is present on the tabletop is a representation of food that speaks of commerce, not home food preparation as put on display in the pantry of the kitchen, or in the *Dining Room* (fig. 5.11). The pink pigment on the appliances of Wesselmann's kitchen scene suggests that the woman as appliance (a theme that Richard Hamilton discussed in 1962 as the genesis of his painting *\$he*, 1958-60,<sup>467</sup>) has moved beyond an exterior view to an interior one. In other words, the view of the kitchen has been resituated from a vantage point outside the work to an interior body/eye. As has been noted, the interior central core of the kitchen remained an open space of passage.

The implied or actual occupant of all three bathrooms at *Womanhouse*: *Menstruation Bathroom* (fig. 5.2), *Lipstick Bathroom* (fig. 5.3), and the *Nightmare Bathroom* (fig. 5.15), was a woman. They represented the interiorized feminine experience and included references to woman as an eternal biological principle (procreation or earth mother) and to woman as a socially constructed figure who performed a masquerade of costume and make-up. The constriction of the spaces

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<sup>466</sup> Fausch, "The Knowledge of the Body and the Presence of History," 42.

<sup>467</sup> See Suzi Gablik and John Russell, *Pop Art Redefined* (New York: Praeger, 1969) for this essay by Hamilton. It first appeared in *Architectural Digest* of 1962 and might have been a factor in Wesselmann's development of his ideas in this collage/construction. See Gablik and Russell for an illustration of Hamilton's *\$he*.

themselves-- they were actual bathrooms with doorways-- added to the sense of privacy or interiority that was so crucial to the effect. The smallness of the rooms, or the narrow view that the doorway afforded in Chicago's piece (which was veiled with a thin curtain of muslin), limited the number of viewers at any given time and contributed to the sense of intimacy. The frisson of entering an actual, occupied bathroom would also have contributed to the opening up of private space that these bathrooms revealed. A comparison between Tom Wesselmann's *Bathroom Number # 1* and Robbin Schiff's *Nightmare Bathroom* visualizes the new personal view with the woman as body and eye at the center of the experience that *Womanhouse* injected into images of the home (fig. 5.16).

Two qualities distinguished the bathroom narratives at *Womanhouse* from Oldenburg's transformed bathroom fixtures (fig.3. 4 ) and the constricted, planar space of Wesselmann's bathrooms scenes. One was the articulation of the female body as a presence in the small rooms; the second was the intimate sense of personal encounter. Also significant as a differentiating characteristic was Oldenburg's removal of the bathroom fixtures from the context of the home and reorientation of the transformed domestic objects into the Janis Gallery. This re-contextualization was very much in line with Duchamp's original transformation of the urinal into the *Fountain* in 1917. Oldenburg also transformed materials, so that hard porcelain became soft vinyl and mechanical plumbing became anthropomorphic, even male, in character. Any sense of psychological and erotic meaning inherent in the bathroom as such was diffused into his larger practice by which all objects of the private and public realm could be transformed



by the artist's imagination. The bathroom objects and the *Bedroom Ensemble*, did not hold personal revelation; they transformed the common object into art and universalized the object as an image of man.

At *Womanhouse*, there is no master bedroom; instead, that room belongs to the mistress/ protagonist of Collette's *Cherie*. The room is true to Collette's story of an aging courtesan's battle to keep her fading beauty and her young lover. The presentation of the room included an ongoing performance in which Karen LeCocq would continually make-up her face and remove that make-up, only to make her face up again. *Leah's Room from Collette's Cherie* (fig. 5.17), a collaboration between LeCocq and Nancy Youdelman, meditates on woman's imprisonment as an object of beauty and desire fated to lose her youth and place in a society in which woman's power depends on her relationship to the masculine centers of power. Female power that was centered in the home, in the bedroom and in the spaces of her private toilette, was a concession to male power outside the home. Comparing a photograph taken of LeCocq's performance in *Leah's Room* (fig. 5.18) to Wesselmann's *Great American Nude # 48* (2.32) reveals the distance between *Womanhouse's* emotionally charged portrayal of the woman within the home and the flat image stripped of narrative and emotional content and presented as a sign within a construction of signs. Wesselmann's image of a woman at home was produced from a position of mastery, and conceptualized as an image to be incorporated into the larger art historical flow of female nudes in domestic

settings.<sup>468</sup> What is most unsettling about Wesselmann's images of the woman at home is that she has no greater weight in the composition than the reproduction on the wall, the nondescript furniture, or the collaged and obviously artificial view out the window. She has no interiority, indeed the room itself has no interiority. While Wesselmann's defense of his representations of nudes in domestic settings was continually couched in terms of his own admiration of his wife and model, others have read his representation of the female form whose only details are the mouth and genitals as an erasure and replacement of the subject with a sign of masculine desire.

In Claes Oldenburg's *Bedroom Ensemble*, created about eight years earlier in Venice (California), not far from the site of *Womanhouse*, the space of domesticity is also erased (fig. 3. 9). A woman is represented within the room as a mere trace-- all that remains is the imprint of her body that was once within the vinyl leopard-skin coat laying on the divan. Oldenburg's references to high art in his fake Pollocks hung on the walls, the use of perspective as a controlling eye/mind, and the incorporation of commercially produced, artificial materials like vinyl and Formica, transform the *Bedroom Ensemble*, a master bedroom suite originally set within the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York, into a masculine space. *Leah's Room* at *Womanhouse* is a private and feminine bedroom infused with narrative and the personality of the room's fictive

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<sup>468</sup> Wesselmann's images were made for a specific audience, an audience for whom the nude was part of the language of art; *Womanhouse* was also made for a specific audience and the differences between the two audiences were another of the many elucidations that *Womanhouse* made visible. *Womanhouse* was not reviewed in the national art press, but it was reviewed in *Time* and in the local Los Angeles Press. The art world did not see *Womanhouse* as part of their audience. Moira Roth, in "Performance in Southern Cal." makes the point that the women and the audience for the performances at *Womanhouse*, and in early feminist performance in Southern California in general, depended on trust between audience and performers because the content was so personal.

occupant. The bedroom is the staging area for the construction of beauty; the collection of accumulated textiles and fabrics providing a haptic experience of sensual encounter through visual means. In contrast, the man-made materials of Oldenburg's room emphasize industrial production and the lack of sensual, tactile encounter. Oldenburg's minimalist and formal art resonates with masculine perspectives of power, construction, and transformation. *Leah's Room* is, by contrast, an accumulation of antique objects, not true souvenirs but props that act as if they were Leah's souvenirs. The props that appear in Oldenburg's *Bedroom* are as bereft of personal history as the vinyl sheets and Formica surfaces. Our accumulated objects are akin to souvenirs of our own lives. Schapiro's description of women as collectors of objects, as diarists writing the stories of their lives through the objects that they accumulate, provides the underpinning to the construction of *Leah's Room* and the *Dollhouse*, now in the collection of the Smithsonian Institution but originally produced for display at *Womanhouse*<sup>469</sup> The presence of such objects in a room creates interiority by infusing the space of the room with individual personality and personal history; exactly the opposite of Oldenburg's surface-decorated, but untextured room. The two rooms provoke different psychological reactions and gendered readings-- one provides an aesthetic experience through personal catharsis, while the other provides aesthetic experience as visual, intellectual pleasure.<sup>470</sup>

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<sup>469</sup> Miriam Schapiro "women are conservators, we collect, we save, we curate our lives, keep our diaries, journals, scrapbooks, so that we can prove we lived." Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, "Conversations with Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, in *The Power of Feminist Art*, 82.

<sup>470</sup> These psychically charged spaces of the bathrooms, the kitchen and *Leah's Room* maintained the living scale of everyday life. Other works in the house expanded the scale of rooms to dwarf the individual within or miniaturized the experience of the home, as in the *Dollhouse*. In the *Nursery Room* by Shawnee Wollenman, the oversize furniture and rocking horse dwarfed the visitor. The purpose of the shift in scale was to recreate the sense of childhood in the viewer in making the relationship between the human

The *Dollhouse* by Miriam Schapiro and Sherry Brody was set into its own room at *Womanhouse* on the first floor of the house (fig. 5.19). Beside the *Dollhouse* itself which was set into the wall and arranged as a double-storied group of rooms in a long rectangular orientation, the room included two additional works of art. One was Sherry Brody's *Pregnant Piece*, set into a white framed alcove to the left; to the right, was a table covered with a satinlike cloth and covered with Brody's pillows made out of women's lingerie. The three works of art together created a room that celebrated the experiences of female sexuality as a woman's experience. Brody's *Pregnant Piece* (a pregnant female torso) re-imagined the stereotypical view of woman as vessel, exalting in woman's ability to carry life within her womb. The *Dollhouse* at the center was spotlighted, as if it were in a museum display. A dollhouse is, as Susan Stewart writes, "the most consummate of miniatures" combining "transcendence and the interiority of history and narrative."<sup>471</sup> As Stewart also notes, the dollhouse is the most abstract form of miniature in that it can only be known in its frontal view; it is not meant to be touched, so it is a purely visual experience for the viewer. Aptly for our purposes, Stewart described the experience of the dollhouse as one of sanctuary where fantasies flourish and a prison that marks boundaries between the world of the imagination and the world at large. Schapiro explained her reason for making the dollhouse as a desire to escape "to regress, to think as a small girl again."<sup>472</sup> Two questions are of particular interest to me: Why did Schapiro focus on a dollhouse as her contribution to *Womanhouse*; and

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visitor and the room's objects like that of a small child in a room of adult-sized furnishings.

<sup>471</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing*, 61

<sup>472</sup> Miriam Schapiro, interview with Moira Roth, 14.

what was her dollhouse's relationship to the room in which it was installed and the house as a whole?

For Stewart, the subject of the dollhouse is exclusively focused on interior space. That is not the case in Schapiro and Brody's *Dollhouse* at *Womanhouse* which includes menacing figures that peer into it from the exterior (fig. 5.20).<sup>473</sup> These figures represent exteriority in opposition to the interior focus of the miniature house. They are also meant to deconstruct the false fears of those enclosed within this miniature house and, by implication, all the houses that have been constructed around women. Schapiro characterized her representation of these outside menacing forces as the fears of babies and children and she explained that they should be understood as "antipatriarchal satire."<sup>474</sup>

Notwithstanding Schapiro's stated desire to think as a small girl again, the *Dollhouse* is an adult's vision of a woman's fantasy of the house inflected by a woman artist's knowledge of art history and the exclusion of women from that history. She continued to work on the *Dollhouse*, and after the close of *Womanhouse* she took it home and rearranged the structure so as to make it a three-story house with a pediment on top and shutters on the sides that could shut the house up (fig. 5.21). Described by the artist as environments of female life and fantasy, these miniaturized rooms were created with "bits of fabric, discarded small objects, and personal

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<sup>473</sup> For example outside the kitchen windows, a phalanx of men taken from a reproduction of a Magritte print peer inside; in the nursery a monster sits in the crib and a spider menaces the alabaster egg where the baby lies while a grizzly bear stands outside the window. There is also the view of the Kremlin outside the window of the studio,

<sup>474</sup> Schapiro, quoted in Broude and Garrard, "Conversations," 82.

mementos, traditionally collected by women and seldom used or exhibited in public."<sup>475</sup>

Susan Stewart described the significance of the memento.

Because of its connection to biography and its place in constituting the notion of the individual life, the memento becomes emblematic of the worth of that life and of the self's capacity to generate worthiness. Here we see also the introduction of the metaphor of texture."<sup>476</sup>

The *Dollhouse* is a significant marker for Schapiro: it returned her to the representation of architectural spaces and, more importantly, pushed her to invent femmage and to concentrate on female, especially domestic, imagery.<sup>477</sup> Schapiro remembers that after *Womanhouse*, "I was totally enveloped in making collages out of all those taboo materials that I had used in the dollhouse."<sup>478</sup> Harper, who was a participant in the FAP recently recalled her impressions of the *Dollhouse*, identifying it as an autobiographical work that referenced Schapiro exclusively:

We understood it as scenes from Miriam's life. Paul Brach was the figure with the cowboy boots. He wore cowboy boots; he was a rider. I don't know what Sherry Brody did, but we understood it (the Dollhouse) as being scenes from Miriam's life. I always thought it was odd that she did a dollhouse in *Womanhouse*.<sup>479</sup>

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<sup>475</sup> Schapiro, quoted in Gouma-Peterson Thalia, *Miriam Schapiro: A Retrospective 1953-1980* (Wooster, Ohio: The College of Wooster, 1980), 14. The home interior as an accretion of personal objects is a metaphor for the way that women have traditionally decorated their homes. Schapiro and Brody's *Dollhouse* is a tribute to women's creative work in the home; the textiles and patterns that fill each surface are representative of traditional domestic space which should be seen in opposition to high modernist architecture's representation of the home as, in Le Corbusier's phrase, "a machine for living."

<sup>476</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing*, 140.

<sup>477</sup> Femmage was defined by Schapiro as "collage activities practiced by women including sewing, piercing, hooking, cutting, appliquéing, cooking and the like" in "Waste Not, Want Not. An inquiry into what women saved and assembled by Melissa Meyer and Miriam Schapiro," unidentified manuscript page in unidentified folder, Miriam Schapiro Papers, Special Collections, RU

<sup>478</sup> Schapiro, interview with Moira Roth, 15.

<sup>479</sup> Paula Harper, telephone interview, July 6, 2009

The *Dollhouse*, as a house within the house, is an extreme representation of the idea of interiority. Harper's remark about the oddness of the choice of a dollhouse within the context of *Womanhouse* is intriguing, however, *Dollhouse* does fit within the larger program of the house. It is yet another instance of the motif of the house within the house. Like Janice Lester's *Private Space* and Faith Wilding's *Womb Room*, and the interiors of the drawers in the *Nurturant Kitchen*, the *Dollhouse* is both a miniaturization of interior space and a deeper retreat into privacy. For all its small size, it encompasses the full range of *Womanhouse*'s ambitions to explore and reclaim domestic space.

Schapiro and Brody's *Dollhouse* was recently discussed at some length by Balducci.<sup>480</sup> As she relates, the history of dollhouses begins in seventeenth-century Holland as an occupation for upper middle-class housewives.<sup>481</sup> Not mentioned by Balducci, but significant, I believe, to Schapiro's conception of the *Dollhouse* is the dollhouse created in the early twentieth century by Carrie Stettheimer, the sister of the modernist painter, Florine Stettheimer. Carrie's autobiographical dollhouse included caricatured representations of the Stettheimer sisters and their circle, as well as miniature works of art painted by Duchamp and other friends between 1918 and 1930. It is now in the collection of the Museum of the City of New York (fig. 5.22).<sup>482</sup> The early

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<sup>480</sup> See Balducci.

<sup>481</sup> Balducci discusses the history of the dollhouse. The dollhouse as a toy for children is a phenomenon of the Victorian age when it became associated with the education of girls and their futures as mistresses of their own homes. Nonetheless, dollhouses never completely left the realm of grown women. The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam features a group of these seventeenth-century dollhouses in its permanent display.

<sup>482</sup> See Sheila W. Clark, *Stettheimer Dollhouse* (San Francisco: Pomegranate Press, 2009) for detailed images of the dollhouse and the miniature artwork inside.

history of dollhouses as an art form practiced by women would certainly have been of interest to Schapiro and the women at the FAP at Cal Arts, early researchers into the history of women's arts while working on *Womanhouse*.<sup>483</sup> The autobiographical nature of Stettheimer's dollhouse might have prompted Schapiro's own autobiographical details in the creation of the artist's studio.<sup>484</sup> She herself suggested a connection between her conception and Stettheimer's dollhouse when she described her process in making the parlor: "I made a Duchampian parlor, where I had his *Fresh Widow*- I satirized it, I feminized it. I had a snake in the parlor..."<sup>485</sup> Duchamp's *Fresh Widow* (1920) had been given to the Museum of Modern Art by Katherine Dreier in 1953. It was a constructed miniature French window whose panes were covered in black leather to disrupt the view out. Schapiro's claim to have feminized it, no doubt, refers to her hanging of lace curtains around the Duchampian French window (fig. 5.23) and the transformation of the black leather into blue paint.<sup>486</sup> Duchamp, whose influence in American art significantly revived in the late 1950s and early 1960s, is a significant choice for Schapiro's transformation, and his presence in the *Dollhouse* creates a tantalizing link to the Stettheimer house. It also suggests that Schapiro and Brody might have been thinking along the lines of Lucy Lippard who characterized the Neo-Dada and Pop images of the home as subjects poached from the female experience. The kitchen

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<sup>483</sup> Paula Harper talked about the difficulty of teaching about women in art history without any resources. She and the students would search out images and make slides to show in class. *Signs* and telephone interview, July 6, 2009.

<sup>484</sup> The fantasies and references to autobiography within the *Dollhouse* seem to point directly to Schapiro not to the presence of her collaborator, Sherry Brody.

<sup>485</sup> Schapiro, in Broude and Garrard, "Conversations," 79.

<sup>486</sup> Windows play an important role in the dollhouse, appearing in four of the six rooms. In all these rooms, except the artist's studio, curtains decorate the windows.



of the *Dollhouse*, on the same level as the Duchampian parlor, recalls Pop treatments of the home like *Wesselmann's Still-Life #30* (fig. 2.25). Both works organize the kitchen with a refrigerator at left, the sink and window in the center, and the stove on the right. A clock in the kitchen to the left is balanced, in Wesselmann's typical fashion, by a small round Delft plate with the image of a young man (fig. 5.24), which should certainly be seen as a humorous inversion of Wesselmann's typical image of a woman from the history of art. Another humorous inversion is found upon closer examination of the handmade kitchen furniture: the soft sculpture form of the refrigerator and the stove are more than reminiscent of Oldenburg's soft sculptural works of home appliances. Schapiro's sense of art history and her knowledge of the New York art world would have made it clear to her that in creating soft sculptures of kitchen appliances, she was referencing Oldenburg's well-known works (sewn as she undoubtedly knew by Pat Oldenburg). In at least one interview of the 1970s, Schapiro described her work as androgynous "coming from my male-identified past and blending with my female-oriented present."<sup>487</sup> Because the *Dollhouse* was made by two women artists and was installed within an art exhibition/installation, many art historians have focused attention on the artist's studio in the attic.<sup>488</sup> In this attic studio, a tiny reproduction of *16 Windows*, one of Schapiro's works from her "male-dominated past" stands on the easel and a nude male figure in boots stands on a pedestal (fig. 5.25). The male figure is often

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<sup>487</sup> Miriam Schapiro, Interview with Moira Roth, 15.

<sup>488</sup> Linda Nochlin, for example, interprets the studio interior as the climactic moment where the full experience of woman's life in the home is transformed into art. "Dollhouse is a conscious and artful articulation of the rich imaginative substratum from which artmaking and, even more specifically, Miriam Schapiro's artmaking, can arise." Linda Nochlin, "Miriam Schapiro: Recent Work," *Arts Magazine* 48, no. 2 (November 1973):38-41, 41.

described as a model (although it is clear he is not the model for the work on the easel) or as an ironic representation of the male artist whose erect penis signals his potency and artistic force.<sup>489</sup> The choice of *16 Windows* as the work to stand on the easel makes reference to Schapiro's formalist work, to which she would not return after *Womanhouse*, and to the modernist tradition as exemplified by the reference to Duchamp in the room below. In the *Dollhouse*, Schapiro feminized not only Duchamp, but his successors in the 1960s, the Pop artists who made the home their subject.

If the *Dollhouse* was the ultimate miniaturization of the home from the perspective of a feminist artist in the early years of the 1970s, *Womanhouse* itself stands as a view of the gigantic in the context of the theme of woman in the home. Stewart's discussions of giants in literature and in myth characterize the gigantic as outside of normalcy, part of nature, not culture, but also "at the origin of public and natural history."<sup>490</sup> In the early 1970s, there were many feminist artists who embraced nature and the representation of nature as an aspect of the divine feminine. For these artists, the prehistory of the current patriarchal systems of religion, culture, and politics lay in the original great goddess figures that celebrated woman's primacy as the bearer of life. In 1966, Nikki de Saint Phalle, for example, collaborated with Jean Tinguely and Per Olof Ultvedt on an enormous reclining female giant whose interior spaces could be accessed from a doorway between the figure's legs. Known as *She-a Cathedral* (in Swedish, *Hon- a Katedral*), the project was organized by the Moderna Museum in

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<sup>489</sup> The only male figure in the seventeen-room house is the nude figure in the artist's studio.

<sup>490</sup> See Stewart, *On Longing*, 70.

Stockholm. Both *Womanhouse* and Nikki de Saint- Phalle's giantess situated architecture as the enclosing walls of a feminized interior space. In this context, Stewart's description of the relationship between the gigantic and the individual is apt:

Our most fundamental relation to the gigantic is articulated in our relation to landscape, our immediate and lived relation to nature as it "surrounds" us. Our position here is the antithesis of our position in relation to the miniature; we are enveloped by the gigantic, surrounded by it, enclosed within its shadow. Whereas we know the miniature as a spatial whole or as temporal part, we know the gigantic only partially. We move through the landscape; it does not move through us. This relation to the landscape is expressed most often through an abstract projection of the body upon the natural world. Consequently, both the miniature and the gigantic may be described through the metaphors of containment--the miniature as contained, the gigantic as container.<sup>491</sup>

In both *Womanhouse* and *She-a Cathedral*, the use of the gigantic took architectural form out of the realm of the everyday to reclaim it on new terms. In both female-centric spaces, the patriarchal view of the domestic and the sacred were shifted from a perspective that looked at space from outside the container to a perspective that located space within the body and consciousness. *Womanhouse* set the woman at the center of the home and also set the eye and body of that woman into the center so that she looked outward at the walls that had been constructed around her.<sup>492</sup> The shift in perspective from exterior looking in, to interiorized space is fundamental to the recolonization of the home as female geography on female terms.

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<sup>491</sup> Stewart, 71.

<sup>492</sup> I mean this in the figurative and literal sense. The woman artists of *Womanhouse* drew from their personal experience and looked outward at the ideology that constrained them; the metaphor is of a woman at the center of a house looking outward at the architecture that was built around her. Bourgeois' image of *Femme-maison* was an image of a woman simultaneously outside looking at the woman and house constructions and inside the architecture of the house.

Martha Rosler was living in Southern California in the late 1960s and was connected with the antiwar movement and the feminist movement. The work she produced at that time included many references to the American home as a counterpoint to what was happening in Vietnam and as a pointed commentary on how women were represented in the American media. Throughout the course of her ongoing activity as a political artist, she has created works that investigated the topics of homes and homelessness, and the role of the social in forming an image of domesticity.<sup>493</sup> Indeed, these issues intersect and coalesce in her early work. Along with the photomontages that protested the war, she also created works that focused on women's representation in the printed media, or in her own terms "women's reality and their representation: women with household appliances, or Playboy nudes in lush interiors."<sup>494</sup> Two examples from the group of photomontages that she created simultaneously with the antiwar images, *Beauty Knows No Pain*, feature nude female figures embedded within or conjoined with kitchen appliances, *Cold Meat* (fig. 5.26) and *Hot Meat* (fig. 5.267). Both of these images continue the association of women and household appliances that had been an ongoing trope in postwar American constructions of the domestic. Rosler's work, however, is a violent disengagement of the myth from the political source of power. In her selection of images from *Playboy* magazine and advertisements for the middle-class home, she brings together two

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<sup>493</sup> See, for example, *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (1974-75) which focuses on the issue of homelessness, alcoholism, and the ways in which both visual and verbal language fail to address and solve the problem. In 1989, Rosler collaborated with the DIA Art Foundation in New York to create an exhibition and series of public programs on the subject of homelessness. See the resulting publication, *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory and Social Activism: A Project by Martha Rosler*, (New York: Dia Art Foundation, 1989).

<sup>494</sup> Rosler, "Place, Position, Power, Politics," 355.

disparate representations of femininity in contemporary culture: the image of the woman as domestic worker with the image of the sexualized female body. As she had done in her *Bringing the War Home* series, she purposefully connects two previously unconnected images to jar the viewer into recognizing the reach of patriarchal policies at home and abroad. Her feminist deconstruction of both the feminine mystique that aligned woman and domestic appliances and the female body as an object and a "commodity sign"<sup>495</sup> brought the intersection of politics and cultural ideas into focus. Rosler has written of Pop Art's use of imagery connected with the home and the feminine; she has also described how "pop art offered a tantalizing model of art that refused to see itself as a mystical and transcendental projection, and instead, promoted a possibility to engage art with the social in an incredibly potent way."<sup>496</sup> While Pop Art, in Rosler's estimation, remained aloof from any engagement with the social, it presented an opportunity for artists whose ambitions included an "intervention into the social sphere."<sup>497</sup> One of the landscapes of Pop Art was the home, and with the media's representations of American interiors and individual kitchen appliances, Rosler re-conceptualized woman's role in the home.

In the early 1970s, Rosler began to work with video as an extension of her exploration of photography, especially the ways in which both film and photography

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<sup>495</sup>Jayne Wark, "Conceptual Art and Feminism: Martha Rosler, Adrian Piper, Eleanor Antin, and Martha Wilson," *Woman's Art Journal*, vol. 22 no.1 (Spring/Summer 2001), 44-50, 44.

<sup>496</sup>Rosler, "Subverting the Myths of Everyday Life: Interview with Martha Rosler," by Marie Pachanova, *n.paradoxa online issue* no. 19 (May 2006), 99. Accessed September 28, 2009. Rosler foregrounds this with a discussion of the context of the 1960s with its "shattering of several artistic and art historical paradigms, the reaction against the stranglehold of Clement Greenberg as a single autocratic critic who promoted Abstract Expressionism in the States and determined for a long time what was acceptable in art and what was not, and, most importantly, the social movements of this period."

<sup>497</sup>Rosler, *Ibid.*, 100.

acted as a representation in contemporary society. One of her continuing preoccupations is with power, where power lies and how it is manifested through imagery. Documentary photography and film, mythologized as truth but refracted along a line of personal or political perspective, was a point of investigation.<sup>498</sup> The home had been a useful sign of middle-class American life for the collages and it continued to provide a theatrical space for video. Rosler turned to explorations of the roles of women in the kitchen and the ways in which food preparation is a sign of social status for middle-class wives who educate themselves in the fine art of cuisine and drudgery for domestic workers.<sup>499</sup> *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975), a seven-minute black-and-white video, has become one of the artist's iconic works. With the camera trained on herself in a small, cramped kitchen space, Rosler demonstrates the letters of the alphabet beginning with A and tying an apron around her waist. As she announces each successive letter, she displays and then enacts the use of a kitchen tool. These are old-fashioned hand tools; there are no buttons to push to start an electric appliance, there is no recognition of any new and improved kitchen gadget. The rotary eggbeater she uses as a demonstration of the letter E is a hand-crank model, and the knife she wields is a basic kitchen knife, not one of the electric knives advertised in the 1960s as a tool for the man of the house. Rosler remained dead-pan as she moved through the alphabet; her actions when picking up items or putting them back on shelves are

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<sup>498</sup>This clearly aligns her with conceptual art and its explorations of the production, reception and commodification of art. Wark, in her article on conceptualism and feminism correctly established the connections and the differences between the canonical conceptual artists and feminist artists like Rosler who used conceptual modes for their own purposes. See Wark, "Conceptual Art and Feminism."

<sup>499</sup>*A Budding Gourmet* (1974) investigates how food preparation becomes cuisine; *Losing:...A Conversation with the Parents* (1977) about anorexia as a woman's disease; and *Tijuana Maid*, a project that describes the powerlessness of an illegal immigrant working as a domestic in America.

delicate and she seems to make an effort to put things back in order after each demonstration. However, the implied violence of kitchen activity or the frustrated desires of women to break free of the domestic confinement break out in her sometimes explosive gestures. With the knife in hand, she stabs at the wooden counter, using the ladle she throws an imaginary substance off camera. Rosler demonstrates T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z by contorting her body into the shape of each letter so that by the end of the lesson, we see that the woman herself is a multifunctional tool in the kitchen. The *Semiotics of the Kitchen* is a study of how a system of associative signs that begins with the simple tools of the kitchen evolves into a linguistic and intellectual construction of entrapment. Rosler's view of the kitchen as a space of physical labor fraught with psychological intensity becomes more and more vivid as she works through the alphabet.

The media's constant siting of the woman in the kitchen was ubiquitous in the 1960s. Women appeared as the stars of televised cooking shows and in commercials on television, in advertising images for household products, foods, and even in images whose purpose was not to sell kitchen products.<sup>500</sup> These images were connected to the efforts by advertising to place the woman as domestic consumer within the confines of the home; in many of the advertisements, the woman is simply an extension of her own kitchen appliances. Rosler as both artist and subject of her own camera takes control of her own representation and that of her work in the kitchen. The distance

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<sup>500</sup> Notably, the woman of the cooking show was cooking for her family at home, she was not a professional chef in a restaurant. The most famous of these women was Julia Child whose television show began in 1963. The politics of food preparation was treated by Rosler in *A Budding Gourmet* and in *Tijuana Maid*.

between her representation of women's kitchen work and Richard Nixon's view of modern technology's liberation of women from kitchen drudgery in 1959 is immense. For Rosler, the media is an insidious intruder into private life whose power lies in its invisibility; for Nixon, who took sly advantage of television cameras at the American Fair in Moscow in 1959, the media was a political ally in the Cold War. *Semiotics of the Kitchen* pushed back against the stereotypes of the happy housewife that Nixon and countless others beamed into the American home. Her black-and-white deceptively amateurish video is another sly disruption. Using humor and exaggeration, Rosler revealed the reach of commercial and public media into the center of the home and its power to shape private identity through invisible means.

By 1975, women artists had made the first forays in the battle to reclaim the home as a space of female agency and enact social reform. By entering the house and confronting prevailing stereotypes, they sought to deconstruct them. In the following postmodern decades, men and women explored the home and the domestic as a place for change and also as an arena of nostalgia. Postmodernism's inversion of the modernist's disdain for the domestic and embrace of the home and domesticity as a subject cut along two lines. On the one hand, the embrace of the nostalgic returned women to the confinement of the home on the terms that predated *Womanhouse*; on the other, the active exploration of the home continued the political critique that the second wave of the woman's movement had made a priority. In the postmodern 1980s



(a period of backlash against the feminist revolution), nostalgic and depoliticized images of the home became prevalent.<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>501</sup> Haar and Reed, "Coming Home," in Reed, ed. "Not at Home," 258. They write: "In the art and architecture that dominated the markets for "post-modernism" in the 1980s, however, feminist campaigns for the critique and reform of the home were overwhelmed by nostalgic formations of domesticity."

## Conclusion: At Home in the 60s

Because the subjects of domesticity and the home in American art of the 1960s are so large a topic, my discussion has ranged over a variety of artists and tried to connect specific images to issues that were embedded within the postwar American love affair with the suburban home. I have taken it for granted that the image of the American home was both a sign and a symbol that resonated with a multiplicity of emotional and social, even political, references for both artists and the American public. Images of the home that were (and still are) ubiquitous in advertising and popular culture represent one picture of domestic life; the artists that have been the focus of this study reveal others. Because any discussion of the home in American art of the postwar period must contend with the cult of domesticity that dominated commercial and popular culture, I have ventured in and out of domestic space in my visual analyses of images of the home. Domesticity, especially in the decades after World War II, meant woman's work in a heterosexual, nuclear family. Thus, home as a space associated with feminine agency, female occupation, and even the female body runs through the representations of the interior of the home in American art of the 1960s. Representations of the home's exterior—the single family suburban home, the urban

apartment complex, the inner city neighborhood, and even examples of modernist architecture of southern California--are less specifically tied to domesticity and woman's work. These images of architecture, which are images of public space not private space, reflect an orientation toward society and commerce. Dan Graham's *Homes for America* and Hans Haacke's *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971* present two examples of artists' critiques of society through the chronicling of housing in America. Other exterior views of the home present snapshots of a varied population different in race, class, economic situation, and sexual orientation.

The re-emergence of imagery after Abstract Expressionism was inflected with popular culture. The deconstruction of popular imagery through collage provided a useful avenue out of painterly abstraction into image-based work for artists like Richard Hamilton, Tom Wesselmann, and Romare Bearden. The return of the image required the return of space (illusionistic or not) as a ground against which the image could be situated. In the post Abstract Expressionist period, artists were actively engaged in reconfiguring the relationship between viewer and object, as well as activating the space that separated viewer and art object. Collage techniques used by Wesselmann and Bearden led to a particular representation of space that engaged the area in front of the canvas. In his installation of the *Bedroom Ensemble*, Claes Oldenburg literally bent space in his distortions of linear single-point perspective. In the tableaux of Ed and Nancy Kienholz and at *Womanhouse* physical space was enclosed by architectural

structure and the viewer's experience of the work depended on the physical movement of the body of the viewer into space.

My intention throughout has been to look for content within the images created by the artists of the 1960s. I have tried to make sense of their decisions in selecting the American home as an image (or as a site) at a time when working with images was symbolic of a generational shift from Abstract Expressionism (modernism) to a post-modern style. Domesticity and gendered dichotomies has played a significant role in this discussion and in the re-evaluations of postwar American art more generally. Domestic space and domestic objects as gendered objects were identified with the feminine; this was especially true in the context of the postwar years when domesticity was understood to be inherently female, and even a necessary component of a woman's happiness and well-being. In such a context, choosing domestic objects and domestic space as a subject for art was subversive, even, as critics of the time noted, anti-aesthetic. Using irony or camp, or veiling the domestic objects within images of advertising, the Pop artists enacted a transformation from a feminine image/object into a genderless (male) image of high art. Andy Warhol's act of wallpapering two hallowed spaces of commerce and culture: the Leo Castelli Gallery in 1966 and the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1970-71 are examples of this. Warhol complicated the division between home and the commercial realm by invading the spaces of high art and high end commercial activity with the images of Elsie, Borden's trademark cow.<sup>502</sup>

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<sup>502</sup>Silver, "Master Bedrooms," 213. As Silver notes, "Warhol was but one of a large group of Pop artists who challenged the shibboleths and dogmas of Abstract Expressionism in the years after 1960s, particularly the prohibitions against the popular and the domestic."

That Warhol meant to launch an affront to both the exclusivity of high art and the complacency of masculine architectural space was made clear by his choice of Elsie.

The disruption of the division between high art as the domain of a masculine genius and a more inclusive understanding of art as a human activity was also a point of attack for women artists. Women did not have the same ability to push domestic imagery into ironic or masculine transformations. However, women artists did wrestle with the gendered space of the home and domesticity, in many examples, women artists reconstructed the home and the work that took place in the home in their own images, according to their own experience. Placing work by artists who engaged the home from both sides of the gender divide, and also within the area of gay identity, has provided a richer context for the art of the 1960s and for a signature work of feminist art, *Womanhouse*. *Womanhouse* is one of the earliest and most significant of a group of feminine interventions into the home as a subject. It stands apart from the representations of domestic objects and rooms of the home that were done by male artists between 1960 and 1970. Whereas the impetus for the use of the home as an image (which begins in the mid 1950s) seems inextricably bound up with a search for a means by which to move away from Abstract Expressionism and into a revival of imagery, *Womanhouse* is a personal journey undertaken by the women of the Feminist Art Program at Cal Arts. Rather than mediating their subject through industry and commerce, these artists recognized the multiplicity of meanings in the home as a feminine space, both confining and protecting. Significantly, *Womanhouse* represents a multi-generational view of the home that encompassed a full range of home-centered

experience from menstruation to childbirth, from childhood to motherhood, and in spatial terms from the miniature to the gigantic. The architectural structure of the house itself played a significant role in the revelations that occurred in the house; private spaces, where art and imaginative play could be pursued, brought the home into the realm of artistic, productive labor. New explorations of gender and architecture have shown how architecture has been theorized to contain female sexuality; deconstructions of art and cultural history have provided reasonable proof that the exclusion of women from the realms of high art is also a theoretical position. These two paths intersect to some degree in my discussion of women, art, and architecture. Both are tools for the construction of systems to enact society's inherent assumptions about gender and social organization, and both are dismantled in *Womanhouse*. In a sly inversion of Andy Warhol's tactic of making the museum and the art gallery into domestic space by applying wallpaper (a surface effect, not a spatial intervention), the women artists of *Womanhouse* reworked the physical spaces of a derelict house into an arena for creating and exhibiting art. In this transformation of the home into artist's studio and art gallery, Chicago and Schapiro expanded and adapted the legacy of Abstract Expressionism by representing the existential encounter of artist and medium within the realm of the domestic. Leo Steinberg wrote, in reference to the proliferation of performance art in the 1960s spawned (in part) by Harold Rosenberg's famous description of Pollock's process, "if what mattered was the encounter, then why corner it within the "arena" of a stretched canvas?"<sup>503</sup> Women artists, whose studios were

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<sup>503</sup> Leo Steinberg, "Some of Hans Haacke's works Considered as Fine Art," in Brian Wallis, ed., *Hans*

often their bedrooms, kitchens, and any available domestic space, reclaimed the home as an "arena" for making and showing art.<sup>504</sup>

In 1974 Gordon Matta-Clark reclaimed a condemned house in Englewood, New Jersey, as the site for an artistic intervention. With the assistance of Manfred Hecht, the artist cut the house in half, creating the project known as *Splitting* (fig. conclusion.1).<sup>505</sup> As a recent textbook on American art insightfully notes, "A contradiction embedded in both *Womanhouse* and *Splitting* is that their revolutionary reorganization of domestic space depended upon economic upheavals, the condemnation of host buildings, and the displacement of the former residents."<sup>506</sup> The displaced owner of the abandoned house that became the site of *Womanhouse* was an unmarried woman; the family that had been displaced from the Englewood house was African American.<sup>507</sup> The economic and social issues around housing that these two examples bring into focus would be one area of exploration for artists in the 1980s.<sup>508</sup>

One of my interests in this study of the home has been to incorporate the issues around housing and civil rights that were so much in the news in the 1960s into a

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*Haacke: Unfinished Business*, (New York, Cambridge, London: The New Museum of Contemporary Art and MIT Press, 1987), 10.

<sup>504</sup> Notably, Judy Chicago, Sheila Levrant de Bretteville, and Arlene Raven would leave Cal Arts at the year's end to invent a more permanent space devoted to women's art, the Women's Building, in Los Angeles that would house teaching facilities, gallery space, and studios. The Women's Building was in operation between 1973 and 1991.

<sup>505</sup> For a recent view of Gordon Matta-Clark, see Elizabeth Sussman, *Gordon Matta-Clark: "You Are the Measure"* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2007), the catalogue to a retrospective of the artist's work.

<sup>506</sup> Angela L. Miller, Janet C. Berlo, Bryan Wolf, and Jennifer L. Roberts, *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Encounters* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2008), 621.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid.

<sup>508</sup> Two examples include Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Homeless Vehicles* of 1988-9 and Martha Rosler's *Homeless Project* at DIA. For a thorough review of the issues around domesticity, modernism, and postmodernism see Haar and Reed, "Coming Home," in Reed, ed. *Not at Home*, 253-273.

discussion of Pop and other image based art of the decade. My discussion has investigated the interest by visual artists in the home as a theatrical space for the enactment of national and personal fears about security. As Elaine Tyler May and Beatriz Colomina have both documented, the Cold War was the setting for much of the political posturing around the home. As Colomina has suggested, the advent of new technologies for surveillance that had been developed for war use and adapted for domestic use, helped move the home away from a nineteenth-century ideal of private space into a commercialized and politicized space. Nostalgia was also important in this change in the public and private dichotomy. The American home that became an icon of American society in the postwar years was not the modernist architectural home of the Case Study House project. Nor was it derived from the models on view at New York's Museum of Modern Art; nostalgia tipped the balance in favor of homes that reflected the American past. But, significantly, this was a nostalgia tinged with Cold War rhetoric, so that the discussions about how to house Americans, and the image of the home, took on a political dimension. Politicizing the home for propagandistic purposes, as seen in Nixon's performance in Moscow in the 1959 Kitchen Debate and Jacqueline Kennedy's 1962 restoration of the White House into a showcase for American history, had greatly increased the resonating power of the image of the American single-family home. The home was also a battleground for Civil Rights activists who rightly saw segregation in housing as a barrier to integrated education, jobs, and sharing of political power; as it was for those white Americans who felt the threats of integration as a



infringement on their own American dreams.<sup>509</sup> The focus on the American home as the sign of success in a capitalist system, a space of nationalist sentiment and commercial activity, and, by feminist artists, as a socially constructed space where the theater of everyday life was scripted by a patriarchal order, collapsed the older categories of private and public that had defined how home had been understood in the nineteenth century. In the 1960s, the representation of the home was turned inside out; the public seeped into the private realm, the invisible became visible, and the myth of American homogeneity symbolized by the suburban single-family house was dismembered. At home and in the street, to paraphrase the words of feminist activists of the time, “the personal was political.”

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<sup>509</sup> While the Vietnam War and a generalized look at violence and violent death in America has been the focus of several studies of the art of the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement as a catalyst for images or as hidden content in the work of white artists has not received much attention. There are many studies of black artists' activities in the Civil Rights struggles in the 1960s. See for example recent publications on Romare Bearden, Betye Saar, John Biggers, Faith Ringgold, Noah Purifoy, etc.

## Illustrations



- 1.1 Richard Hamilton, *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* 1956



1.2. Tony Linck, for *Life*, *Aerial View of Levittown*, June, 1948



1.3 Hans Namuth, photograph of Jackson Pollock painting in his studio, 1950





1.4 Robert Rauschenberg, *Bed*, 1955



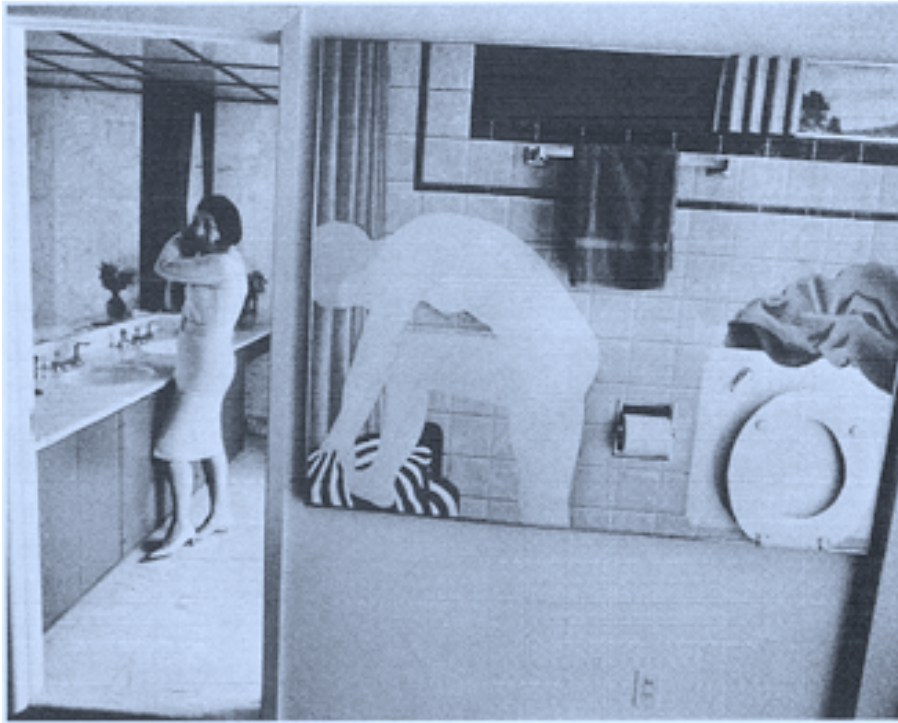


1.6 Charles and Ray Eames, *Eames House* (Case Study House No. 8), 1949



1.7 Charles and Ray Eames, *Eames House* (Case Study House No. 8), 1949  
Interior view





1.8 Kenneth Heyman, Mrs. Kraushar in Her Bathroom, 1965



1.9 Kenneth Heyman, Kraushar Family in their Dining Room, 1964





1.10 Richard M. Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev, the "Kitchen Debate" in Moscow 1959. AP/Wide World Photos



1.11 "Kitchen of the Future" at American Fair in Moscow, 1959



1.12 American Family in Bomb Shelter, 1950s



1.13 Jay Swayzee at the Entrance to his Underground House sponsored by GE, 1964  
Published in *Life* 56, no. 17, (April 24, 1967).



1.14 Jay Swayzee's daughter in her bedroom, Underground House sponsored by GE, 1964 New York World's Fair  
Published in *Life* 56, no. 17, (April 24, 1967).





1.15 Stanley Tretick, John F. Kennedy with son John under desk, December 3, 1963



1.16 Still of Jacqueline Kennedy, Televised Tour of the White House, February 14, 1962



Mrs Kennedy reading the inscription on the State Dining Room Mantel.



- 1.17 Jacqueline Kennedy reading the inscription on the State Dining Room Mantel.  
Televised Tour of the White House, February 14, 1962

*It's a promise!*

Jim's going away tomorrow... and there will be long, lonely days before he comes back.

But that little house sketched there in the sand is a symbol of faith and hope and courage. It's a promise, too. A promise of gloriously happy days to come... when Victory is won.

Victory Homes of tomorrow will make up in part at least for all the sacrifices of today... and that's our promise!

They will have better living built in... electrical living with new conveniences, new necessities, new accessories to make every day an adventure in happiness.

Plan for your Victory Home now... the one sure way is to buy War Bonds. Every bond you buy is an investment in your future happiness and security... every dollar you put into Bonds helps bring our boys back home—and safer. Buy another Bond today.

The General Electric Consumer Institute at Burlington, Conn., is devoted to research on wartime home problems such as electricity, food preparation, food preservation, appliances, care, appliances, repairs, laundering, home heating and air conditioning. Detailed booklets are available from your U.S. Appliances Dealer, or General Electric Company Institute, Dept. 44-6.

APPLIANCES AND MECHANICAL DEPARTMENT, BURLINGTON, CONN.

**GENERAL ELECTRIC**

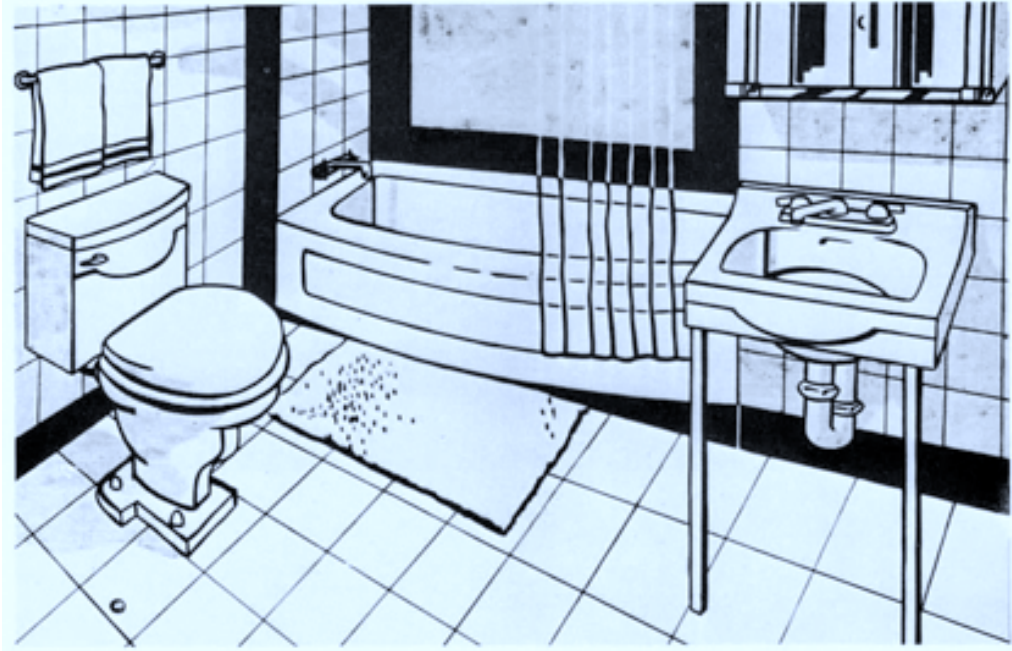
“It’s a promise!” A General Electric advertisement from World War II promises servicemen and their wives or sweethearts “Victory Homes” filled with electric appliances—fourteen are pictured at the bottom of the page—when the war is won. Courtesy of General Electric Company.

## 2.1 General Electric Advertisement from World War II

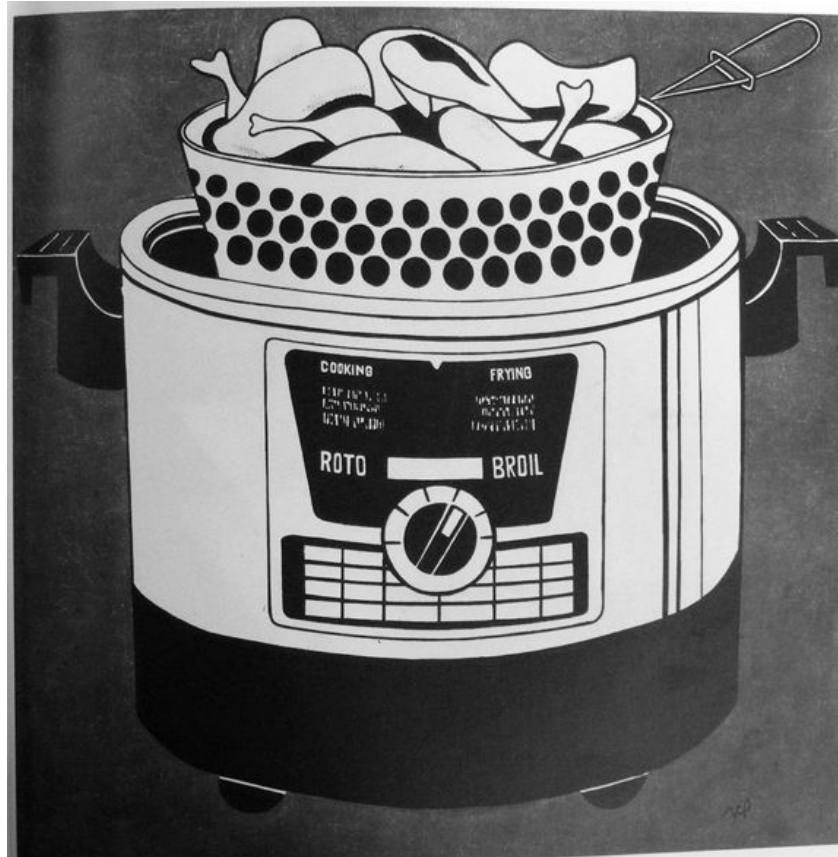




2.2 *Saturday Evening Post* Cover, August 15, 1959  
Illustration by Alajov.



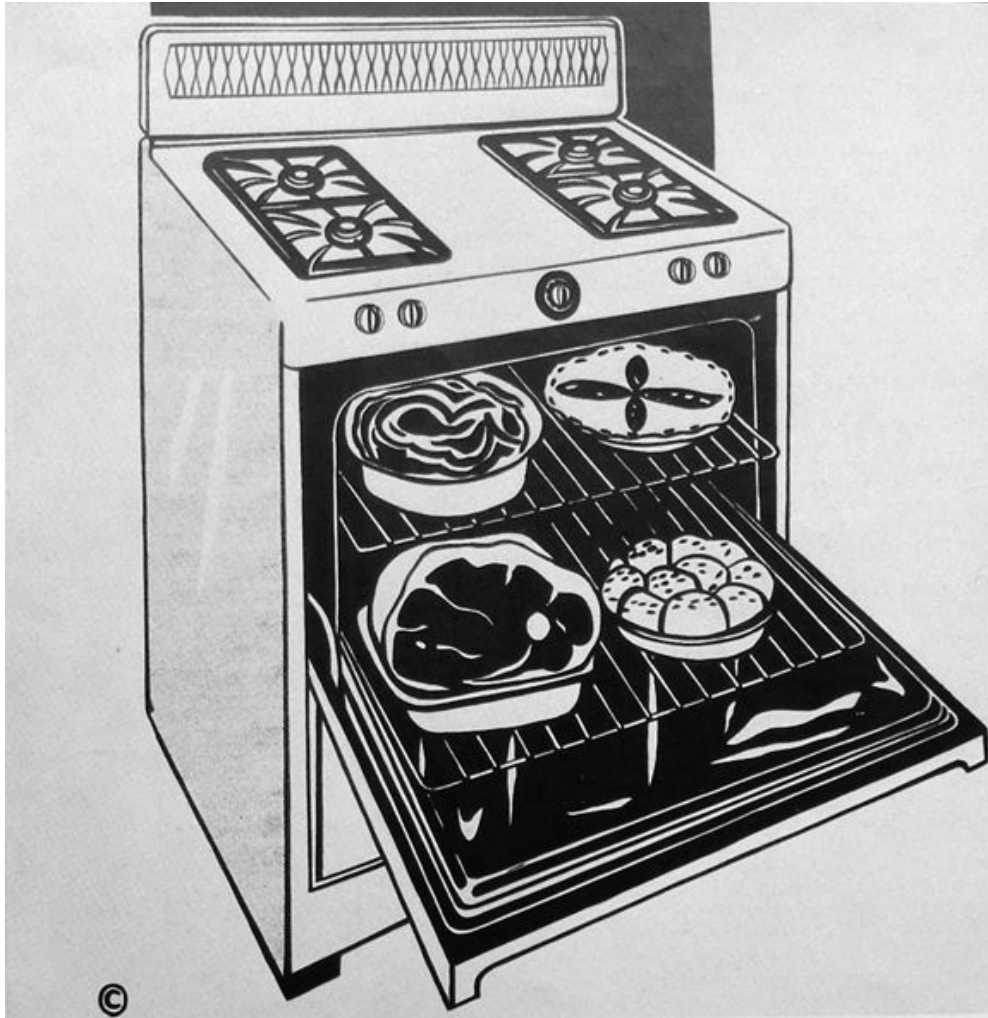
2.3 Roy Lichtenstein, *Bathroom*, 1961



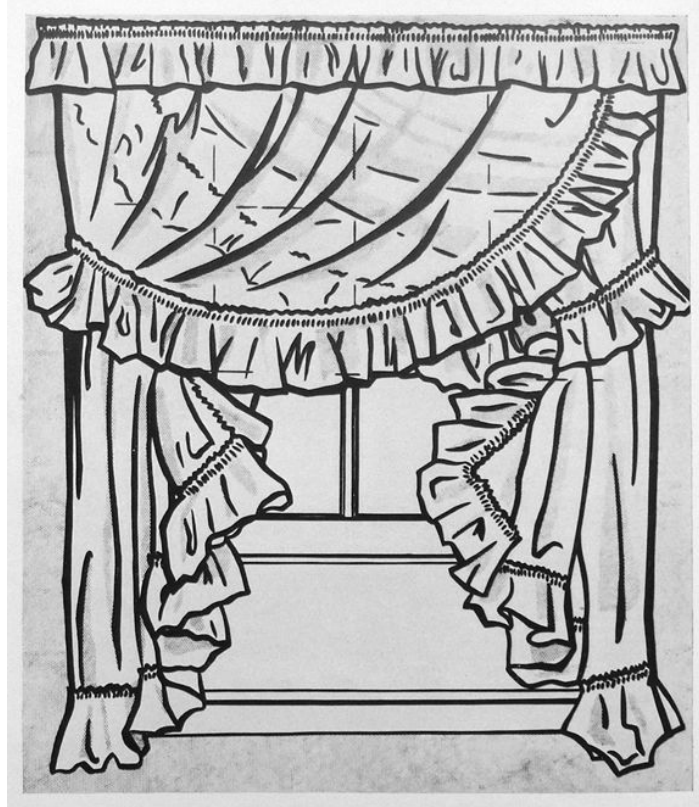
2.4 Roy Lichtenstein, Rotobroil, 1961



2.5 Rotobroil, vintage machine, ca. 1950s (image from Ebay)



2.6 Roy Lichtenstein, *Kitchen Range*, 1961



2.7 Roy Lichtenstein, *Curtains*, 1962



2.8 "Here Comes Color to Brighten Your Home"  
Promotional paint inspiration booklet by Benjamin Moore, ca. 1952





2.9 Roy Lichtenstein, *The Refrigerator*, 1962



2.10 Roy Lichtenstein *Washing Machine*, 1961



2.11 Roy Lichtenstein *Step-on-Can with Leg*, 1961





2.12 Roy Lichtenstein *Blonde Waiting*, 1964



2.13 Roy Lichtenstein *Brad, I Know How You Must Feel*, 1963





2.14 Roy Lichtenstein, *Eddie Diptych*, 1962



2.15 James Rosenquist, *Rainbow*, 1961



2.16 James Rosenquist, *Front Lawn*, 1964



2.17 James Rosenquist, *Win a New House this Christmas*, 1964



2.18 Wyler's Soup Advertisement, *Life* 15 no. 19 (November 8, 1963)



2.19 Detail Chevrolet Rambler Advertisement, *Life* 55 no. 15 (October 11, 1963)





2.20 Tom Wesselmann, *Great American Nude # 40*, 1962



2.21 Tom Wesselmann, *Still life #20*, 1962



### General Electric Mobile Maid gives you lift-top rack and 3-level washing.

No messy screens to clean in this dishwasher. General Electric's special action pre-scrapes and pre-rinses dishes, then washes soft particles down the Flushaway Drain. Just tilt off large scraps and Mobile Maid® does all the rest. General Electric's exclusive 3-level action features Power Shower. It washes down while Power Tower washes up, Power Arm washes dishes all around.

Mobile Maid rolls right up to the sink, ready to get your dishes sparkling clean and dry. Note the convenient-loading Lift-Top rack.

And notice Mobile-Maid's new Faucet-Flo®: lets you draw hot or cold water from the tap while dishes are washing. Ask your General Electric dealer for Mobile Maid SM-500. (Ask about his easy payment plan, too.)



This 12-lb. capacity washer has exclusive MINI-BASKET. It is a washer for all your washables—giant 12-pound capacity for big family loads, and exclusive MINI-BASKET\* for delicate "handwashables," nuisance loads, last-minute loads. Filter-Flo® System works for both. Model shown: WA-1250Y.



High-speed dryer has 12-pound capacity, matches the Filter-Flo® washer in quality and dependability. This model (DA-1220Y) has an extremely sensitive Compensated Control which automatically determines right time and temperature for fabrics being dried. Also variable time control for special fabrics.

\*MINI-BASKET OF THE DRYER, EXCEPT DRYER, MAJOR APPLIANCES CO., CINCINNATI, OH

**GENERAL ELECTRIC**





2.23 National Lumber Association Advertisement, *Life*, (May 10, 1963)



2.24 Campbell's Soup, Advertisement, *Life* 56 no. 3 (January 17, 1964)





2.25 Tom Wesselmann, *Still Life # 30*, 1963



2.26 Bell Telephone Kitchen Extension Advertisement, *Life* (ca. 1963-64)



2.27 Open Kitchen of the 1950s. Illustration from Karal Ann Marling, *As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1994.



2.28 Westinghouse Appliances Advertisement, *Life* 56 no. 23, (June 5, 1964)



2.29 Tom Wesselmann, *Still Life #28*, 1963



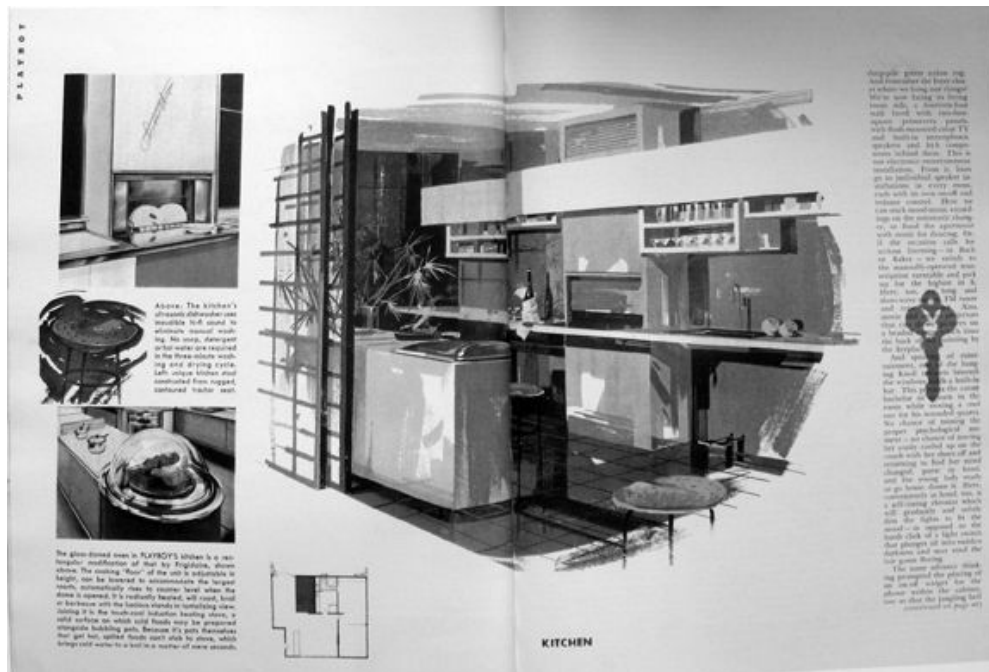
2.30 Tom Wesselmann, *Still Life #31*, 1963



2.31 Lee Friedlander, *Washington D.C.*, 1962



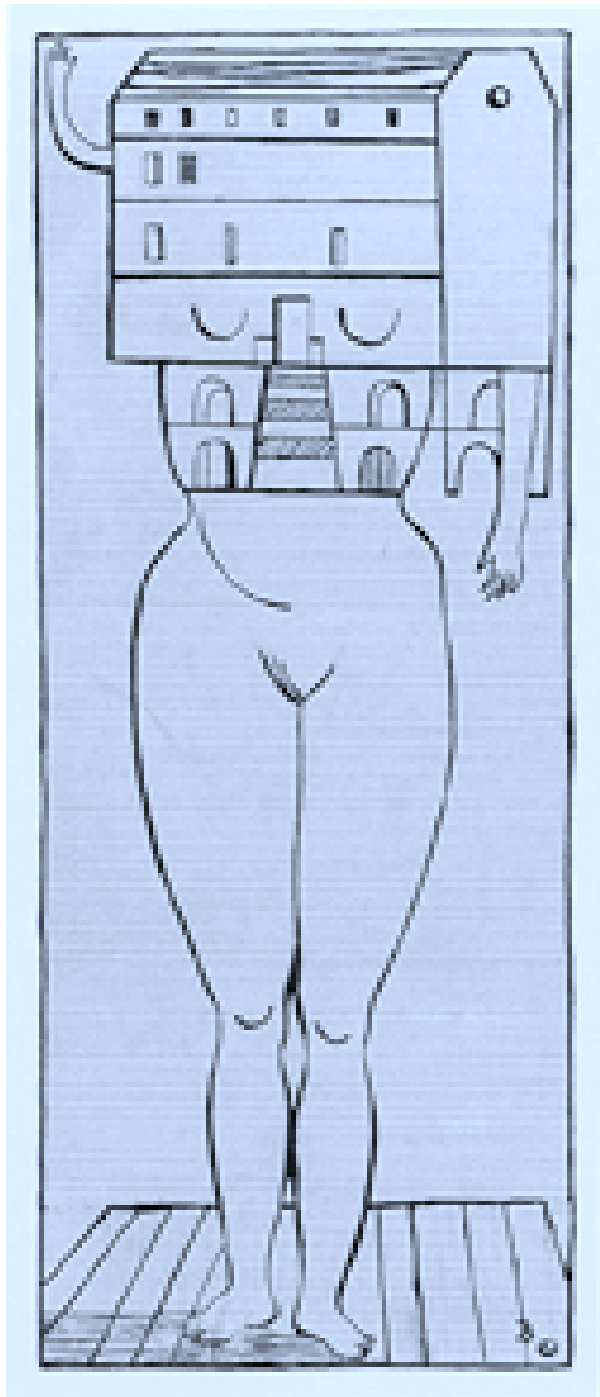
2.32 Tom Wesselmann, *Great American Nude # 48*, 1963



2.33 Kitchen, Playboy Penthouse apartment, *Playboy*, 1956

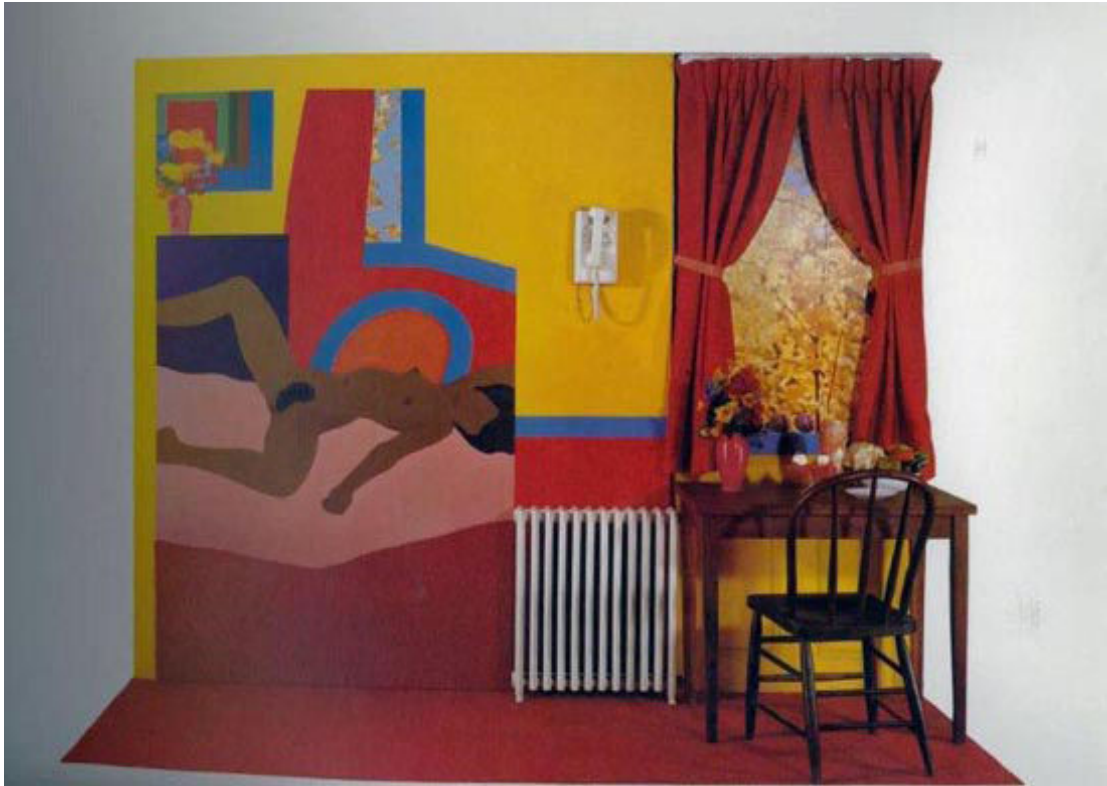


2.34 Bedroom, Playboy Penthouse apartment, *Playboy*, 1956

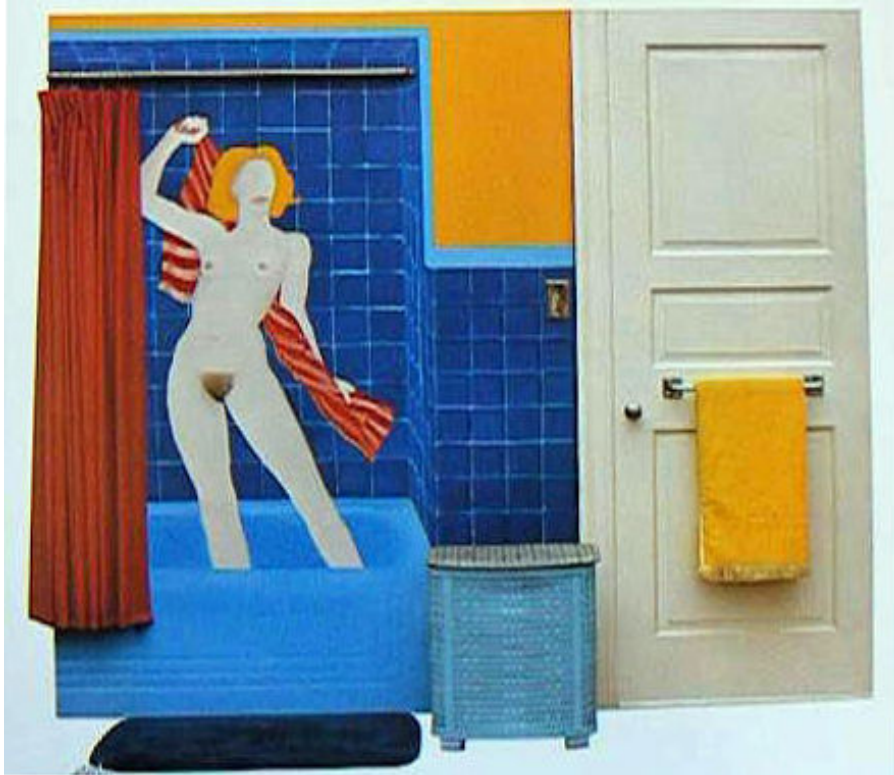


2.35 Louise Bourgeois, *Maison-femme*, ca. 1946-47





2.36 Tom Wesselmann, *Great American Nude*, # 54, 1964



2.37 Tom Wesselmann, *Bathtub Collage # 3*, 1963



2.38 Tom Wesselmann, *Bathtub Collage #1*, 1963



2.39 Tom Wesselmann, *Interior # 2*, 1964





Photograph, Robert R. McElroy, N. Y.

- 3.1 Claes Oldenburg constructing the *Bedroom Ensemble* at the Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1964



3.2 Claes Oldenburg, *Bedroom Ensemble, 1/3, 1963*

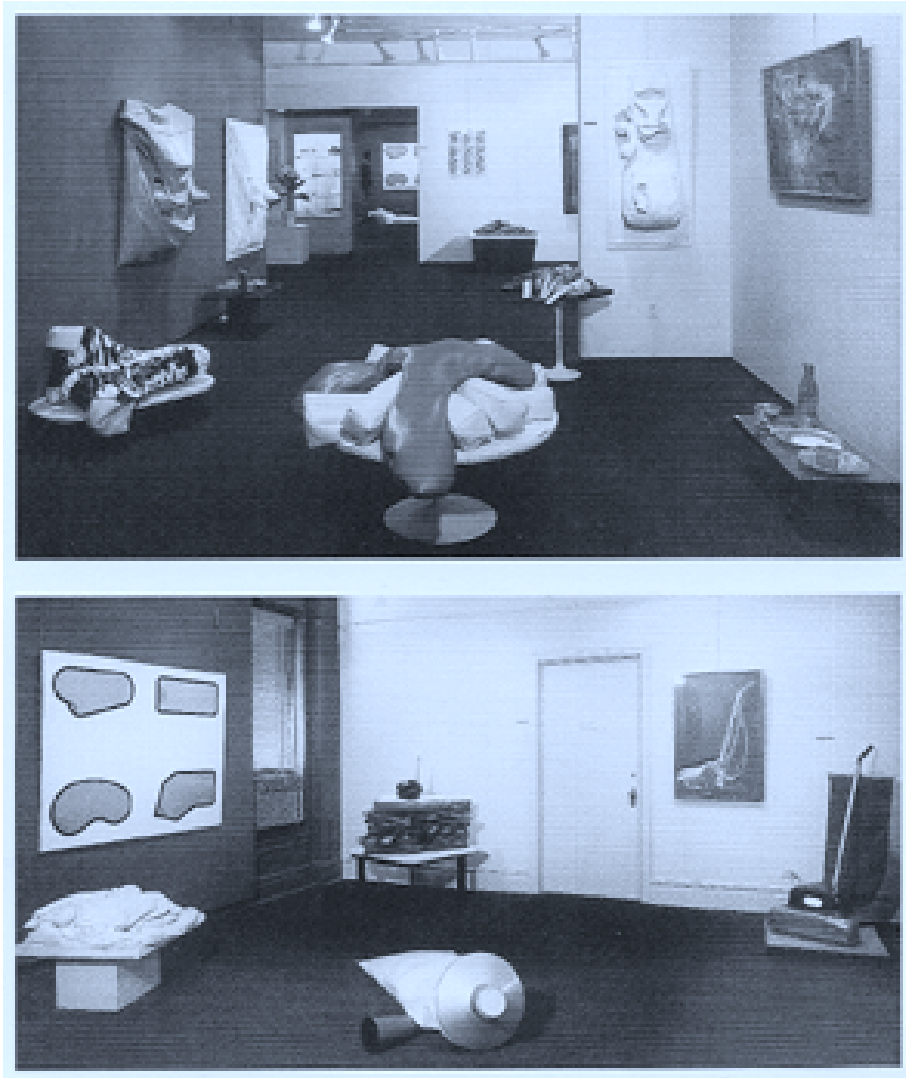


3.3 Claes Oldenburg, *Bedroom Ensemble, 2/3, 1963 (Frankfurt)*

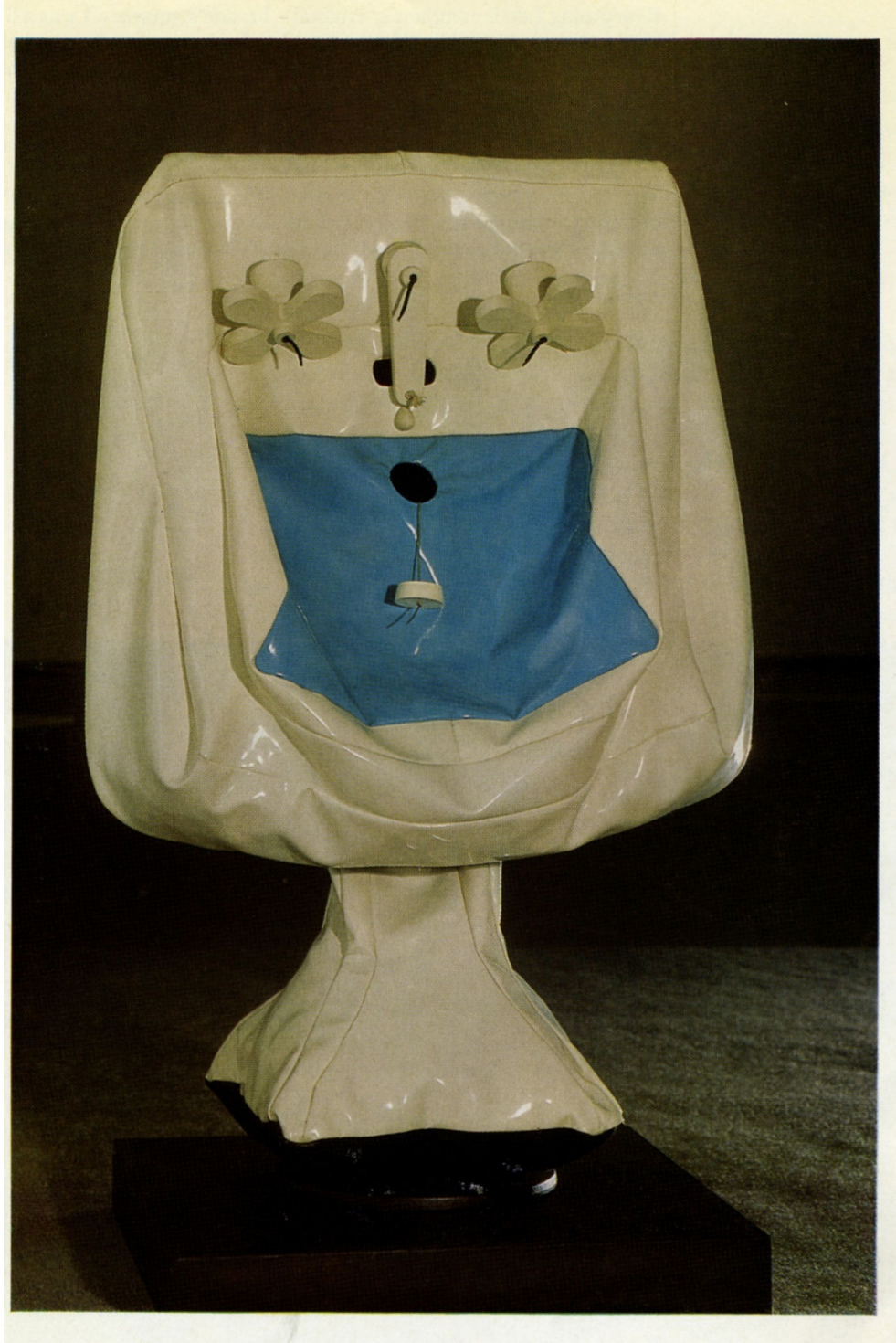




3.4 Claes Oldenburg, *Bedroom Ensemble, 1/3*, 1963 (Whitney Museum of American Art, installation, 1974).



3.5 View of Recent Works by Claes Oldenburg, April 7 to May 2, 1964  
Sidney Janis Gallery ,New York



3.6 Claes Oldenburg, *Soft Washstand*, 1966





3.7 Jim Dine in his environment the *Home* at the Judson Gallery



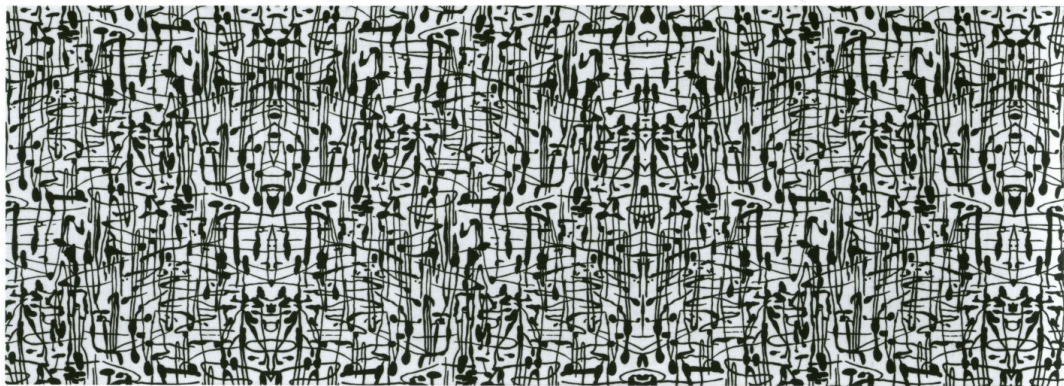
3.8 Claes Oldenburg, *The Store*, 1961



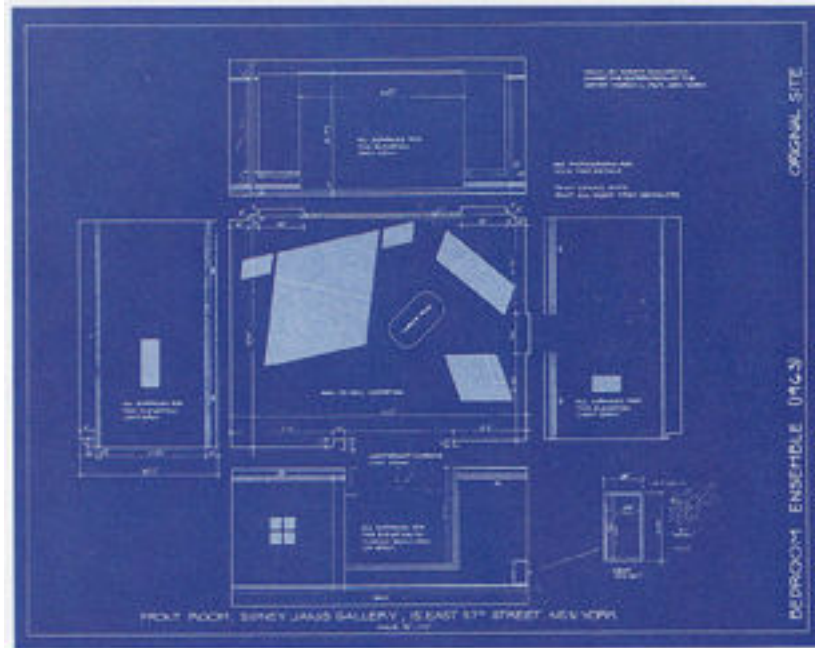
3.9 Claes Oldenburg, *Proposed Colossal Monument for Central Park North, New York City, Teddy Bear*, 1965



3.10 Claes Oldenburg, Detail of *Bedroom Ensemble*, 1/3, 1963



3.11 Claes Oldenburg, Detail of Pollock yardage in *Bedroom Ensemble*, 1/3, 1963

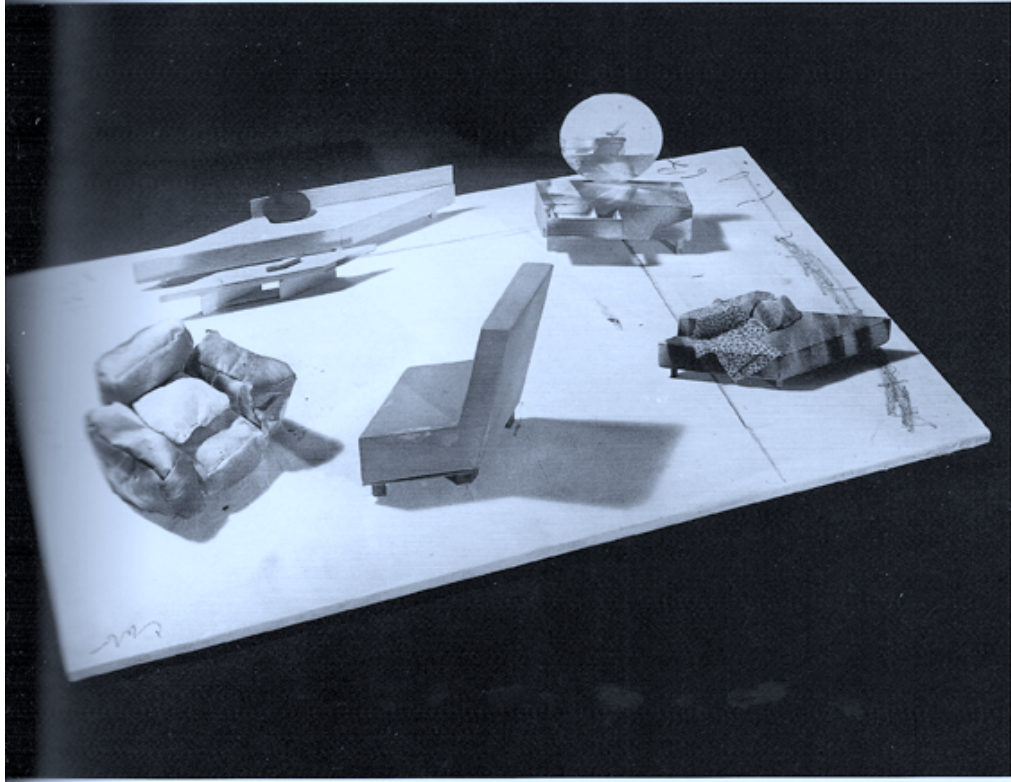


3.12 Claes Oldenburg, Floor Plan *Bedroom Ensemble*, 1/3, 1963. Janis Gallery

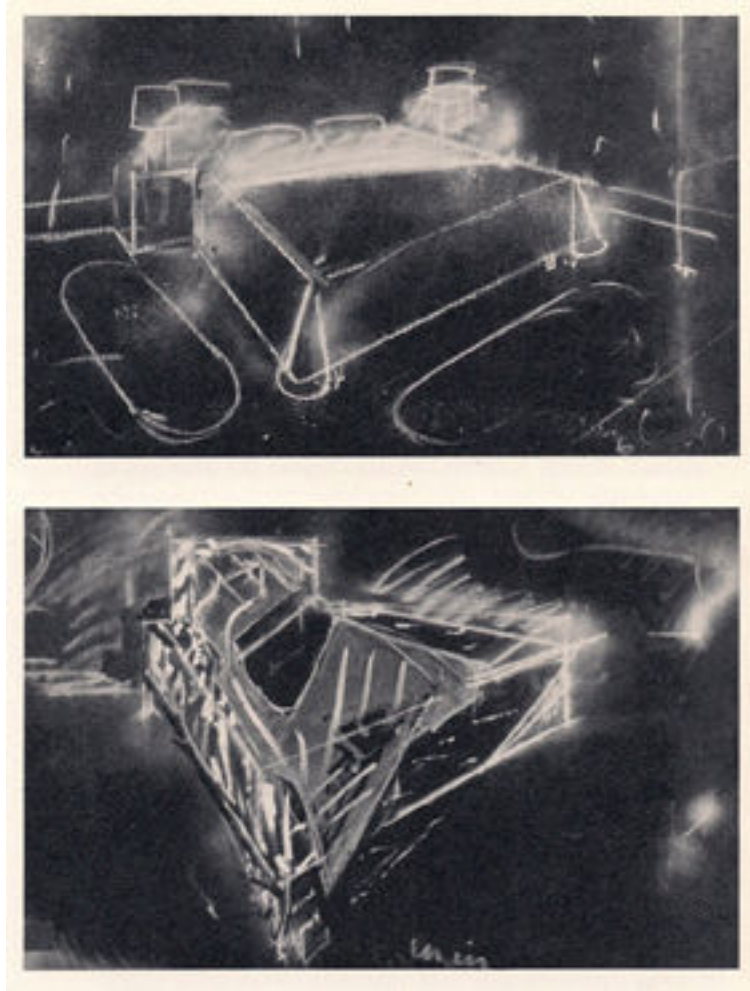


3.13 Claes Oldenburg, *First Model for the Bedroom*, 1963





3.14 Claes Oldenburg , *Miniature Models of Furniture*, 1963



3.15 Claes Oldenburg, preliminary sketch for *Bedroom Ensemble*, 1963

3.16 Claes Oldenburg, preliminary sketch for *Bedroom Ensemble*, 1963



3.17 Claes Oldenburg, Detail of *Bedroom Ensemble*, 1/3, 1963

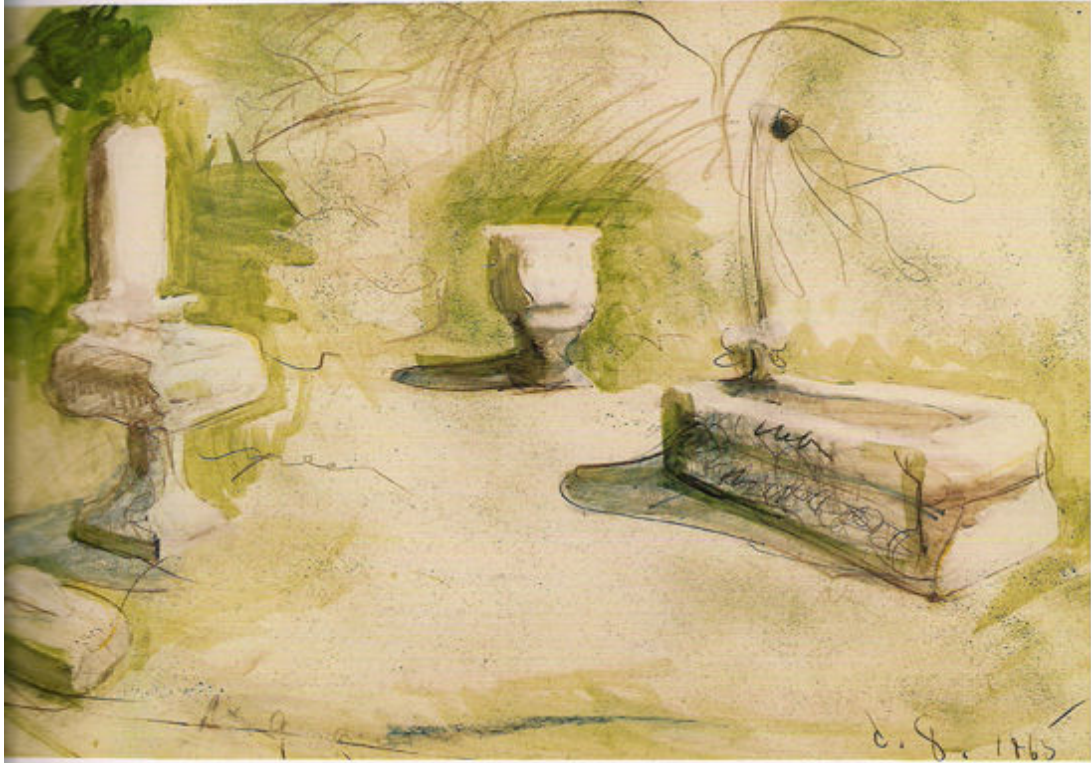


3.18 View into gallery. Claes Oldenburg, *Bedroom Ensemble*, 1/3, 1963





3.19 Claes Oldenburg , *Soft Toilet*, 1966



3.20 Claes Oldenburg, *Bathroom Group in a Garden Setting*, 1965



4.1 Hans Haacke, *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real Time Social System as of May 1, 1971*

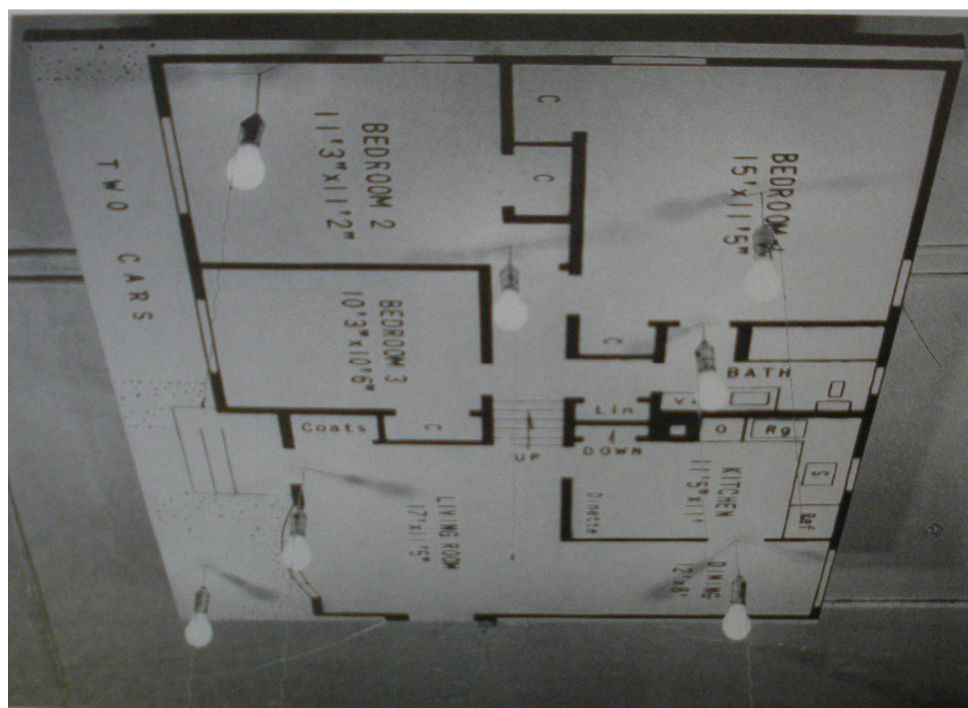


4.2 Richard Artschwager, *Untitled, Tract Home*, 1964

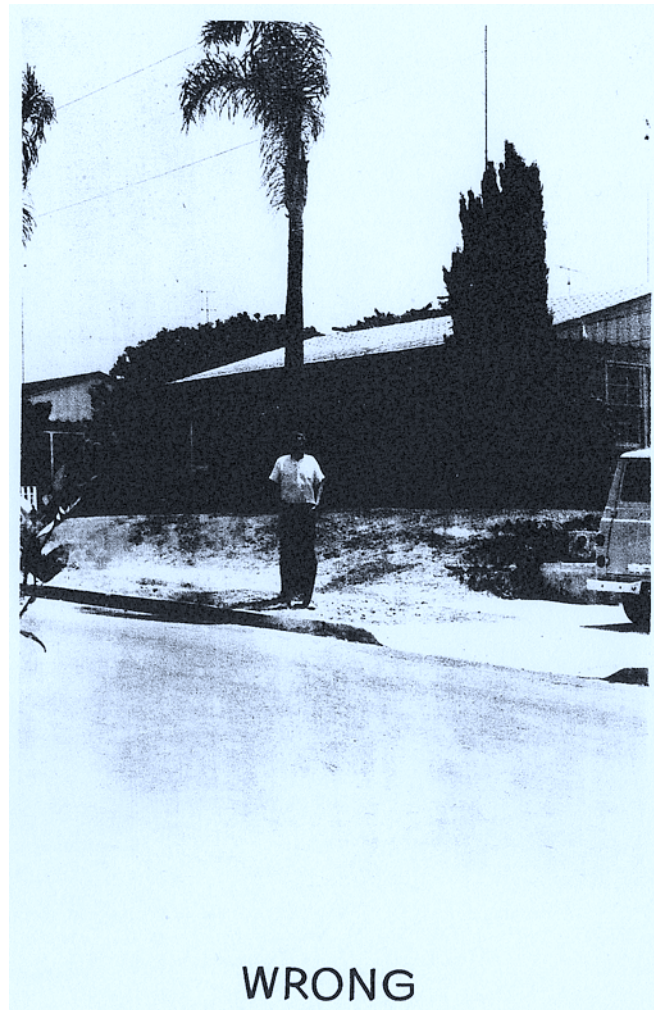




4.3 Joe Goode, *House Painting*, 1963



4.4 James Rosenquist, *Doorstop*, 1964.



4.5 John Baldassari, *Wrong*, 1967



4.6 Dan Graham, *Homes for America*, 1966



4.7 Richard Artschwager, *Lefrak City*, 1962





4.8 Claes Oldenburg, *Upside Down City*, 1962



4.9 John Biggers, *Shotgun Third Ward #1*, 1966



4.10 Romare Bearden, *Evening, 9:10, 461 Lenox Avenue*, 1964

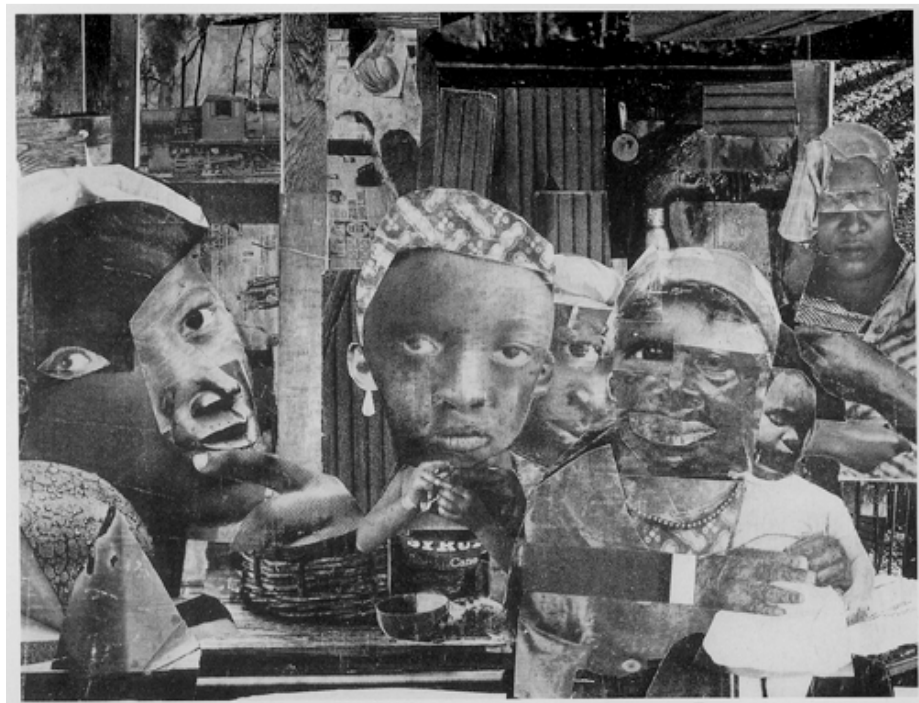




4.11 Romare Bearden, *The Street*, 1964



4.12 Tom Wesselmann's *Still life #28*, 1963



4.13 Romare Bearden, *Mysteries*, 1964



4.14 Ed and Nancy Kienholz Ed Kienholz, *While Visions of Sugarplums Danced in their Heads*, 1964



4.16 Clement C. Moore, *The Night Before Christmas*. Illustrated by Mircea Catsanu, New York: Golden Book Publishing Company, Inc., 2001),np.



4.15 Dwan Gallery installation, *While Visions of Sugarplums Danced in their Heads*, 1964

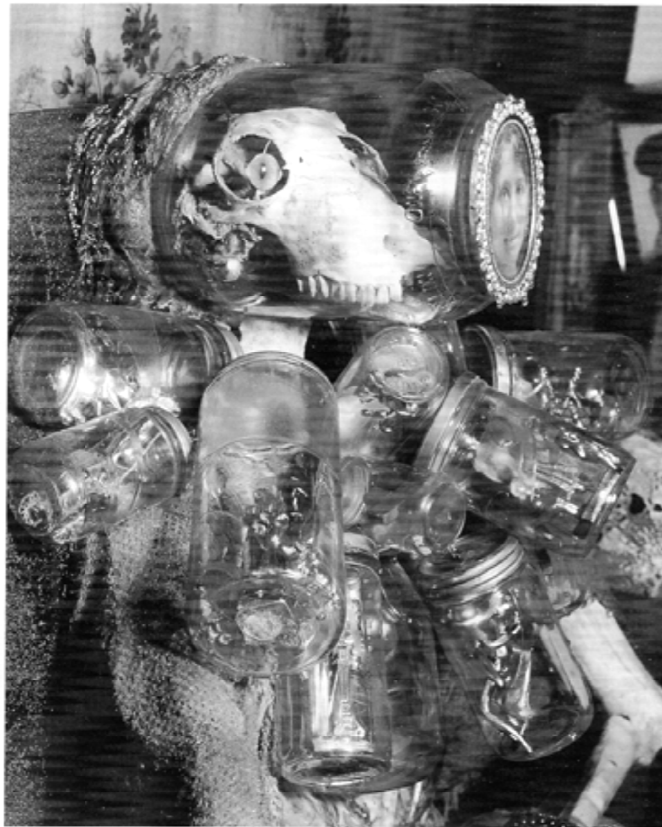


4.17 Detail, *While Visions of Sugarplums Danced in their Heads*





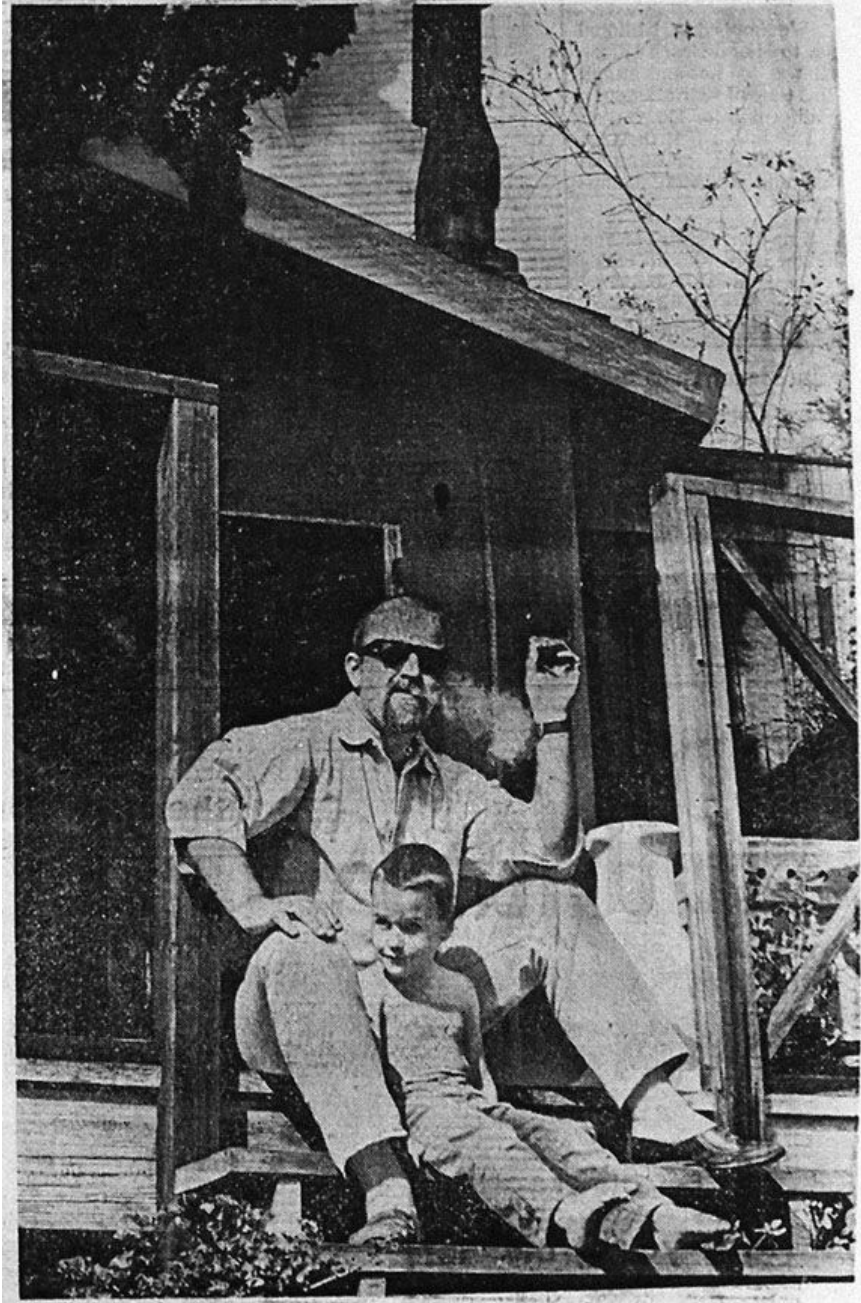
4.18 Ed and Nancy Kienholz, *The Wait*, 1964-65



4.19 Detail, Ed and Nancy Kienholz, *The Wait*, 1964-65



4.20 Photograph of Ed Kienholz in Los Angeles, 1964



4.21 Photograph of Ed Kienholz with son, Noah, 1964.



4.22 David Hockney, *Domestic Scene, Los Angeles*, 1963





4.23 David Hockney, *Peter Getting Out of Nick's Pool*, 1966



4.24 David Hockney, *Portrait of Nick Wilder*, 1966



4.25 David Hockney, *A Bigger Splash*, 1967



4.26 David Hockney, *A Lawn Being Sprinkled*, 1966





4.27 David Hockney, *Beverly Hills Housewife*, 1966



4.28 David Hockney, *Christopher Isherwood and Don Bacardy*, 1968



4.29 David Hockney, *American Collectors (Fred and Marcia Weisman)*, 1968



4.30 James Rosenquist, *Toaster*, 1962





4.31 James Rosenquist, *F-111*, 1965



4.32 James Rosenquist, *F-111*, 1965

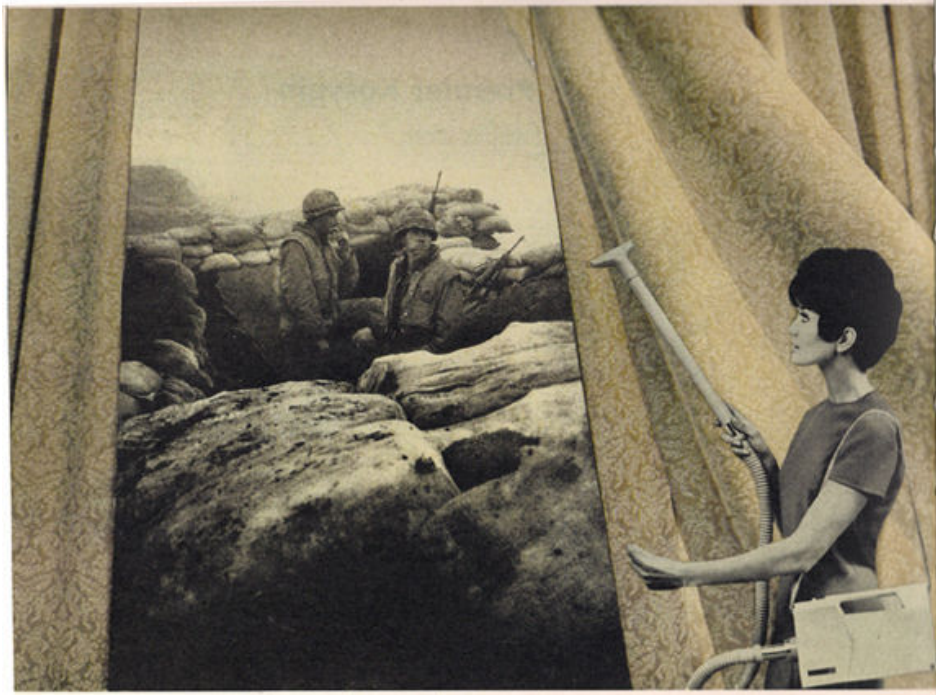


4.33 Martha Rosler, *Bringing the War Home: Vacation Getaway*, 1968-72



4.34 Martha Rosler, *Bringing the War Home: Beauty Rest*, 1968-72





4.35 Martha Rosler, *Bringing the War Home: Cleaning the Drapes*, 1968-72



4.36 Advertisement "Pamper her with a Part-Time Maid," *Life* 56, no. 17 (April 24, 1964)



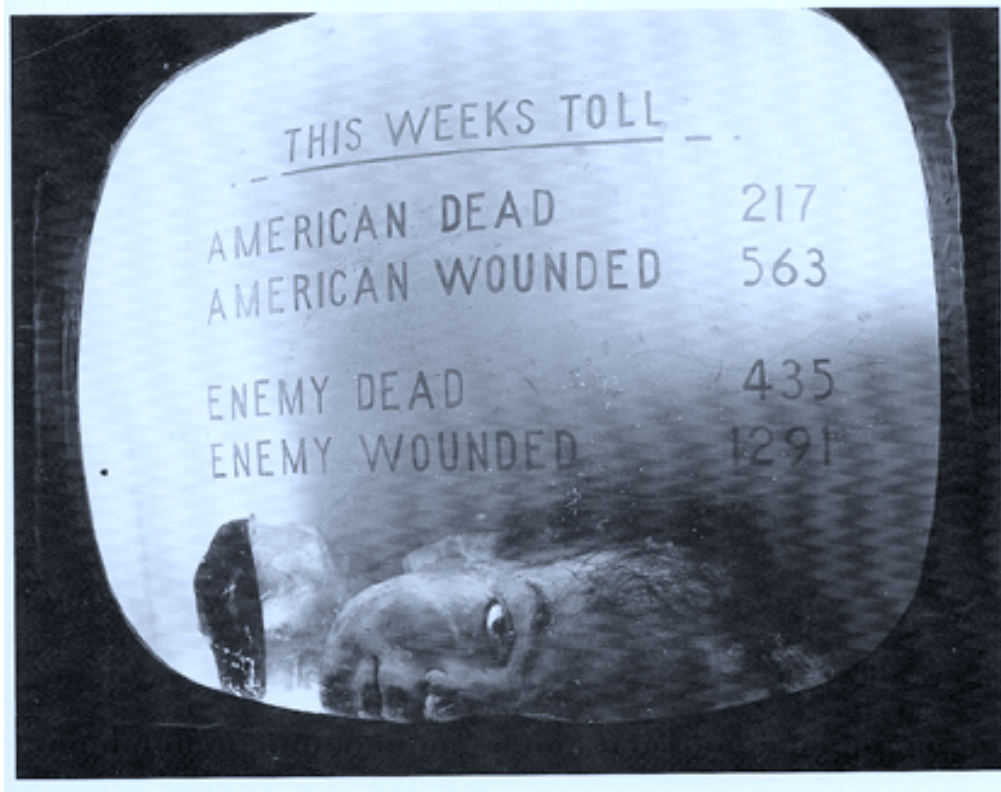
4.37 Martha Rosler, *Bringing the War Home: Red Stripe Kitchen*, 1968-72



4.38 Ed and Nancy Kienholz, *Eleventh Hour Final*, 1968



4.39 Ed and Nancy Kienholz, *Eleventh Hour Final*, 1968



4.40 Detail, Ed and Nancy Kienholz, *Eleventh Hour Final*, 1968

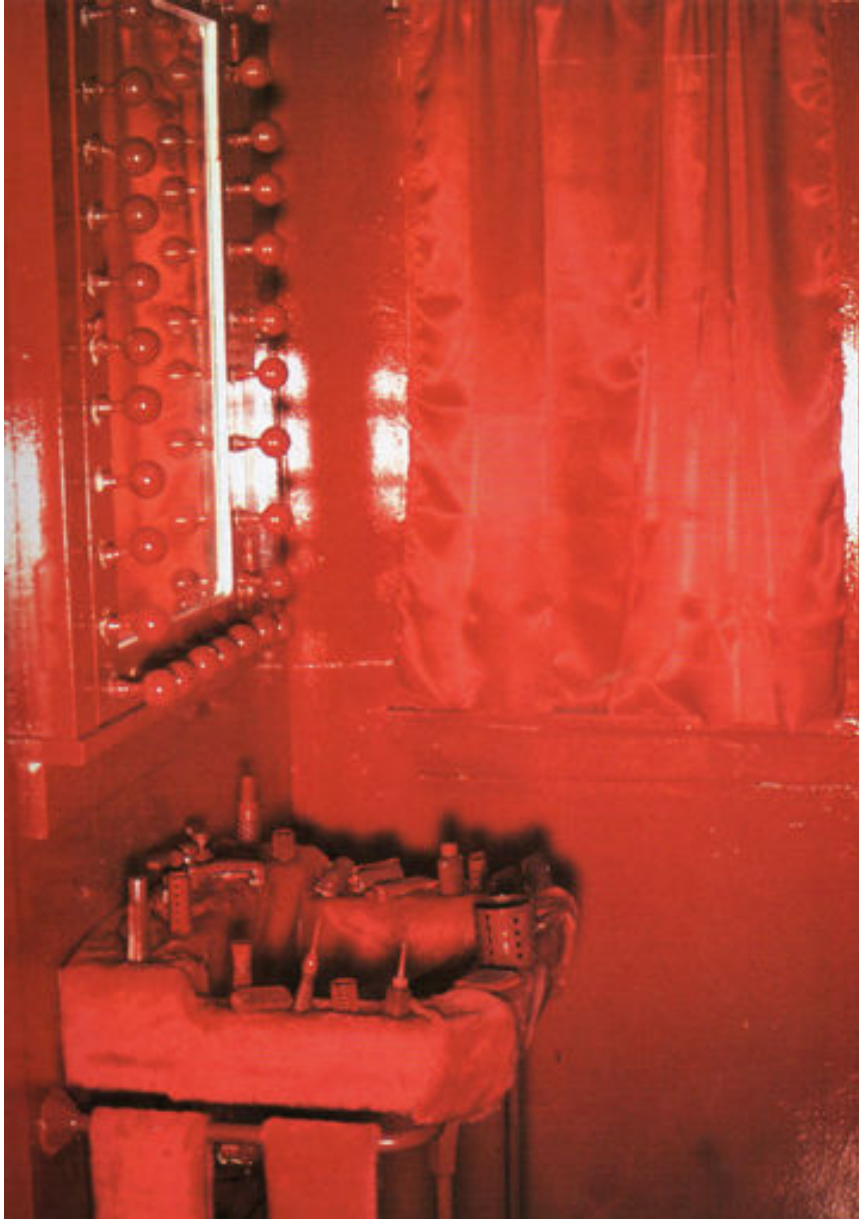




5.1 Cover of the *Womanhouse* Catalogue, 1972



5.2 Judy Chicago, *Menstruation Bathroom* (Top and Bottom)



5.3 Camille Grey, *Lipstick Bathroom*



5.4 Beth Bachenheimer, *Shoe Closet*

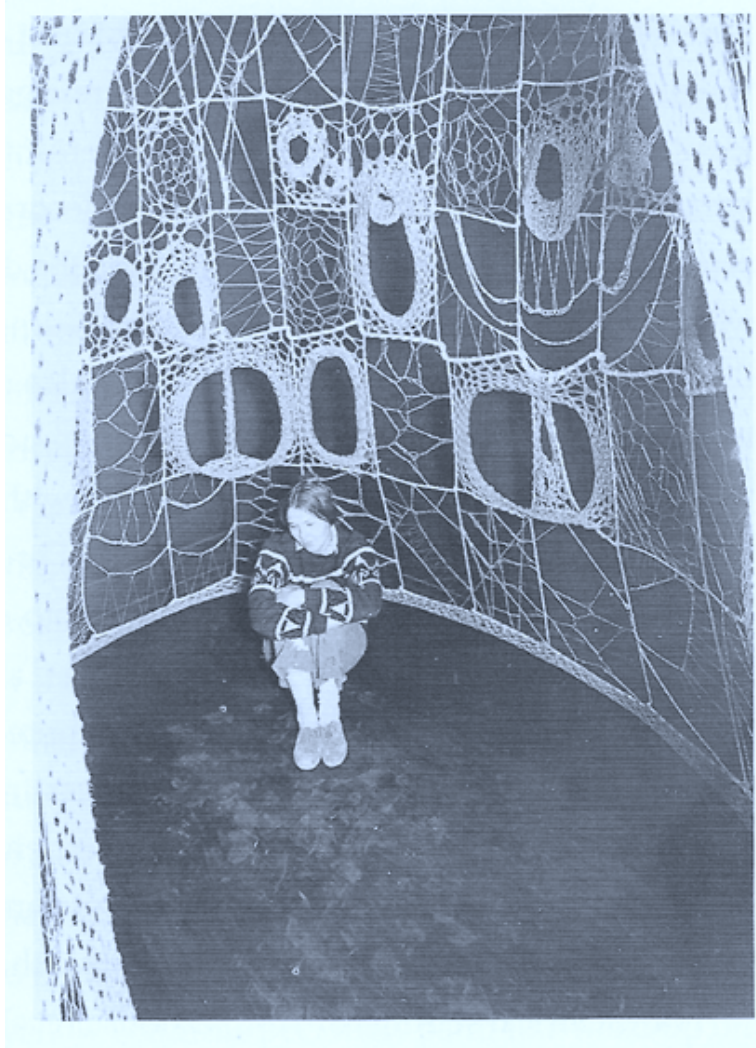




5.5 View through *Womanhouse*



5.6 Vicki Hodgett, Robin Weltsch, Suzanne Frazier, *Nurturant Kitchen*



5.7 Faith Wilding in her *Crocheted Environment* also called *Womb Room*



5.8 Kathy Huberland, *Bridal Staircase*





5.9 Sandra Orgel, *Linen Closet*



5.10 Faith Wilding, *Waiting*, 1972 performance at *Womanhouse*



5.11 Beth Bachenheimer, Sherry Brody, Karen LeCocq, Robin Mitchell, Miriam Schapiro, *Dining Room*



5.14 View of the unfinished Dining Room

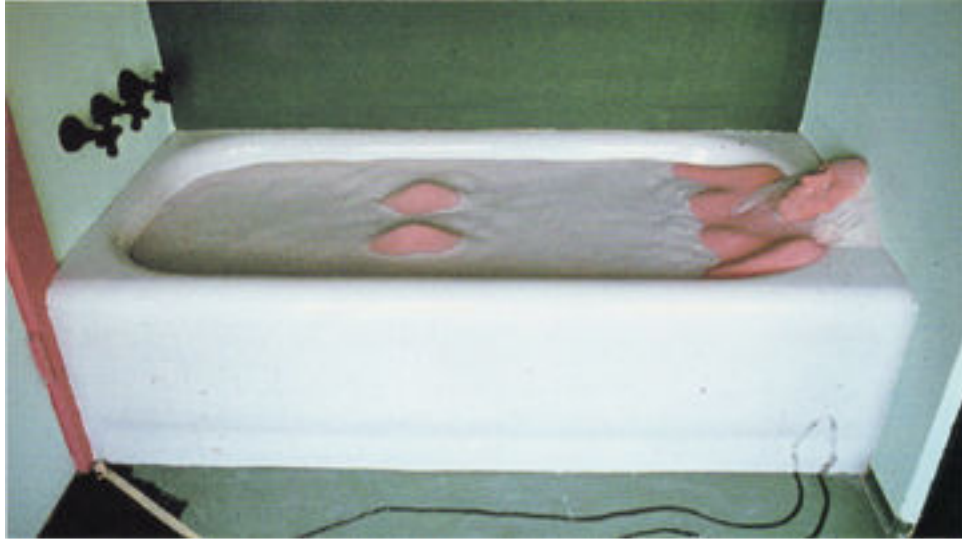


5.12 Shawnee Wollenman, *Nursery*





5.13 Janice Lester, *Personal Space Room*



5.15 Robbin Schiff, *Nightmare Bathroom*



5.16 Tom Wesselmann, *Bathtub Collage # 2, 1963*



5.17 Karen LeCocq and Nancy Youdelman, *Leah's Room* from *Collette's Cherie*



5.18 Karen LeCocq performance, *Leah's Room*



5.19 Miriam Schapiro and Sherry Brody, Dollhouse Room, *Womanhouse*



5.20 Miriam Schapiro and Sherry Brody, *Dollhouse*, detail of figures peering in





5.21 Miriam Schapiro and Sherry Brody, *Dollhouse*



5.22 Carrie Stettheimer, *Dollhouse*, Museum of the City of New York



5.23 Miriam Schapiro and Sherry Brody, *Dollhouse Parlor*



5. 24 Miriam Schapiro and Sherry Brody, *Dollhouse Kitchen*





5.25 Miriam Schapiro and Sherry Brody, *Artist's Studio in Dollhouse*





5. 26 Martha Rosler, *Beauty Knows No Pain: Cold Meat*, , 1967-72

5.27 Martha Rosler, *Beauty Knows No Pain: Hot Meat*, 1967-72



Conclusion. 1 Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*, 1974

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Wolfe, Ann M. *Suburban Escape : The Art of California Sprawl*, Center for American Places and San Jose Museum of Art, 2006.

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Yee, Lydia, *Division of Labor: Women's Work in Contemporary Art*, New York: Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1995.

## Curriculum Vitae

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### Current Employment:

Liaison for the Mellon Program and Assistant Curator of American Art  
Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey

### Previous Employment

Visiting Part-time Lecturer in Art History Department  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, September 2006 to July 2008

Director of Exhibitions, Hunterdon Museum of Art, Clinton, NJ, June 2001-October 2005

Chief Curator, American Federation of Arts, New York, NY, July 1999 to June 2001

Curator of Exhibitions, American Federation of Arts, September 1989 to July 1999

### Education

M.A. Art History, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick  
B.A., Montclair State University, Upper Montclair, NJ

### Grants received

Luce Foundation's American Art Dissertation Research Award, September 2008 - July 2009

Mitnick Fund, Rutgers Art History dissertation research grant, May 2008

New Jersey Council for the Humanities (funding for exhibitions)

*Almost Human: Dolls and Robots in Contemporary Art*, Hunterdon Museum of Art, 2005

*Correspondences: Poetry and Contemporary Art*, Hunterdon Museum of Art, 2003

A.P. Kirby Foundation, Inc. (funding for exhibitions)

*Jim Toia: groundwork*, Hunterdon Museum of Art, 2002

### Selected Publications

*A Parallel Presence: National Association of Women Artists, 1889-2009*, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, 2008.

"Structuring Thought," in *Elizabeth Chapman, Ed Kerns: Word, City, Mind: A Universal Resonance*, Martin Art Gallery, Muhlenberg College, PA, 2007.

*Almost Human: Dolls and Robots in Contemporary Art*, Hunterdon Museum of Art, Clinton, NJ, 2005.

"The Apparent Intersection of Near and Far: International Perspectives in Contemporary Art from New Jersey," in *Transcultural New Jersey: Diverse Artists Shaping Culture and Communities* vol. I, New Brunswick, NJ, 2004.

*Correspondences: Poetry and Contemporary Art*, Hunterdon Museum of Art, Clinton, NJ, 2003

R. S. Mattison and D. Gustafson, *Jim Toia: groundwork*, Hunterdon Museum of Art, Clinton, NJ, 2002.

Editor and principle author, *Images from the World Between: The Circus in Twentieth-Century American Art*, MIT Press and American Federation of Arts, Cambridge and New York, 2001.

*The Poetry of Place: Works on Paper by Thomas Moran from the Collection of the Gilcrease Museum*, American Federation of Arts, New York, 2001.

"Interview with Tone Vigeland," in *The Jewelry of Tone Vigeland*, The Museum of Applied Arts, Oslo, Norway, 1995; translated and reprinted in Tokyo Museum of Modern Art's exhibition catalogue, *Tone Vigeland*, 1997.

### Teaching Experience

Rutgers, Department of Art History

Modern American Art: 1876 to 1970; Introduction to Art History; American Art: 1600 to 1900

Junior/Senior Seminar: Artists' Books in Twentieth-Century Art

REaCH Instructor (Rutgers Early College Humanities Program) 2009 - 2010

### Selected Exhibitions

*Undercover: Disguise and Deception in (some) Contemporary Art*, Arts Guild of Rahway, 2009

*The Gun Show: Images of Guns in Contemporary Art*, Shore Institute of the Contemporary Arts, Long Branch, NJ, 2007.

*Transformative Portraits: Altered Identities in Contemporary Art*, Richard A. and Rissa W. Grossman Gallery, Lafayette College, Easton, PA, 2006.

*Liminal Images: Recent Work by Jeanne Jaffe*, 2005, Hunterdon Museum of Art, Clinton, NJ

*Portraits of Amelia: Photographs by Robin Schwartz*, 2005, Hunterdon Museum of Art

*Almost Human: Dolls and Robots in Contemporary Art*, 2005, Hunterdon Museum of Art

*The Apparent Intersection of Near and Far: International Perspectives in Contemporary Art from New Jersey* (part of *Transcultural New Jersey*), 2004, Hunterdon Museum of Art,

*Correspondences: Poetry and Contemporary Art*, Hunterdon Museum of Art, 2003.

*Jim Toia: groundwork*, Hunterdon Museum of Art, 2002.

*Images of the World Between: The Circus in Twentieth-Century American Art*, American Federation of Arts, American Federation of Arts, 2001. Traveled to the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT; Ringling Museum, Sarasota, FL; Austin Museum of Art, Austin, TX

*The Poetry of Place: Works on Paper by Thomas Moran from the Collection of the Gilcrease Museum*, American Federation of Arts and the Gilcrease Museum, 2001. Traveled to Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska and the Frick Art Museum, Pittsburgh.

*The Jewelry of Tone Vigeland*, American Federation of Arts, 1996. Traveled to Wichita Center for the Arts, KS, Musée des arts décoratifs, Montreal, Canada, Elvehjem Museum of Art, Madison, WI, Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester, NH, Cooper-Hewitt National Museum of Design, NY.

### Selected Lectures

"Pop Art: A Portrait of America" Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, October 24, 2008

"Artist Dialogue with Ilene Sunshine," New York Public Library, October 20, 2008

"Altered Identities in Contemporary Art," Lafayette College, November 9, 2006

"Images from the Greatest Show on Earth: The Circus in European and American Art," Wadsworth Athenaeum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, November 3, 2001.

"Structuring Transcendence: The Retrospective Exhibition as Contemporary Pilgrimage," College Art Association Meeting, Toronto, February 25-28, 1998.