THE MUSEUM OF ME (MoMe)
An Exhibition of Conceptual Art

by

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I hearby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

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(MoMe)

Abstract

In this project, Heidi Overhill explores her own home as a case study of the roles played by objects in the expression of self; as a microcosm of meaning in material culture. By examining her different kinds of collections through contemporary methodologies of museum collections management, she seeks to better understand herself, the collections, and the methodology of museum collecting in general. The exhibition focuses on the accessioning of the permanent collections, and provides a gift shop where visitors may purchase postcards and other souvenirs.

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Introduction

The Museum of Me is my home, and is therefore nothing more or less than an embodiment of me. It represents my past, my present and future; personally, culturally, and in terms of my biological identity as a member of the human species. A study of MoMe aims to achieve a better understanding of me as a unique and idiosyncratic creature; and also of me as a routine example of any person inhabiting this particular culture at this time and place. The Museum of Me is not exceptional in embodying expressive meaning. All objects stand in relationship to all human beings in this manner. Material culture has formed a continuous whole with the mind and body of hominid species since the time of *Homo erectus*, 900,000 years before the evolution of *Homo sapiens*. Media have always been the extensions of mankind.

As a work of art, the Museum of Me seeks to explore meaning in the world, rather than serving as "art for art's sake." In the task of studying the world, MoMe is a convenient case study. Its collections are readily available to me at all hours for examination, as are explanations of their history, function and meaning, because when questions arise, I merely have to ask myself in order to receive clear answers. As a sample of material reality, MoMe may be limited in scope, but it offers compensatory virtue in terms of level of detail.

The starting point of this project has been an inventory of the house to determine what it contains, which is to say that the museum's collections are being accessioned. This is a large job, not yet complete. Accession information is recorded in a Filemaker database with fields corresponding to the conventions of museums in North America and Europe. An unusual location-based accessioning accession numbering system permits the project to be undertaken in phases. The resulting database is a snapshot of the Museum as it exists at the moment of accessioning: a rather extended "moment" lasting several years.

As a project, the Museum of Me must address the functions of museums. Because it contains personal collections serving multiple purposes, it holds some kinship to the cabinets of curiosity, the proto-museums of the Renaissance, though more in terms of their research activity than in their marvelous contents. MoMe is further framed by the traditions of conceptual art, for none of the objects contained within the Museum of Me have been altered by the inventory. MoMe stands as a conceptual superstructure transforming what was formerly just my house, but without in any way touching it. MoMe also fits into the genre of museums made by artists, many of which fall into the realm of "institutional critique" as artists explore the distortions imposed by gallery display. MoMe participates to some degree in institutional critique, because applying the procedures of corporate museology to a mere

house highlights the implicit power-struggle between things that are economically important (men, money, institutional art) and things that are economically unimportant (women, unpaid work, domestic decoration).

However, MoMe may be seen in equal measure as institutional affirmation. If we believe that museums matter and that museological concerns are real, and if professional museum workers have made genuine progress in formulating their goals and methods for reaching them, then there must be validity in the methodology of contemporary museums. To apply those procedures to middle-class housekeeping becomes a gesture of respect for the truth-seeking methods of the museum, and to the importance of the everyday in human life. Some of us may have more prestige than others; but none of us are less significant.

This thesis is represented by an exhibition installed at The University of Waterloo East Campus Hall Gallery in April 2009. Introducing MoMe to a broader public for the first time, the exhibition focuses on the methodology of the accessioning project that occupies current curatorial effort. In keeping with standard museum practice, the exhibition is accompanied by a gift shop offering exclusive souvenirs.

Home as the embodiment of self

The idea that home composes a description of self is not unique to MoMe. Tracey Emin's installation *My Bed* (1994) embodied her immaterial anxieties into literal stained sheets and empty bottles. Her work emphasizes the physical person of the artist as the mythical center of art production, differentiating it from *Bed* (1955) by Robert Rauschenburg, which also makes reference to the personal zone and materiality, but alters the bed and mounts it on the wall to serve equally as a comment on painting.[1] More closely related to Emin's installation is the work of artist Lucas Samaras, who in 1964, moved his entire New Jersey bedroom to a gallery in New York City, remarking, "it was as complete a picture of me without my physical presence as there could possibly be."[2]

In his recent book *Beyond the White Cube* (2007), author Brian O'Doherty describes Samaras's project as a "shimmer of signs and synecdoches." He suggests that it forced

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1 The Museum of Modern Art, *MoMA Highlights*. (1999. Revised edition. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2004), p. 207.

2 Quoted in Brian O'Doherty, *Studio and Cube: On the relationship between where art is made and where art is displayed*. (New York City: Buell Center/ FORuM Project, 2007), p. 4. The recreated studio of Francis Bacon in Dublin is another example.

attention away from art and onto the figure of the artist, who in later Modernism became the center of mythical attention in art.[3] But O'Doherty's main interest is on the bedroom's second function as a studio; a mythic place of creativity. He asserts: "we can 'read' studios as texts that are as revelatory in their way as artworks themselves."[4]

Such "readability" holds equally true for kitchens, bathrooms or laundry rooms. Like the studio, they are also centers for meaningful production. Other rooms, like living rooms, are not primarily used for production, but are more focused on display, intended to be "read" by visitors for symbolic meaning, like display galleries. Both product and display spaces are found in MoMe, and must be understood for both overt and hidden meanings

Of central concern here is the unique relationships that the human species hold with our manufactured goods. We rely on these goods for our very existence. Just as a termite will die if taken from the rarefied air of its sealed nest, so a human being will die if placed naked in unmediated nature — particularly the snowy nature of midwinter Canada. When Alexander Selkirk was isolated on a remote island in 1704, his immediate job was to recreate, as fast as possible, the technological nest needed to sustain his life. Tools have always been a part of human lifestyle, preceding the evolution of *Homo sapiens* by almost a million years.[5] Where Darwin assumed that it was human intelligence that made tool use possible, it has been suggested more recently in fact it was the opportunities presented by tool use that made intelligence worth having.[6]

Tools relate closely to the human body. Communications theorist Marshall McLuhan described material culture as the "extensions of man," because all media perform as enhancements of the physical human body.[7] McLuhan quotes Ralph Waldo Emerson, who in 1879 described the human body as "the magazine of inventions, the patent office where are the models from which every hint was taken,"[8] and Edward T. Hall, who in 1959 observed:

> Clothes and houses are extensions of man's biological temperature-control

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3 Ibid., pp. 5-6.

4 Ibid., p. 7.

5 Roger Lewin, *Human Evolution, an Illustrated Introduction*. (Third edition. Boston, Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1993), p. 144.

6 Frank R. Wilson, *The Hand: How Its Use Shapes the Brain, Language and Human Culture*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1998).

7 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. (London: Routledge, 1964.)

8 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Works and Days*. 1870, p. 151. Quoted in Marshall McLuhan

> mechanisms. Furniture takes the place of squatting and sitting on the ground... Money is a way of extending and storing labour. Our transportation networks now do what we used to do with out feet and backs. In fact, all man-made material things can be treated as extensions of what man once did with his body.[9]

Even Sigmund Freud can be found in agreement, writing in 1925 that: "all the forms of auxiliary apparatus which we have invented for the improvement or intensification of our sensory functions are built on the same model as the sense organs themselves."[10]

Defining objects as parts of the body evokes the way that body "identity" flows into tools in use. If a car gets bumped, the driver takes it personally, shouting "you hit me!"[11] Contact with the machinery is perceived as a blow to the body. This open-ended perception of "body" is part of human nature. V.S. Ramachandran, Director of the Center for Brain and Cognition at the University of California, has developed exercises which extend body identity into inanimate objects, so that a subject may experiences pain when furniture is struck. He states: "your own body is a phantom, one that your brain has constructed purely for convenience."[12]

This point was demonstrated by Australian performance artist Stelarc in 1980, when he developed a mechanical third arm and learned to operate it as part of his body in unthinking "automatized" reflex.[13] Similarly, American sideshow performer Francesco "Frank" Lentini (1889-1966), the "human tripod," could use his third leg to kick a soccer ball across the stage.[14] The flexible human mind has no problem incorporating an extra limb into the operational body, whether it is biological or mechanical. In the case of amputation, sometimes the brain persists in experiencing a phantom limb that no longer exists. Biologist Richard Dawkins suggests that the constructions of animals should be considered

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and Eric McLuhan. *Laws of Media: the New Science*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 94.

9 Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language*. 1959, pp. 56-57. Quoted in McLuhan and McLuhan, *Laws of Media*, p. 94.

10 Sigmund Freud, "A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad,." 1925. In Charles Merewether, ed. *The Archive*. (Documents of Contemporary Art. London: Whitechapel, 2006), p. 20.

11 Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. (1993. Second edition. New York: HarperCollins, 1994), p. 38.

12 Quoted in Norman Doidge, *The Brain that Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science*. (New York: Viking, 2007), p. 188.

13 Andy Clark, *Natural-Born Cyborgs,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 115.

14 "Frank Lentini," 17 September 2008. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francesco_Lentini, accessed 20 September 2008.

part of their biology. The genetic inheritance of an animal is expressed in the physical form of its body, or "phenotype," which grows in response to instructions coded in its genes. Dawkins points out that genes also guide the construction of birds' nests or beaver dams. To make clear their biological origins, he suggests that these should be described as an "extended phenotype:"

> But how can it possibly be right to use the same word, phenotype, on the one hand for a tail of flesh, bone and blood, and on the other hand for a body of still water, stemmed in a valley by a dam? The answer is that both are manifestations of beaver genes.[15]

If a beaver dam is the extended phenotype of beaver biology, then the Hoover Dam must be seen as part of the extended phenotype of humanity. It is an object that we seem to be genetically drive to create whenever circumstances permit. Biologically, then, MoMe is not only a set of representative "signs and synecdoches." As my extended phenotype it is an inseparable part of the physical me, in the most literal manner possible.

Human technology is not just physical, but includes things that exist only in the form of ideas, like mathematics. Design scholar John Walker coined the word "mentafact" to describe immaterial creations. He observes that museum collections neglect mentafacts in favour of artifacts, particularly small ones that are easy to handle. This collecting habit distorts the historical record of human endeavor.[16]

British cognitive scientist Andy Clark points to math as proof that human beings must be understood as "natural born cyborgs." Technically, a cyborg is a living creature with technology under the skin, which today includes anyone with a pacemaker or artificial hip. Clark, however, focuses on the way that a pencil meshes with routine thinking. A person doing a math problem writes down numbers that are too large to remember, freeing up the brain to make the smaller, bite-sized calculations that are all it can handle. The pencil and paper extend the brain's ability to make calculations. Clark argues that use of such tools qualifies us as cognitive cyborgs; a species naturally integrated with our technology.[17]

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15 Richard Dawkins, *The Ancestor's Tale: A Pilgrimage to the Dawn of Life*. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson: The Orion Publishing Group. 2004), p. 158.

16 John A. Walker, *Design History and the History of Design*. (London: Pluto Press, 1989), p. 62.

17 Clark, *Natural-Born Cyborgs*. 2003.

Finally, objects today are more than just practical. They serve the human self, but also exemplify the self symbolically. Economic historian Richard Goldthwaite dates this change to the Renaissance, a time when the numbers of objects available increased to include new varieties of evocative high-status consumer goods. He observes, "people entered a realm where possessions became an objectification of self for the first time — a step that was to have enormous implications for the subsequent history of the West."[18]

It becomes clear that no house is trivial. Everything in MoMe, material and immaterial, must be understood as a living part of me. It is a technological "metabody" that forms a reification of my ideas as well as my abilities and actions, and goals. It extends memory, emotion and thinking as well as temperature control, and does so not only in the present, but also in terms of my imperfect past and vague plans for the future.

Accessioning the collections

MoMe contains an extremely large number of objects. Accessioning those objects requires a strategic approach that will capture an appropriate level of information with an expedient level of effort. Establishing this procedure involved developing a working definition of "object," defining the types of information to be collected, and the creation of a novel location-driven accession numbering system to solve intellectual orientation problems.

At the beginning of the project, I estimated that the house contained several thousand objects. Historically speaking, this is a large number. Houses of the early Renaissance contained virtually no furniture,[19] and this remains true in some non-Western cultures today. An inventory of a 20th century Visayan home in the Philippines revealed a grand total of only 69 household items, including the broken jar used to feed cats and dogs.[20]
Our Western glut of consumer products began in the late industrial revolution. Design historian Adrian Forty points out that mass consumption was the flip side of mass production, when the new proliferation of goods found justification as social communication. Not just more goods, but more types of good were created, so that varying styles of the same kind

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18 Richard A. Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy 1300-1600*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 255.

19 Philippe Ariès and George Duby, eds., *A History of Private Life III: Passions of the Renaissance*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989).

20 Rodrigo D. Perez III, Rosario S. Encarnacion and Julian E. Dacanay Jr., *Folk Architecture*. (Quezon City: The Philippines: GCF Books, 1989), p. 157.

of thing differentiated men and woman from each other; as well as adults and children; servants and the upper classes.[21] The explosion of differentiation continues to mount. The simple canvas sneaker of my childhood — itself then a fairly recent innovation — has been supplanted by myriad sports-specific shoes, plus helmets, gloves and other newly necessary paraphernalia. The same multiplication is seen in every other product: in clothing, kitchenware, furniture, media and food.

With the inventory of MoMe underway, I have increased my estimate to predict that the house in fact contains hundreds of thousands of objects. The current records of about 3,000 items represent most of the visible furniture, pictures and knick-knacks, with things in closets and drawers remaining largely unaccessioned. A tentative start suggests the storage collections are extensive. An inventory of only one of more than a dozen plastic boxes in the basement (the box of amusing postcards) found that it alone contained over 1300 items.

The example of the postcard box illustrates one of the difficulties in establishing the precise number of "objects" in the house. The definition of what constitutes an "object" is unclear, and variable. A postcard arriving in the mail is a single object. It will be examined by each member of the household, and remarked upon. However, if that same postcard is put in the postcard box, it is only an element inside the over-arching single "object" of the box. A similar malleability can be seen in "objects" such as the television, which includes a cable box, VCR, DVD player, and electrical and signal cables, not to mention three remote controls, each of which can also be disassembled to reveal batteries that are sometimes, but not always, handled in the household as separate "objects."

The definition of "object" seems not to be physical, but rather to depend on whether or not a "thing" requires individual attention. At any given moment in time, object identity is self-evident, but varies over time. The television is a single object until it is disassembled. A box of pins is a single thing, until the pins spill, when each pin requires separate attention to ensure it is not lost in the rug. To cope with this ambiguity, the MoMe inventory system has made provision for an optional "sub-item" description to be used when needed. Sub-items are not regularly counted in the inventory, but can be included if desired. One advantage of their provision lies in the comfort they provide for the obsessive personality during such a task. When individual pins are not being counted, as they arguably ought to be for the sake of completion, it is possible to comfort oneself with an insincere promise of coming back later.

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21 Adrian Forty, *Objects of Design: Design and Society Since 1750*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992).

A better understanding of the variable identity of an "object" throws a clearer light onto some aspects of housework. One of the central acts of the household task of "tidying" appears to be assembling sub-items into the fewest possible number of over-arching singular "things." In 2006, I made an inventory of a junk drawer in a table in the living room, which proved to contain a variety of small toys, screws, paper-clips, and so forth, almost none of which "belonged" there. At the same time, it was often unclear where the things did "belong." It seemed that the purpose of the drawer, in fact, was simply to defer having to make a decision as to what to do with these objects, or, at the very least, to delay the effort required for proper action, for example, carrying a single paperclip upstairs to the paperclip holder.

The act of "tidying" the drawer began with the examination of each object to identify it, and associate it with a household category. If the paperclip has started to rust, for example, then it no longer belongs to the category of office supplies; but has become a tiny piece of scrap metal that belongs in recycling. Some of the items in the drawer had been there for years, such as a small green Monopoly house placed there during the roughly ten-year interval when the Monopoly game was visiting the cottage. Monopoly games always suffer from a shortage of houses, so clearly the house could not be discarded, but at the same time it had never been significant enough to remember to bring when packing to go to the cottage. But by 2006, the game had returned to the house, and upon finding the house this time, I was able to reunite it with the rest of the game. Restored to the box, the house's object-identity vanished. Previously, it had demanded individual attention, decision-making and handling. Back in the box, it was just "a part" of a larger object. In other words, tidying literally reduces the number of objects in the house, making the house significantly simpler to manage.

However they are counted, the number of objects in a contemporary Canadian house is not just larger than in past houses, it is also larger than the collections of many small museums. Accessioning is time consuming. Even a large institution with paid professionals may accession only a few hundred new objects each year. For this reason, it was important that my plan for accessioning be practical. (One of my former museum clients assured me that he had heard of someone else, a museum studies student, who had also begun to accession her own home, but was committed to a mental institution during the attempt.[22])

Two preliminary test accession projects tested my accessioning method, using an ad-hoc Filemaker database set up with fields based on a recollection of museum records from past exhibition design projects. These initial fields included spaces for an accession number, date of acquisition, title of the work, artist/maker, medium, date of fabrication, place of origin,

22 Mike Baker, formerly of Museum/London, London, Ontario, September 2008.

height, width, depth and/or diameter, category, condition, location in house, original price, replacement value, number of parts, donor, history (meaning the object's provenance), description, photograph and the date on which the record was made.

Both test projects were associated with a still-life painting. For the first painting, *Fantastic Snow White Windex* (2004), I inventoried all of the items associated with the creation of the painting, starting with the bottles of Fantastic and Windex and the small figurine of Snow White that were its subject. The inventory also included the paints, the easel, the clothes worn, sales receipts for new art supplies, and a photo of me painting. Inventory records for these things were printed out and placed in a three ring binder, which was also given an accession record, and the binder itself fit inside a hinged back panel on the painting.

This process illustrated some interesting facts. For example, a set of accession records, printed out, would in itself immediately and precisely double the number of objects in my house, since for each object in the house, a new piece of paper would appear as a record. In turn, these pieces of paper themselves might be accessioned, making the process infinite. This point was established by Marcel Broodthaers, in his seminal *Musée d'Aigles* (1972), when he displayed a set of three labelled eagle eggs, part of the collection, and beside them a photo of the set of three labeled eggs, with the photo also labelled as part of the collection.[23]

The endlessness of total documentation can also be seen in Andy Warhol's "life capsules" project of the 1970s, in which he indiscriminately packed everything he came across in daily life. Their very completeness served to make them close to useless. As one curator observed: "[Unopened mail] would seem a historian's dream… Except that the staggering volume of the capsules reveals Warhol's revenge, drowning the speculator in details of little or no importance."[24] Commenting on the project, Warhol himself remarked: "I really hate nostalgia, though, so deep down I hope they all get lost and I never have to look at them again."[25]
My second accession painting, *The Kingdom of Animals* (2005), was accompanied by records of animals and animal-related products and images in the house, including frozen meat, a silk shirt (silk worms are animals), and a print of Albrecht Durer's *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1497). Some of these items feature in the painting. The printed accession

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23 Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, ed., *Broodthaers: Writing Interviews, Photographs*. (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1988), p. 145.
24 Ingrid Schaffner, "Deep Storage." In Ingrid Schaffner and Matthias Winzen. *Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing and Archiving in Art*. (Munich: Prestel, 1998), p. 19.
25 Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1975).

records accompanying the painting were sorted into the sequence of their biological nomenclature. The biological Kingdom of Animals is divided into three Phylae: Arthropoda, Mollusca and Chordata, which each in turn divide into further categories. A bee's wax candle is therefore found under Hymenoptera, bees, part of Insecta, under Arthopoda. Sorting did not differentiate between fact and fiction, so that children's books about the Berenstain Bear books were classified as Ursus under Chordata. My own intuitive categories were recorded on the data sheets, available for future use but not yet applied. I also did not control the vocabulary of the categories, simply recording whatever came to mind, so that our cats, Rusty and Shadow, were described as belonging to the category "members of the family."

The printed set of these records was larger than anticipated, so that the binder did not fit into the niche provided on the back of the painting. Of more concern, the accumulating mass of records was becoming difficult to manage. In both test cases, the accession numbers for artifacts were random, following the order in which the records were made. This is common museum practice. For example, the third object acquired in the year 2005 might be numbered 2005-03, distinguished from 1895-12. The accession number must be unique, but is not important for any other reason. The MoMe accessioning project is larger and faster in process than a typical museum inventory. Even with a searchable digital database, it was proving difficult to re-locate any record after it was made, to check it against a new entry or add further details. In addition, it was clear that the project required an approach that would permit coherent chunks of the record to be completed in stages. An opportunity to solve both problems seemed to be available in the accession numbering system.

I therefore developed a new, unique, location-based accession number system. Each room has been given a four-digit reference code, with a following two-digit Room Location Number indicating an object's location inside the room, (ceiling, floor, or north, east, west or south walls). Location Numbers are also provided for furniture that is a location for other objects, like a bookshelf. A further two-digit Drawer/Shelf number indicates where on the piece of furniture the object is located (on top, underneath, leaning against, top shelf/drawer, second shelf, etc). The number takes this form:

XXXX — Room Code (KITC, kitchen, LIVE, living room, etc.),
XXXX-**XX** — Room Location Number (ceiling, floor, north wall, etc.),
XXXX-XX-**XX** — Drawer/Shelf Number (numbered 00 if not needed),
XXXX-XX-XX-**XXX** — Object Number,
XXXX-XX-XX-XXX-**XXX** — Sub-item Number (Optional).

This creates some redundancy, as a bookshelf will have its own unique number as an object (with loose shelves as sub-items), but will also appear as a location. However, the duplication makes it possible to locate the record for any item by searching for its predictable accession number. This orientation method within the records closely duplicates the orientation method for actual objects in the house, in which you first go to the basement, then the tool cupboard, then the shelf in the cupboard that has the screws, and then sort through the relatively limited number of screw boxes on that shelf to locate the precise size needed. To find the record, I could similarly enter the code for the laundry room north side shelves, and within those locate for the specific jar wanted. The physical grouping of the material also permitted me to stop the accession process at any time, and resume it without hesitation or confusion about what had been completed. Refer to Appendix A for specific numbering details. It is notable that early library catalogues also often listed books according to location. As in the case of the house, location also reflects intellectual categories, since the books have already been intuitively sorted to group similar topics together.[26]

Before re-starting the inventory over with the new numbering system, I also undertook a review of the data fields. These fields, known as "metadata," are set up on a blank record to be filled in during accessioning. The metadata fields of a major museum are extensive. For example, the artist of a work might be identified with separate fields for name, date of birth, location of birth, date of death, location of death, current address, e-mail, phone, biography and more. Large established museums often use their own historical systems, while newer smaller museums might purchase a proprietary software inventory system specifically developed for museums. (This is a substantial market. In 1987, the Canadian Museums Association was able to list 1,885 institutional members in Canada.[27]) While different museums tend to record different metadata, there is increasing convergence, motivated by a desire to share electronic access to records. Metadata "crosswalks" that compare the data fields of different organizations or software are available through the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles,[28] the Canadian Heritage Inventory Network,[29] and the United Kingdom

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26 Dorothy May Norris, *A History of Cataloguing and Cataloguing Methods 1100-1850: With an Introductory Survey of Ancient Times; A Thesis accepted for the Honours Diploma of the Library Association*. (London: Grafton & Co. 1939. Republished 1969 Detroit: Gale Research Company.)

27 Canadian Museums Association, *The Official Directory of Canadian Museums and Related Institutions. 1987-88*. (Ottawa: The Canadian Museums Association, 1987), p. 189.

28 Murtha Baca, ed., *Introduction to Art Image Access: Issues, Tools, Standards, Strategies*. (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2002).

29 "CHIN today," 2005-12-01. http://www.chin.gc.ca/English/About_Chin/chin.html Download date 05 February 2009.

Museum Documentation Standard known as "Spectrum."[30]

Following a review of such metadata crosswalks, and based on my previous tests, I added a new field for "Content," to describe the iconography of an artifact, such as the name of the person in a snapshot. A new field for "Associations" allows different objects to be related to each other, such as the binder that goes with the painting *Animals*, but is stored in a different room. In addition, two new fields for "Nomenclature" introduced a standard "controlled vocabulary," the "Robert G. Chenhall System for Classifying Man-Made Objects." [31] Issued in part by the Smithsonian, this vocabulary is used by historical collections to achieve cross-institutional consistency of language. Under this system, a regular kitchen plate, for example, is described as "plate, dinner," rather than "dinner plate," "tableware," or "ceramics." Applying the vocabulary is time consuming and often counter-intuitive, but generates a desirable level of consistency, not just with other institutions, but also from personal inconsistency in my own use of language from day to day.

One of the great advantages of the vocabulary also lies in its strangeness when applied to the house. Using this language causes the house to become in a sense new, which is what Russian literary critic Viktor Shklovsky in 1917 described as the role of poetry:

> Habitualization devours work, clothes, furniture, one's wife and the fear of war. And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things; to make the stone stony. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.[32]

Despite additions, the number of data fields were kept as small as possible, to keep the database practical in light of the limited staff resources (only one part-time Registrar: me).

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30 Gordon McKenna and Efthymia Patsaki, eds., *SPECTRUM: The UK Museum Documentation Standard*. Cambridge, UK: MDAm 2005.

4 James R. Blackaby, Patricia Greeno and The Nomenclature Committee, *The Revised Nomenclature for Museum Cataloguing*. (Lanham MD: Altamira Press in co-operation with the American Association for State and Local History, 1995).

32 Viktor Shlovsky, "Art as Technique," 1917. Translated by Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reiss, 1965. David Lodge, ed., *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader.* (London: Longmans, 1988), pp. 16-30.

It was also necessary to accept that not all fields would be filled out during the initial pass. Photography, for example, will be a separate later stage. The final MoMe database now includes the following data fields:

— accession number,
— accession date,
— nomenclature category (Chenhall controlled vocabulary)
— nomenclature term (Chenhall controlled vocabulary);
— short description ("Aunt Lena's shell ornament")
— title ("*Fantasic Snow White Windex*")
— fabrication date,
— fabrication location,
— content (iconography of any imagery on the piece),
— fabricator,
— fabricator information,
— acquisition (purchase, donation),
— history (previous owners),
— location change (a unique field to accommodate changes affecting the number)
— value (initial cost, replacement value, or both)
— material,
— height, width, depth,
— condition,
— image (typically a photograph taken by me),
— image data (describing copyrights affecting the image),
— associations (links to other items in the collections),
— comments.

The utility of the resulting records depends upon the fact that they are in a searchable digital database. Any single field can be searched, retrieving focused segments of records on a particular topic. As a totality, the records of MoMe are too complete: like the records of Andy Warhol, they contain too much data to have obvious meaning.

MoMe as a museum; the museum as research tool

The Museum of Me finds its closest formal relationship with the earliest historical form of the museum: the Renaissance cabinet of curiosity. Like MoMe, the cabinets were also owned and maintained by essentially one person or family. MoMe shares with the cabinets also a fundamental focus on research: the conviction that manipulations of the collections can

achieve insight. Human beings have always hoarded precious objects, but in the cabinets, for the first time, collections of objects were assembled as representatives of ideas, not financial value. As museum historian Ken Arnold writes, "[museums are] places where people release the knowledge potential of objects, where they give voice to them as 'ideas reified.'"[33]

A number of recent artists make reference to cabinets of curiosity, such as Mark Dion in *Tate Thames Dig* (1999),[34] but the cabinets were not as consistent as such references often suggest. Cabinets evolved rapidly, serving social, scientific, and political goals. They inspired not just later institutional museums, but also modern sciences like chemistry, medicine, and biology. Contemporary domestic medicine cabinets are also the direct descendents of the practical herb collections found in the cabinets of curiosity.[35]

Cabinets emerged for the first time in Europe during the Renaissance because of a sudden influx of entirely new kinds of objects, which eluded existing definitions. These new objects included mysterious fragments of freshly excavated Classical culture,[36] plus astonishing natural and artificial things "far fetched" from the distant ocean explorations made possible by the new magnetic compass and trigonometric tables for navigation calculations.[37] Author Stephen Greenblatt writes:

> Columbus' voyage initiated a century of intense wonder. European culture experienced something like the 'startle reflex' one can observe in infants: eyes widened, arms outstretched, breathing stilled, the whole body momentarily convulsed. But what does it mean to experience wonder? What are its origins, its uses, and its limits? Is it closer to pleasure or pain, longing or horror? Is it a sign and an agent of renunciation or possession?[38]

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33 Ken Arnold, *Cabinets for the Curious: Looking Back At Early English Museums*. Perspectives on Collecting Series. (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006), p. 5.

34 "Mark Dion Tate Thames Dig," http://www.tate.org.uk/learning/thamesdig/flash.htm. Download date 18 February 2008

35 Irvine Loudon, ed., *Western Medicine: An Illustrated History. (*Oxford: Oxford University Pressm 1997).

36 Alain Schnapp, *The Discovery of the Past*.1993. Translated by Ian Kilmes and Gillian Varndell. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997), p. 123.

37 Thomas Crump, *A Brief History of Science As Seen Through the Development of Scientific Instruments*. 2001. Paperback edition. (London: Robinson, 2002), p. 37.

38 Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*. (1991. Paperback edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 14.

In their initial appearance, the cabinets served as a sort of intellectual junk drawer, temporarily delaying the need to draw conclusions. One scholar observes:

> Wonder was a proper reaction for the learned as well as for the uninstructed [visiting a cabinet]: wonder, paraphrased perhaps as inquisitive delight in novelty, mingled with awe and gratitude, was part of the natural history and natural philosophy of the time. The idea that it is the task of the scientist not to arouse wonder but to mortify it with the icy touch of reason had no place in the 1590s.[39]

The visual impact of the new things was increased by a new sophistication in optics, which in the late 1200s had started with reading glasses for aging scholars.[40] Inside the cabinets, lenses, prisms and mirrors were collected as curiosities, used in optic experiments,[41] and turned upon other objects to see them better. After seeing a bee under a magnifying lens in 1630, one writer exclaimed, "neither Aristotle nor any other philosopher and ancient or modern naturalist has ever observed or known [these things].[42]

The sensory shock of new visual experiences unbalanced the structure of believability. Authority shifted from words and the ear, onto pictures and the eye.[43] In art, linear perspective replaced the medieval corporate view with a singular personal "point of view:" a record of what one person, with one eye, sees at one moment.[44] Gutenberg's printing press, perfected 1400-55,[45] spread the new information, strengthening individuality and the possibility of new opinions. Aristotle's recommendation of original observation was freshly

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39 William Schupbach, "Some Cabinets of Curiosities in European Academic Institutions." *Origin of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in the Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century.* Edited by Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 170.

40 Mark Pendergrast, *Mirror/Mirror: A History of the Human Love Affair with Reflection*. (New York: Basic Books, 2003), p. 77.

41 Laura Larencich-Minelli, "Museography and Ethnographical Collections in Bologna during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Origin of Museums*, pp. 21-23.

42 Francesco Stellurni, *Persio tradotto*. Rome, 1630. Quoted in Philip Blom, *To Have and to Hold: An Intimate History of Collectors and Collecting*. (2002. Paperback edition. London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 19.

43 Alan Macfarlane and Gerry Martin, *Glass: A World History*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 48.

44 Samuel Y. Edgerton Jr., *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective*. (New York: Basic Books, 1975), p. 9.

45 Philip B. Meggs and Alston W. Purvis, *Meggs' History of Graphic Design*. (Fourth Edition. Hoboken: New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2006), pp. 69-75.

felt as a strategy for understanding the wrld[46] as the *contemptus mundi* of the Middle Ages began to yield.[47]

Unlike simpler hoards of precious goods, cabinets of curiosity were often found among the newly prosperous middle classes, encouraged in the Renaissance by financial innovations like double-entry bookkeeping invented by Fra' Luca Pacioli.[48] A cabinet of curiosity was a practical social tool, increasing its owner's social status by attracting "cavaliers and curious ladies."[49] The guest books of cabinets inspired their own comments, as visitors recorded their pleasure at seeing who else had visited before.[50] Collections proliferated. In 1549, one writer counted 100 private collections in Rome alone,[51] while in 1560, another found 968 across Europe overall.[52]

As the cabinets matured, their focus began to shift from wonder to reason. The mere physical presence of the objects required their arrangement onto shelves, so that physical juxtapositions raised the issue of how the objects should be sorted or classified. The published "inventory" of early Schatzkammer treasure-houses began to change to the more systematic "catalogue" of the Wunderkammer, which aimed to establish conceptual relationships between different types of material.[53] This later type of cabinet more resembles MoMe, as it too seeks to understand its contents through the tools of meaningful sorting. The results, like the arrangements inside other people's kitchen drawers, often seem curious to the outsider. In the collection of Duke Ferdinand II at Ambras Castle, the arm-bone of an ancestor was stored in the cupboard with the other bones, including ivory lathe-turned toys.[54]

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46 Jonathan Barnes, *Aristotle: A Very Short Introduction*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

47 George Duby, "Preface." *A History of Private Life II: Revelations of the Medieval World*. Edited by Philippe Ariès and George Duby. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1988), p. x.

48 Alfred W. Crosby, *The Measure of Reality: Quantification and Western Society, 1250-1600*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 213.

49 Guiseppe Olmi, "Science-Honour-Metaphor: Italian Cabinets of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries." *The Origin of Museums*, p 13.

50 Joachim Menshausen, "Elector Augustus's *Kunstkammer:* An Analysis of the Inventory of 1587." *The Origin of Museums*, p, 73.

51 Ibid., p. 15.

52 Blom, *To Have and to Hold*, p. 20.

53 Julian Rabey, "Exotica from Islam." *The Origin of Museums*, p. 251.

54 Elisabeth Scheicher, "The Collection of Archduke Ferdinand II at Schloss Ambras: Its Purpose, Composition and Evolution." *The Origin of Museums*, p. 35.

In *The Order of Things* (1966), Michel Foucault addresses the problem of taxonomy when he quotes the famous passage from Borges about "a certain Chinese encyclopaedia," in which:

> …animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) etcetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies.[55]

Foucault points out that this list could only occur in the "non-place of language."[56] In contrast, the museum is a real, physical, place, where juxtapositions are limited to those that are physically possible. Realness is the quality that distinguishes the museum from all forms of verbal debate. Questions posed in the museum are created by the mere existence of the object, while that same existence limits the possible answers, as when the hopeful alchemist repeatedly fails to turn lead into gold, despite the verbal plausibility of his explanations. Foucault compares the tentative sorting efforts of early science to a man with brain damage trying to sort wool:

> The aphasic will create a multiplicity of tiny, fragmented regions in which nameless resemblances agglutinate things into unconnected islets; in one corner, they will place the lightest-coloured skeins, in another the red ones, somewhere else those that are softest in texture, in yet another place the longest … creating groups then dispersing them again, heaping up diverse similarities.[57]

Ultimately, the descriptive tools developed by the manipulation of sets of seashells and leaves would succeed. The binomial nomenclature popularized by Carol Linnaeus (1707-1778) is only one outcome. Taxonomy remains at the heart of museum functions to this day. It is the essence of collections management and storage, and of curating. In an exhibition, the narrative line is carried by the physical relationships between the objects selected by the curator for display. Their commonalities establish the context or "ground" of the show, with the story created by differences perceived against that ground. Thus, at the Bata Shoe Museum, the topic of shoes soon vanishes from the viewer's attention, which focuses instead on craftsmanship, fashion or ethnic identity as described in the shoes. Fred Wilson's

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55 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*. 1966. (Paperback edition. London: Routledge, 1989), p. xvi.

56 Ibid., p. xviii.

57 Ibid., p. xx.

display *Metalwork 1793-1880* in the exhibition *Mining the Museum*, (1992) shows the power of sorting. In this notable institutional critique, an elaborate sterling silver tea set is installed into the same museum showcase as a set of steel slave shackles also manufactured in Baltimore at the same time.[58] The physical juxtaposition of the objects, asserting their similarity, establishes the narrative of their difference.

Much Postmodern art, with its rhetoric of appropriation, might be also seen as an act of sorting or curating. I have begun to think of some of the recent objects I have been making as "microcurating." The cardboard quilt *Face the Day* (2008) is constructed out of our empty breakfast food containers. In this object, a single autobiographical object is achieved through a miniaturized version of the curatorial act of selection and recontextualization.

Outside of the public displays at MoMe, which aim to communicate social values (like "middle class" or "clean"), much of the private sorting serves as a mnemonic device. Sorting aims to reduce the complexity of the collections, to make them usable. The human brain cannot handle too much complexity. The upper level of separate items that can be remembered seems to be about seven ("the magical number seven, plus or minus two"[59]). Any collection more complex than that must be handled grouped or coded in some way. In the house, a series of progressive orientation allows small objects to be located by progressing downwards in categories, taking the searcher first to one of several general areas, then within that area to one of a limited number of more specific locations.

Good organization is not just handy; it also resonates with reality. The periodic table of chemistry reflects the atomic structure of the elements. "Noble gasses" are grouped in the right-hand column to describe their completed atomic structure, which is also the reason why they are "noble" or chemically inert. In the house, organization groups things for function, putting laundry soap beside the washing machine. This sounds deceptively simple, and in practice fails to work, because social symbolism is given priority over real needs. House architecture is treated as "scenario design" in which features evoke a desirable activity. Purchase of the house is the ritual acquisition of potential experience. Good features include a fireplace (kissing on the rug), a foyer with curved staircase (dramatic entrance to a party), and an exercise room (flatter stomach). Buyers are not encouraged to imagine dull or

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58 James Putnam, *Art and Artifact: The Museum as Medium*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001), p. 30.

59 George A. Miller, "The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on Our Capacity for Processing Information," *The Psychological Review*, 1956, vol. 63, Issue 2, pp. 81-97. http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Miller/ Download 02 Nov 2008.

unpleasant activities like storing empty bottles, cleaning a litter box or locking a bicycle, and a result no provisions are made for these activities, which become therefore difficult to do. The example of museum exhibition design, however, which easily combines flashy visuals with extreme practicality in security and conservation, suggests that both types of feature could be achieved without compromising either. This is possible, however, only if advance planning fully identifies both the storyline and practical constraints. The accessioning of the collections of MoMe is a first step towards such integrated domestic programming.

At MoMe, sorting problems are compounded by the churning effect of everyday life. Unlike objects in museum, household objects regularly change category, as when clean clothes (belonging in the closet) are transformed into dirty clothes (needing transport to the laundry room). Further category problems are created by the clashing concepts of different inhabitants. Such ambiguities plague the kitchen. The measuring cup might be a jug (top left shelf), a cooking tool (under the counter) or a piece of glassware (bottom right shelf). Problems arise when different people assume different classifications, and place these items where other users don't think to look. All households suffer this problem, not just MoMe.

Categorization problems in the kitchen are compounded by the ritual "skinning" of kitchen cabinetry, a leftover of 1930s streamline styling. With cabinet contents concealed behind a skin, their locations must be memorized. Memorization requires the use of "recall memory," rather than the easier-to-learn "recognition memory" triggered when something is visible. The kitchen of MoMe will function smoothly for its multiple kitchen users only when the design takes advantage of recognition memory.

In classic categorization theory, categories are supposed to be clear cut and consistent. Sorting is supposed to be a clear-cut process, unaffected by any foibles of the person doing the categorizing. Newer "prototype theory" offers alternative explanations of human sorting. It suggests that categories are not consistent, but instead rely upon a "best example" or prototype. Classification of things into categories becomes a personal judgement-call of how much each thing resembles the prototype. At what point does a kitten become a cat? Recognizing and assessing prototypes draws on culture, learning and metaphor to achieve results. Categories are not abstract neutral containers.[60]

The categorization and maintenance problems of the domestic middle-class house are deceptively ordinary. We tend to assume they are personal, trivial, and unworthy of attention.

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60 George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp 6-7.

However, domesticity affects many other issues. Feminist economist Marilyn Waring was a leader in pointing out the impact of unpaid work upon world economics, and demonstrating that its neglect by the United Nations system of accounting in measures like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contributes to war, death and world hunger.[61] In 2005, Statistics Canada estimated that Canadian women spent an average of 4.3 hours daily on unpaid work (chiefly housework and child care) in comparison to the 2.5 hours spent by the average man.[62] Such observations are often interpreted as revealing the laziness of men. However, lack of involvement can equally be interpreted as an effect of categorization problems. When critical domestic functions rely upon memorization of hidden categories, it may be more efficient to delegate those functions to one person. Extra "helpers" will only generate confusion; increasing the work required for re-sorting before the kitchen can be restored to useful order.

MoMe bears less resemblance to later cabinets as they changed again to reflect more structured ideas of the world. Cabinets now began to be composed as a metaphor for the world at large. They were selected and assembled to serve as a microcosm to express the macrocosm rather than accumulating random stuff as came along. While I see MoMe as a microcosm, it is a natural one, that already embodies in miniature larger issues of domesticity in our culture. The task is not to collect artifacts to match a conceptual structure; the task is to recognize the structures hidden within the existing artifacts.

Francis Yates wrote about the legendary *Memory Theatre* of Giulio Camillo (1480-1544)[63] which physically embodied a mnemonic sorting system. Standing on the stage of the *Theatre* and looking up at its ranked rows of displays, a user could "at once perceive with his eyes everything that is otherwise hidden in the depths of the human mind."[64] More than an aid to memory, the Theatre was an embodiment of philosophy, positioning each type of information in relationship to a greater scheme. Camillo's framework was adopted by some cabinets of curiosity, including that of Francesco I dei Medici.[65] But the age of the cabinet was fading

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61 Marilyn Waring, *If Women Counted: A New Feminist Economics*. (New York: Harper-Collins, 1990).

62 Virginia Galt, "Men pitching in more on home front; as women spend more time at work, men are picking up more duties, a study finds." Toronto: *The Globe and Mail,* Thursday, July 20, 2006, page B1

63 Francis A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966).

64 Erasmus, *Epistolae*. Edited by P.S. Allen et al. (Oxford, 1906, X), pp. 29-30. Quoted in Willim Schupbach, "Some Cabinets of Curiosities in European Academic Institutions." *The Origin of Museums*, p. 176.

65 According to Bolzoni, 1980. Quoted in Guiseppe Olmi, "Science-Honour-Metaphor:

even as Francis Bacon described an ideal one in his *Gesta Grayorum* (1594):

> ...a goodly, huge cabinet, wherein whatsoever the hand of man by exquisite art or engine has made rare in stuff, form or motion; whatsoever singularity, chance, and the shuffle of things has produced; whatsoever Nature has wrought in things that want life and may be kept; shall be sorted and included.[66]

Bacon's perfect imaginary cabinet was set in a zoological garden beside a library and a "still-house" or laboratory. Earlier, those functions would have been contained inside the cabinet. In the well-known illustration of Ferrante Imperato's Museum in Naples, 1599, one of three walls is entirely taken up by racks of books,[67] stored flat in stacks since the bookshelf had not yet been invented.[68] At the time Bacon wrote, the sorting process within the cabinets had identified coherent categories of things that were beginning to spin off into new institutions all their own. The library, zoo and lab would soon be followed by specialized institutions devoted to minerals, natural history, antiquities, ethnography, and fine art, as the cabinets finally emptied themselves entirely and vanished.[69]

The beginning of the end of the cabinets of curiosity might be seen as early as 1584, when Francesco I dismantled his cabinet to move its contents into the Uffizi, for use on the political function of ostentation.[70] In 1833, the Rosenborg Collection in Denmark became the first to be sorted into chronological order.[71] Chronological order was then a startling innovation, made possible by a vast increase in knowledge that permitted dates to be given to previously mysterious objects. Across Europe, consolidation and reorganization saw personal small collections swallowed into larger institutions. Private and princely collections gained definition as agents of national identity. The Louvre opened to the public in 1789, nine days after the Revolution. A few years later, under the rule of Napoleon, it achieved a certain pinnacle of influence when its director advised the Emperor which objects would be worthy

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Italian Cabinets of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries." *The Origin of Museums*, p. 7

66 Quoted in Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor, "Introduction." *The Origin of Museums*, p. 1.

67 *Dell'Historia Naturale di Ferrante Imperato Napolitano Libri XXVIII…* (Naples). *The Origin of Museums*, Fig. 4.

68 Henry Petroski. *The Book on the Bookshelf*. (New York: Knopf, 1999).

69 Bente Gundestrup, "From the Royal *Kunstkammer* to the Modern Museums of Copenhagen." *The Origin of Museums*, pp 128-134.

70 Olmi, "Science-Honour-Metaphor." *The Origin of Museums*, p. 10

71 Impey, *The Origin of Museums,* p.134.

of looting from the museums of countries he planned to conquer.[72]

The growing social agenda for museums can be seen in one of the earliest displays of public art in Britain, at the Foundling Hospital, London, 1747. Its historical paintings promoted the prestige of the hospital, and gave pictorial expression to its humanitarianism. In addition, as a fashionable expedition, the display provided an opportunity for visitors to practice the difference between cultured conduct and the "vulgar."[73] The establishment of the British National Gallery in 1824 also carried a social agenda, working in parallel with the Great Reform Act of 1832 to extend culture, as well as the vote, to excluded classes.[74] Historian Nick Prior describes the mandate of the new institution:

> As far as the committee was concerned, a properly organized national gallery was an important tool of national improvement and social order. It was imperative, therefore, that free admission was secured, and a regime of access encouraged, to expose the lower ranks to works of art that might improve their habits and morals.[75]

Hope for social transformation was also the overt purpose of the Whitechapel Art Gallery, established in 1901 in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Europe by the Reverend Samuel Barnett and his wife Henrietta. Their "evangelical" mission was to promote social urban renewal, by displaying art objects to a working class public.[76] In Canada, the new National Gallery Act of 1913 established its mandate to "improve public taste." This goal reached an apex from 1947-1955 when the National Industrial Design Council (NIDC) was integrated with the National Gallery. Under the leadership of Donald Buchanan, the NIDC issued awards certifying which products of design were officially good.[77]

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72 Blom. *To Have and to Hold*, pp. 166-118.

73 Brandon Taylor, *Art for the Nation: Exhibitions and the London Public 1747-2001*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp 3-5.

74 Nick Prior, *Museums and Modernity: Art Galleries and the Making of Modern Culture*. (Oxford: Berg, 2002), p 75.

75 Ibid., page 84.

76 Iwona Blazwick, "Temple / White Cube / Laboratory." *What Makes a Great Exhibition?* Edited by Paula Marincola. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Center for Arts and Heritage, 2007), p. 119.

77 "Industrial Design Division of the National Gallery of Canada June 1947-1954" http://www.lethbridgecollege.net/gallery/design/index.php Download 05 November 2008. See also John Collins, *Design For Use, Design For Millions: Proposals and Options of the National Industrial Design Council 1948 - 1960*. MA Thesis, Carleton University, 1986.

Where the owners of cabinets of curiosity hoped to gain personal social advantage, new institutional museums aimed for social advancement for the masses, through transformative exposure to the experience of art. The actual result, of course, was rather different. It was the appearance of the art museum as an institution that permitted the rebellion of Modern art. Without public access to art, there would have been nothing to rebel against. Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) marks the moment when the museum was recognized for its new-found power. Previously, the prestige of a museum derived from the glamour of the magnificent objects found within it. Now, the identity of the museum had become so strong that the relationship had flipped. It was now the glamorous museum that defined the nature of its contents, lending aura to the objects housed there.

Today's museums pitch themselves as centers of pleasurable entertainment as well as intellectual enlightenment.[78] Carsten Holler described his five-story slide *Test Site* (2006) at the Tate Modern as a "playground for the body and the brain."[79] In art galleries, the mind is whirled through pleasurably giddy intellectual disorientation in the same way that a regular amusement park whirls the body through fun physical disorientation.

MoMe is widely separated from all institutional museums by their scope of activity, professional staff, and their long time frame. None of these relate to MoMe, for, like virtually all of the cabinets of curiosity, it operates on a shoestring and will not outlast its collector. This does not, however, mean that MoMe as a project will end with the inevitable dispersion of its collections. Like the cabinets, MoMe also exists as a document. The cabinets remain known because of published diagrams, illustrations, catalogues, and diaries and travel accounts of wealthy visitors doing the "Grand Tour" of Europe. As a document, MoMe also may withstand the editing of time. There is a possibility that it will endure past the end of the physical institution, standing as a monument immune to loss and decay.

The relationship of recording to the hope for permanence has been noted before. Author Jacques Le Goff observed that archives have often been described by the term "monument," as in the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* published starting in 1826.[80] Artist Christian Boltanski, describing his project *Research and Presentation of All That Remains of My*

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78 Victoria Newhouse, *Towards a New Museum*. Expanded edition. (New York: Monacelli Press, 2006.)

79 "Tate Modern Unveils Giant Slides," 9 October 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/6034123.stm 01 March 2009.

80 Quoted in Paul Ricoeur, "Archives, Documents, Traces," 1978. *The Archive*. Edited by Charles Merewether. Documents of Contemporary Art. (London: Whitechapel, 2006), p. 68.

Childhood 1944-1950 (1969),wrote:

> So many years will be spent searching, studying, classifying, before my life is secured, carefully arranged and labelled in a safe place — secure against theft, fires and nuclear war — from whence it will be possible to take it out and assemble it at any point. Then, being thus assured of never dying, I may finally rest.[81]

At a recent panel discussion in Toronto, the artist Judy Chicago returned more than once to the theme of "immateriality" in women's art, lamenting the numbers of her peers who had devoted themselves to fashionable conceptual and performance art, and as a result found themselves at the end of their careers having left no tangibly visible heritage.[82] She cited the Guerrilla Girls for their observation that in 1989 only 5% of the works shown in the Modern and Contemporary Galleries of the Metropolitan Museum were made by women — dropping to 3% in 2004.[83]

Immateriality has been a theme of women's work throughout history, as writers on textiles[84] have commented. Women's work tends to yield experience; men's work to produce objects. One of the goals of MoMe is to materialize the ephemeral domestic house. The accession records of MoMe capture the complete range of objects in museological description. It is the range of objects and depth of detail, that separates the MoMe accession list from the type of usual house inventory found in wills or insurance policies. Even the prestigious inventory of the goods of Charles I following his execution consists primarily of a list of objects with prices.[85] Inexpensive objects, and details, are omitted.

In describing the MoMe accessioning as a monument against death, I do not claim that the collections merit preservation because they are unusual. They vary from other house collections in rather predictable ways having to do with the idiosyncrasies of our family histories and personalities. This lack of exceptionality is, of course, one of the most valuable things about MoMe. The historical collections of museums retain only the exceptional and

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81 Christian Boltanski, "Research and Presentation of All That Remains of My Childhood 1944-1950." Merewether. *The Archive*, p. 25.

82 12 February 2009, Innes Town Hall, Toronto, Ontario, with Maura Reilly, Jenni Sorkley and Allyson Mitchell.

83 "Guerilla Girls at the Venice Biennale 2005," http://www.guerrillagirls.com/posters/venicewallf.shtml 28 February 2008.

84 Elizabeth Wayland Barber, *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years. Women, Cloth and Society in Early Times*. Paperback edition. (New York: W.W. Norton), 1995.

85 Hal Horsler, *Living the Past*. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2003), p. 37.

wonderful things of the past because the boring and the ordinary have been edited away. The dresses of Marie Antoinette survive, but not the dress of the housemaid who cleaned the floors beneath her feet. MoMe includes floor cleaner in its accession records.

MoMe as art

As a work of art, MoMe draws on the tradition of conceptual art, including the area of institutional critique. However, because of my personal background as a designer, MoMe is also committed to the realist political agenda of the Russian Constructivists, which has become a convention of professional design practice.

In asserting a claim to the status of work of art, it is not acceptable to simply duplicate claims of the past. As artist and educator Jane Buyers has noted, the world of visual art does not encourage the sort of skillful repetition of past works found in music or theatre, where creative "interpretation" is a genre that commands its own respect.[86] In contrast, a claim to "artness" must assert uniqueness, from a chronological position in time that takes account of previous claims. At each point in the chronology, a new claim to artness can stand for only a brief moment as a readable "figure," visible against the historical "ground" created by the sum of previous claims. The new figure is then absorbed into the practice, and becomes part of the new ground against which the next claim must be made. The cultural appropriations of Postmodernism appear to be on the edge of establishing just such a new genre,[87] but at this moment, the critical issue seems to remain demonstrating awareness of context, and describing how the new work differs.

Claiming art status against the context of a body of existing practice becomes increasingly difficult today, because of the unstable condition of the canon of art. The traditional canon described in introductory art history textbooks[88] suffers from a number of well known limitations, notably in terms of coverage of objects made in non-Western cultures or by

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86 Jane Buyers, class lecture, October 30, 2008.

87 Joan Coutu, comment to author February 26, 2009.

88 Laurie Schnieder Adams, *Art Across Time*. Second Edition. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2002). Lois Fichner-Rathus, *Understanding Art*. Eighth Edition. (Belmont CA: Thomson Higher Education, 2007). Gloria K. Fiero, *The Humanistic Tradition. Volume I: Prehistory to the Early Modern World*. Fourth Edition. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2002). Mark Getlein, *Living with Art*. Eighth Edition. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2008). Fred S. Kleiner and Christin J. Mamiya, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages: A Concise History. (*Belmont, CA: Thomson Higher Education, 2006). Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History.* Third Edition. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2008).

women, both of which may be denigrated by being described as “decoration,” (a pejorative term which also applies to MoMe). Other objects suffer from more arbitrary exclusion, like the magnificent Solutrean “laurel leaf” flint points roughly contemporary with cave painting. The points share notable formal qualities with Brancusi’s sculpture, being similarly geometrically elegant, fragile, difficult to make, and useless. Yet they are not considered art, because the canon excludes abstraction made prior to the mid 1800s CE.

There have always been exceptions to the rule of the canon, such as the Barnes Collection of Philadelphia, established in the first half of the twentieth century, in which objects of mixed ages and origins were installed according to the theories of significant form of Clive Bell and Roger Fry. Recent art practice further erodes the canon. The notable 2008 re-installation of the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto contextualized First Nations works into the historic Canadian galleries of Western painting. This installation includes a wall of stone arrow points. In the accompanying video interpretation, interpretive planner David Wistow comments on the beauty of this work and asks, “how can it not be an expression of art? It has to be.”[89]

Even so, MoMe is difficult to position because it is conceptual and abstract in form, but pragmatic and tangible in ambition. However, there are precedents for practical art. The proposal that useful objects may also, at the same time, be works of art, was a central tenet of Russian revolutionary art as it moved away from the mystic abstraction of Suprematism. In the *Constructivist Manifesto* (1922), Alexei Gan wrote, “let us tear ourselves away from speculative work [art] and find a way to real work, applying our knowledge and skills to real, live and expedient work.:[90] This linking of artistic with practical goals has become embedded into Modern design practice. Scholar Paul Greenhalgh observes:

> The overarching concern of the Modern Movement was to break down barriers between aesthetics, technics and society, in order that an appropriate design of the highest visual and practical quality could be produced for the mass of the population... Design was to be forged into a weapon with which to combat the alienation apparent in modern, urban society. It was therefore construed to be fundamentally a political activity, concerned with the achievement of a proper level of social morality.[91]

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89 Video installation seen on site February 18, 2009.

90 Camilla Gray, *The Great Experiment: Russian Art 1863-1922*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962).

91 Paul Greenhalgh, “Introduction.” *Modernism in Design*. Edited by Paul Greenhalgh. (London: Reaktion, 1990), p. 8.

Trained as a designer in the Modern tradition, I am unable to shake the political ambition to solve real problems. Applying the sophisticated methodologies of museum communications design to the under-investigated problems of domesticity, the accessioning of MoMe is only a necessary first step, to be followed (after graduation) by development of a new and improved storyline and re-installation according to new corporate objectives.

But since the project at this point is immaterial, MoMe is also related to the tradition of Conceptual Art, which in the 1960s reduced art to the essence of idea alone. Alexander Alberro has identified some of the threads of thinking that came together in its creation. An increasing "self reflexivity" in painting and sculpture was exploring materials in ways that discounted technical skill and dematerialized the art object. Barry Robert's transitional *Inert Gas Piece* (1969) is physically real but invisible. At the same time, the framing conventions of the gallery had become increasingly problematic, inspiring a search by artists to find alternate delivery methods; through performance, perhaps, or publicity brochures. Art found itself at "the threshold of information."[92]

Different conceptual artists took different approaches. Sol LeWitt felt that conceptual art had been achieved when the decision to make a piece of art was sufficient to render the rest of its execution automatic, writing, "the idea becomes a machine that makes the art."[93] Joseph Kosuth went further, locating the essence of a project in the idea alone, meaning that it was not necessary to implement any action. Working with the group Art and Language, Kosuth created a series of texts about art, presented as art, without reference to the outer world. Not only did the importance of such work lie only in its self-referential ideas, but Kosuth further felt it was not significant whether or not any member of the viewing public understood them. In a 1969 interview Kosuth said, "the public's not interested in art anyway... No more interested in art than they are in physics."[94] Both directions are encouraging news for the inventory of MoMe, allowing me to take a rest before finishing, in confidence that the idea alone is a valid achievement, whether or not it interests anyone other than myself. With the procedure established, completion now requires only automatized willpower.

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92 Alexander Alberro, "Reconsidering Conceptual Art, 1966- 1977." *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology.* Edited by Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1999), p. xvii.

93 Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art", *Artforum*, June 1967. http://www.ddooss.org/articulos/idiomas/Sol_Lewitt.htm Download 06 November 2008.

94 Alberro, "Reconsidering Conceptual Art," p. xx.

As the object vanished in Conceptual Art,[95] what remained was often writing done by the artists, as they stepped into roles previously occupied by a separate class of writers. In some cases, the criticism alone became the location of "artness." As Alberro points out:

> Given the nature of Conceptual Art, the exhibition catalogue is as important a component of the show as the work displayed in the museum galleries.... The strategy that governs the production and exhibition of this work is twofold: while it acknowledges from the outset that in a society of mass culture the work of art is no longer encountered as an original, but as an industrially produced and disseminated reproduction or interpretive description, it also inverts this phenomenon by embedding the work of art within the very channels in which it will ultimately be received.[96]

The accessioning of MoMe also exists only as a work imbedded in its channels of communication: the database, and to some extent this artist's statement. MoMe exists as a document, not an object. Here an interesting perspective is thrown onto the example of the cabinets of curiosity. They too, remain now only as documents. As we currently understand them, the cabinets are in fact Conceptual Art: just an idea.

Conceptual Art did not ultimately succeed in many of its goals. In 1970, Brazilian artist Cildo Meireles tried to create art without financial value when he modified Coke bottles with political slogans ("Yankee Go Home!") and returned them for the deposit. The modified bottles were refilled and distributed to a random audience. However, the artist kept copies of modified bottles, and in 2006 donated some to the Tate Gallery in London, where they are now categorized on the web site as "sculpture."[97]

Conceptual Art was also not alone in demonstrating that ideas have power. As Naomi Klein points out, the idea of a product — the brand — is enough to give value, regardless where a product is made or bought.[98] The power of branding has been tangibly measured in the

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95 Lucy Lippard, *The Dematerialization of the Art Object 1966-1972*. (Berkeley CA: University of Califonia Press, 1997.)

96 Alexander Alberro, "Mel Bochner: Thought Made Visible, 1966-1973." Yale University Art Gallery," *ArtForum*, Feb. 1966 . FindArticles.com. 27 Sep. 2008. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0268/is_n6_v34/ai_18163699

97 Item T12328. http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=84302&searchid=19774&tabview=work Download date 19 February 2009.

98 Naomi Klein, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. (Toronto: Knopf, 2000.) But actually branding is historically earlier than Conceptual Art. The world's first logo, the red

field of "neuro-marketing." In a seminal early experiment, American neuroscientist Read Montague repeated the Pepsi Challenge taste test inside an fMRI (functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging) machine, to measure blood flow in the brains of subjects. His results substantiated Pepsi's claim of better taste, because Pepsi triggered a stronger response in the pleasure center of the brain. However, when Montague told subjects which drink was Coke, a different pattern of brain activity also affected cognitive centers. Learning the identity of Pepsi had no similar impact.[99] Ideas themselves are commodities which, in Marx's terms, have exchange-value.[100]

In Alberro's analysis of Conceptual Art, the generations of artists following in the tradition have polarized between two camps: political and "appropriationist." Politicized artists have not abandoned the attempt to reach the audience. With *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (1974) Martha Rosler draws upon the tradition of Conceptual Art, taking advantage of its language tools.[101] Though political in its goals, MoMe does not fit this tradition, since its methods and goals for change are not linguistic, but concerned with the tangible structure of the house.

Conceptual "appropriationist" art is less political, testing sacred ideas around the necessity of "originality" and the neutrality of museums. Artists in this tradition include Richard Prince, who re-photographed the Marlboro Man posters. In this group we might also place Andrea Fraser, whose critiques of the art gallery and appropriations of its methods are inseparable from her desire to belong to it.[102] Fraser's first fake museum tour, *Museum Highlights* (1989), used the persona of a fictional low-level museum docent to offer comments. Canadian artist David Tomas has observed how the social hierarchy of museums resembles that of churches. In a church, God lies at the apex of authority, served by "those who serve God," the clergy, below whom are "those who serve those who serve God. " In an art gallery, "Art" lies at the top, served by curators, and below them, those who serve the curators.[103] Thus, even a low-paid junior curator enjoys higher institutional prestige than a senior administrator. On this

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triangle for Bass Beer, appears in Èdouard Manet's *A Bar at the Folies Bergere* (1882)

99 Clive Thompson, "There's a Sucker Born in Every Medial Prefrontal Cortex," *The New York Times*, October 26, 2003. http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B07E1DE113EF935A15753C1A9659C8B63 06 November 2008.

100 Jay Emerling, *Theory for Art History*. (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 21.

101 Pierre Bourdieu, "Foreward: Revolution and Revelation." *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser.* Edited by Alexander Alberro. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2005), pp. xviii-xvix.

102 Bourdieu, "Foreword." *Museum Highlights*, 2005.

103 Personal communication to author, April, 1986.

scale, volunteer docents are roughly equivalent to the ladies who serve coffee after church, so the harshness of Fraser's critique of museums through a parody of docents can be compared to savaging the religion by ridiculing bake sales. It is not surprising that her work has been greeted with affection by those inside museums. Fraser's later works document an upwards social vector, as she rises to the role of curator, artist and museum director. In *Untitled* (2003), she has sex with a collector, reaching the zenith of museum status: trophy wife. Trophy spouses wield considerable power in museums, having both the necessary time and money to meddle. All else came to a stop at the National Gallery when Mila Mulroney came to borrow paintings for 24 Sussex Drive.[104] It will be interesting to see where Fraser's next projects go, now that her fictionalized social climbing is complete.

In MoMe, I both satisfy and evade Fraser's response to the power hierarchies of the museum, for as director and donor I lie at the top of its internal hierarchy. However, MoMe is probably the most insignificant museum in Canada putting it at the very bottom. Positioning oneself at the extreme edge of anything has a long tradition in art, of course, where it is closely aligned with transgression or rebellion. In design, the artistic mythology of rebellion justified the worst offenses of Modernism. If clients and users hated a design, that was only to be expected, because the superior artist/architect was a rebel, who must lead the unenlightened general populace, for their own good, even if they didn't want to go.[105] The posture of rebellion is a staple of consumerist society, as Thomas Frank described in 1995:

> Perpetual revolution and the gospel of rule breaking are the orthodoxy of the day... as consumers require ever-greater assurances that, Yes! You are a rebel! Just look at how offended they are![106]

In design, the growing predictability of late Modernism conflated rebellion with boxy shapes, the colour gray, and moral values like "function," "honesty" and "originality." The ironic quotations of Postmodernism took a side-step around the issue, permitting designers to lay a claim to "originality" with a rousing rebellion against rebellion; unoriginal copying of work that was not gray and boxy. While MoMe may lay claim to being annoying, it is not essentially rebellious. I like museums.

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104 Personally witnessed, 1984.

105 Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead*. 1943.

106 Thomas Frank, "Why Johnny Can't Dissent." 1995. *Commodify Your Dissent: Salvos from The Baffler*. Edited by Thomas Frank and Matt Weiland. (New York: W.W.Norton, 1997).

The shock value of unoriginality seems to have run its course. Writing in 2005, Johanna Drucker described the "oppositional rhetoric of radicality" as an "academic party line" under which artists earnestly strive for subversion as the route to peer acceptance.[107] She sees in recent work a hopeful rejection of subversion in the pleasurable work of artists who use quotation without the hostility or ironic distance of Postmodernism or camp.[108] When an artist like Vanessa Beecroft fills galleries with beautiful women in fashionable lingerie, it is impossible not to enjoy the spectacle on some level. Drucker writes:

> In an already fully corrupted world, one in which consumerism holds sway, commercial images provide a standard for production. In an administered world such as our own the purpose of aesthetics—the awareness of artifice, the appeal to pleasure, beauty, and imagination—is a necessity in its own right. It cannot be harnessed to another purpose. [109]

Some of the marginal productions of MoMe may participate in such pleasure. The *Waste Paper Baskets* (2009) and *Waste of Time Clocks* (2009) are fabricated out of consumer waste packaging, exploiting its colours and patterns for formal pleasure. The pieces defamiliarize corporate messages, revealing concealed aesthetics. However, not everyone is willing to accept the newfound pleasure so willingly. Julian Stallabrass of the Courtauld Institute writes, "in making work that seeks less to document than to exemplify the ideological and aesthetic action of bureaucracy on the world, the danger is that the art becomes indistinguishable from its subject.[110]

He sees art today as subject to a level of corruption tolerated in no other world market, as dealers and auction houses control limited consumption in the face of chronic over-supply. Art is over-supplied because artists make it regardless of demand, subsidizing their production with income from other jobs. Oversupplied, art should be cheap, but it is not, because it operates as a pyramid bubble similar to the famous Dutch "tulipomania" of the 1630s, when bulb collectors also paid high prices for goods of little intrinsic value.[111]

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107 Joanna Drucker, *Sweet Dreams: Contemporary Art and Complicity.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 9.

108 Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp'." 1964. http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/theory/Sontag-NotesOnCamp-1964.html 06 November 2008.

109 Drucker, *Sweet Dreams*, p. 14.

110 Julian Stallabrass, *Contemporary Art: A Very Short Introduction*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 83.

111 Ibid., p. 102.

Criticism of economics may remain a area in which artists can still offend. Hans Haacke's exhibition of *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971* was cancelled by the Guggenheim because its trustees were implicated.

Stallabrass observes that the world of the art market stands apart from art in the university and the museum, which also share surprisingly little. Art in the university must present itself as a credible academic subject, and has developed a protective "arcane theoretical canon,"[112] which conflicts with the needs of museums for coherent public communications. Museums are drawn still further away from the university by their need to pander also to corporate sponsors as government funding dries up.

MoMe in this analysis is a museum, as it does have an ultimate goal of public communication, though it need not respect any corporate communications guidelines. MoMe is not a saleable product, but is subsidized by my full-time employment in the provincial Ontario community college system. It is that same educational job that ironically puts me safely out of reach of the demands of the university for arcane theory. Ontario college professors[113] fall under the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), along with all other provincial employees,[114] while university professors are often supported by faculty associations.[115] University Professors enjoy higher prestige, but must research and publish to gain scare job security. College professors teach more, but enjoy job security without a drawn-out tenure process, automatic raises, and are not required to publish. College administrators will greet research by professors warmly, as reflecting upon institutional prestige, but do not police it. As a college employee, therefore, I may actually enjoy more academic freedom than I would in a university. Over the past few years, in addition to MoMe, I have also participated in an Asian anthropometric field research project, SizeChina, that in 2008 won four major international design awards.[116] Neither SizeChina nor MoMe directly relate to my teaching in applied design, nor apparently to each other (though a future convergence is envisionable). In a university setting, they might not have merited support.

My independence from the official worlds of art therefore leaves MoMe free to take its own form, relatively free of distorting demands from the market, the university, or institutional museums. This may not be a good thing, however, as all three venues maintain high, if

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112 Ibid., p. 82.
113 "Professor" is my job description, printed on my business card.
114 OPSUE home page. http://www.opseu.org/ 28 February 2009.
115 University of Toronto Faculty Association. http://www.utfa.org/ 28 February 2009.
116 "Size China," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SizeChina 01 March 2008.

inconsistent, levels of internal accountability that arguably might add different kinds of rigor to the project. The sociological context for the project remains as yet unexplored.
Before leaving the question of whether MoMe is indeed a work of art, I can offer one final piece of substantive evidence in support of that claim. In 2006, I made a grant application to the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), for a pilot program in fine art, requesting $210,250 for a proposed work of art to be titled *One Nice Kitchen (ONK)*. I proposed *ONK* as Stage One of a more extended overall renovation of the entire Museum of Me. The proposal laid out the process in which the cash would fund accessioning, 3D computer modeling, preparation of a detailed storyline, and physical reinstallation of the kitchen to museological standards. My artist's statement for this project, which was not included with the application, claimed that the application itself was a work of art, aimed to generate an art performance in which the committee members served as both performers and audience as they were forced to take my ludicrous demands under consideration.

The reviewing committee refused my concept resoundingly, awarding me the lowest possible score in every category. But they did not, in their standard-form rejection letter, check off the little box stating that the project had not qualified for the grant program. They thought that my plan was terrible, but they agreed that it was art.

Other artist museums

Artist-made museums take a variety of approaches to the subject. A museum style of presentation, including taxonomic sorting, is adapted by many artists in the presentation of their art. Others find the museum to be visually appealing for formal qualities of its furnishings or contents. Still others occupy the museum as a site for work that could exist nowhere else. A few, like MoMe, use museum methods to pursue non-museum ideas.

Artists who adopt the methodology of the contemporary museum or art gallery sometimes mimic its altar-like presentations. Examples of this include Haim Steinbach's gleaming shelf displays, like *supremely black* (1985), or the glass showcases of Jeff Koons in *New Hoover Deluxe Shampoo Polishers, New Hoover, Quick-Broom, New Shelton Wet/Dry Triple Decker* (1987). Ann Hamilton stands slightly aside, with primevally beautiful displays like *Between Taxonomy and Communion* (1990), where water drips onto the floor from the red-ochred ritual display of teeth.

Some artists relish the obsessive clutter of a previous generation of museums. Where they

survive, earlier institutions are freshly appreciated for visual effects, as in the *Museum Dilivianum* built in the 1720s to prove that fossils were animals killed in the great flood of Noah.[117] Joseph Beuys took this process behind the scenes in his *Fragment for an Absurd Wilderness: Working Place of a Scientist/Artist* (1961-67), with storage shelves of absurdly sorted materials, and the animating presence of the undefined sorter invoked by a tiny desk. More recently, American artist Mark Dion excavated the riverbank of the Thames in honour of the opening of the Tate Modern in 1999. Describing the "pseudo-museological" systems used to organize his fragments, Dion said:

> What we're showing, is that kind of alchemical process of how garbage from the beach is gaining meaning as we take it through a process of selection, (which everyone is participating in) to the process of cleaning things, organizing them and placing them into categories.[118]

Not much different is the school of thought that enjoys the peculiar things found only in obscure museums. Richard Ross photographed dressed stuffed bunnies at *Potter's Museum of Curiosity, Arundel, Sussex, England* (1986), and Zoe Leonard shot a wistful *Seated Anatomical Model* (1991-92). All museums also accidentally create poignant juxtapositions, such as shown in Louise Lawler's photos of a photo of a photo of a painting with a bench in *Untitled 1950-1* (1987). Similarly, Dario Lanzardo photographed the unselfconscious storeroom of the natural history museum for *Restored Skeletons of Apes* (1995).

There are also museum parodies. *Appropriation #9 Peter Marzio, 11/12/92 10:39 a.m.* (1992), by the Art Guys, is part of a project of pinching stuff from the desks of museum staff for later display in vitrines labelled with the date, time and location of the theft. Other parodies range from the lavishly deadpan *Museum of Jurassic Technology* (1994)[119] to the adorable *Collier Classification System for Very Small Things* (2004), the web site for which helpfully sells the Official Collier Classification System Collecting Kit.[120] Karsten Bott's *Trouser Pocket Collection* (1996) falls between such frolic and the weird but genuine anthropology of the group "Mass Observation," who surveyed trouser pocket contents in

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117 Stephen Jay Gould and Rosamond Wolff Purcell, *Crossing Over: Where Art and Science Meet*. (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2000), p. 106.

118 "Mark Dion Tate Thames Dig," http://www.tate.org.uk/learning/thamesdig/flash.htm. Download date 18 February 2008.

119 http://www.mjt.org/ Download date 18 February 2009.

120 "The Collier Classification System for Very Small Things." http://verysmallobjects.com/ Download date 18 February 2009.

England in the 1940s to reveal attitudes towards the war.[121]

Other artists seem to respond to the physicality of the museum, by producing replicas stripped to bare geometry. Explorations of museum packing cases were done by Martin Keppenberge in *A Man and His Art* (1994); of museum vitrines by Yuji Taeoka in *Floating Pedestal* (1992); of the museum workroom in *Backstage* (1994) by the Readymades Belong to Everyone group; an art sales room by Guillaume Bijl in *Auction House* (1996). Candida Höfer's photograph of freshly painted display plinths, *Museum für Völkerkunde, Dresden 1* (1999), bears a striking formal similarity to pictures of Imi Knoebel's fictitious *Room 19* (1968), with its surreal impact compounded by knowledge that Höfer's room is for real — its red forms have been set out by the museum for reasons that are, to the museum, entirely rational. These works act to divide the familiar forms of the museum from actual use, revealing them as sculpture. They are a minor fugue upon the general theme of foregrounding the background as seen in *The Lights Go and Off* (2001) by Martin Creed.

Some artists use museums to contain works that could not exist elsewhere, such as Daniel Buren's striped staircare *Photo-Souvenir: 'Up And Down, In and Out, Step by Step,' Work in Situ* (1977), Antony Gormley's *European Field* (1993) at the Kunsthalle su Kiel, and Andy Goldworthy's snaked *Sandwork* (1994-5) in a temporary exhibition of Egyptian art at the British Museum. Related to this genre are the people who sneak unauthorized objects into museums: the Museum Interventionist Movement. This includes the *Covert Wall Socket Exhibit* (1977) at the Los Angeles County Wall Art Museum by Jeffrey Valance, or the graffiti artist Banksy's "museum hacking" in 2005.[122] Musician Martin Mull lists on his resume the painting exhibition, *Flush with the Walls, or, I'll be Art in a Minute* (1972), which was furtively installed in the men's washroom of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.[123]

The transformation that the museum brings to any object within it has, of course, been a theme exploited by Marcel Duchamp, as well as by Dion, by Christian Boltanski in *Vitrine de Reference* (1971) and many more. Marcel Broodthaers' *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section XIXème Siecle* (1969) is unsurpassed in its acute observations of the impacts of display, labeling and inventory. But his labels reading "this is not a work of art," became, of course, immediately collectable, as works of art.

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121 "Mass Observation Archive," University of Sussex, http://www.sussex.ac.uk/library/speccoll/collection_catalogues/tclists/tc65.html Download date 18 February 2009.

122 "Banksy in the Museum," http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkUbYBo5xgs Download date 19 February 2009.

123 http://www.hammergallery.com/Artists/Mull/mull.htm Download date 18 Feb 2009.

Much closer to MoMe are works that use museum methodology to comment on issues beyond the museum. Nikolaus Lang's *For Mrs. G. Legacy — Food and Religious Hoard* (1981) features a real hoard collected by a genuine old lady, though the installation presents that hoard in a purely sensual manner. Closer are the *Musée Sentimentel* projects of Daniel Spoerri. The first of these, at Centre George Pompidou in 1977, also included a museum shop, *la boutique aberrant*.[124] The series builds upon Spoerri's fascination with normalcy. In his earlier *tableaux pieges* (snare pictures), he glued the contents of a room into position as found. His later *Musée* works gathered ordinary items to reveal wider cultural portraits. The museum setting allows the objects to be taken seriously.

However, even Spoerri seems to see the museum only as something visited by the public, rather than as the site of research. The late Cuyler Young of the Royal Ontario Museum did not merely curate a public gallery on Ancient Mesopotamia, but also spent much time in original archaeological excavations in Iraq. In architectural planning of museum buildings reserves about half of the floor space must be reserved for "back room" functions including offices, storage, and conservation.[125] Only a small portion of the museum's collections are ever visible, even to visitors who tour private areas. It is in the private functions of research where MoMe is positioned, rather than in display.

Artistic practice within museums often touches on the related issue of storage, a central theme for MoMe. The 1998 exhibition *Deep Storage* focused on archives and storage rooms. Writing about their selection of works for this show, the curators remarked:

> ...for some the notion of storage conjures memory (things saved become souvenirs), for others history (things saved become information). And yet for others, storage is a provocative spectacle of material culture that hails the virtual as an ideal form of relief from the everyday problem of what to do with all this stuff. In short, the idea of storage cannot be easily contained. The arsenal threatens to explode, even before a single artist has been chosen.[126]

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124 Jean Hubert Martin, "The 'Musée Sentimental' of Daniel Spoerri." *Visual Display: Culture Beyond Appearances*. Edited by Lynne Cooke and Peter Wollen. (New York: The New Press, 1995), p. 58.

125 Gail Dexter Lord and Barry Lord, *The Manual of Museum Planning*. Second Edition, (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2000).

126 Ingrid Schaffner, "Digging Back into 'Deep Storage.' Schaffner. *Deep Storage*, p 10.

Storage is often related to archiving, and MoMe also contains archival material, although they are marginal to the institution. Archiving centers on words and photographs, as shown in a project like Gerhard Richter's *Atlas* (1964-present). Furthermore, by their nature, archives are often fragmentary, which both permits and demands different interpretations of the same contents. Art historian Charles Merewether defines the archive as:

> ...the means by which historical knowledge and forms of remembrance are accumulated, stored and recovered. ..Manifesting itself in the forms of traces, it contains the potential to fragment and destabilize either remembrance as recorded, or history as written.[127]

While it is possible to imagine that fragments of the inventory of MoMe might find their way into an archive, the inventory alone is too homogenous to constitute one itself. Rather than collecting destabilizing traces, it is a stabilizing force intended to capture an authorized history using consistent, established methodology. This application is a test of the methodology, as well as a survey of the contents being recorded; it is an inside job.

The exhibition of MoMe

An early and definitive exhibition of Conceptual Art was Mel Bochner's *Working Drawings And Other Visible Things On Paper Not Necessarily Meant To Be Viewed As Art* (1966). Installed at the School of Visual Arts, New York, it featured four binders placed on equally spaced white pedestals at the center of a white gallery space. Inside the binders were photocopies of drawings by noted artists, including drawings that were technical or "non art," and printed paperwork such as a fabricator's bill from artist Donald Judd.

The presentation of this material inverted normal gallery convention. Bochner grouped the flat works centrally in the space (rather than around the walls), horizontal (rather than vertical), and covered up (rather than openly displayed). The installation was also a reversal of the practice that tries to make viewing comfortable. Bochner's installation would have created physical discomfort because looking through binders on a pedestal requires the viewer to stand still and lean over. Leaning puts strain on the back; and standing causes blood to pool in the feet.

It has become common to deplore the habitual "gallery stroll," in which visitors walk past works of art at a steady clip without pausing. The pace is commonly taken to indicate a

127 Charles Merewether, "Introduction: Art and the Archive." *The Archive*, p. 10.

shallow intellectual response to the works. However, flexing of leg muscles is part of normal blood circulation. A visitor who walks slowly can spend longer in a museum than one who is forced to stand. This is the reason why political demonstrators walk back and forth with their signs. Standing is more tiring, and will prevent visitors from lingering in an exhibit.

In the case of the 1966 Bochner binders, discomfort would have discouraged lengthy engagement. Cursory dipping would be enough, however, to understand the audacity of the material, which by skirting around the subject of "art" made visible the edges of the common (and therefore invisible) definition of it. Bochner's concept would have been communicated by even short contact. In addition to being short, viewer contact with the binders would also be randomized, in that no two visitors would probably view the same documents. Each would dip into a different binder at a different spot, and spend a different length of time examining different things. Despite that, the same message would be perceived by all.

Bochner's binders might be thought of as a "holographic" presentation of his idea. A physical holograph is not a visual image, but rather the interference pattern created by light bouncing off an object. When the interference pattern is re-exposed to the same kind of light, it bends that light to form the image. If a conventional picture is torn up, each part carries a different piece of the image; perhaps a foot, face, or hand. If a holograph is broken, each broken piece contains all of the image, at a low level of resolution. Increasing the size of the piece improves the sharpness and detail of the image, but it does not add new parts. Bochner's binders provided a holographic experience in the sense that the message received by each visitor would be the same, even though each visitor would examine a different fragment. Longer examination of more of the pieces in the binders would not change the message, but only increase its detail.

The variability of the binder experience would probably not be experienced by the visitors as something planned. It seems more probable that at some point, each visitor would personally "decide" not to look further, and leave, aware that further material was available that c*ould have been* examined. Bochner thus created a special kind of experience in which each viewer, choosing the moment to leave, established self-closure. Electing not to examine further material, the visitor had made a judgment that the rest of the material could now be predicted. The unseen material as imagined by the visitor may be the purest representation of the visitor's understanding of the exhibition. The visitor chose not to look as soon as the unseen material was deemed predictable. Whether or not the visitor had enjoyed the work, he or she no longer anticipated any surprises. The visitor had "got it."

The issue of how to display too much material is central to MoMe. There is no possibility that anyone will examine all of the inventory I have created; nor any need for anyone to examine it. The sole display need is to make sure that visitors are aware that it exists, of what it contains, and to establish the fact that *if they ever wanted to*, they could look at it more closely. That message should be sufficient to alter the way in which they will in future view their own homes, as well as other, more institutional museums.
In his book about the "marketing" of Louis XIV, author Peter Burke asks whether it is necessary for art to be seen. There may be occasions on which it is sufficient that the art is known to exist. Burke observes that the famous carvings of Trajan's tower cannot be seen from the ground (which has probably been their sole vantage point since the earthquake of 801 CE destroyed much of the forum). Even in antiquity the carvings would have been only partly visible from separate buildings rising half way up the column on three sides.[128] However, everyone knew that the carvings existed; and the knowledge alone had impact. Similarly, the elaborate rituals of Louis (the Bath, the Chair) were witnessed only by the most privileged of intimates, but were important to a larger "viewing public" aware that they existed. The same strategy operates in some conceptual art. Walter De Maria's *Vertical Earth Kilometer* (1977) is a one-kilometer long brass rod inserted into the ground. Only its top can been seen, set flush in a flat red sandstone plate, so that the viewer can only imagine its depth below, in a moment of experience radically different from the effect of a visible monument.

The rituals of Louis were sometimes not just hidden but entirely fictional. An engraving of Louis visiting at the Academy of Sciences lent his authority to an event that never occurred.[129] Dada and Surrealist artists continued the tradition, as did Conceptual artists in the 1960s. South American artists Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari and Roberto Jacoby issued a manifesto on "media art" describing how to go about the creation of a false report that will convince the audience it is an accurate description of a real event. They observe: "in this way the moment of transmission of the work of art is more privileged than its production. The creation consists of liberating its production from its transmission."[130]

Even in the world of design, the real existence of a real product may no longer be necessary. Preliminary concepts have always been published, in the form of drawings and computer

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128 Kevin Lee Sarring and James E. Packer, "Trajan's Glorious Forum: Drawing." 1998. http://www.archaeology.org/9801/abstracts/captions/trajan.html 03 March 2009.
129 Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).
130 Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari, and Roberto Jacoby, "A Media Art (Manifesto)." Alberro. ed. *Conceptual Art*, p. 3.

renderings, but now products are promoted which are physically impossible. In 1998, Australian design student Matt Schwabb created a lettuce leaf lamp which burned for only seconds before the light bulb cooked the lettuce to a limp shred. Writing about this moment, designer Remmy Rammakers observed:

> The designer allowed it to shine just briefly, long enough to etch the image in your mind, never to be forgotten. The 'frame' he attached to the lamp emphasized the object's image-ness. He used this lamp to express his own feelings about European leading edge design that he knew only from books and magazines. He felt no need to see the products in reality, much less possess them. Seeing the image as it had once presented itself to him, was enough.[131]

Once again, the existence of the idea alone is sufficient. It is for these reasons that it really doesn't matter what selections I show from the Museum of Me in its inaugural temporary exhibition. Only the tip of the iceberg of them will appear, for just a moment, labelled so that viewers can reach an understanding of the shape and dimensions of the unseen remainder.

The exhibition therefore focuses on the controlled terminology of the eight descriptive categories of the Chenhill Nomenclature, presenting them with explanatory text panels, and providing representative samples of objects in each, together with their accession records. Access the database itself is provided on a laptop computer, which is positioned in the display according to its Chenhill classification. The resulting display is thus perfectly logical, yet entirely counter-intuitive; foregrounding the existence of our unexamined intuitive sorting categories that are here disobeyed. For visual impact, and to generate an insider pun around the tradition of the white cube, all of the objects chosen for display are white, and square in outline. Please see Appendix B for a hanging list with accession records.

The MoMe gift shop:

Like all museums, MoMe provides a shop. It is a truism of museum operations that if a tour bus can stop for only a half hour, visitors will skip the exhibits to maximize time in the gift shop. Souvenirs from the gift shop preserve and consolidate memory of the museum experience. Jac Leirner may have said it all with her *Names (Museums)* (1989-90), quilted from museum gift shop bags. The bags confirm possession of knowledge from the museum.

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131 Renny Ramakers, *Less + More: Droog Design in Context*. (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2002), p. 21.

The gift shop is also important because it is safe. Art may be unpredictable, and a visitor can find looking at it to be boring, aggravating, or confusing. The museum shop is a contrasting oasis where the visitor can relax, confident of being in control. Shopping is a practiced intellectual skill for most people today. In the shop, the visitor can intelligently understand the goods in terms of appeal, usfulness, cost, status and value, without any fear that they are not properly "understood" or "appreciated." The gift shop offers pleasure and flattery: attractive goods, catering to the higher education of the typical museum visitor. Where a regular shop might offer a jigsaw puzzle of a clown, a museum shop offers puzzle art, with snob appeal.

Museum shopping expands upon the experience in the galleries. After visitors have looked at ancient papyrus under glass in the galleries, they can touch a real piece of the same material in the shop. The fantasy speculations of the gallery — what was it like to live then? — come closer in the shop — what would it be like to take one of these home now? An American anthropologist who studies shopping observes:

> A good deal of our firsthand experience of the world comes to us via shopping. Where else do we go with the specific intention of examining objects? To museums, of course, but don't try touching anything that's not in the gift shop — a retail environment. Stores alone are abundant with chances for tactile and sensory exploration.[132]

It is, of course, these very qualities that may give museum shops the opportunity to surprise visitors just when they thought they were safe. Just as there have been many artist museums, there have also been many artist shops. The exhibition *Shopping: A Century of Art and Consumer Culture* (2002) offered a lively summary of efforts in this area, ranging at one end of the spectrum from shops as beautiful as art, like the stores of Prada, and at the other works of art that comment on shops, like the photos of Eugène Atget, or Claes Oldenburg's *Lingerie Counter* (1962).

At least one work, the *Museum Boutique* (1991) of Dellbrüge and de Moll, purports to address the museum shop specifically, but telegraphed the punch by styling the boutique as a white-box of regimented matched posters. A short rack of postcards on a plinth-bare desk gave the only indication it was a shop. (To close the self-referential loop, the postcards were images of other museum gift shops.) Dove Bradshaw's *Performance* (1978) offers a wider

132 Paco Underhill, *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping*. (New York: Touchstone, 1999), p. 167.

range of comment. She enacted the hoary old museum joke of putting a label next to a fire-hose cabinet at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She then photographed the "work," made postcards of the photo, and smuggled the cards into the shop, where they proceeded to sell briskly. Discovering the hoax, the museum elected to license the postcard to sell officially, and has since bought the original fake label for its collections.

The corporate branding of the gift shop artifacts also falls into an art tradition, following the Canadian example of Iain Baxter and his N.E.Thing Company, which permitted him to organized his prodigiously varied art output in different media into different "departments." Still more closely related is the work of General Idea, the collective identity of Felix Partz, Jorge Zontal and AA Bronson, who created a varied line of products for their early and seminal *Boutique of the 1984 Miss General Idea Pavilion* (1981), an installation which physically took the form, in floorplan, of a literal dollar sign. Their contemporaneous issue of *File Megazine* featured an article on the Boutique titled "Turning Ideas into Cash and Cash into Ideas."[133]

The gift shop of MoMe is set in a separate room apart from the display of works from the permanent collections. Its retail identity is established with a post-card rack and display of mugs, t-shirts, posters and buttons; the normal paraphernalia of souvenirs, with large visible price tags. Ideally, I will have a retail license, an operating Visa machine, and a dedicated shop employee, to make purchasing easy and convenient.

The gift shop does make some preliminary gestures towards exploiting the subversive possibilities of the medium, in that it includes a set of items that take opportunity of the sensual possibilities of shops, and may not be suitable for purchase. The series of *Digital Socks* were created with the explicit goal of making an object that would be difficult to display in a museum. These machine-washable, hand-knit woolen socks feature knitted lettering relating to clothing, hobbies and wool, such as "Dress for Success," "Social Camouflage," "Fuzzy Logic," "Cheap Sheep Chic,[134]" "Feminismo," and "Obsessive Compulsive." The *Iraqi War Socks* (2003), knit while watching that event on television, feature the words "Madame Defarge" around the ankle, with borders of Patriot missiles and tracer fire. The socks are unsuitable for museum display because they must be seen

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133 Lilian Tone, "Affording the Ultimate Shopping Experience: The Boutique of the 1984 Miss General Idea Pavilion." *On The Edge of Everything: Reflections on Curatorial Practice*. Edited by Catherine Thomas. (Banff, Alberta: Banff Centre Press, 2000.)

134 Socks knit for artist Cesar Forero, who has a Spanish accent, and is unable to pronounce accurately any of these English words. These socks are in a private collection.

from all angles closely. They could be displayed in individual narrow plinths, bolted to the flooto overcome the tippiness inherent in a narrow case, but that would be both expensive and unattractive. The socks are at their best when they can be fondled and stretched to read the lettering, or when being worn, at which time they are covered by pant legs and only conceptually present in the mind of wearer.

While the socks can best be appreciated in a retail setting, at the same time, they are not credible consumer goods, because it takes more than two weeks to knit a pair. At a conservative hourly consulting fee of $50/hour, that puts their price at $5,000 a pair. Prices at that level are the privilege of art, of course, so that pricing the socks according to their production cost confuses their presence. It may also (though I doubt most visitors will think of this) highlight the issues of third world craft production. If jobbed out to knitting labour camps in rural China, these same socks might be made available at good prices.

Conventional art is represented in the gift shop by a number of oil paintings, including at least one work painted by me in adolescence. These too carry high "art" prices, but only I am fond of these paintings. They have been given high prices to permit their use in the shop as merchandising décor while at the same time discouraging potential buyers.

Bridging the gap between the paintings and the postcards are products made from waste paper discarded from MoMe over approximately the past year. Rather than being recycled, this paper has been hoarded in the basement for use in future art production. Art made from waste or packaging is fairly common. Tom Sachs has created a series of fake McDonald's meal packages using packaging materials from Prada, Chanel, Hermes, and Tiffany, in their distinctive white, black, red and turquoise colours (1999). (This work might be understood as signifying the collapse of the value of those trademarks, now too recognizable to be exclusive). That work is unrelated to the autobiography of the MoMe products, which are made of real trash, and are an embarrassing autobiographical revelation of our consumption. As author Guido Viale wrote:

> Trash constitutes a world of its own, complex and symmetrical to the world of merchandise. ... Trash is a direct documentation, minute and incontrovertible, of the habits of forms of bebaviour of those who produced it, aside from the beliefs and perceptions that they have of themselves.[135]

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135 Guido Viale, *Un mondo usa e getta*, 1994. Quoted in Lea Vergine. *When Trash Becomes Art: TRASH rubbish mongo*. (Milan: Skira, 2007), pp 11-12.

My autobiographical trash has been turned into a series of quilts or wall-hung collages, that have been sorted, or micro-curated, by a number of different strategies. Items in *The Skin of Food* (2008) are unique. Each food product is represented by a single square, wrapped in the folded context of a grocery bag, and sorted for colour. In tribute to the evocative connotations of branding, the quilt pattern used is called "Cathedral Windows." The elements in the quilt *Face the Day* (2008) are restricted to things eaten at breakfast, in multiple examples revealing the relative pattern of their repeated consumption. Items in *Poobelle* (2008) are an inventory of the different kinds of toilet paper available nearby. *Crazy Quilt (DSM IV 300.3 Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder)* (2009) is a record of completed Sudoku puzzles; the title punning on the mental disease best associated with quilting. As collage, these items might draw on the heritage of Picasso, or earlier mosaic work by Antonio Gaudi and Josep Maria Jujol in Park Guell (c.1903), which expanded the tradition of "trencadis" to incorporate broken ceramic ware, including dinner service and a doll.[136] Made of the same materials as the quilts, the *Waste Paper Baskets* and *Waste of Time Clocks* bridge between the arty wall-hung quilts and straightforward souvenirs like postcards.

Since everything in the shop has been made (or designed) by me, the only conclusion is that I am not just an artist; I also make other things as well. The gift shop also serves a further important sorting function in separating my entirely idiosyncratic art productions from the more typical permanent collections of the functioning household: the permanent collections of MoMe. Thus I am able to record and present the entire record without omitting or distorting either the normal or the eccentric.

Conclusion:

The Museum of Me is a small museum drawing on the traditions of the Renaissance cabinet of curiosities the political traditions of Modern design and more recent conceptual art. The museum is currently undertaking the extensive project of accessioning the collections.

Like the cabinets of curiosity, MoMe finds practical use for its owner as a tool for social definition. It also places importance on its role as an intellectual workshop. MoMe is a location in which artifacts are studied in hopes of generating lasting knowledge. The essential job of MoMe is to examine itself. Like the cabinets, MoMe sees in its collections a microcosm of larger issues in the world; and hopes to find behind the facade of their appearance the secret codes that govern their mysterious operations.

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136 César Martinell, *Gaudi: His Life, His Theories, His Work*. 1967. Translated by Judith Rohrer. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1975), pl. 53.

As a piece of conceptual art, MoMe exists only in the intellectual structures of the accessioning process, which do not currently affect the physical structure of the house. These documents are ultimately aimed at transformation of the institution, however, in keeping with the traditional political idealism of Modern design around issues of honesty, function and beauty. Future plans for MoMe will apply the completed accession records to a project of redefinition and redesign of the installation of the permanent collections.

This first traveling exhibition from the museum aims to reveal progress on the accessioning project, and offers a gift shop in which souvenirs can be purchased that are in keeping with the autobiographical mandate of the museum. The use of an outside location for the exhibition highlights one unusual feature of MoMe, in that as an institution it consists only of collections, with no public exhibitions, putting it in contrast with the phenomenon of the "new museum" which has only exhibitions, with no collections.

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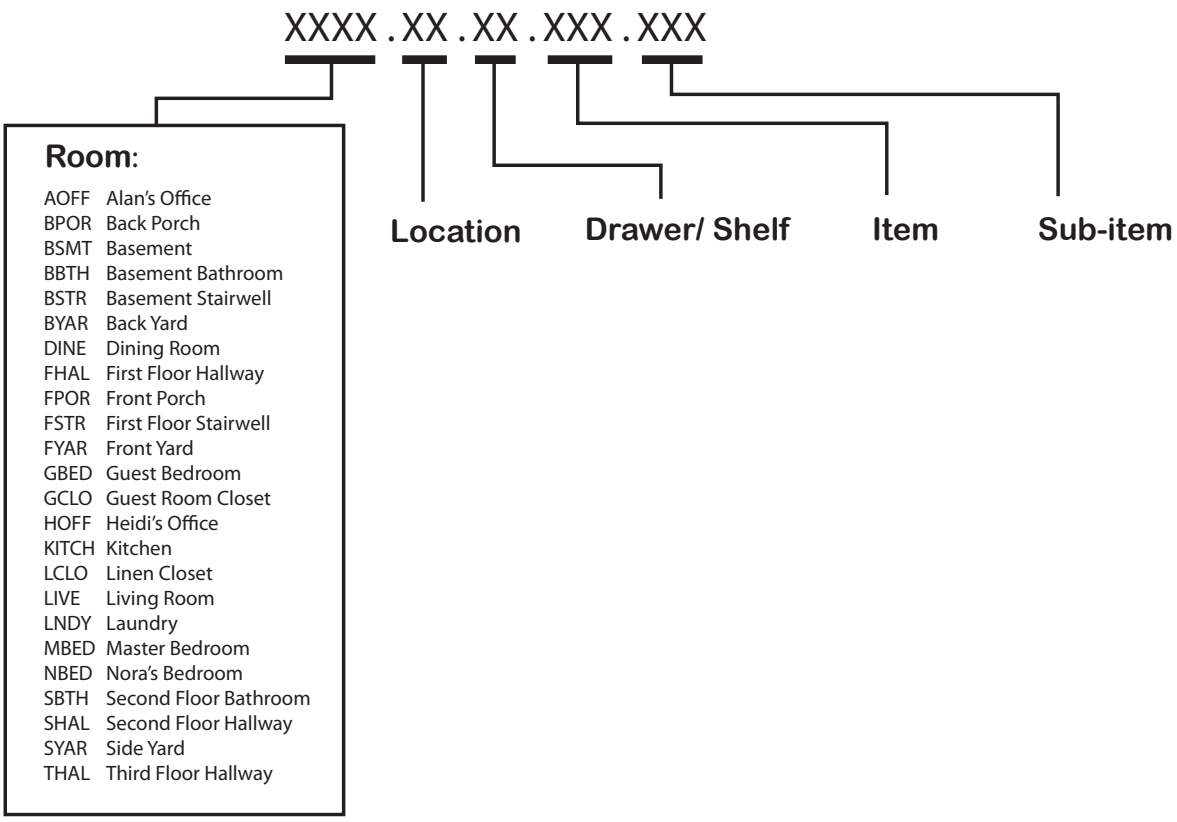
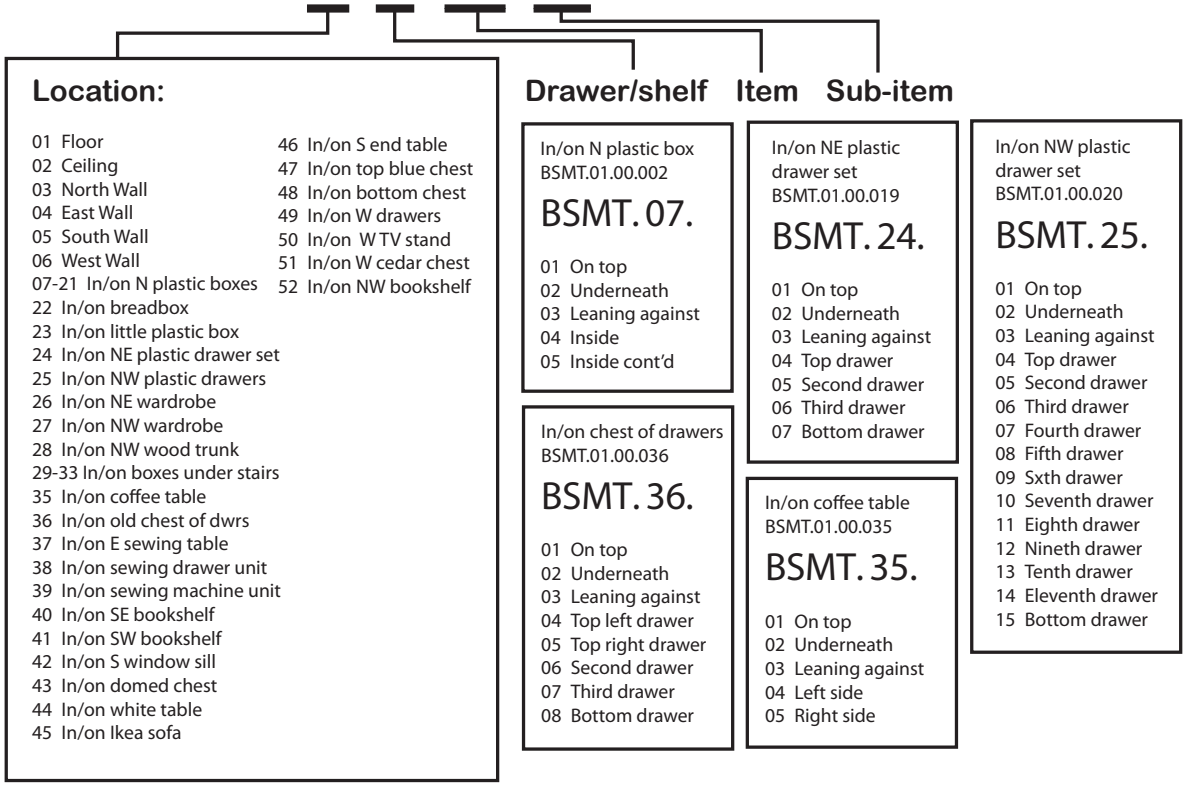
Appendix A:
Location-based Accession Numbering System

MoMe
Location-based Accession Numbering
28 March 2008



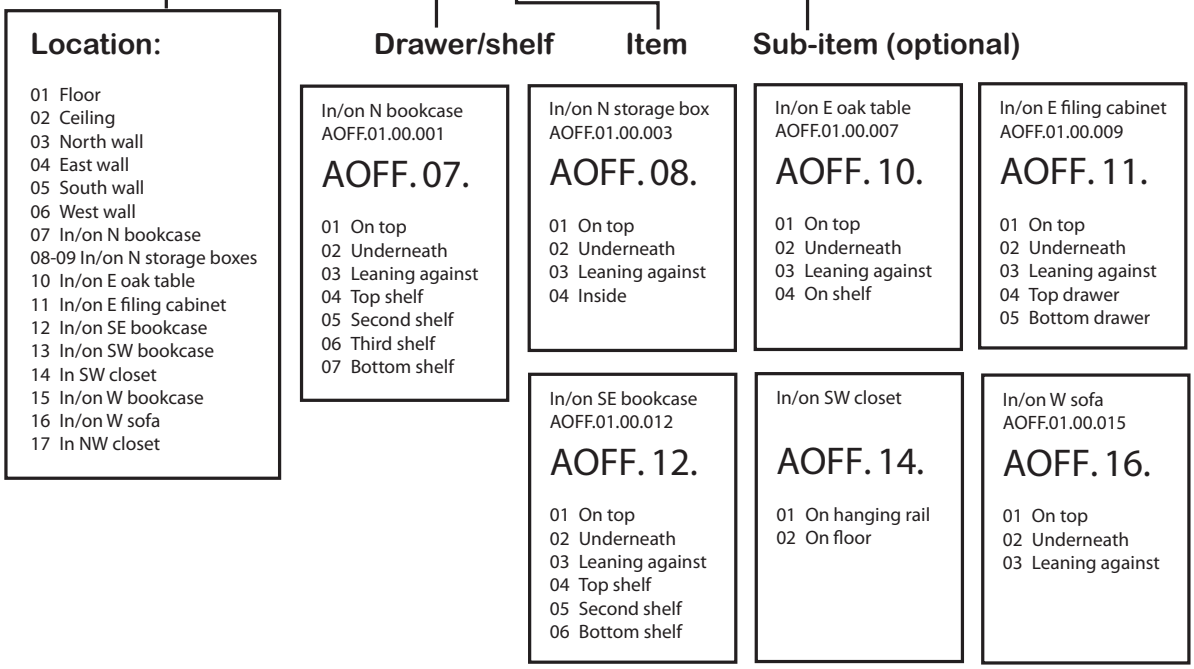
MoMe
Location-based accession numbering
08 August 2008

Basement: BSMT . XX . XX . XXX . XXX



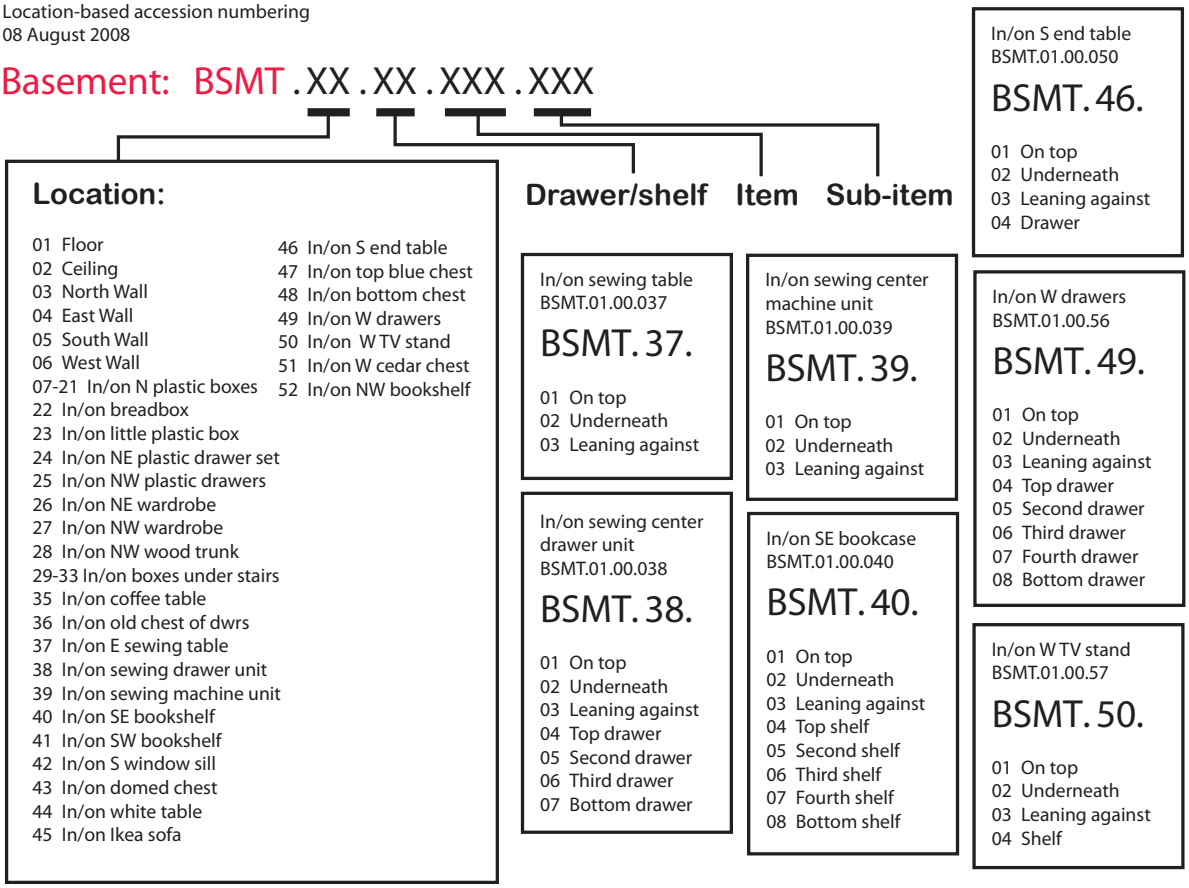
MoMe
Location-based accession numbering
08 August 2008

Alan's Office: AOFF . XX . XX . XXX . XXX



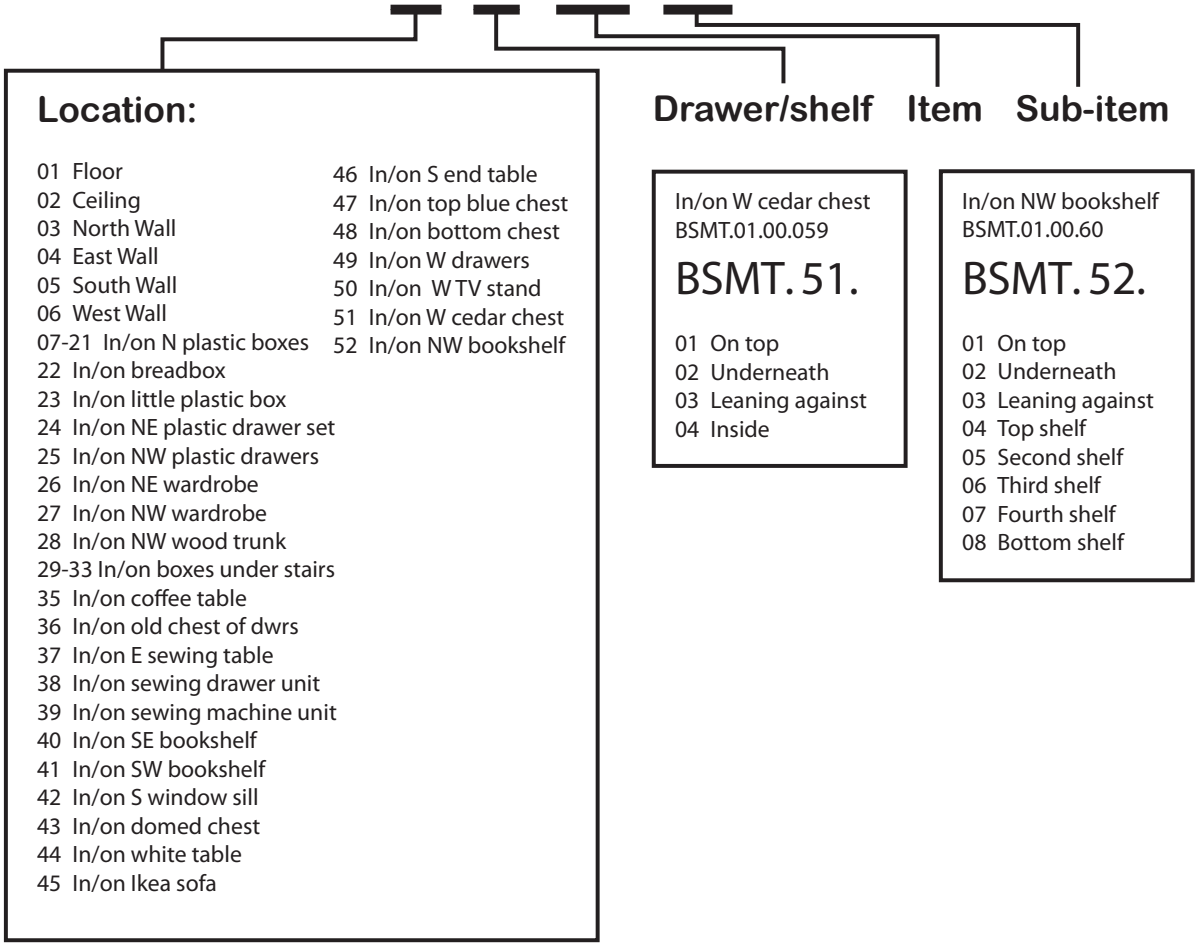
MoMe
Location-based accession numbering
08 August 2008

Basement: BSMT . XX . XX . XXX . XXX



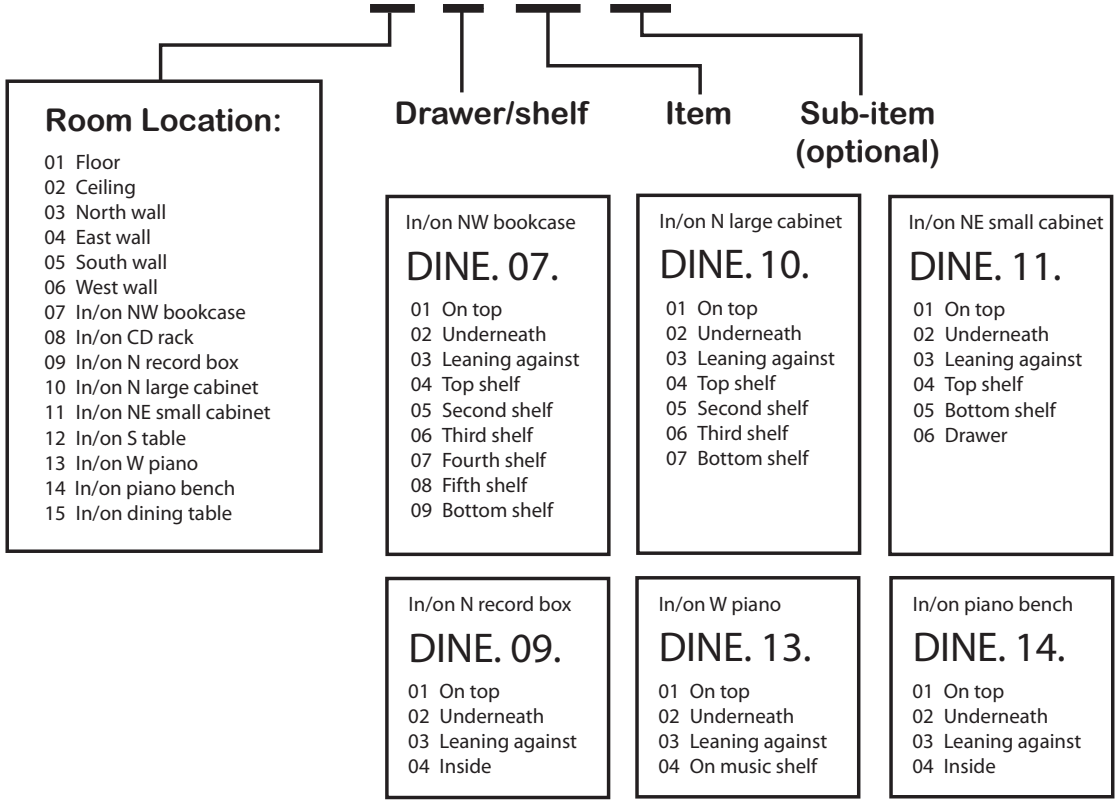
MoMe
Location-based accession numbering
08 August 2008

Basement: BSMT . XX . XX . XXX . XXX



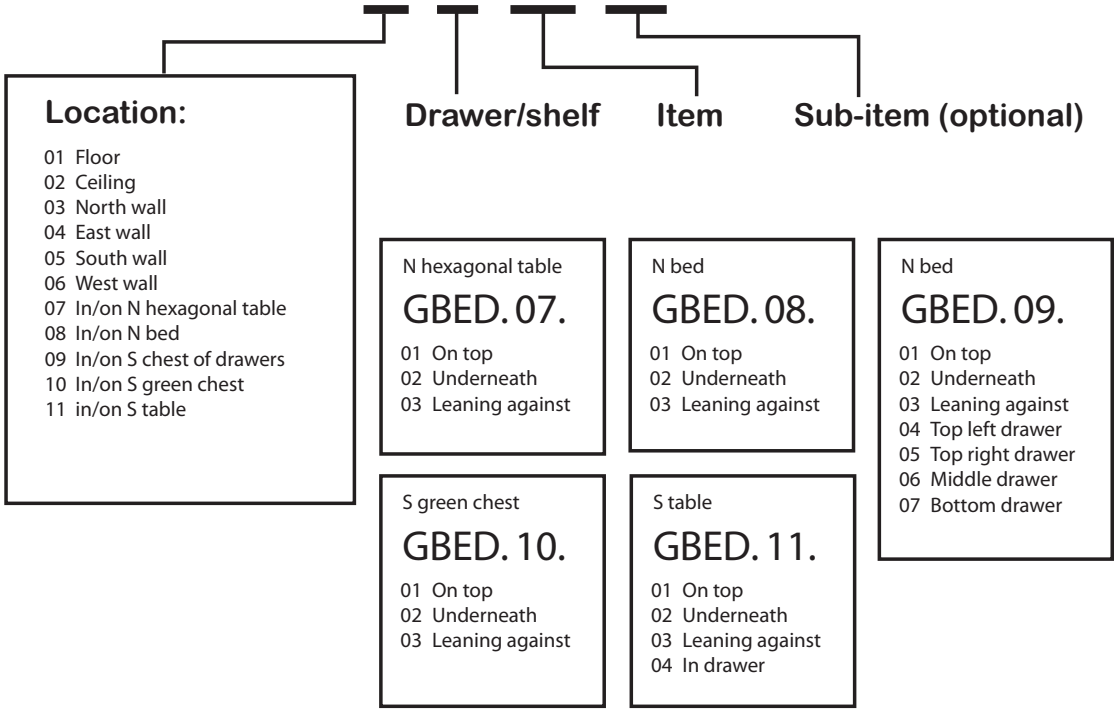
MoMe
Location-based accession numbering
08 August 2006

Dining Room: DINE . XX . XX . XXX . XXX



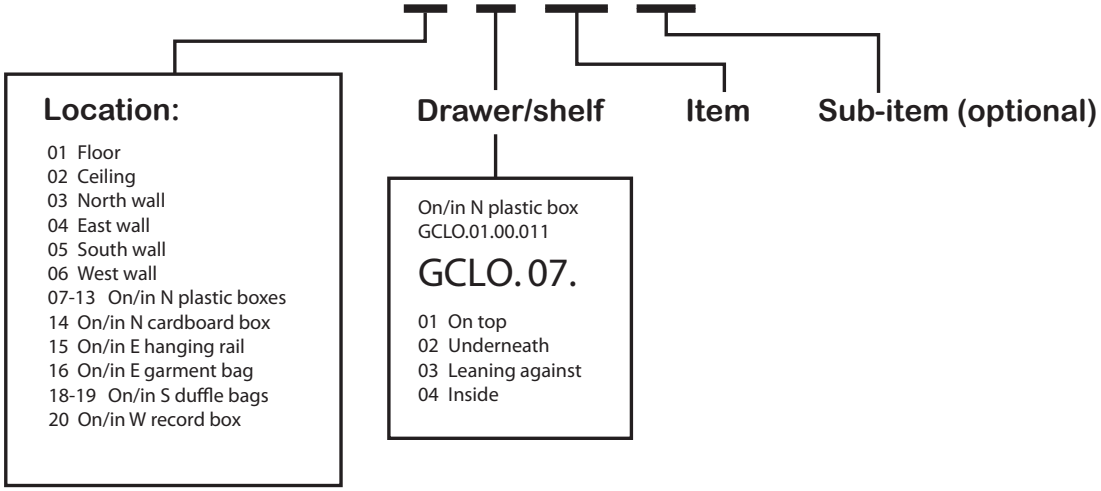
MoMe
Location-based accession numbering
08 August 2008

Guest Bedroom: GBED . XX . XX . XXX . XXX



MoMe
Location-based accession numbering
08 August 2008

Guest Room Closet: GCLO . XX . XX . XXX . XXX



MoMe
Location-based accession numbering
08 August 2008

Heidi's Office: HOFF.XX.XX.XXX.XXX

Location:

01 Floor
02 Ceiling
03 North wall
04 East wall
05 South wall
06 West wall
07 In/on NW Ikea bookshelf bay
08 in/on NE Ikea bookshelf bay
09 in/on N shelf
10 in/on N drafting table
11 in/on N low rolling thing
12 In/on E drawer unit
13 In/on E table
14 In/on NE storage box
15 In/on E storage box
16 In/on SE storage box
17 In/on S fireplace
18 In/on S Ikea steel cabinet
19 In/on W filing cabinet
20 In/on SW bookshelf
21 In/on NW bookshelf
22 In/on W chest of drawers
23 in/in door

Drawer/shelf

NW
Ikea bookshelf bay
HOFF.07.

01 On top
02 Underneath
03 Leaning against
04 Top shelf
05 Second shelf
06 Third shelf
07 Fourth shelf
08 Bottom shelf

NE
Ikea bookshelf bay
HOFF.08.

01 On top
02 Underneath
03 Leaning against
04 Top shelf
05 Second shelf
06 Third shelf
07 Fourth shelf
08 Bottom shelf

Item

N low rolling thing
HOFF.11.

01 On top
02 Underneath
03 Leaning against
04 Inside

E drawer unit
HOFF.12.

01 On top
02 Underneath
03 Leaning against
04 Top drawer
05 Middle drawer
06 Bottom drawer

E storage box
HOFF.15.

01 On top
02 Underneath
03 Leaning against
04 Inside

Sub-item

W filing cabinet
HOFF.19.

01 On top
02 Underneath
03 Leaning against
04 Top drawer
05 Second drawer
06 Third drawer
07 Bottom drawer

SW bookcase
HOFF.20.

01 On top
02 Underneath
03 Leaning against
04 Top shelf
05 Second shelf
06 Third shelf
07 Fourth shelf
08 Fifth shelf
09 Bottom shelf

S Ikea steel cabinet
HOFF.18.

01 On top
02 Underneath
03 Leaning against
04 Top shelf
05 Bottom shelf

NW bookcase
HOFF.21.

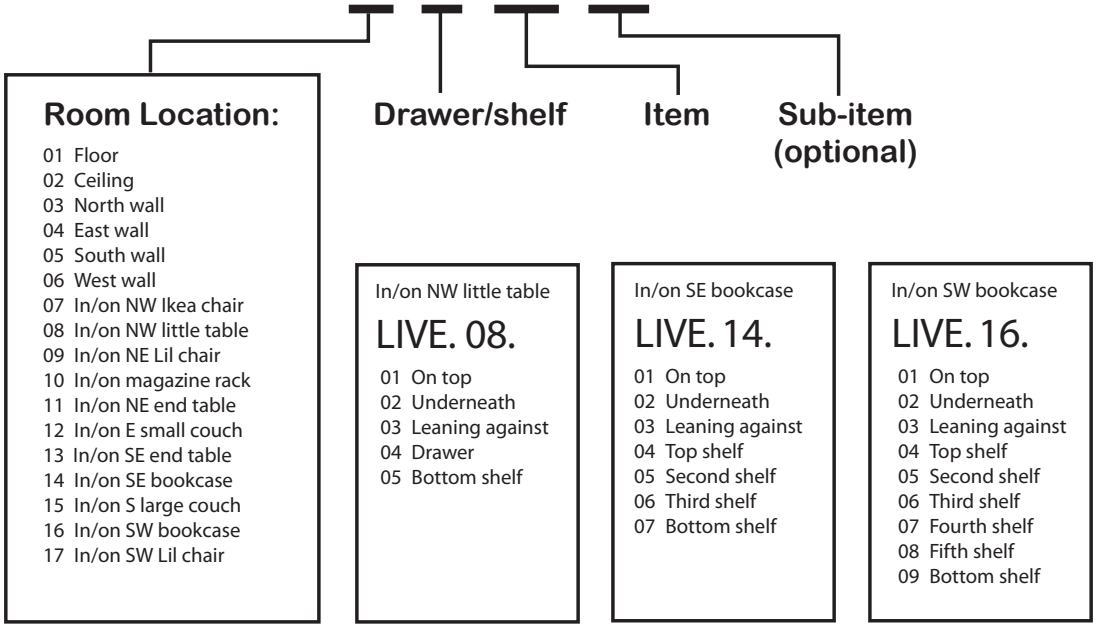
01 On top
02 Underneath
03 Leaning against
04 Top shelf
05 Second shelf
06 Third shelf
07 Fourth shelf
08 Fifth shelf
09 Bottom shelf

W chest of drawers
HOFF.22.

01 On top
02 Underneath
03 Leaning against
04 Top drawer
05 Second drawer
06 Third drawer
07 Fourth drawer
08 Bottom drawer

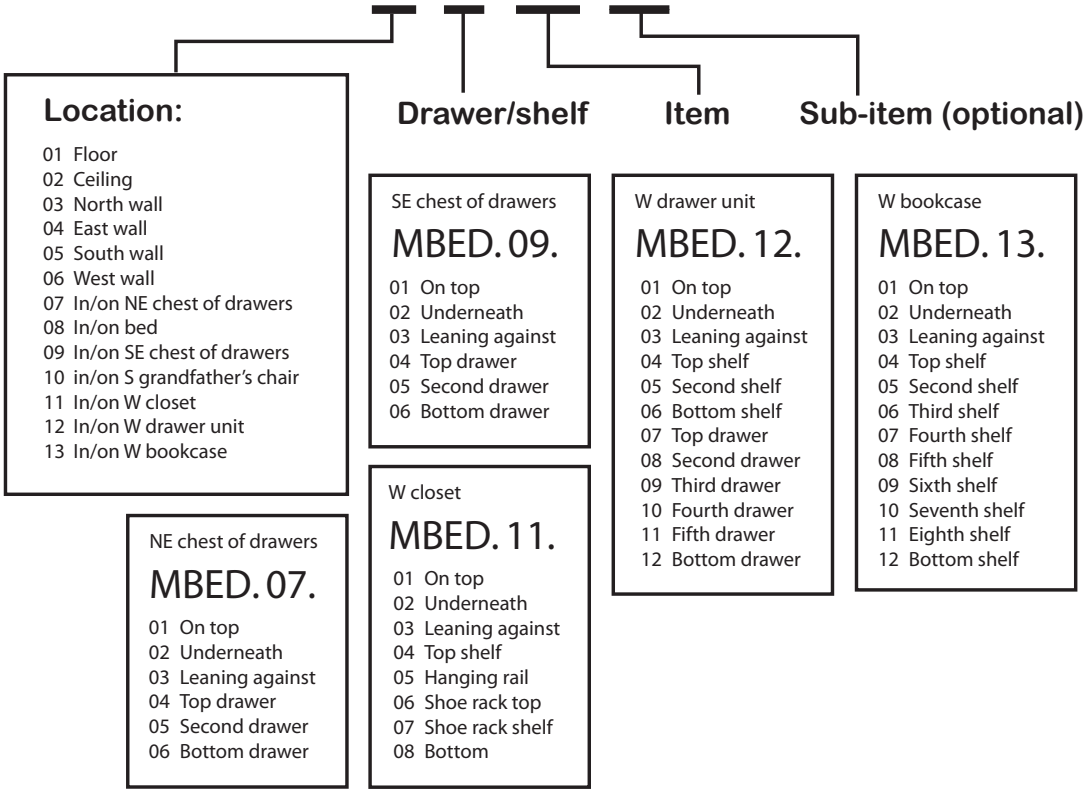
MoMe
Location-based accession numbering
08 August 2008

Living Room: LIVE . XX . XX . XXX . XXX



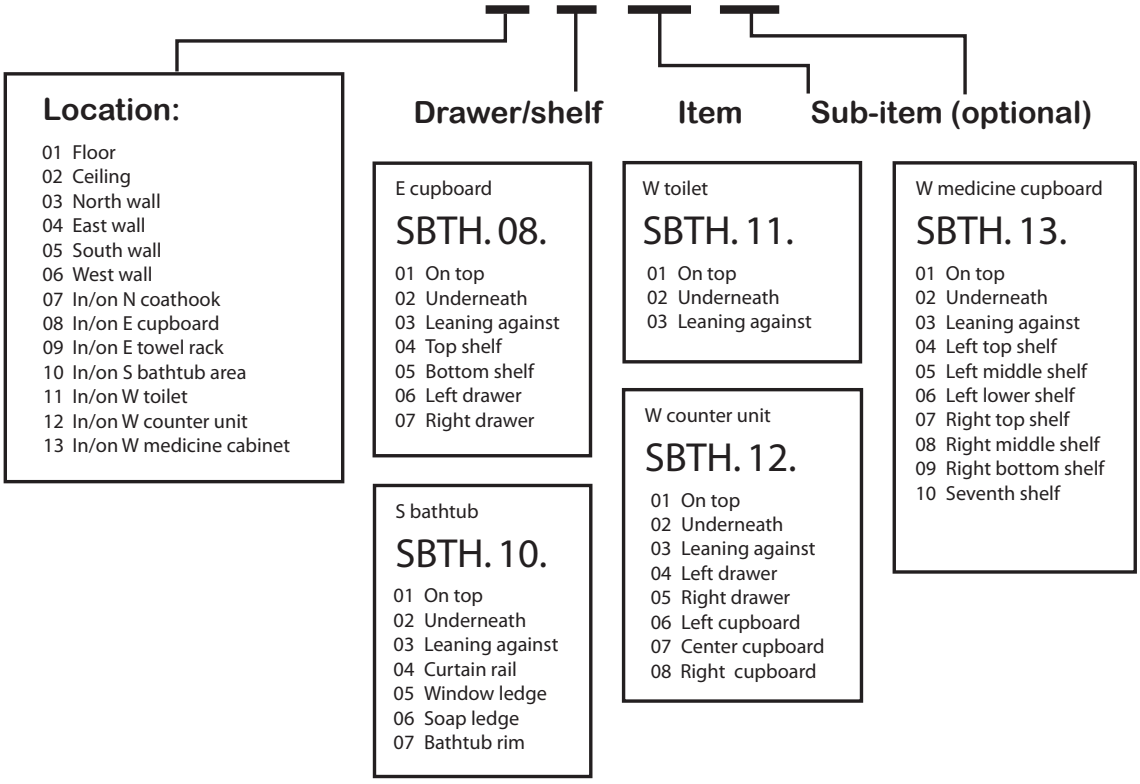
MoMe
Location-based accession numbering
08 August 2008

Master Bedroom: MBED . XX . XX . XXX . XXX



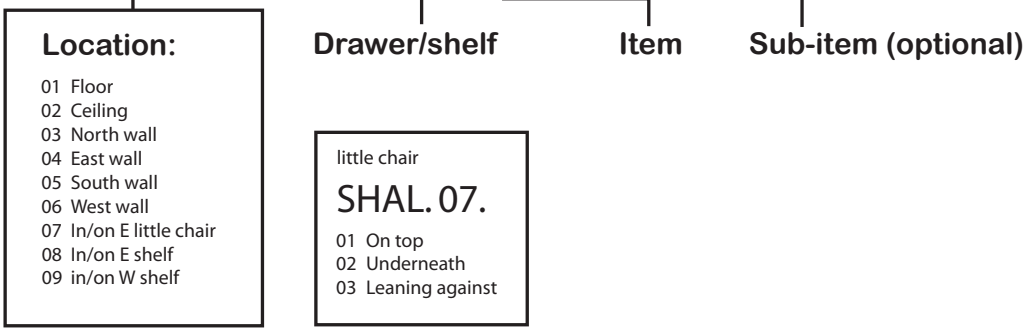
MoMe
Location-based accession numbering
08 August 2008

Second Floor Bathroom: SBTH . XX . XX . XXX . XXX



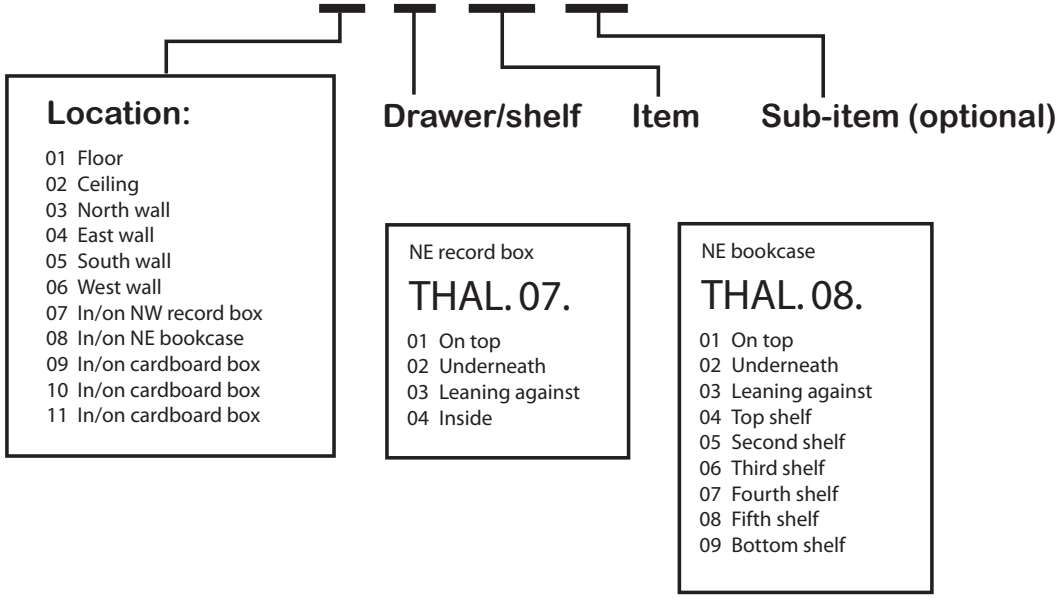
MoMe
Location-based accession numbering
08 August 2008

Second Floor Hall: SHAL . XX . XX . XXX . XXX



MoMe
Location-based accession numbering
08 August 2008

Third Floor Hall: THAL . XX . XX . XXX . XXX



Appendix B:
Hanging List
"The White Cube"

Category 1: Structures		
Building		
Building Component	Office door	SHAL.04.00.001
Site Feature	Planter, garden	BYAR.01.00.001
Other Structure		
Category 2: Building Furnishings		
Bedding	Sheet	LCLO.02.02.001
Floor Covering		
Furniture	Chair	OFF.01.00.007
Household Accessory		
Lighting Device		
Plumbing Fixture		
Temperature Control Device		
Window or Door Covering		
Category 3: Personal Artifacts		
Adornment		
Clothing		
Personal Gear	Handkerchief	BSMT.43.02.002
Toilet Article	Soap	BBTH.08.01.002
Category 4: Tools & Equipment for Materials		
Agricultural T&E		
Animal Husbandry T&E		
Fishing & Trapping T&E		
Food T&E		
Food Processing		
Food Service	Mug	KITC.12.10.001
Forestry T&E		
Glass, Plastics, Clayworking T&E		
Leather, Horn, Shellworking T&E		

Masonry & Stoneworking T&E		
Metalworking T&E		
Painting T&E	Paint (gesso)	LNDY.07.02.023
Papermaking T&E		
Textileworking T&E	Thread	BSMT.38.05.010
Woodworking T&E		
Other T&E		

Category 5: Tools & Equipment for Science & Technology

Acoustical T&E		
Armament T&E		
Astronomical T&E		
Biological T&E		
Chemical T&E		
Construction T&E		
Electrical & Magnetic T&E		
Energy Production T&E		
Geological T&E		
Maintenance T&E	Hamper	LNDY.01.00.003
Mechanical T&E		
Medical & Psychological T&E		
Merchandising T&E		
Meteorological T&E		
Nuclear Physics T&E		
Optical T&E		
Regulatory & Protective T&E	Alarm, Fire	SHAL.02.00.001
Surveying & Navigational T&E		
Thermal T&E		
Timekeeping T&E	Clock, Alarm	MBED.09.01.002
Weights & Measures T&E	Scale, Bathroom	MBED.01.00.007
Other T&E for Science & Technology		

Category 6: Tools & Equipment for Communication

Data Processing T&E	Computer, Laptop	MBED.08.01.010
Drafting T&E	Ellipsograph	BSMT.40.07.008
Musical T&E		
Photographic T&E		

Printing T&E		
Sound Communication T&E		
Telecommunication T&E		
Visual Communication T&E		
Written Communication T&E		
Other T&E for Communication		

Category 7: Distribution & Transportation Artifacts		
Container	Box, storage	BSMT.01.00.002
Aerospace Transportation		
Land Transportation		
Rail Transportation		
Water Transportation		

Category 8: Communication Artifacts		
Advertising Medium		
Art		
Ceremonial Artifact		
Documentary Artifact	Book	HOFF.08.08.008
Exchange Medium		
Personal Symbol	Badge	HOFF.22.08.023

Category 9: Recreational Artifacts		
Game	Dice	LIVE.08.04.001
Public Entertainment Device		
Recreational Device		
Sports Equipment		
Toy		

Category 10: Unclassifiable Artifacts		
Artifact remnant	Sherd	LIVE.14.01.001
Function unknown		
Multiple use artifacts.		

Appendix C:
Artifact Accession Records

Accession Number AOFF.01.00.007 **Accession Date** 28 March 2009

Nomenclature Category 2. BUILDING FURNISHINGS. FURNITURE.

Nomenclature Term CHAIR, DESK

Short Description white fiberglass chair

Title

Fabrication date c. 1960? **Fabrication location** unknown

Content

Fabricator

Fabricator Information

Acquisition Gift of George and Lil Rosenthal

History Formerly in Alan's boyhood room when he lived with his parents.

Material Fiberglass shell with metal legs

Location Change **Value**

Condition Somewhat stained, and missing some feet.

Image

Height 80
Width 60
Depth 45

Image data
photo by Heidi 28 March 2009.

Associations

Comments

Accession Number BBTH.08.01.002 **Accession Date** 28 March 2008.

Nomenclature Category 3. PERSONAL ARTIFACTS.
TOILET ARTICLE.

Nomenclature Term SOAP.

Short Description Ivory soap.

Title

Fabrication date c.2009 **Fabrication location** "Imported"

Content "Ivory/ Happiness is not a destination/ It is a journey, pure and simple."

Fabricator Distributed by Procter and Gamble.

Fabricator Information Cincinnati, OH 45202.

Acquisition Bought at Sobey's.

History

Material Soap with paper wrapper.

Location Change

Value

Condition

Image

Height 2.5
Width 8
Depth 5.5

Image data
Photo by Heidi 28 March 2008.

Associations

Comments

Accession Number	BSMT.01.00.002 **Accession Date** 08 August 2008
Nomenclature Category	7. DISTRIBUTION & TRANSPORTATION ARTIFACTS. CONTAINER.
Nomenclature Term	BOX, STORAGE.
Short Description	plastic storage box
Title	
Fabrication date	**Fabrication location**
Content	this box contains postcards
Fabricator	
Fabricator Information	
Acquisition	bought at Staples
History	
Material	
Location Change	**Value**
Condition	
Image	
	Height 28
	Width 36
	Depth 45
	Image data
Associations	One of a large number of similar boxes. Others are in GCLO and HOFF.
Comments	

Accession Number BSMT.38.05.010 **Accession Date** 28 March 2008

Nomenclature Category 4. TOOLS & EQUIPMENT FOR MATERIALS. TEXTILEWORKING T&E.

Nomenclature Term THREAD.

Short Description Spool of white thread

Title

Fabrication date unknown **Fabrication location**

Content none

Fabricator unknown

Fabricator Information

Acquisition purchased

History

Material plastic spool with cotton or polycotton thread.

Location Change **Value**

Condition still quite full

Image

Height 4.5
Width 3.5
Depth 3.5

Image data

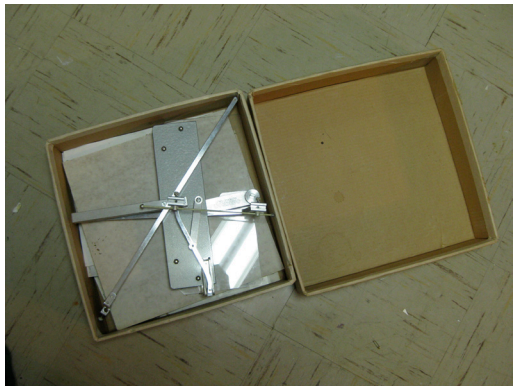
Photo by Heidi 28 March 2008.

Associations

Comments

Accession Number	BSMT.40.07.008	**Accession Date**	28 March 2009
Nomenclature Category	6. TOOLS & EQUIPMENT FOR COMMUNICATION. DRAFTING T&E.		
Nomenclature Term	ELLIPSOGRAPH.		
Short Description	Ellipsograph		
Title			
Fabrication date	c. 1980	**Fabrication location**	
Content	“OMNICROM/ MODEL 25 ELLIPSOGRAPH/ 8 STORAGE”		
Fabricator			
Fabricator Information			
Acquisition	Gift of Overhill Engineering Ltd.		
History			
Material	metal tool in cardboard box		
Location Change		**Value**	
Condition	Working		

Image



Height 10
Width 36
Depth 36

Image data

Photo by Heidi 28 March 2009.

Associations The other illustrators and I used this tool to make some of the technical drawings for the Canada France Hawaii Telescope.

Comments Making the technical drawings was my main summer job while I was going to design school in Ottawa

Accession Number BSMT.43.02.002 **Accession Date** 28 March 2009

Nomenclature Category 3. PERSONAL ARTIFACTS. PERSONAL GEAR

Nomenclature Term HANDKERCHIEF.

Short Description White handkerchief.

Title

Fabrication date c. 1950? **Fabrication location** Nova Scotia?

Content Floral embroidery, white-on-white, shadow

Fabricator Unknown.

Fabricator Information

Acquisition History Probably inherited from either Ellis Hicks or Helena Hicks.

Material Cotton

Location Change

Value

Condition Yellow stains.

Image

Height 25
Width 25
Depth 0.1

Image data

Photo by Heidi 28 March 2009.

Associations

Comments

Accession Number BYAR.01.00.001 **Accession Date** 28 March 2008

Nomenclature Category 1. STRUCTURES.
SITE FEATURE

Nomenclature Term PLANTER, GARDEN

Short Description white plastic garden planter

Title

Fabrication date c. 1980 **Fabrication location** “Made in Canada”

Content grotesque faces and leafery

Fabricator

Fabricator Information

Acquisition purchased

History Formerly kept on the deck at 1706 Queen St. West with flowers planted in it.

Material appears to be blow-moulded plastic with recycled content

Location Change **Value**

Condition top edge starting to break off in places.

Image

Height 23
Width 35
Depth 35

Image data
photo by Heidi 28 March 2008.

Associations

Comments I keep this empty now, to use for holding weeds as I move down the flowerbeds weeding the garden. It is lightweight and easy to carry.

Accession Number HOFF.08.08.001 **Accession Date** 28 March 2009

Nomenclature Category 8. COMMUNICATION ARTIFACTS. DOCUMENTARY ARTIFACT.

Nomenclature Term BOOK.

Short Description Chenhill nomenclature

Title The Revised Nomenclature for Museum Cataloguing

Fabrication date 1995 **Fabrication location** Lanham, MD.

Content

Fabricator James R. Blackaby, Altamira Press

Fabricator Information American Association for State and Local History

Acquisition Purchased from Amazon.

History

Material Paper

Location Change **Value** $106.02

Condition Pencil annotations

Image

Height 28
Width 22
Depth 4

Image data

Photo by Heidi 28 March 2009.

Associations

Comments

Accession Number HOFF.22.08.023 **Accession Date** 28 March 2009

Nomenclature Category 8. COMMUNICATION ARTIFACTS. PERSONAL SYMBOL

Nomenclature Term BADGE

Short Description

Title

Fabrication date 1987 **Fabrication location** Ottawa

Content “No. 0236 NG” and photo of Heidi

Fabricator

Fabricator Information

Acquisition Issued to me when I was an employee of the National Gallery.

History

Material plastic

Location Change **Value**

Condition

Image

Height 9
Width 5.5
Depth 0.5

Image data

Photo by Heidi 28 March 2009.

Associations

Comments

Accession Number KITC.12.10.001 **Accession Date** 08 March 2009

Nomenclature Category 2. FURNISHINGS.
HOUSEHOLD ACCESSORY

Nomenclature Term MUG.

Short Description White mug

Title

Fabrication date 2000 **Fabrication location** Indonesia

Content none

Fabricator Royal Doulton

Fabricator Information

Acquisition c. 2002

History purchased at the Club Monaco next to Loblaws on Lower Jarvis St., Toronto.

Material Ceramic

Location Change **Value**

Condition good

Image

Height 8
Width 11
Depth 8

Image data

Photo by Heidi 28 March 2008.

Associations part of a set of similar dishes

Comments Despite being theoretically restaurant quality, some of these dishes have cracked. They are no longer carried by Club Monaco, which is no longer located on Lower Jarvis Street.

Accession Number LCLO.02.02.001 **Accession Date** 28 March 2008

Nomenclature Category 2. BUILDING FURNISHINGS. BEDDING.

Nomenclature Term SHEET.

Short Description Embroidered flat sheet

Title

Fabrication date c. 1930? **Fabrication location**

Content Embroidered “H” with curliques, corner label reading “PEPPEREL LUXURY

Fabricator Embroidery probably by Henrietta Hicks

Fabricator Information My great-grandmother.

Acquisition Almost certainly came from Aunt Helena’s house upon her death.

History

Material Cotton

Location Change **Value**

Condition good

Image

Height 245
Width 205
Depth 0.1

Image data

Associations There was formerly a matching pillowcase, that has worn out and been thrown away.

Comments Henrietta Hicks was an excellent needleworker. This talent was inherited by neither of her two daughters, Helena or Sarah, both of whom viewed sewing as childhood torture.

Accession Number LIVE.08.04.001 **Accession Date** 28 March 2009

Nomenclature Category 9. RECREATIONAL ARTIFACTS. GAME.

Nomenclature Term DICE.

Short Description

Title

Fabrication date **Fabrication location**

Content

Fabricator

Fabricator Information

Acquisition

History

Material Plastic

Location Change **Value**

Condition

Image

Height

Width

Depth

Image data

Photo by Heidi 28 March 2009.

Associations

Comments

Accession Number LIVE.14.01.001 **Accession Date** 28 MARCH 2008

Nomenclature Category 10. UNCLASSIFIABLE ARTIFACT.
ARTIFACT REMNANT.

Nomenclature Term SHERD

Short Description

Title

Fabrication date unknown **Fabrication location** Great Britain

Content

Fabricator

Fabricator Information

Acquisition History Picked up while mud-larking on the banks of the Thames, August 2005.

Material Ceramic

Location Change

Value

Condition

Image

Height

Width

Depth

Image data

Photo by Heidi 28 March 2009.

Associations

Comments

Accession Number	LNDY.01.00.003	**Accession Date**	28 March 2008
Nomenclature Category	5. TOOLS & EQUIPMENT FOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY. MAINTENANCE T&E.		
Nomenclature Term	HAMPER		
Short Description	white laundry hamper		
Title			
Fabrication date	c. 200	**Fabrication location**	
Content			
Fabricator	Rubbermaid		
Fabricator Information			
Acquisition	Probably bought at Zeller's on Dundas St. W., Toronto		
History			
Material	Plastic		
Location Change		**Value**	
Condition	Missing the black handle on one side.		

Image

Height 35
Width 61
Depth 43

Image data

Photo by Heidi 28 March 2008.

Associations

Comments

Accession Number LNDY.07.02.023 **Accession Date** 28 March 2009

Nomenclature Category 4. TOOLS & EQUIPMENT FOR MATERIALS. PAINTING T&E.

Nomenclature Term PAINT.

Short Description gesso

Title

Fabrication date c.2008 **Fabrication location** "Made in Canada"

Content "Venetian/ Acylics/ Gesso/ 500 ml/ Thin with water or studio mediums./ Keep

Fabricator Curry's Art Store

Fabricator Information Mississauga, Ontario L4Y 3Y3.

Acquisition Purchased

History

Material Plastic, gesso

Location Change **Value**

Condition Still quite full

Image

Height 8.5
Width 9
Depth 9

Image data

Photo by Heidi 28 March 2009.

Associations

Comments

Accession Number MBED.01.00.007 **Accession Date** 04 August 2008

Nomenclature Category 5. T&E FOR SCIENCE AND TECH.
WEIGHTS & MEASURES T&E.

Nomenclature Term SCALE, BATHROOM

Short Description White bathroom scale.

Title

Fabrication date **Fabrication location**

Content “Not legal for trade.”

Fabricator Mansfield

Fabricator Information

Acquisition

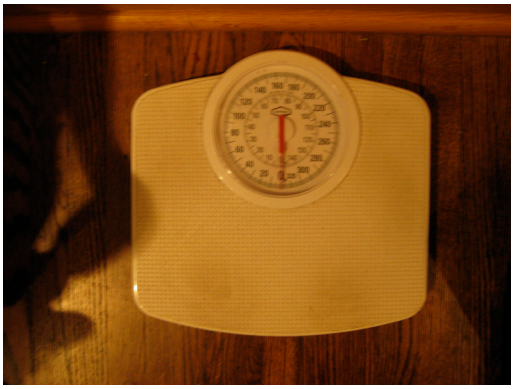
History

Material

Location Change **Value**

Condition Slight scuffing from foot marks.

Image



Height 4
Width 32
Depth 30

Image data

Photo by Heidi 28 March 2008.

Associations

Comments I bought Alan a scale when he got interested in eating right. The first electronic one from Weight Watchers broke, so I replaced it with a nice mechanical one with a big dial. I never weigh myself. Wait. 140. I’ve lost 7 pounds. Hmm. I wonder why.

Accession Number MBED.08.01.010 **Accession Date** 04 August 2008

Nomenclature Category 6. T&E FOR COMMUNICATION. DATA PROCESSING T&E

Nomenclature Term COMPUTER, LAPTOP

Short Description MacBook Pro 3,1 Serial number W873111DXAH

Title

Fabrication date **Fabrication location**

Content

Fabricator

Fabricator Information

Acquisition This computer belongs to Sheridan College.

History Got it last year.

Material

Location Change **Value**

Condition

Image

Height 3
Width 36
Depth 24

Image data

Photo by Heidi 28 March 2009.

Associations Fits into briefcase MBED.03.00.030

Comments

Accession Number SHAL.02.00.001 **Accession Date** 28 March 2008

Nomenclature Category 5. TOOLS & EQUIPMENT FOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY. REGULATORY & PROTECTIVE T&E.

Nomenclature Term ALARM, FIRE

Short Description

Title

Fabrication date **Fabrication location**

Content

Fabricator

Fabricator Information

Acquisition

History

Material

Location Change **Value**

Condition

Image

Height

Width

Depth

Image data

Photo by Heidi 28 March 2009.

Associations

Comments This past summer we updated all the fire alarms in the house, installing a new talking carbon monoxide alarm in the basement.

Accession Number SHAL.04.00.001 **Accession Date** 28 March 2009

Nomenclature Category 1. STRUCTURES.
BUILDING COMPONENT.

Nomenclature Term DOOR

Short Description Door to Heidi's office

Title

Fabrication date c.1900 **Fabrication location** possibly Toronto

Content

Fabricator Unknown

Fabricator Information

Acquisition Came with the house when we bought it.

History Appears to have been part of the original interior finishings.

Material Wood with hardware and paint

Location Change **Value**

Condition Battered.

Image

Height 960
Width 760
Depth 160

Image data
photo by Heidi 28 March 2009

Associations

Comments Some of the similar neighbouring houses still have original interior finishing in places. Based on that, this door would originally have had a faux oak finish over top of an ungrained wood, possibly maple. The current coat of white semi-gloss latex was applied by Heidi.

Appendix D:
Installation Photographs

Page 94 © Heidi Overhill 14 April 2009

Page 98 © Nora Rosenthal 14 April 2009

Other photography © Rafael Goldchain, 17 April 2009


MoMe
The Museum of Me

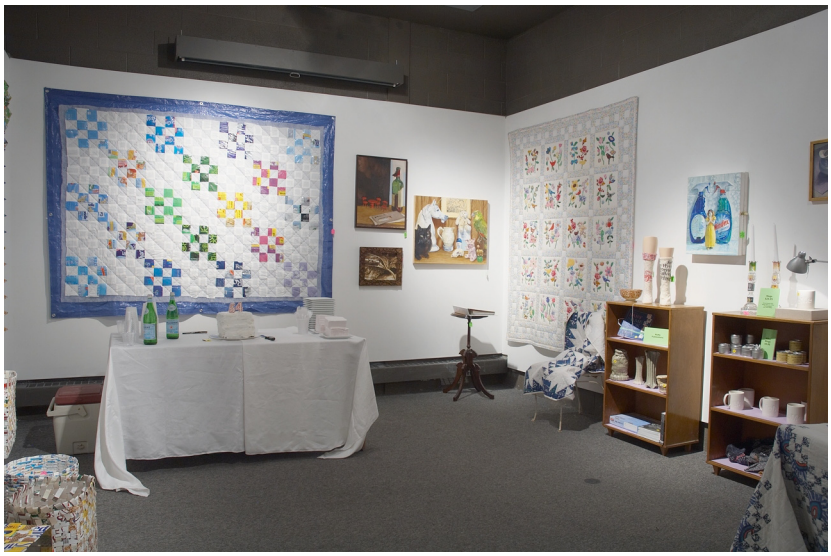

MoMe
The Museum of Me


MoMe


MoMe


Gift Shop
Postcards
$1.99
MoMo
NOT
YOU


MoMo
NOT
YOU




Waste of Time Clocks


Nutri-Grain
CHOCOLATEY ALMOND
AMANDES CHOCOLATÉES
6 EGGS
SIZE: MEDIUM
6 OEUFS
SINCE 1882
proud partner
fier partenaire