

Building Osborne House

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Acknowledgments

This final project of my undergraduate degree encompasses not just the experiences I learned from and the skills I gained through making this work, but also all I learned and gained through these four years here at the University of Michigan. These years have challenged and shaped me immensely – personally and creatively. I want to thank Carolyn Gennari, Franc Nunoo-Quarcoo, Phoebe Gloeckner, Mike Bianco, Joe Trumpey, Hannah Smotrich, Jennifer Metsker, and, of course, my family, for their support, advice, and love. This project—and my time here at Michigan—would not have been what it was without you.

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The beginning

In January of 2016, I got a call from my dad late one night: “We saw your website,” He tells me, angry. “We saw your drawings.”

I wasn’t sure what to say.

My dad continued. “How could you make such hurtful work, about your own family?”

I had not anticipated this moment to happen for at least a few more months. And I had not anticipated how liberating and overwhelming it would be. Everything was unfolding.

A year earlier, I had completed a suite of monoprints, a series titled *Some Things I Cannot Say*. These prints told a story of my relationship to my family. They examined the construction of my identity and how I felt my identity—how I—contradicted my family: the place I came from, the people who had nurtured me. These prints were intensely honest about my conservative, Christian family, and my frustrations with their gendering, with their apparent attitudes towards homosexuality, and what I felt were their expectations for me as their only daughter among their four sons. I used explicit imagery and blatant references to my parents in conjunction with short phrases, telling a story of disconnect, fear, and longing. I didn’t make these prints out of hate or malice. Rather, they grew out of a fear of losing my family, out of an intense love for them.

As my parents and I resolved our relationship over the following weeks, everything was seemingly “back to normal” and we never talked about my prints—or any of my visual work—again. This silence and total lack of conversation about my practice, which is so apart of myself, frustrated me. But it also intrigued me. Rather than ignore this conflict within my family, I wanted to focus my practice on this tension; I wanted to piece apart this double-edged nature of family relationships and home.

Building Osborne House examines the complexities of family relationships. It is about clinging to family for identity, support, and the shared history you have together, but at the same time trying to define yourself from it as you grow older. Abstracting family relationships by focusing on the everyday objects and conversations that define my experience of family life and “home,” *Building Osborne House* explores the ways that family is a source of frustration, pain, and disconnect, but at the same time a source of humor, love, and connection.

Contextual discussion

Over the summer of 2016, I worked at a printmaking studio in Minneapolis. Every day there I ate lunch next to this print of plastic sidewalk news stands, titled *Free News*. It was by Carolyn Swiszc, and I became obsessed with her work and her exaltation of the every-day, boring parts of modern American life.

As I delved into her work more and more, I discovered *Inventory Days* (fig. 1), a video project based on the chapter in her life after she graduated from college and moved back in with her parents, working for an inventory-documenting company. She created these “episodes” using puppets, sets made from prints and then green-screened into the background, looking at her relationship with her parents but also the objects that she was taking inventory of. I was drawn to the way she took the parts that made up her everyday life—car rides with her dad, her day job of collecting inventory at grocery stores—and gave them special importance. Carolyn describes her work as “trying not only to seek meaning in the world around [her], but to actively create that meaning. Experience inspires painting, and then the painting becomes a lens that I use to transform day-to-day living¹.” I wanted to use this same idea and glorify difficult family relationships.

Carolyn Swiszc led me to Minnesotan artist Andy DuCett’s work. I was particularly drawn to his large-scale installation at The Soap Factory, *Why We Do This*. Taking up a 12,000 square foot gallery, this installation included different, to-scale re-created scenes of a bar, a row of airplane seats complete with clouds floating past the seat windows, a functioning thrift store, a “free samples day” at the grocery store, a leather couch in the middle of a 3-walled room filled with National Geographic issues, as well as surreal scenes, like a giant six-pack of beer, a hallway of bubble wrapped-floor and balloon-wall to pop as you walked through— and many more. In his writing about this work, he described it as a way for visitors to “immerse themselves in a series of interlocking and varied vignettes and performances²,” challenging the meaning of “cultural ephemera³” when it is taken out of context—basically, the day-to-day life.

I appreciated this blending of “real life” with this “created life,” and imitating the way our memories are created, in multi-faced planes while also using imagery and scenes from collective American culture to create them. Most American visitors would be familiar with the iconography and the objects/concepts (like the bubble-wrap-floor-balloon-wall hallway) within this installation, but we all have different memories associated with them. It begins to rely on the audience to give it meaning through their own unique experiences. I wanted to include this re-contextualizing of familiar family scenes, pulling individual conversations and

1 Swiszc, Carolyn. “About.” Carolyn Swiszc. Accessed April 18, 2017. <http://www.carolynswiszc.com/about-new/>.

2 Ducett, Andy. “Projects: Why We Do This.” Andy DuCett. Accessed April 18, 2017. <http://andyducett.com/projects/>.

3 Ibid.



Fig. 1. A frame from Carolyn Swiszc's short film 'Pizza' from *Inventory Days*.
Source: www.carolynswiszc.com



Fig. 2. An airplane scene and a room full of *National Geographic* issues surrounding a leather couch from Andy DuCett's installation *Why We Do This*.
Source: www.andyducett.com

family interactions and creating a narrative like DuCett did, through various scenes that come together as a whole.

As I focused on family interactions, and what they tell us about the complexities of family relationships, I started to also consider plays and television shows where family conversations were reconstructed, and falsified, in a way, in order to give them new significance. In Young Jean Lee's play *Straight White Men* (Fig. 3), which I saw back in 2015, Lee considers the straight, white man's social, cultural, and political value in American society today all through an hour or so of conversations and interactions between three adult brothers coming home for Christmas⁴. I liked this use of every-day conversation paired with the knowledge that it was totally fictional, and how this gave these conversations new meaning and allowed them to become critical examinations.

The British sitcom, *The Royle Family* (Fig. 4), also uses this technique of conversation as the matrix for the meaning in the show. It follows a working-class family from Manchester, and the main activity that happens in the show is television watching and conversation about their days.⁵ This show is so brilliant because it takes the most mundane of family interactions and creates a critique of late 20th century British culture. I admire this balance of humor and exaggeration with the everyday and mundane.

At the same time I discovered Carolyn Swiszczy's work over the summer, I was also rediscovering Claes Oldenburg's work. I love his sculpture collection Pastry Case (Fig. 5), which is just that: a pastry case, but full of to-scale, papier-mâché painted foods: a cake, some ribs, a piece of pie. They are pale, clumpy, and gross. In a way, this work is like DuCett's *Why We Do This*: It's a blending of real life and fake life, where context is distorted. I wanted this distortion and manipulation of everyday objects, the alteration of perspective. I also wanted to take something recognizable—a family interaction, a conversation, a living room scene and manipulate it into something still recognizable, yet unfamiliar.

Red Grooms is a similar artist of distortion. Through his small diorama work and his larger-than life cardboard scenes such as *Loft on 26th Street* (Fig. 6), Grooms' work is "like life", (but not life like) as art critic Carter Ratcliff quotes poet Ted Berrigan in his expository book *Red Grooms*⁶. Ratcliff continues to quote Berrigan, adding that "because his paintings are not so neat, and because the people and things (tables, dogs, window-curtains, playing cards, hands) seem so important simply because they exist, Red's paintings sometimes seem very unsettling [...] [they] are much more haunting than they are delightful, despite their bright Pop colors and the near-comic air of domesticity they strike."⁷ I appreciate this idea of Grooms' work

4 *Straight White Men*. By Young Jean Lee. Ann Arbor, MI, January 22, 2016.

5 Aherne, Caroline, Craig Cash, and Henry Normal, writers. *The Royle Family*. British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). September 14, 1998.

6 Ratcliff, Carter, and Red Grooms. *Red Grooms*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1984.

7 *Ibid.*



Fig. 3. A scene from Young Jean Lee's *Straight White Men*.
Source: www.sleek-mag.com



Fig. 4. A scene from *The Royle Family*.
Source: www.gold.uktv.co.uk

balancing both this familiarity through the domestic scene, but carrying heavier, unsettling feelings at the same time. I like the dimensionality of his dioramas and his sculptures, and the tactility and immersive-ness of them.

Ed and Nancy Kienholz also created these very immersive, yet more overtly-grimy installations. In *Pedicord Apartments* (Fig. 7), which is a recreated floor of an apartment building with the hallway narrowing as you walk down it. It's full of doorways on either side, and when you press your ear up to the doors, you can hear what's going on inside the apartments, but you can't see. I like how involved the public are with Kienholz's installations and how you literally are surrounded both visually and auditorily by their work.



Fig. 5. Claes Oldenburg's *Pastry Case*.
Source: www.moma.org



Fig. 6. Red Grooms' *Loft on 26th Street*.
Source: www.si.edu

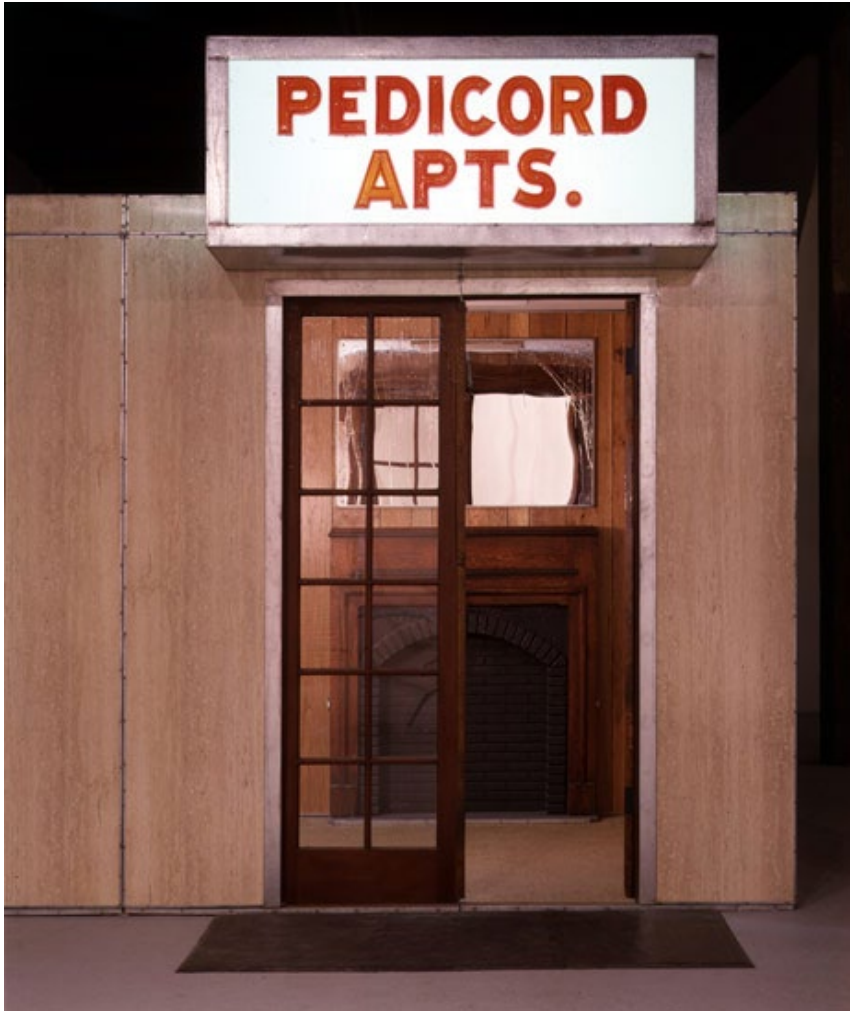


Fig. 7. Ed and Nancy Kienholz's *Pedicord Apartments*.
Source: www.stexpanded.wikia.com

Methods and Process

As I discussed earlier, *Building Osborne House* grew from the conflict I encountered with my family last year. I wanted to use this project to explore how complicated family relationships, and one's relationship to one's home, can be. While this concept was consistent throughout my creative process, my formal exploration varied quite a bit. For clarity, I have spilt this section up into the different formal stages this project encountered along the way.

Stage one: puppets

Feeling slightly lost in the creating process at the beginning, I let my material focus drive my concepts, understanding that if I began to physically create something, I'd be able to reflect back on what was motivating that creative impulse. Drawing from Carolyn Swiszczy's video where she uses flat, wooden puppets to represent her and her dad, I created a similar two-dimensional puppet of my grandfather, his mouth opening and closing and his arm lifting a drink to his mouth (Fig. 8). With this puppet painting, I had begun to experiment with representing and abstracting family members, but I had also begun to tell a story.

Continuing with the idea of puppetry, the next object that I made was a set of large, papier-mâché arms (Fig. 9, 10, 11). These arms were made out of a chicken wire base with a top layer of papier-mâché and acrylic paint. I created them with a hollow center so I could wear them. As I wore these giant arms, they suddenly became these puppets, these body extensions. The arms began to establish the visual identity of this project, which I was drawing from Claes Oldenburg's *Pastry Case* and Red Grooms' sculptures. Like the puppet of my grandfather, the arms were an abstraction of a person, but in a three-dimensional, exaggerated caricature.



Fig. 8. A two-dimensional puppet of my grandfather, made with cardboard and acrylic paint.



Fig. 9. The internal structure of the wearable arms.



Fig. 10 & 11. Testing out the finished arms.

Stage two: performance

The performative nature of these puppet arms led me to create a “mother booth,” where I would dress up as this mother figure wearing the arms, and give a hug in exchange for the public to confide in their “mother” (Fig. 12, 13). I created a hand painted sign with the phrase “Hello, can you stop for a chat?” and set up a cardboard booth in the Stamps School’s main hallway in front of the office, waiting for people to approach me.

But not many people did. Perhaps it was because I don’t have any natural performing skills, or the idea was a bit too goofy. This iteration showed me a direction that I didn’t want to go—uncomfortable with performance, I knew that I myself didn’t want to perform. But, I wanted to use conversation and the tension within those conversations as a way to express the frustration yet comfort that you find within family. I decided that a puppet show, using actors and the wearable “puppets” like the arms that I had made was a solution to the form. The puppet show would incorporate exaggerated character through the papier-mâché puppet styles, and conversations that showed the intricacies and difficulties of family life. I then began create giant wearable puppet heads for the actors to wear (Fig. 14–16).



Fig. 12. Performing behind the 'motherly advice' booth with a matching giant mug of papier-mâché tea.



Fig. 13. Offering a motherly hug to a participant.

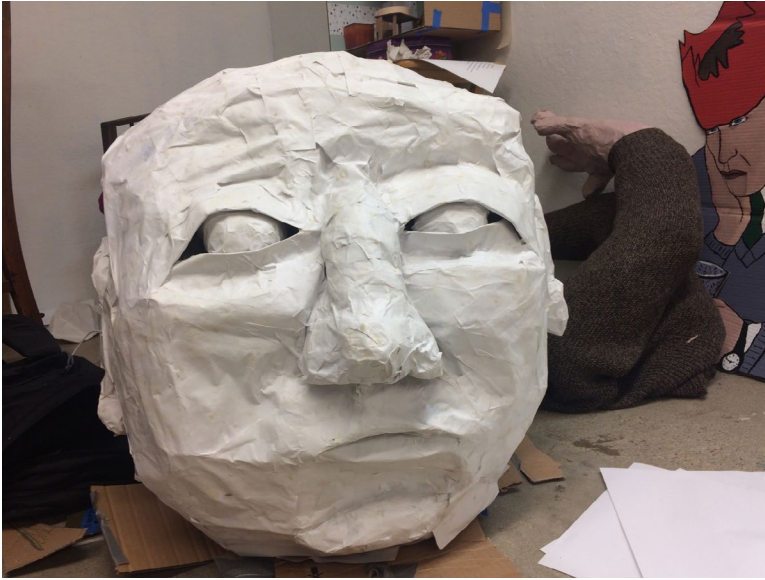


Fig. 14. The first stages of the wearable puppet head, made with cardboard and papier-mâché.



Fig. 15. The puppet head painted with acrylic paint awaiting its hair transplant.



Fig. 16. Testing out the interaction between the puppet head and arms, experimenting with character and performance.

Stage three: dioramas

Lacking script writing and directing experience and unable to find actors, I was now feeling uncomfortable with this performance idea. And, during my December review, my panel agreed with my hesitations. They suggested that I move on from this performance plan and instead try to define the story in scenes and writing, creating a narrative from those scenes in a different way.

Taking my panel's advice, I began writing out different moments of family interactions and creating illustrations from these (Fig. 17–25). I was also doing more and more research about Red Grooms' work, and his many-foot-long dioramas that combined three-dimensional sculpture and two-dimensional painting, such as *Loft on 26th Street*. I was really drawn to, again, the imitation of life but simultaneous surrealism—these scenes were recognizable, but dreamlike at the same time. I wanted the tension and the uncertainty this form had.

I translated the five main scenes that I had written into 5 dioramas at 1/5 scale, creating the furniture out of papier-mâché and with plans to paint the characters on flat cardboard with the text suspended over the dioramas (Fig. 26, 27). Yet there was something about the painting quality and the composition of the diorama that seemed unfinished, that seemed like a seventh-grade science project. It had this quality of “anyone could have made that.”



Fig. 17.



Fig. 18.



Fig. 19.

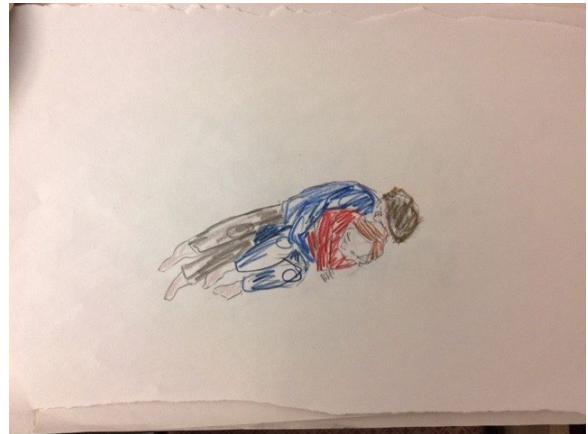


Fig. 20.



Fig. 21.



Fig. 22.



Fig. 23.



Fig. 24.



Fig. 25.

Fig. 16–25. Initial sketches and scenes I created as I defined the final narrative of my work.



Fig. 26. Testing out the diorama composition with unpainted sculptures.



Fig. 27. Experimenting with painting style and incorporation of real fabrics and textures in the diorama.

Stage four: suspended objects

Carolyn Gennari, my Graduate Student Instructor, suggested that I approach the scenes that I was trying to communicate through these dioramas in a more abstracted way. The dioramas were a very literal, enclosed interpretation of family scenes. She suggested instead that I think about how I could “explode” these dioramas—throw away the walls and the box of the diorama completely, and focus on the objects that create the scenes. I bought some fishing wire and suspended the objects from the bedroom at different heights from a sheet of cardboard, and photographed and filmed it. The result was a beautifully eerie, slow motion video of these familiar objects floating in space, real and recognizable, but at the same time obviously not real (Fig. 28, 29).

Finally, the uncertain-yet-familiar sentiment I had been striving for were all coming through in the form. To retain the physicality and the immersive environment that I had envisioned from the beginning, I turned my focus to how the final exhibition could incorporate this object suspension.

To create a stronger narrative through the objects, I focused on the scale of the objects relative to one another. For example, a mug that is larger than my head, but a two-foot long couch. I mentally divided the objects I was creating into different “rooms,” creating objects from a living room, a bedroom, and a kitchen (Fig. 30, 31).



Fig. 28. The first attempt at suspending the objects from the bedroom diorama.

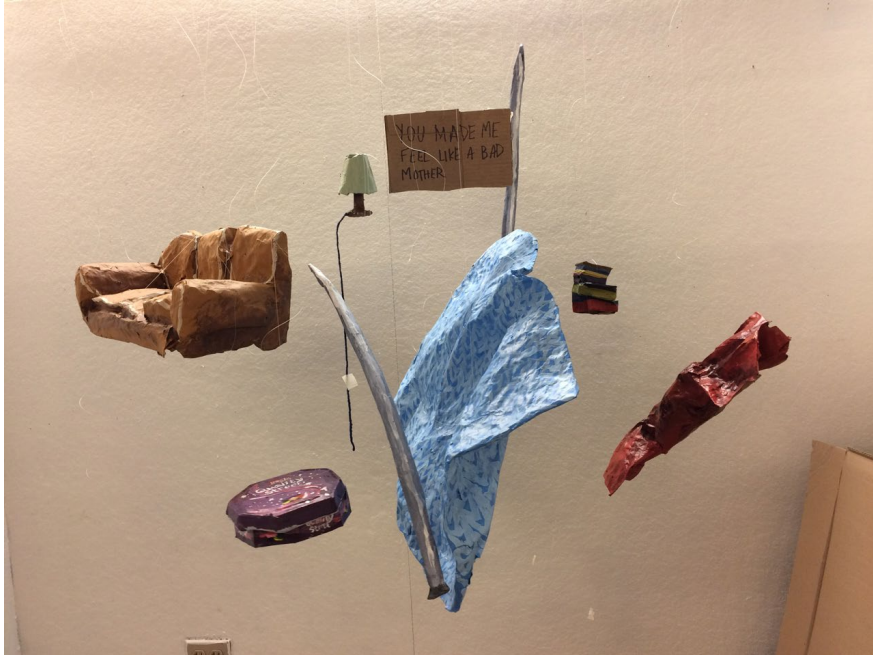


Fig. 29. Later experiments with suspending the final, distorted-scale papier-mâché objects.



Fig. 30. In-progress papier-mâché objects drying.



Fig. 31. The collection of final painted papier-mâché objects.

Stage five: words and synthesizing

Yet, one of the problems I was still left to solve was whether or not, and how, to include the text. I had written up different phrases that I drew from my initial writings on pieces of cardboard—very crudely, and just to get an initial idea of what text hanging amongst the objects would look like. I then suspended some of these written-on-cardboard phrases among the objects that I hung from the chicken wire (Fig. 29). Some of the feedback that I got about this solution was that the text was a bit too obvious, and was a bit too “easy” of a solution. They wanted it to challenge the viewer more, to be incorporated into the objects in a more abstracted way. I considered using words cut from vinyl and sticking them to the floor below the objects, but also painting the phrases on the walls, or onto architectural pieces like stacked wooden boxes.

This concept led me to painting the text onto structures resembling a house, inspired by Margaret Kilgallen’s signage-painted boxes (Fig. 32). In sketches, this looked too visually busy. However, I thought the structure beneath the suspended objects gave them a focal point, a center (Fig. 33). I finally landed on a single-pitched roof structure, that resembled a house, but wasn’t exactly. I didn’t want it to seem too refined—just as the objects were not refined in style— and so I decided to source the wood from scraps I found (Fig. 34).

This structure, because of its natural “house” form, also became a natural place to house the text. While I met with writing professor Jennifer Metsker, she mentioned how spoken word played from within the structure could add to the surrealism of the installation. I defined eight different phrases based on their short length, and either causal or more confrontational tone in order to emulate the variety of tense and every-day conversations you have with family (Fig. 35).

With these three elements—the suspended objects, the found-wood structure, and the repeating phrases coming from within the structure—this installation became both surreal and familiar, grounded by the structure but still retaining the eerie whimsy of the disembodied sound and the floating objects.

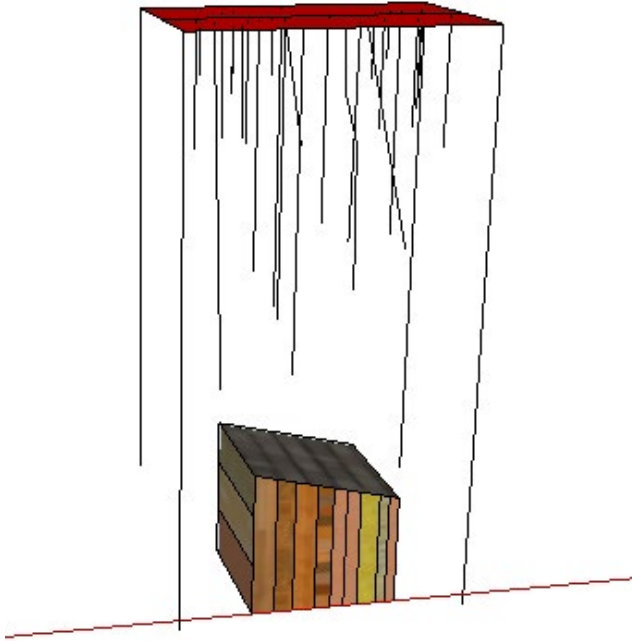


Fig. 33. My Google Sketch-up drawing of the structure/installation design.



Fig. 32. Margaret Kilgallen's *Main Drag*, a three-dimensional typography painting.
Source: www.library.artstor.org



Fig. 34. The completed, un-stained structure.

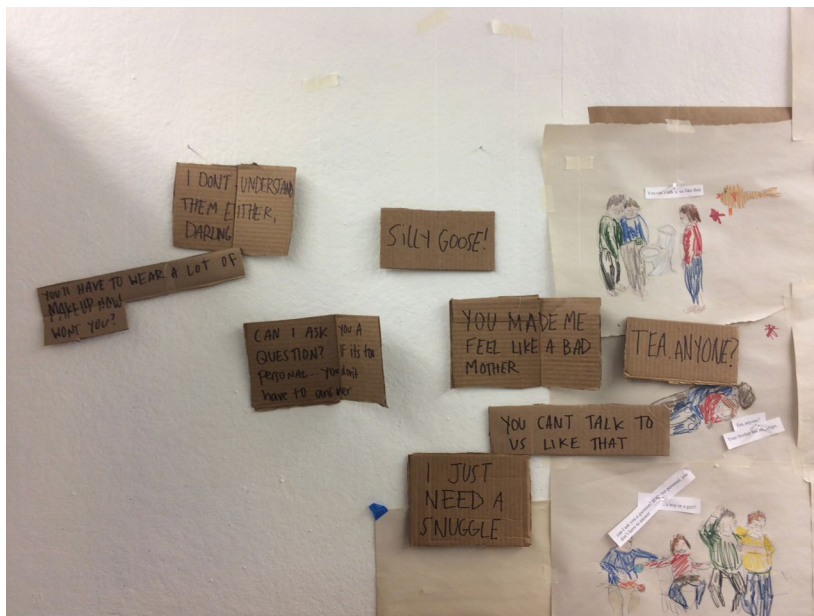


Fig. 35. Iterations of potential text to include.

Building Osborne House: final installation

In the center of the gallery sits a lean-to structure made out of mismatched planks of wood, about three feet high and two feet wide. Roughly cut shingles cover the sloping roof and the whole structure is stained a golden brown, save for the few planks already painted white. It has no doors or windows, no way of entering or leaving.

Above this structure, familiar objects from home seem to float, wobbling in the breeze created by the stride of viewers walking past the cluster of household things: a bed, a couch, a spilled mug of tea, a kitchen table and kitchen chair, letters and bills, a wrapped piece of candy, a kitschy embroidered pillow of a chick hatching from its shell, a plate of marmite and cheese toast, a used teabag, a lamp, a pair of dirty, wrinkled socks, an electric kettle, a bible, a stack of plates, a backpack, a duffel bag, a tin of chocolate, and at the center of it all, a swath of blue knitting and knitting needles. These objects vary in scale, the couch and bed a mere foot long, but the spilled tea mug and knitting four times the normal size. Crudely constructed out of papier-mâché and painted with bright colors, these objects are lumpy and obviously fake, but eerily familiar at the same time (Fig. 36–42).

Standing closer to cluster and the structure, one notices the nylon wire suspending the objects from above. These objects are hung at varying heights and positions, all hovering above the structure.

There is sound coming from inside the structure, ambient white noise made up of the sound of dryers turning, kettles boiling, someone rummaging through drawers and flipping light switches and walking up the stairs. Every twenty seconds or so a woman's voice says one of these short phrases:

“Tea, anyone?”

“You can't talk to us like that”

“Silly goose!”

“You made me feel like a bad mother”

“I just need a snuggle”

“I don't understand your father either, darling”

These phrases are repeated, while the white noise of house-sounds suspend them.

This installation, *Building Osborne House*, is a surreal encounter of the family. Like a home



Fig. 36. The final installation.



Fig. 37. Viewing the final installation from the base, next to the structure.

frozen in space, or a patchwork of suppressed memories, *Building Osborne House* brings to question the ways that family and home can be both comforting and disturbing. The objects are whimsical, but at the same time, unsettling.

The objects I chose to include in this installation were intentional, all generally familiar to the average western home, but also specific to my own family. These more specific objects include the spilled tea, the tea bag, the Quality Street chocolate tin, the plate of marmite and cheese toast, the knitting and knitting needles, and the bible. These are the objects that are most nostalgic to me, they are foods and objects and ideas that give me comfort and make me feel homesick. These are what make me long for my family, to sit on the couch together drinking tea while my mother knits with the Quality Street tin on the table in front of us full of empty wrappers.

The other objects which are more general to the western home are no less important; they are the objects that make up “home,” but which we often overlook: the sunken couch, bills and junk mail on the kitchen table, forgotten socks strewn across the floor, the chair that we sit upon while we eat, the plates that we clean and make dirty and make clean again, the bible—or the doctrine—that is so often placed upon us by our family. They are the interstitial matter that the home wouldn’t be without.⁸

The more important, or emotionally heavy, the objects, the larger they are: the square of knitting is enormous, about two feet in width, and the spilled tea mug and dirty socks about eighteen inches long, a wrapped piece of candy similar in size. These objects represent specific family members: the knitting, my mother, the wrapped candy, my father, the dirty socks, my brothers. Not only does the skewed scale and exaggeration of form place emphasis on certain objects, and create both visual and conceptual focal points, but it also creates tension between the familiar, real objects, and the unfamiliar form. I focused on this visual tension in this installation because it mirrors the tension within the home, of family being both familiar and unfamiliar at the same time.

While the first step of this installation was creating the papier-mâché objects, the next step was to synthesize these pieces. I was drawn to rawness and the simplicity of Tracey Emin’s structures in her various installations, and I wanted to build something to physically ground these pieces. I decided to create a centerpiece for my objects, an abstracted house for these pieces to be growing from, or looming over. Using found wood and nails, this structure was crudely constructed in order to match the rough style of my papier-mâché objects. Like the objects, this structure resembles something familiar: it has a roof and shingles, and four sides

8. A full photographic collection of each object can be viewed in the supplementary materials at the very end of this document

like a house, yet it is only three feet tall, and has no windows or doors. You can neither enter it nor escape it, which is often how the family home can feel.

The texture of the wood, and the visual familiarity of the shingles and four walls makes it slightly more visually familiar and tangible than the objects, acting as a bridge between the viewer and the suspended objects. And, in conjunction with the objects, which are so often contained within these “four walls,” it becomes a home exploded. This violent image of objects bursting from the home, uncontainable, reflects the often-uncontainable tension and frustration housed within your home, between children, parents, and siblings. Yet, at the same time, these “exploded” objects rest calmly in the air, frozen in time like a portrait of the family and the home. It is this tension that is at the heart of *Building Osborne House*.

Text was a significant component of this work. While I have incorporated it into my two dimensional work in the past as a way to juxtapose ideas, finding a way to use text as a tool for juxtaposition in sculptural work was more difficult. I decided to create a sound piece with the phrases that represented both the lackadaisical and the more challenging family interactions, because it would act as a peripheral component; I wanted the sound to be subtle, but still noticeable, like a thought from your subconscious. Coming from within the structure, the sound’s origin is hidden and slightly obscured by the walls, but holds meaning—similar to the ways family interactions can be both seemingly mundane and unimportant, but at the same time be important signifiers of your relationships within your family.

The phrases I chose to include repeated over ambient house-sounds ranged from casual to more loaded. “Tea, anyone?”—a simple question from a mother to a child or a child to a father, and one of the most common phrases heard among my family. Tea symbolizes a common ground for all of my family members, despite our conflicts. Making tea for the family is also an act of service, an act of love. But the phrase “you made me feel like a bad mother” is a much more aggressive statement. Based on an interaction I had with my own mother, this phrase suggests not only conflict, but a distortion of the mother-child relationship: suddenly the mother, who is the protector of the child, becomes the one who is vulnerable, who needs protecting. Each included phrase holds a multi-faceted meaning, both a superficial signifier of relationship but also a more complicating signifier of vulnerabilities, resentments, disconnects, and understandings. That even a simple phrase like “tea, anyone?” can also represent performing an act of service and defining domestic roles mirrors the actual relationships within a family: they are a balance of compromise and conflict.

The ambient noise behind the phrases is made up of floorboards squeaking, footsteps on the



Fig. 38



Fig. 39



Fig. 40

Fig. 38–40. The final installation from different viewpoints



Fig. 41. Details of the suspended bed and knitting piece.



Fig. 42. Details of the suspended lamp.

stairs, a kettle boiling, a dryer running. I spliced all of these sounds together so that they became white noise for the phrases to sit among. This background noise obscured the conversations slightly, which added to the disconnect within familial relationships. To push this further, I enclosed the speakers playing the sound inside the structure; the sound would struggle to break through the walls, and would only catch the viewers in bursts of sound.

Building Osborne House becomes a whole-body experience: with the incantations of family chatter resonating from within the structure, and the surreally familiar objects from home floating above the noise, memories are triggered. Standing in front of a tiny couch, a giant spilled mug of tea, a shingled roof with the sounds of a dryer running and floorboards squeaking—it's like you're home. Except you aren't. As you are woken from your daydream by a mother asking for a snuggle or for a cup of tea, to say that you hurt her, the home and family becomes irreconcilable. And, as frustrating as it seems to always be reaching for that love and that praise from the people and place that grew you, there is, perhaps, a comfort in it too.

Final thoughts

Creating *Building Osborne House* completely altered my understanding of my own creative identity. Up through my third year at Stamps, I considered myself a printmaker and an illustrator, placing utmost importance on defining concept before construction. This was one way of making. *Building Osborne House* was different. I let the material guide me first, and then let the concept and critical analysis refine the form further. There is a direct connection between that first two-dimensional puppet of my grandfather, and the giant floating overturned mug hanging over plank-and-nail lean-to—I gave life and narrative to pieces of cardboard, strips of newspaper, and glue, while still exploring the complexities of family. Yet this connection only became apparent retrospectively, as I stepped back and saw my whole body of process work. The form-first process of this project was completely new, but it showed me the range of my creating and making abilities, and the many ways a problem can be approached.

I must also acknowledge the fear that constrained this project. One of the most challenging aspects of creating *Building Osborne House* was constantly having my parents' reactions looming over my process. My intention for this project was not to pull out the nastiness of my family life, but rather acknowledge the ways that family relationships are multi-faceted, to confront the reality that there is both frustration and comfort in these relationships. Yet whether or not my parents would perceive that is still unknown. Unlike my prints and drawings from years before, *Building Osborne House* was completely devoid of human representation. The phrases were carefully chosen to provoke only slightly, but to not target any one person in my family. I was careful in how I represented my family and my relationships. I recognize that my creating was constrained by this fear, but I don't apologize for it. Rather than a limitation, this fear became a creative challenge, one to push me to think more critically about how to represent both the conflicts and the tenderness of a daughter's relationship to her mother, of that to her brothers.

Because I was forced out of the figurative representation of my family, what resulted was an even more complex and peculiar interpretation of relationships. Eerily-floating furniture, a house with no door, and parcels of conversations between family members became proxies for the way I relate to my home life, to my family members. Is this not a more meaningful and critical exploration of family?

As a gallery visitor gazed at *Building Osborne House*, he said to me, "I feel as though I'm watching a dream of mine." Like the way an unconscious brain dreams, sifting through the events of the day to make sense of it all, *Building Osborne House* was my own negotiation

between my family conflict and myself, a physical manifestation of sorting through it. My work has consistently been a way for me to address the conflicts I am facing in my own life. Yet, rather than rejecting my practice two years ago after the literal representation of family caused deeper conflict between my parents and me, I discovered a different, stronger, more developed path to my creative practice.

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Supplementary photographs



The junk mail



The backpack



The plate of marmite-and-cheese on toast



The embroidered baby pillow



The dirty plates



The kitchen chair



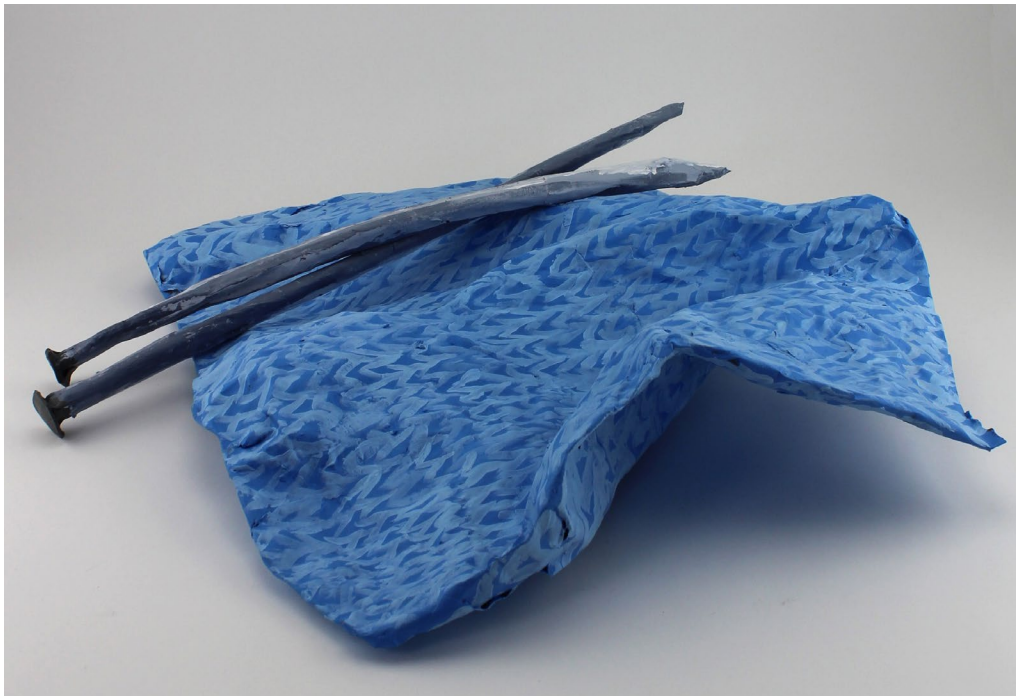
The lamp



The spilled mug of tea



The Bible



The knitting and needles



The well-sat-upon couch



The duffel bag



The bed



The chocolate



The chocolate tin



The bookshelf



The kettle



The kitchen table and chair