



h o u s e h o l d

an immersive performance installation by Call Your Mom

Emma Bergman, E Cadoux, Sophie Goldberg, Mia Massimino

thesis by Emma Bergman, Sophie Goldberg, and Mia Massimino
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Introduction

Household is a collaborative gallery show that employs live art, video, audio, and sculpture to question structures of home and family. Emma Bergman, Sophie Goldberg, Mia Massimino, and E Cadoux are “playing house,” creating works in our studios and in an Ann Arbor house that question mythologies of home. The gallery show comes from this experimentation as we reflect on the history of a house and our personal histories to create a tense but familiar feeling of home. This work is part of an ongoing collaborative practice called Call Your Mom. Call Your Mom is a performance family that grew out of close personal friendships and now works to include audiences in that shared intimacy.

The major inspiration for working with a house space and re-creating feelings of home in a gallery began with the consideration of perspective in this distinct moment of our lives. As seniors in college, we are in a transitional period—thinking about our future homes and the nostalgia we feel for our homes of the past. We waver in between two places in time, playing house in spaces that we know are temporary.

This work also explores Call Your Mom as a chosen family, a group that is familial without being related and romantic without being sexual. Our history with one another makes for interactions that replicate familial patterns. Things get tense. We require ourselves to work hard through emotions in real time, and in doing so, we maintain the unconditional commitment of family. We look back on memories of our childhood homes and project into shared futures, exploring in distinctly liminal spaces.



Call Your Mom members perform collaborative arm knitting, a technique we created in which each arm serves as a knitting needle to create the loose, large-scale knits that make up the nest.

Contextual Background

Art and Design History and Influences

We draw inspiration from a wide range of artists and performers whose works exemplify the power of experimentation and collaboration. Immersive theatre experiences like Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More*, Feminist Art Program's *Womanhouse*, and the Fluxus happenings of the 1960s and 70s have allowed us to consider the possibilities at the intersections of art installation and live performance. The involved and occupational nature of these events stand as canons in the histories of high art and theatre. Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More* is an experimental and experiential take on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The structure of this piece allows each audience member to choose their own experience, following any performer or storyline at any given time.¹ We are inspired by this model, empowering each audience member in *Household* to have a unique experience of the work based on individual decisions. We then allow those audience instincts to inform which works we highlight in the gallery space. *Womanhouse* is an important influence for this project because of the large-scale collaboration and the choice of a house as the installation site.² Although our collaborative process is quite different from that of the members of the Feminist Art Program in that we work in a strictly horizontal structure, we respect their project's cohesive inclusion of varied artistic voices. *Household*'s structure comments on these performance standards, plays with them, and attempts to compensate for their downfalls.

Call Your Mom thinks extensively about the performative languages that can exist within collaborative groups. We observe and admire the vocabulary of the Chicago-based Neofuturists and that of Michael Gould and Malcolm Tulip's *Remember Me*. Through the study of performance, we have come to believe that audiences can read the power of connection between collaborators. The Neofuturists' *Too Much Light Makes the Baby*

Go Blind, 30 plays in 60 minutes, exemplifies the versatility that is possible in group vocabulary. In this work, the Neofuturists greet audience members with randomly generated name tags as they come into the theater. The "Hello My Name is..." name tags say things like "Mamma Loves A Parade," "Mrs. Officer," and "Chapstick Dog Dick." The cast members jump high in the air at the end of each piece to retrieve sheets of paper from a suspended clothes line. Each sheet represents a different approximately two-minute segment of their ever-changing set. They yell and scream. They grow quiet and contemplate. In short, they include audiences in the energy of their chosen language and as audience members, we begin to speak it.³ *Remember Me* also shows collaboratively produced content—syncopated voice over, dance, and live projection that unite under the themes of memory and expired intimate relationships. The piece is not linear, but it creates many undeniable connections between the various elements that exist on stage. The *Remember Me* cast forms an aesthetic language that allows the audience some fluency, then eventually, the ability to make sentences of their own.⁴ As a collective, and particularly in *Household*, Call Your Mom is interested in the processes these groups employ to develop their vernaculars and the ways they invite audiences to learn them.

Household is a more tactile work than previous Call Your Mom shows. As we explore the physical installation elements in *Household*, we look to fiber artists, referencing the history of traditional women's work, its place in the home, and its place within the current breaking of binary gender roles. Historically, women have found both community and limitation within their assumed roles as homemakers. Quilting bees began in the 1800s, providing space for women to feel empowered despite so often being restricted to the home. Quilting is used as a means of storytelling; creating physical artifacts that project family history and nostalgia into the future. The contemporary works of Ana

Teresa Barboza, Susan Frazier, and Faith Wilding epitomize the lasting power of fiber arts to reclaim feminine narratives. Susan Frazier's *Aprons in the Kitchen* and Faith Wilding's *Womb Room*, both installations in *Womanhouse*, use traditionally feminine objects—aprons and yarn—to tell personal stories.⁵ Take, for example, Frazier's artist statement:

“Come in [...] please put on the apron strings and experience the heart of the home with me. The outside is no longer with you[...]I want to undo these apron strings, to see what the rest of the world is doing, to see if I can help...to see myself once again. I want to travel, to see wonders I only dream of daily...to see wonders I only dream of daily, right here in the heart of the home façade.”

With these words, Frazier connects material and narrative, bringing viewers into her experience of the feminine “home facade.”⁶ Similarly, in a quilt by Ana Teresa Barboza entitled *TUS PALABRAS SON LO ÚNICO QUE TENGO EN NUESTRA RELACIÓN A DISTANCIA*, embroidered phrases that, when translated, read, “How strange,” “Do you want to follow me?” and “I’m happy,” allow for multiple tones to exist in a single work.⁷ In *Household*, we create our own quilt placing it in a room dedicated to animating and combining the intricacies of our family histories, a complicated homage to this traditional method of settling and comforting.

In creating our own fusion of installation and performance, we turn to artists that utilize the dissonance between their work and traditional methods of museum presentation. Amy Jenkins' *Pocket, Trapped Wasp*, and *House-I* not only challenge gallery installation expectations, they also link to our overarching themes of complex home and family.⁸ Rirkrit Tiravanija's *Untitled (Free)* uses food and smell and Ernesto Neto's *O Bicho SusPenso na PaisaGem* uses tension and gravity to take elements of home comfort out of context, thus enriching their meanings. In Rirkrit Tiravanija's *Untitled (Free)*, Tiravanija serves rice and curry to museum-



A person sits inside Faith Wilding's *Womb Room*, an installation in *Womanhouse*.

goers, emphasizing their interaction with one another and with the food as the focus of his work.⁹

In *Household*, Call Your Mom creates a similarly interactive space at 910 Sunset Road, in which the audience's experience with the environment and with one another enlivens the work. Ernesto Neto's *O Bicho SusPenso na Paisagem* is a physical structure that is made of string and suspended above the ground. Like the yarn enclosure in *Household*, viewers can explore Neto's work and walk inside of it. This nest-like sculpture takes comfort and tension—both ideas that we are exploring in *Household*—and places them in space for public exploration. It allows the audience to make their own physical connections by placing their bodies inside the work.¹⁰ Call Your Mom settles our memories of home into a physical house and ultimately reconstructs those experiences in a gallery. In doing so, we augment the meaning of the work outside of its original home. We reanimate the house, question what it means to inhabit, and subvert expectations of art viewing.



The Neofuturists perform an iteration of *Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind*.



Amy Jenkins projects onto a smaller-than-life-sized button down shirt in *Pocket* (1996).

Research in Other Disciplines

The interdisciplinary nature of our work compels us to research ideas outside the worlds of art and performance.

Animals

Researching animal artistry and nest-making patterns enables us to consider our own home experiences from a distance. When we think of our upbringings as animalistic, we begin the work of normalizing dysfunction, trauma, and loss because we see other species dealing with these patterns in similar ways. After reading Mike Hansell's *Bird Nests and Construction Behaviour*, we are able to see the human home as a kind of nest.¹¹ In *Household*, we install a nest made of yarn, sticks, and chicken wire into a grown-up's childhood bedroom in order to reference our human tendency to construct safety, both before and after we learn that it will inevitably decay. We find comfort in the ubiquitous nature of this decay. It is both cathartic and numbing to think that we, as humans, are not the only animals dealing with separation anxiety, neglect, adultery, loss, abuse, etc. The repetitive motion of knitting the nest materials teaches us that there is comfort in pattern, but that we can easily become numb and make mistakes within an established system.

Music

Call Your Mom is considering these same systems of repetition in music. In our collaboration with Masters of Composition student Douglas Hertz, we explore spatial relationships through sound. Hertz installs motion-sensing feedback loops throughout the house that produce dissonant harmonies when visitors stand within them. The soundtrack to *Household* creates a haunted beauty that references the artifice of hosting in private space. The audio in the bedroom that houses the nest sings a

haunted lullaby in the same key as the motion sensor program. We match the key to unify the ambience and to engage with the hidden darkness of lullabies. We are captivated by the realization that "Rock A Bye Baby" is about a cradle falling out a tree and "Hush Little Baby Don't Say a Word" is about a parent purchasing material goods to silence their child. Our lullaby takes the tone of a parent slowly comprehending the true meaning of the lyrics that raised them, as they lull their own child to sleep:

Mother sings of springtime.

We all go to sleep.

*And now in the meantime,
newborn still can dream.*

And we'll see.

And we'll sing.

Bedroom still in springtime.

Never goes away.

*Winter takes the leaves by,
cooling sky to grey.*

Mother waits for springtime.

Know that she is here. She is here.

Mother waits for spring time.

Father's always near.

*In the waiting hours of the winter,
we must sleep ourselves to sing.*

And she will keep us company.
She will keep us company.
She will keep us calm and young
until the newer year.

Mother makes the seasons.
Evening dims the day.
Mother makes the people
that in day the sun will wake and say,
“go live to see another age.”

Mother loves the springtime.
Youth asleep at dawn.
Aging every springtide.
Every body gone.

Architecture

Working within a built environment, we must also consider architecture theory. In his 2016 Penny W. Stamps Distinguished Speaker Series lecture entitled *Performance Architecture*, Alex Schweder discusses the performative acts that architectural spaces invite and the ways in which architecture can enhance performance. *Household*, like much of Schweder’s work, exists at the intersection of these mediums. Each room we install in combines the architecture of the space as it stands, the architecture of what we bring to the space, and the architecture of the human bodies—performers and audience members—that move through the space. We are drawn to the metaphysical image of bodies moving through an unfamiliar house space, hosting upbringings, childhoods and adulthoods within. Throughout this process, we call upon bodies as artifact,

and as architecture in order to physicalize the impacts of upbringing and illustrate the variance and similitude of personal experience. Then, we apply these architectural concepts to a gallery space, charged with a history of austere viewership. We consider this framework and the effect its etiquette has on the content it holds as we translate our installation into an ostensibly blank, but culturally charged gallery space. We have experience adapting our content to fit disparate spaces—Slusser and Stamps Galleries for the Undergraduate Juried Exhibitions, the Duderstadt Video Studio for our last show, *THIS CLOSE*, and Interarts Showcase, the basement of Vail Cooperative House, the Yellow Barn, etc.



Call Your Mom performs a second iteration of *Shadow People* at the 2015 Penny W. Stamps School of Art & Design Undergraduate Juried Exhibition. Photo by Katie Raymond.

Personal Context

Call Your Mom has collaborated since 2014, fostering intimacy for and with our audiences based on the closeness we share. We explore personal experiences and test the boundaries of relationships through multi-media performances that exist in realms of visual, performing arts, and places in between. Call Your Mom's history of collaboration and the personal narratives of its members inform every project we undertake.

Call Your Mom (2014)

Call Your Mom—a multimedia performance that investigates women's solidarity and collective narrative via movement, poetics, sound, and video—premiered on November 14th, 2014 at Lab Cafe in Ann Arbor. The show employs an episodic structure similar to that of *Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind* and *Remember Me*. The positive reactions to our first show and the feedback we received drove us to make *THIS CLOSE*, our second self-produced show at the Duderstadt Video Studio in 2016.

THIS CLOSE (2016)

THIS CLOSE is a 55-minute episodic, multimedia investigation into miscommunication and mistranslation. It allowed us to build on our collaboration, making larger-scale work as we looked into the questions that concerned us at the time. We intended the piece for a larger audience than that of our first work, *Call Your Mom*. This pushed us to attempt an all-encompassing performance that engaged audiences across various ages and interests, asking audience members if we can ever really understand one another.

Adapting for space

Adapting past concepts to current perspectives is an important part of our collaborative history. Throughout the past three years of making together, we discovered that we regularly feel the need to adapt our work as our realities, personal boundaries, and perspectives change. As we become an established collective, we are often asked to present past work in new spaces. Our willingness to adapt allows us to keep the work dynamic and genuine. For example, we performed *Shadow People*—a movement piece from our first show—at the 2015 Stamps Undergraduate Juried Exhibition. This was our first experience adapting for a new space. When we got together to rehearse this piece for the show, we realized that a year later, it no longer represented our experiences. It didn't fit in our bodies anymore, so we decided to change it. We worked with the piece, keeping many of the movement elements but adding new physical reactions to that choreography so we could feel comfortable as active participants in our own work. Since then, we have adapted numerous works. The process of adapting has become essential to *Household* as we work to present the piece in two distinct forms—its original experimentation location at 910 Sunset Road and weeks later, in the gallery space.

Methodology

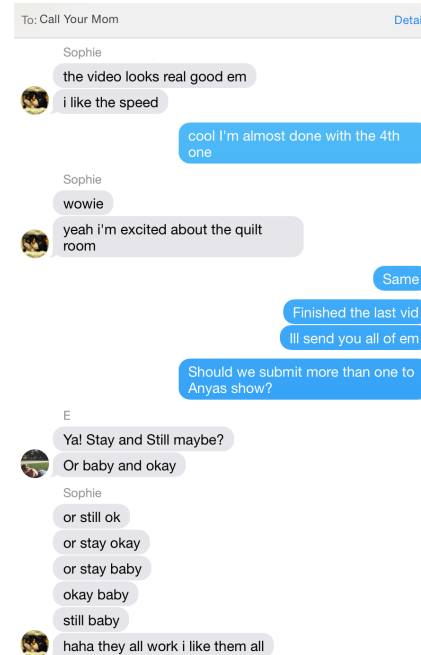
Call Your Mom operates within a strictly horizontal structure, with every voice equally represented and no one person wielding more power than another. Our process goes against the hierarchy of capitalist, product-driven models seen in United States business, family, and culture. This anti-capitalist framework informs the ways in which we include audiences in our work. We do not charge admission. We explore various non-traditional seating and stage arrangements so as to not perpetuate the etiquette of traditional high theater. We engage audience members and view their reactions as crucial to our work's meaning. We attempt to create immersive spaces that invite audiences into our world.

Because this is a continued collaboration, we have already established a practice and a making style. We spend our studio time meeting as a group, building on self-driven objectives. A typical Call Your Mom meeting has five parts: "life update/show update," adjustment, work time, logistics, and assignments. We structure our meetings this way to get emotionally and artistically in tune with each other before beginning our work. Our familiarity with the group's modes helps us determine what we will be able to accomplish at any given time. We also make sure to update one another on the excitements, inspirations, and ideas we have each encountered since our last meeting. From there, we move into our agenda for the day. The tasks on our to do list range from solidifying choreography to timed writing prompts to applying for grants. Based on the life and show updates, we determine whether we are all mentally prepared to work on what we scheduled, whether it is still our top priority. Then we adjust and move to work time, time we allot ourselves to actually complete the items on our agenda. This is the meat of the meeting.

After we make, we move into logistics. We discuss our next meeting time and our upcoming priorities. Did we get as far as we wanted to get

on this task? Is there another opportunity or deadline that we need to address? Do we need some time to simply move around, improvise, and create next meeting or is it crunch time for something? Once we plan our next meeting, we address things we each need to do outside of our allotted rehearsal. Does someone need to buy materials? Does someone need to spend a few hours editing a video on their own? Do we need to assign a collective writing prompt on a topic we are working on in our next meeting? We leave the meeting trusting, from experience, that each person will uphold their commitment to the collaboration and come prepared to our next meeting.

Our work benefits from critique. In our IP reviews, the panel stressed that it is important to distill and synthesize our ideas to make our workload more manageable and the product more accessible to audiences. The process of cutting concepts and combining works is not new for us. Beginning with larger goals than seem possible to accomplish keeps us from limiting ourselves and allows us to successfully convey our ideas.



These screen shots provide insight into Call Your Mom's frequent text message correspondence.



The sock wall was installed in its first iteration at our residency at The Hosting. Photo by Matt Wilken.

We try to reach out to artists throughout the community who are less familiar with our work as well. During the month of January and part of February, Call Your Mom was in residence at The Hosting, an art space that seeks to provide community for local artists. At the end of our residency, we gathered a panel of local artists: the Music Coordinator at The Neutral Zone, a second year MFA student, a professional videographer, the Senior Programming Coordinator for the University Musical Society, a singer-songwriter, and the founder of The Hosting. This critique invigorated us. We had time to set up the space and were therefore able to provide the panel with a complete experience. There was no sense that we needed to defend the work, but a perception that the work could speak for itself. This was refreshing coming from a university setting in which it is essential to speak eloquently in defense of one's work. It also brought us back to the roots of our practice, a self-governed space we created as a sort of sanctuary from outside influence.



We first showcased our collaborative embroidery technique at our critique at The Hosting. Photo by Matt Wilken.

Installation at 910 Sunset Road

Windows

As audience members approach, white chipped windows lean against the trees leading up to the house, becoming haunting characters who greet the unexpecting viewers.

Cradle

An old 19th-century cradle sits adjacent to the front doorway, filled with water and illuminated by light spilling out from the house that towers above it.

Entrance program

As each audience member enters the installation, they are greeted by a randomly generated phrase pulled from an emotionally wide-ranging list of greetings.

“I... wasn’t expecting you.”

“Ya ya come in come in!”

“Surprise!”

“Where have you been?”

“We’ve been worried sick!”

“Heyyyy”

“Come ere you!”

“Go away.”

“Welcome home”

“Hey, babe.”

“Who are you?”

“It’s way past curfew.”

“Long time no see”

“Who invited you?”

“What are you doing here?”

“I can’t believe you’re here!”

“Come on in”

“Make yourself at home”

“How long are you staying?”

“We’re not interested. Thank you”

“Do I know you from somewhere?”

“You’re in my space.”

“Come here often?”

Projection

A white sheet hangs across the floor-to-ceiling window to the left of the entrance. Layered, texture-heavy moving images of the installation are projected across it—soap bubbling, lamps shining, water boiling, sun rising. Silhouetted participants enter and linger, anticipate the installation. In the meantime, they become part of the image from afar.

Baby nook

In a tight corner, E’s first pair of shoes hangs from a bright blue rope reminiscent of a noose. The corner is upholstered from top to bottom with pastel pink fabric and gated at the middle with an adjustable fence—the kind that keep dogs and babies in place. It is lit in bright pink and feels like a baby’s bedroom at nap time.

Sex nook

Directly beneath the baby nook, another inlet alcove is covered with deep blue velvet. Inside, four vibrators buzz and fidget on invisible fishing line with lingerie strewn in a pile underneath.

Powerplay screendance

A black couch welcomes each audience member to sit down and orient themselves toward an old 90’s tube TV. The television fuzzes its way through *Powerplay*, a cloudy screen dance, costumed in gender-emphasizing pastels that are hastily swapped back and forth from body to body before the viewer’s eyes.



This is a still from Call Your Mom's screen dance *Powerplay*, which was shot in the photo studio at the Penny W. Stamps School of Art & Design. Photo by Katie Raymond.

Costumes

The costumes we wear in *Powerplay* are hung on the wall to the right of the couch, giving the audience physical reference to the characters.

Head-in-hole

An old window with peeling white paint is suspended in an open door frame. One side of the window is covered in black fabric, with a head-sized, circular hole cut through at the approximate height of an adult human's head. Below the hole, a small label reads "HEAD HERE." On the other side of the fabric, behind the window, the person whose head sticks through is a voyeur, looking in on the goings on in the other room. As an audience member approaches the head-in-hole, they do not know they are a voyeur. It is only when they enter the other room that they realize their role.

Glowing cutting boards

Clear, plexiglass boxes (etched to fog the glass) are covered in parchment paper and lit from beneath. The words "Is it done yet?" and "Is it healthy?" are written in chalk marker on the boxes. As we make pancakes in the kitchen throughout the night, we pile them on one box and smear syrup on the other. Audiences are encouraged to eat the pancakes as they explore *Household*.

Quilt

A vibrant, childlike quilt lays on the bed. Audience members work to understand each patchwork self-portrait and embroidered family inside joke or tradition within the quilt. They will never fully understand the meaning, but the words "Stay," "Still," "Baby," and "Okay," in the same aesthetic create cohesion. They can piece these four words together in choppy refrigerator-magnet-style sentences.

Embroidery boxes

Four wooden boxes with white cloth stretched across the front play rear projected moving images of collaborative embroidery. One hand in front of the box retrieves the needle and thread from the silhouetted hand behind the sheet. The front hand pulls the thread through and returns it to the silhouette on the other side. The videos are frantic in speed, but they still seem to move slowly, illustrating the real-time tediousness of this uncomfortable communal activity. Eventually, after some time, the videos read “Stay Still Baby Okay?”

Sock curtain

The sock curtain is dyed with dirt, an ombre that fades from untouched white to a muddy brown that reflects overuse. Audience members can part the sock strands with their hands and push their way into an enclosed corner, inward facing, lit in bright white.

Dryer sheet wall

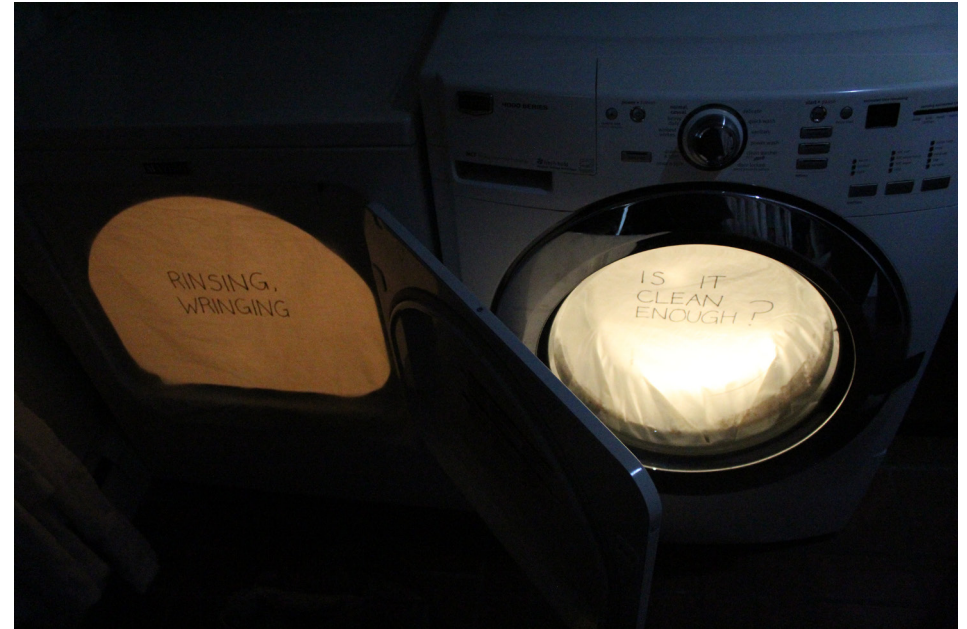
The dryer sheet wall hangs perpendicular to the sock curtain. It is made of dryer sheets, plastic bags of lint, and translucent photo transfers. It is dirty, hazy, and fragile.

Washer/dryer words

White sheets with the words “RINSING, WRINGING” and “IS IT CLEAN ENOUGH?” are stretched over the openings of the washer and dryer, written in black and backlit from inside the machines.

Nest

In a small, old bedroom off the kitchen, participants encounter an overwhelming enclosure. The canopy-esque shelter resembles the structurally sound, but sloppy decoration of a bird’s nest, with yarn, sticks,



Above: The phrases “RINSING, WRINGING” and “IS IT CLEAN ENOUGH?” are stretched across the washer and dryer at 910 Sunset Road.

Below: The nest occupies the downstairs bedroom at 910 Sunset Road.
Photos by Malcolm Tulip.



The sex nook is positioned below the baby nook at 910 Sunset Road, creating a spooky juxtaposition. Photo by Malcolm Tulip.

and chicken wire poking out every which way as it stands still and strong. It droops close enough to the visitor's face to warrant a kind of casual, visual claustrophobia. The nest's chaos is warm. Its colors are natural. The untidy harmony of it cites the familial structure.



The members of Call Your Mom perform the final incantation to close out the 30-minute performance portion of the installation at 910 Sunset Road. Photo by Malcolm Tulip.

Lullaby

A lullaby plays softly in the nest bedroom. It sounds like a vocally motivated music box, twinkling along to a tired and trembling parent's evening song, slowly realizing the darker meaning behind the melody and lyrics that sang them to sleep their whole life.

Political artifacts

The walls of the downstairs bathroom are filled with framed political artifacts—signed images and personal letters from competent and distinguished leaders of the past.

Twinkie

In a small space above the bathroom mirror, a spotlit frame filled with Twinkies™ smushed up against the glass sits among the other framed artifacts. A greasy typed caption reads “45th President of the United States of America.”



This is an outside view of the glass room at 910 Sunset Road, where the 30-minute performance portion takes place. Screen capture of video by Levi Stroud.

Performance at 910 Sunset Road

15-minute performance installations

Throughout the evening audiences traverse the house, encountering six ghostly figures—the four members of Call Your Mom and our two performance collaborators Douglas Hertz and Spencer Schaefer. Doug serves as a sort of bouncer, guiding people from the yard into the installation and performance space, timing the entrance and exit of each group. Spencer stays in one place throughout every 15-minute section. He sits in a blue, leather armchair playing his French Horn in reaction to a motion sensor program that feeds off the traffic in the house. The members of Call Your Mom engage in various Household tasks—cooking pancakes, brushing our teeth, massaging each other, bickering, arm knitting, humming, etc.—rotating activities for a new audience at the end of each 15-minute cycle. Each task invites the audience to wonder about the history space and its occupants, creating characters for a misplaced nostalgia. After the performance, one audience member remarked that they felt a ghostly presence but could not tell who haunted the space—the performers or the audience.

30-minute performance

15 minutes into each hour-long cycle we gather the audience by approaching them individually to inform them that it is time for dinner, leading them to the glass room for the 30-minute performance. The performance is a combination of movement, dialogue, audio, and performer-audience interactions. Audiences react—some laugh, some cringe, some sit in silent introspection—as we stumble through an intentionally hesitant opening piece. The work intends to illicit this kind of varied response, leaving room for audience members to project their own relationships with home and family onto it. Our script serves as the appendix to this thesis.

Argus II Gallery

Installing *Household* into the gallery space became a process of synthesizing the work throughout the house into a cohesive aesthetic that could exist in one room. Once we placed the individual works in the gallery, we were able to gather new meanings from their proximity. For the gallery installation, we chose to include the quilt, *Powerplay*, sock wall, embroidery boxes, baby gates, nest, and family portrait. We also chose to add a video documenting our site-specific installation at 910 Sunset Road and chose to re-purpose the windows to create the illusion of an enclosure at the gallery.



The nest is installed in the back right corner of the Argus II gallery. Its shadows splay across the adjacent walls.

Documentation Video

As you approach the space in Argus II gallery, the room hums with a compilation of *Household's* audio pieces while projections surrounded by warm lamps illuminate the space in a dim flickering light. The documentation of our performance installation at 910 Sunset Road plays on the back wall of our gallery enclosure giving the audience context for the work.

Sock curtain

The sock curtain is suspended from the ceiling on the far right of the space, creating the illusion of a front wall. Through the sock wall, a blue velvet chair and a pair of pink pillows sit on a gray shag rug facing *Powerplay*.

Powerplay screen dance

This piece remains the same in the gallery space, although the television is painted white and now rests on top of a small table covered in pink silk fabric. Behind the television the wall is painted baby blue framing the space. Audience members are invited to sit and watch the flickering screen dance as it cycles through.

Costumes

In the gallery iteration, the costumes we wear in *Powerplay* are strung on a clothes line above the television draping down the wall and lit by a dim blue light.



Nest

In the back right corner of the gallery, the nest is completely reconstructed, replicating its original form. It invites audience members to come inside and experience the soothing but confining enclosure.

Embroidery boxes

In the gallery, the embroidery boxes are spread across the space. Two are displayed next to each other behind the *Powerplay* area facing the left wall. These boxes—“Baby” and “Okay?”—are held in place by three baby gates painted white. This structure creates a playpen with white rubber ducks and E’s baby shoes from the original baby nook sitting on top. The other two boxes—“Stay” and “Still”—sit high on top of the walls, engaging the space above the viewer’s head.



Above: In the Argus II gallery, E’s first baby shoes are positioned on top of the “Baby” embroidery box in the center of a circle of white rubber ducks.

Below: This detail provides a closer look at the patchwork quilt that hangs on a yellow wall in the gallery.

Quilt

The quilt hangs on the back left wall as an heirloom of our chosen family. The piece gains a new nostalgia in its new location, like a granddaughter displaying her grandmother’s family patchwork.

Windows

The white chipped windows hang from the ceiling, suspended at eye level and forming a corner through which audiences can view a lamp, a small rug, a pile of socks, and the rest of the installation.

Performance iteration

At Argus II, we perform excerpts of the original 30-minute and 15-minute performances throughout the evening, as audience members gather and disperse. We adapt to the space, arm knitting from atop the walls and reading books beneath the hanging windows.

Conclusion

The ideas we are grappling with in *Household* grew from the homes we were born into and the homes we chose. As we adapted our installation and moved it from the house at 910 Sunset Road to the Argus II gallery, we continued to learn about how the environment a piece occupies informs its meaning. We became so interested in this transformation that we plan to incorporate this adaptable model into our future practice.

As we transition out of an academic setting, we plan to continue working together, crafting a portable, immersive tour of *Household* that we can bring with us to festivals, residencies, and future homes. This template will begin with site-specific considerations: What does the place smell like? What do we think about as we fall asleep there? We will then sort *Household* into two categories: pieces that respond to the original site and pieces that speak to general ideas of homemaking. We will devise a fill-in-the-blank performance piece that changes based on location. Encountering new collections of literature, art, and everyday objects in each place we visit will push us beyond our experiences of home to understand the roles of domestic space among various cultures, age groups, and identities.

Household asks us to consider the development of chosen families, the enclosure of home space, and the body as a home. We hope to bring our home and comfort making skills to other people, facilitating performance-based, coalition-building workshops. We recently facilitated a workshop at Onward: A Student Power Summit. In the workshop, we introduce participants to ideas of embodiment, ability, and performativity and illustrated that each body in space is both personal and political. This workshop is an introduction to devising performance as a tool for self-care, collaboration across identity, and corporal awareness. It asks that participants become aware of their own bodies before interacting mindfully with one another. This process builds off of the instincts of the

individual and combines those instincts with the work of a collaborative group, enabling an empathetic development of choreography.

Many of the questions we pose in *Household* remain unanswered: What gestures and symbols form our understandings of home? How do we bring ideas of home with us to new places, in order to bring a new awareness to familiar relationships? What defines the inside and outside boundaries of each home? What happens to a household when it is uprooted? Where do its teachings go? How do upbringings interact with one another? How can we facilitate familial interaction and tension between strangers? Such existential and ubiquitous questions can hardly be answered in a single project and will likely remain unanswered for as long as we are making homes, working together, and building worlds in domestic space. Our continued collaboration and newfound workshop model will enable us to continue actively considering these questions and bring us closer to understanding them.



Call Your Mom signals the end of our final performance at 910 Sunset Road. Photo by Levi Stroud.



The gallery space at Argus II requires that many elements coexist in a single room, creating a lively and rich iteration of *Household*.

Endnotes

1. *Sleep No More*. Dir. Punch Drunk. New York City. Performance.
2. *Womanhouse*. Chicago, Judy, and Miriam Schapiro. Feminist Art Program. 1972. Performance.
3. *Too Much Light Makes The Baby Go Blind*. Dir. The Neo-Futurists. Chicago. Performance.
4. *Remember Me*. Gould, Michael and Malcolm Tulip. Tangente Theatre Company. 2014. Ann Arbor. Performance.
5. Wilding, Faith. *Crocheted Environment*. 1972. Installation. Womanhouse, California.
6. Frazier, Susan. *Aprons in the Kitchen*. 1972. Installation. Womanhouse, California.
7. Barboza, Ana Teresa. *TUS PALABRAS SON LO ÚNICO QUE TENGO EN NUESTRA RELACIÓN A DISTANCIA*. 2006. Quilt. Peru.
8. Jenkins, Amy. "Ebb." 1996. "Pocket." 1996. "Trapped Wasp." 1998. "House-I." 1995. Amy Jenkins. Web.
9. Tiravanija, Rirkrit. "Untitled (Free)". 1992. Food. MoMa, 303 Gallery.
10. Neto, Ernesto. "O Bicho Suspenso Na Paisagem." 2011. Faena Arts Center. Universes in Universe.
11. Hansell, Mike, and Raith Overhill. *Bird Nests and Construction Behaviour*. N.p.: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.

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Appendix: Performance Script

Household

All stand over a pile of household objects. Clasp hands in a circle. Silent expectation. No one speaks.

Em: So who wants to start?

Mia: Do you want to start?

E: I mean I don't normally start but I could. I know it.

Soph: Yeah I mean we all know it.

All: Yeah, yeah.

Mia: I definitely know it.

E: So why don't you start?

Mia (*and sort of Soph*): Well we could start together?

Em (*and sort of E*): Well we could start together.

Soph: So then...let's all start. Together.

All: Dear God, or something different. We are grateful for (dogs / cheeseburger / sleep / sex)...(dogs / cheeseburger / sleep / sex) and also for shelter and peace and family. Family. Family.

Pause

E: The song.

All: The song.

Pause

Em: So who wants to start?

Mia: Do you want to start?

E: I mean I don't normally start but I could. I know it.

Soph: Yeah I mean we all know it.

All: Yeah, yeah.

Mia: I definitely know it.

E: So why don't you start?

Mia (*and sort of Soph*): Well we could start together?

Em (*and sort of E*): Well we could start together.

Soph: So then...let's all start. Together.

Deep breath in

Mia: But like, does it start mmm? mmmm? mmmm

All test notes, deep breath in

All (*singing*): What is happening to our home?

What is happening to me and all my friends?

What is happening to the world?

What is happening to people I don't know?

All look down at the pile of objects. In the following section, performers hand objects to audience members. These lines can be said in any order and overlap one another.

E: (*gives cleaning bottle*) "Clean up after yourself"

Mia: (*gives checkbook*) "I'm trusting you."

Em: (*gives charger*) "But I really need it back"

Mia: (*gives fake plant*) "Don't over water because it's fake"

E: (*gives bread on plate*) "Mommy, I made you this"

Soph: (*gives toothbrush*) "As a friend *hands toothbrush*"

Em: (*gives soap*) "Wash up."

E: (*gives thermometer*) "You can only stay home if it's above 98!"

E: (*gives clean laundry w/ shove-like push out of objects*) "You fold it."

Mia: (*gives tie*) "Do you know what you're doing?"

Em: (*gives makeup*) "You're prettier without it"

Soph: (*gives comb*) "Fix that mess."

Soph: (*gives blanket*) "Don't let the bedbugs bite"

[*At the same time*] Em: (*gives kitchen timer*) "Don't burn anything, ok?"

Soph: (*gives spatula*) "Don't burn anything, ok?"

Mia: (*gives fake ID*) "Don't get caught"

Em: (*gives wrapped present*) "It's your special day!"

Soph: (*gives remote*) "You can pick"

E: (*gives toilet paper, look away as if audience member is on the toilet*)

"Here ya go"

Mia: (*gives pill case*) "How are you feeling?"

Em: (*gives game piece*) "Play fair."

Soph: (*gives tampon*) "You're all grown up."

E: (*gives family portrait*) "What a beautiful family."

Soph: (*gives box of tissues*) "Bless you."

Mia: (*gives key*) "Lock the door behind you."

Em: (*gives spices*) "Don't overdo it."

Mia: (*gives towel*) "Don't leave it on the floor."

Soph: *(gives sponge)* “Take it all in.”

E: *(gives tupperware)* “This is the last set.”

Em: *(flashlight)* “In case of emergency.”

Mia: *(gives condom)* “You’ll need this someday”

They return to CS and hold hands, looking at the audience.

All *(recorded)*: You can’t leave anything or take anything away. Welcome to the family.

Soph: May I please be excused?

All break hands and step back. Mia and Em move to position. Mom (Mia) propped up, legs splayed, facing audience. Teen (Em) head resting on Mom’s crotch, legs splayed, facing audience.

Teen: Mom, I think I might be pregnant

Mom: What?? When did you even get your period?

Teen: I’m 17.

Mom: Don’t talk back to me. Who’s the father?

Teen: Remember Tony?

Mom: The mathlete? Really? Antonia, you’re ruined! How could you do this to me?

Teen: Mom!

Mom: What about that fine piece of ass who drove you home last week?

Teen: Mom, that’s my soccer coach.

Mom: At least he has a salary. What does Tony do? Math?

Teen: You don’t get paid to be a rec league soccer coach mom. He’s a volunteer.

Mia and Em move to new position, E and Sophie join. Dog (Em) laying on his side, oblivious, panting the whole time. Child (Soph) squatting SL of dog. Mom (E) and Dad (Mia) cheek to cheek, arms outstretched and crossed around Soph.

Mom: Casey, son, we know you have never known a world without your dog, but we are going to start thinking about what life might be like

without him.

Child: But I love Toby.

Dad: Yes and we do too

Child: Is it cause of his balls?

Dad: Yes actually. He has testicular cancer.

Child: BALLS!!!!!!!

Mom: Casey.. This is serious. Toby might die.

Child: What?

Mia, Em, and Soph move to new position, E returns to the side.

Grandma (Soph) and Grandpa (Mia) hunched with heads on each other’s shoulders. Margaret (Em) sitting below them, one leg folded up against Soph’s legs and one arm wrapped around Mia’s legs.

Grandma: Do you think our granddaughter Margaret is a lesbian?

Grandpa: What’s a lesbian?

Margaret: Yes. I am.

Grandma: She loves that Ellen Degeneres.

Margaret: I don’t like Ellen. You like Ellen.

Grandma: And she always smells like aftershave. It’s not ladylike.

Margaret: It’s Old Spice. I’m gay.

Grandpa: She’s a pretty girl when she wants to be.

Grandma: It’s considered very “cool” to be lesbian.

Margaret: I sleep with women.

Beat

Grandpa: Who’s Margaret?

Mia and Em move to new position, Soph returns to the side. Sister (Mia) is piggybacked on Brother (Em), who struggles to support her weight.

Brother: So.. sis, what do you think of my sweet sweet lover Maya?

Sister: Oh! Oh, uh, she seems nice.

Brother: Nice? That’s it?

Sister: Well I don’t know her that well so yeah. Nice.

Brother: But she’s like, more than nice, right?

Sister: You tell me.

Brother: She’s great. Really great.

Sister: Great.

Brother: You don't like her.

Sister: I mean she calls our mom mom.

Brother: Why can't you just be happy for me?

Sister: I'm sure she's fine.

Brother: Fine.

Sister: Fine.

Both: Fine.

Pause

Brother: She doesn't like you that much either.

Em shoves Mia off of her back. Mia falls to new position, E joins her, Em returns to the side. Both Partners are on their knees facing away from one another. Partner #1 (E) has their leg through the lets of Partner #2 (Mia). They are clasping one arm and leaning away from each other.

Partner #1: Spouse dear, I think we should start remodeling the house so we can sell it next year.

Partner #2: We literally just moved in last night.

Partner #1: Yeah, but it's just so... I'm seeing us more as a 20th century modern kind of couple.

Partner #2: A what?

Partner #1: I'm thinking about our happiness here, maximizing our success.

Partner #2: You could get a job.

Partner #1: It's just not homey.

Em helps E up, Soph helps Mia up. Em and Soph move to position. In-law #1 (Em) and In-law #2 (Soph) legs to the sides of their bodies, cheeks touching. Mia and E move to either side, pushing In-laws together with their butts.

In-law #1: So, Carol, my favorite sister-in-law, how's the EPA treating you?

In-law #2: Well, Jim, we've had a minor setback, but thanks for asking. And how are things for you over on wall street?

In-law #1: Oh, you know. Can't complain. Did you spot my new

Chrysler 300 out back? She's a beaut. Dynamite engine.

In-law #2: Yeah, real shiney.

In-law #1: Are you insulting my baby?

In-law #2: Me? Never.

In-law #1: Always good to see that you still haven't given up your endearing little rage against "the man."

In-law #2: Always good to see that the guilt of knowing you're destroying our one and only planet hasn't hit you yet.

In-law #1: You are just such a riot.

In-law #2: Back atcha, Jimbo.

In-law #1: Now, now, you know how I feel about that nickname of yours.

In-law #2: Oh, you.

In-law #1: Oh, you.

In-law #2: Oh, you.

Pause

In-law #1: But really, Carol, don't call me Jimbo.

Mia and E move to position, Em and Soph return to the sides. Mom (E) stands behind Daughter (Mia), who jumps up to wrap her legs behind her and around Mom. Both have a wide squatting stance.

Mom: I'm just going make us some lunch, honey. How about a single raisin? Does that sound good?

Daughter: No, mother. No it does not.

Mom: Well what would you prefer? Some flax? Or how about we split a Lean Cuisine?

Daughter: Yeah, or we could empty the neighbor's bird feeder onto some non fat vegan yogurt.

Mom: Sweetie, we've got to take care of ourselves.

Pause

Come on, you know what I mean.

Daughter: THIS IS MY BODY!!

Mom: I'm just saying.

E and Em move to position, Mia returns to the side. Partner #2 (E) lays face down, Partner #1 (Em) face up, same position, butt to butt. They are like a single plank.

Partner #1: I bought handcuffs.

Partner #2: What?

Partner #1: Handcuffs. I thought...

Silence

Partner #1: Sooo no handcuffs. Good, that's good to know. Relationships thrive when everything is on the table.

Partner #2: Please take the sex cuffs off the table.

Partner #1: Right.

Soph helps Em up, Em pushes Soph down into position. E returns to the side. Interviewee (Soph) in a contorted pile in the middle of the stage, one leg in the air, headlocking herself.

Interviewee: You're going to do great. You were made for this job. You're going to go so far. It doesn't matter that you have poor organizational skills and can't keep a plant alive. Firm shake, not too firm. Whatever you do, do not tell the story about the hamster asphyxiating in your urine. People don't like that. Wash your hands when you leave the bathroom. Lean in.

Soph stands, all others move to position. Stevie (Em) lying face down facing audience, arms crumpled and splayed beneath her head. Aunt (E) on their back, legs bent over Stevie's back. Mom (Soph) crouched over Aunt, face to face. Grandpa (Mia) flopped over Mom's back.

Grandpa: I'm dying.

Aunt: Dad we know stop saying that all the time.

Grandpa: We need to discuss your inheritance.

Mom: Not in front of little Stevie!

Stevie: Mommy, what is dying?

Mom: Oh honey. It's when your body gets tired and stops working and all the people you love bury you in the ground.

Aunt: It will happen to you someday.

Stevie: Are you gonna bury me in the ground?

Mom: No, no. You'll be fine. You don't have to worry about all that. Not today.

Grandpa: Don't lie to the child. Of course Stevie should worry about

death. It's coming for all of us and if this family could just accept that--

Aunt: I want the decorative wicker baskets.

Mom: Shauna, everyone wants those.

Grandpa: No I'm being buried with the decorative wicker baskets.

Em slides out, gets the wicker basket full of socks. E slides out. Mia and Soph stand up together, back to back. All stand in a line CS. Em dumps the socks. All put on layers of multi colored socks and begin to hum the tune of "What is happening?" Once everyone has three pairs of socks on, all stand and turn to look out the back windows. Then turn and look at the audience as if looking out another wall of windows. Mia and Em move back to back, legs outstretched. Soph positions herself to face Mia and E to face Em.

All: Is it ready?

Sniff each other's feet

All: Is it ripe?

A movement loop begins in which each person is either pulling off another person's socks and walking with them as if dragging the person, kneeling and attempting to pull off their own socks, or walking and stepping on their own toes, pulling socks off. All are humming to the tune of "What is happening?" in a round. When everyone has only one pair of socks on, they stop. The following lines are yelled as everyone gathers the socks strewn on the floor and throws them to the basket on the side.

Em: Dinner!

Soph: Don't yell across the house!

Em: I know you heard me!

Mia: Bring toilet paper!

E: Shut up, I'm trying to sleep!

Mia: What?

Em moves DSL, Soph moves USL, E moves CS, and Mia moves SR. A five minute movement piece follows, set to audio of a nighttime routine. There is sock wrestling and E, Em, and Mia end in a pile of panting bodies. Soph stands, puts her hand on the pile.

Soph: Stay still baby, okay?

Soph paces around the pile. E gets up and lunges their arm. Soph catches it.

Soph: Stay still

Soph & E: Stay still baby, okay?

Em and Mia roll SL and SR respectively. Slap the ground and reach up. Soph and E reach and catch their arms.

Improv combinations of the following words in repetition:

Em: Baby / slow down

M: Still / pick me up

E: Stay / hand me down

S: Okay / catch up

Mia: Pick me up

Soph: Okay

E: Hand me down

Em: Slow down

Soph (*as little kid*): Catch up, ok?

Mia (*as little kid*): Still?

Soph: Pick me up

Mia: Okay, pick me up.

Soph: Ok, still?

Em (*sensually*): Baby.

E (*sensually*): Stay baby

Em: Slow down baby.

E: Hand me down baby.

Em: Fuck up! (*cover eyes, whine, and stand*)

Soph: Fuck up! (*cover eyes, whine, and stand*)

Mia: Fuck up! (*cover eyes, whine, and stand*)

E: Fuck up! (*cover eyes, whine, and stand*)

Lean back like Powerplay movement

E: Fall down

All bend forward. All jump up trying to hit invisible hands, cacophony of all the words. All clap thighs and reach to the sky.

Mia and Em lunge down to a wrestling pose around E and Soph. They attempt to run forward while Mia and Em attempt to pull them back. Soph and E sit on Em and Mia on the US ledge. Soph and E fall forward to do pushups while Em and Mia play footsie on the ledge. Then Em and Mia do tricep dips on the ledge while Soph and E play with each other's hands and feet. Then Soph and E begin to mime opening drawers while Em and Mia play a childlike hand clapping game. All stand. Em goes to get a lamp. Soph brings the books CS. Mia and E turn off all other lamps. Throughout this whole section, the following recorded audio is playing with live lines interspersed.

Mia: How did we get here? To someone, each house is home.

Em: Make yourself at house.

E: You are a visitor. You brush your teeth with your own toothbrush because you brought it with you.

Soph: There are kind of secrets everywhere, but no way to keep or uncover them.

All (*live*): You are let in.

Soph: Being here is being poked and asked the question, if this was your house who would you be? We want you to choose.

Em: You've been here a while.

Soph: You expect the downstairs bedroom to smell like not quite mothballs before you walk in. You know that the light comes through these windows between 4:45 and 7:00 pm, and also all day, but most notably those times because it's so pretty.

Em: At night you realize the house is lit only by lamps that become hard to find if you forget to turn them on before dark. In the perfect dark of not your bedroom some night, you could be anywhere. Dry, open, self-aware.

Mia: Itchy armpits because body butter is not lotion. Not lubriderm, not cetaphil, not anything acceptable or correctly scented. Make yourself at house. Itch your armpits all night in this bed that isn't yours. But you want that. You want to be alone with your anxiety in someone else's home. Hosted alone. You are let in. It's temporary.

E: You can't add anything or take anything away. It isn't yours.

Soph: Put things here, move things around, put things away, build things and wipe surfaces clean. It's temporary.

All (*live*): Have we overstepped? Have I overslept?

Mia: It isn't ours.

Em: Does it matter that we've promised to put everything back in its place?

E: It is lived-in. We are let in. You are let in.

Soph: We are leaving.

Stage lights off. Em brings lightless lamp to the middle of the stage. A single lamp on in the middle of a seated half circle.

Em (*live*): Warm welcome

Em turns lamp on. Each has a book from the shelves of 910 Sunset Road. They are positioned as if reading the books but their eyes never look down at the page.

All: Bestow this house upon some body.

Em: Bless this hurt.

Mia: Praise this bed.

Soph: Whisper.

E: It is night.

All: Sleep is nigh. They say nothing is better, nothing is best, take care of your health and get plenty of rest. Uh, what? *Flip page*. Okay fine. Be singing. Be silent. Be satisfied by all permanence and impermanence and permanent impermanence.

E: What is happening to people?

All: We don't know. Mother sings and we all go to sleep. Every body gone.

Soph: Stay still baby, okay?

Em: What is dying?

All: Oh honey. It's when your body gets tired, stops working. All the people you love bury you in the ground. Uh, what? *Flip page*. Power. Play. I never sleep better than I do after a tantrum. Everyone lies about brushing their teeth. This is my body. Homebody, housebody.

Mia: Can I come in?

All: Okay. Please. Pick me up, hand me down. Okay, baby. Lulled, loved, they say it all goes so fast, etcetera. Welcome to the family. *Flip page*.

Who wants to start? *Close books*.

Em clicks lamp off and back on again. Stage lights turn on again.

E and Mia (*to those who have not traversed the house*): You are let in.

Soph and Em (*to those who have already traversed the house*): Thank you for coming. It is time for you to leave now.