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Damaged Goods: Reconstructing the Perceived Perfect

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Damaged Goods: Reconstructing the Perceived Perfect

by
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A thesis presented to the
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Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

The writing that follows is intended to provide a speculative framework based upon theories, literature, and narratives that seek to articulate several major themes that occur within my studio practice. My work incorporates the imagery of domestic objects that can substitute for the body to permeate realities through the deconstruction and reconstruction of structures while simultaneously integrating gendered materials under the principles of the uncanny. This production process provides how we as viewers question strength and stability in what we understand by staging the familiarity of the home that is then imbued with altered states of being.
Introduction

When the presence of the handcrafted object in the domestic space drastically declined due to the industrial revolution, a uniform image of the domestic object flourished both in production and advertisement. These distinctions serve as a narrative embedded in my work as the imagery uses uncanny qualities to investigate how these objects reside within the psyche. The text in Sigmund Freud’s The Uncanny serves as a theoretical template for classifying certain attributes’ effects in an object’s appearance under the Familiar and Unfamiliar.¹ It is within this warped information that the testing of realities can be analyzed.

I reveal the inescapable unknown by altering the construction of mundane objects. The objects chosen for these works operate under the principles of planned obsolescence.² Brian Massumi’s texts on the influx of information describe how technologies are growing faster than that of our own bodies can interpret.² It is through my sculptures’ functionality that their usage ages them in a world of commodity culture. As size and form strongly suggests the body’s presence, an immediate statement is outlined for our own expiration in this culture.

This ideology can be paired with that of Jean Baudrillard’s value system of signs in order to interpret why certain imageries under discussion, especially in advertisements, evoke the interrogation of multiple realities. Perfection lies within imagery, danger however, lies within construction.

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¹ When the production rate of an item replaces older versions of themselves with newer features, designs, or materials.
Finally, in horror fiction, films such as John Carpenter’s *Christine*, 1983, after Stephen King’s novel, and Adult Swim’s infomercial series’ that feature Ben O’Brien and Alan Resnick’s *This House Has People in It*, 2016, utilize domestic spaces that are ultimately extensions of our bodies. These narratives confront their audience as a changeling for their normally perceived average realities.

My intention is to merge the gender of the materials as I reconstruct the form of these domestic objects, which often offer themselves as a replacement for the body, and suggest a former presence of the human hand in means of operation. This thesis will infer the components of production, display, content and influences in relationship with each other and how the outcomes of my work suspend all of their agendas.

* Adult Swim series consisting of fifteen minute specials which air at 4 A.M. as satires of American infomercial culture.
The Maker: Repetition Makes Perfect

Conceptualism is inherently born through the choice of material as well as the process. Craft has a necessity for discussion in contemporary discourse because of its importance to process and production. Specific practices such as Shibori dyeing involves meticulous tying and submerging of material in water. This baptism transforms the material from white silk to opulent forms of structure and color. This cultural practice thus informs the display and production in terms of the work.

As the hand is responsible for production, the mind is so for conception. In The Craftsman, Professor of Sociology and Economics, Richard Sennett describes that “…when hand and head, technique and science, art and craft are separated… the head then suffers; both understanding and expression are impaired.”¹ Within the performative actions, it is the responsibility of the artist to utilize both the mind’s intention along with the tactile processes to produce a meaningful piece.

My Shibori sculptures use their processes to emulate form and pattern, meaningful to the construction of two specific objects, the kaleidoscope and kaleidocycle. In Conversation (Kalos Eidos Scopeo), 2015, the kaleidoscope’s* length is proportionate to a body suspended in space, which is activated by an observer’s gaze into its innards. This view creates another dimension in the space, which alters the viewers’ relationship to it. Change (Kalos Eidos Cyclus), 2015, an enlarged kaleidocycle or

¹ A Japanese technique for animal fibers, such as silk, which uses tying and sewing as resists when submerged in dye vats. Areas under resist are preserved, while exposed material absorbs the dye.
* Kaleidoscope from ancient Greek; (Kalos, beauty), (Eidos, form), and (Scopeo, to see), is an instrument which uses mirrors and light to create ever-changing patterns for the viewer, when looking through it.
hexaflexagon*, calls for the partaker’s initiation in movement to activate its evolving capabilities. With each movement, the planes of the object changes and therefore shows the onlooker a different view of itself in its revolutions. Both the scale and hinged joints of this piece creates a stand in for the body within the space.

These objects, realistically hand held, are blown up in proportion in relation to the body. In Robert Morris’ Notes on Sculpture, the minimalist artist illustrates the effect of the object’s size in relationship with the viewer’s body. Since the viewer’s body is experiencing the two pieces in the gallery at a larger scale, the relationship between the two is brought into another dimension within the space. This affect also strengthens the connection between the viewer and the object’s patterning. As the viewer interacts with the piece in its larger scale, a dialogue is created between the body and the pattern’s metamorphosis.

Since the object’s structure is embedded into quilt, the process transcends the functional and transforms the material. The treatment of the surface for these two

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* A kaleidocycle, Greek; (Kalos, beauty), (Eidos, patterns), and (Cyclus, changing). Commonly known as a hexaflexigon, is a hand-held mechanism created by twelve diamond-shape planes, each row consisting of a different pattern or color. When the mechanism is folded and fastened together at the right joints, the object can evolve in on itself continuously, with each convolution yielding a different pattern.
Sarah E. Harford, *Change (Kalos, Eidos, Cyclus)*, thioxed silk and cotton, batting and Masonite board, dimensions vary, 2015.
Sarah E. Harford, *Conversation (Kalos, Eidos, Scopeo)*, acrylic mirror and silk habotai, 2” x 72” x 2”, 2015.

Sarah E. Harford, *Conversation*, detail.
objects clearly dictate Shibori’ virtuosity in patterning. The resists created with folding and repetitive sewing allow the surface of these two objects to discuss the infinite amount of variations possible on one solid place or surface. Interaction requires the presence of the viewer in order to experience all possibilities. Both hand and light are the catalysts for these progressions.

The object’s image is rendered using Shibori and quilting, which together intensify each other’s meanings by material and form. The Craftsman states that it is because of process that fine art cannot exist without craft for “the idea for a painting is not the painting.” This culturally diverse processes suggest a deep immersion in past civilizations’ conventional art objects and their influence in contemporary culture.

The web sustains an ever-bearing environment because of its daunting maker. In Neri Oxman’s Armor, 2012, the weaving goddess, Arachne, influences both the patterning in appearance as well as the formation of the material in relation to the structure. Oxman elaborates that her work attempts to invert the typical formation found in architecture of structure and material. The artist elaborates that the mathematical logic of natural materials and their development form the structure and therefore creating a more resilient object or being.

The mentality behind this process suggests how an object emerges into the world. As Neri Oxman’s 3-D printed objects exist, their object hood and value increase in significance in relation to their production. It is this attitude of making that restores the object’s creation by ultimately connecting the mind’s idea with the hand’s actions.

The treatment of the surface and execution of my two objects and the pieces of armor address both the body’s awareness in the space as well as the surface’s meaningfulness to the function. The object, Armor, can be defined as a crafted material whose conceptual identity is augmented by its functionality. Oxman, as a maker,
transcends the collective identity of handcrafted objects and utilizes the unique geometry of nature in order to exploit the numerous possibilities of any object.

Art objects transpired their function in traditions with their importance both culturally and aesthetically. Parameters of the sculpture installations, which contained Conversation and Change, began to define the use of space on various levels including the creation of dimensions one can only experience by interacting with the piece.
In, Yasuaki Onishi’s installation at Rice University of Houston, Texas, *Reverse of Volume*, 2012, the elevation of materials are responsible for the transformation of space and the compositional meaning of form. Black glue suspends a sheet of plastic casting an invisible form within the space. The plastic is draped over mounds of cardboard boxes. As the black hot glue is hand-drizzled over support rods and connects with the sheeting, the two materials bind, and the plastic material suspends in mid air once the boxes are removed. It is in this characteristic of the production process that allows the piece to have its sensorial response on the viewers in its final display. Onishi’s black glue and plastic casts a negative space of the sculpture. Therefore, the casting of a form to be absent yet observable by the body as it enters the positive space of the sculpture. The installation as a whole embodies the entities of positive and negative spaces in relation to the human body while the production entails the hand application of specific materials for maximum effect.

The dual capability of an artwork’s incorporation of the body and space relies on process, material, and display. In Ann Hamilton’s body/object series, 1984/93, the comparison between materials and the human form cause a reversal of roles between the two entities. The Wexner Center for the Art’s catalogue on The Body and the Object describes our body as a “locus for empirical knowledge”, through its sense is our understanding of everything we know or will know. The body’s orifices, vision, and touch act as a portal for this permeation of roles to act as it is for these aspects that we know objects and classify them. The body surpasses into an inanimate being once the materials are applied to its structure. In return, the materials are given life by the work’s permeation between the concept of sense and object. In Hamilton’s Suitably/ Positioned, 1984, the “toothpick suit” uses the assembled objects to create a whole. Once the whole is brought to life by the body, the two entities can amalgamate into a piece of recollections of the viewer in their own vast pool of understandings and experiences.

Processes imbued with cultural significances informs the overall production and content of the work, which seeks to elevate the material. The life-sized aspect of these works utilizes the body’s presence within the space in order to create awareness of its relationship to the work. Along with the materials and surface area, the object’s purpose is counseled by sensual characteristics meaningful for its affect on the viewer’s presence.
Dismantling the Uniform, Unveiling the Destruction

The investigation of a found object’s construction may also conduct a dialogue with the body. In particular, using domestic furniture and devices that come into contact with the body in leisure or use, serve as props for a stand-in for the body. Repetition as an element coincides with the increasing quantities of produced objects. This factor leads to an erasure of identity and sentimentality. My work incorporates the commodity for these reasons in order to articulate the rate at which objects, formerly crafted, are produced and disposed of in comparison to the presence of the self. Analyzing an object’s life span leads to the realization of the body’s extension within the domestic space. It is within the staging of these theatrical sculptures that new narratives surface and that the audience perceives alternating realities that could only be revealed through the deconstruction and reconstruction of these familiar materials and their recognizable structures.

I will be focusing on the over-produced object’s plug-in nature within the domestic space, the loss of identity and uniformities, as well as their materiality and structures that can be altered in order to dismantle reality.

*Striptease* and *Lap Dance*, 2015, is primarily composed of butchered limbs from found chairs that had been sanded and re-stained. The pieces lay scattered across the floor while some shrouded in nude nylon stocking. Towering above this mass of bones is a column of stacked chair seats, tokens of the items I had collected, resting on a skeletal chair structure whose elongated spine supports this rising stack of seats.

The life expectancy of furniture and appliances decreased when mass productions increased availability and designs. For instance, one could note the subtle unnatural perfection in symmetry within wooden chairs. It is within this plugging in
and out of these items throughout the domestic space that gives a universal uniformity. My work investigates these commodity items’ ability to render the concept of the double and to explore their capability to substitute the body.⁷ In Freud’s *The Uncanny*, the ambiguity between the Familiar the Unfamiliar creates a realm of uncertainty when the perceiver attempts to justify or understand something. In *The Commodity*, Karl Marx distinguishes the image of the table as a being born from material and the human hand.⁸ It is necessary to use these texts to infer which specific imageries being evoked in relationship to the material choices.

In Freud’s *The Uncanny*, the concept of *Heimlich* or *Unheimlich* acknowledges the various shades of the known and unknown.⁹ A subtle element off disturbs the viewer’s expectation of a black and white reality. Hence, and immersion into the various shades of grey suspends the identification of an understood reality. As this causes the viewer to not understand the object’s purpose, an immediate sense of confusion is followed towards the item.

In *Lap dance*, 2015, the familiarity of the chair is recognizable in the use material and form. However, its reconstruction converses with the viewer in a dialogue between the body’s form and attributes. Because the chair stands in for the body, the elongation of the spinal area, intensifies the viewer’s own awareness of their own body within the space. The actions that created these two sculptures primarily consist of gathering, erasing, inserting, and stacking. These processes give new meaning to the visual representation of the work’s new form and context.

*Lap Dance* serves as a columnar stack memorializing the objects as they once were. The heap of bones scattered across the gallery floor summons a narrative about the loss of identity. The stack of seats was once individual bodies collected and possessed specific qualities in design, construction, and adornment. Once the limbs
were removed and the seats remaining were stacked, the sanding erased original stains and dulled carved features. Any trace of these artifacts’ previous identity became absolutely lost as white stain veiled each piece in addition to being inserted into nude stocking pieces.

The viewer responds through their experience of being in close proximity to the installation. This mutual presence is needed for the two beings to have relationship to one another. This effect is created when movement around the sculptures allow for multiple viewpoints of the interactions between the stack and the elongated chair. The awareness of the laying pieces recalls the presence of a hand, which the viewer immediately understands. Within the display of this arena speaking about what once was and what is now is articulated thought the understanding of materials alongside these alterations that give them a new context in which the former objects can be discussed.

Understanding these items both deconstructed and reconstructed allowed their meanings to be discussed psychologically as well. Horror fiction narratives frequently employ anthropomorphic commodity objects as vehicles for affecting their audiences by utilizing their
Sarah E. Harford, *Striptease* and *Lap dance*, found chairs and nylon, dimensions vary, 2015.
uniformity, or Heimlich. Attributes as simple as self-governing movement, causes the character to question it entirely because a small happening disturbed everything that was known for that particular object. The following discusses how particular areas of the domestic space unite with the psyche and how manipulating their construction affects the home dweller’s comfort of what they perceive as home.

When analyzing these characteristics between the home and the psyche, it is essential to recognize the actions in a particular space or with an item as well as the former presence that was in action with objects while in use. In The Book on the Bookshelf, engineer and author, Henry Petroski, questions the reasons behind how we structure, organize, and display our books within a bookshelf. He notices the vertical stacking of the spine of the books facing outwards in their horizontal line. Amongst all of this, he compares our negligence in acknowledging the bookshelf as an infrastructure “like a bridge beneath a line of cars”.

Petroski recognizes these questions concerning the nature of which we exhibit our novels as devices born from our intimacy with the objects and how we integrate our ownership of them within our social realm. It is in an item that rests on our laps while we turn its layers sewn together in its spine and covered with encasing. Vertical staking within the case allows for easy removal and reinsertion of these pieces of literature, while also being able to distinctively decipher which one is which. Picture frames and souvenirs adorn these shelves while simultaneously serving as markers, for an individual to remember a section or placement of books on a vast shelf. It is plausible for an interaction between the visitor and the inhabitant’s bookshelf, where separate yet similar memories of content and interpretations are discussed. The bookshelf stages the items of literature in the same manner in which the mind retains memories and pieces of knowledge, all of which we utilize to communicate with one another intellectually and emotionally. It was proper to
begin this segment with an object that symbolizes the mind, as it serves as a fundamental image that can articulate our natural associations between the items and the body. When these familiar structures of what we know are altered, a revelation unto another reality happens while the sense of stability is shattered because of the discrepancies of what is perceived as the known.

In Rachel Whiteread’s, *Untitled (Library),* 1997, the use of negative space defines the content of the piece. A plaster casting renders the forms cratered by stacked novels. However, the materiality of the sculpture embodies the negative space, which intensifies the latter. This construction questions what we do know and do not know. Interestingly, the essence of the sculpture is created by the absence of the books, the main signifier of knowledge. The process and display of this piece brings awareness to the infinite by operating on the scale of a domestic image.

*Surreal House*, an exhibition consisting of both modern and contemporary artists that uses surrealistic imagery to explore how familiar items distinguish reality within the domestic space. Curator Jane Alison, combined numerable amounts of drawings, sculptures, photography, painting, and films in order to shed light on specific imageries that discuss how the psyche plays into this familiar setting. The catalogue praises the common imagery of a haunted house, as it states that the literary device incorporates attributes of the uncanny alongside with *the marvelous*. architectural historian and theorist, Delibor Vesley, contributed an article for exhibition catalogue entitled *The
Surrealist House as a Labyrinth and Metaphor of Creativity, which discusses the occurrence of dreams as a vehicle of the surreal that accesses this level of “the marvelous”. Furthermore, since we are only able to perceive dreams by remembering them in our awakened state, the surreal is inherently needed to access this alternate reality in which the marvelous can be experienced. This ideology can be applied to domestic objects as their universal familiarity can transcend various areas of the viewer’s mind. The reconstruction of these objects allows access in perceiving multiple realities. This effect undermines the normal setting for the viewer and causes questioning of the observable world around them.

Specific pieces that will be discussed from this exhibition include, Rebecca Horn’s Concert for Anarchy, 1990 and Alberto Giacometti’s Lustre, 1948. These works encompass both modern and contemporary times, which were equally influenced by the aesthetic of the surreal. Their work operates under a narrative using imagery of commonly known items such as a piano and a chandelier to deliver a standpoint on how these specific items operate for the house dweller’s reality.

Concert for Anarchy features an upside down black grand piano suspended in close proximity to the ceiling. The keys sag towards the floor as they extrude from their musical encasing. This suspension invokes the typical scenery of a grand piano falling to the concrete from two-numbered stories while someone is moving in. The piece itself is its own citadel in the space daring the viewer to stand beneath it. The object’s identity is manipulated by its vertical rotation as well as the exaggeration of its features. The keys resemble teeth as if the grand piano can devour something or someone’s fingers if approached. The hovering animates the instrument as this display activates all space surrounding the object to be tangible by its movement. The overall presentation of the obscured object dangles a premonition of demolition within the space.
Rebecca Horn, *Concert for Anarchy*, 1990.
Italian sculptor, Alberto Giacometti, utilized stylistic hand techniques and material for representation of objects and their meanings. *Lustre*, 1948, a rudimentary crafted chandelier depicts a mother-like figure encaged in the light fixture’s construction while an animal and male-like figure exist on its branches. The use of this object serves as a metaphor as its construction is altered to narrate an entrapment of one particular being. The craft intensifies the obvious presence of the hand. It is the process and the implications addressed by what we commonly perceive as a light fixture that discusses the nature of the narrative.

My work tests the durability of our seamless world. Imagery borrowed from the domestic space situates the viewer in a comfortable state because it is inherently familiar. By restructuring these objects’ materiality and form in relation to the uncanny theory, I can ultimately arise multiple realities and thus throw the viewer into confusion. Objects activated by the hand’s presence qualify them as a stand in for the body. The awareness of the body in this context encloses an intimacy between the objects’ signifiers as well as experiences confronted by the sculpture.
Vacuuming in heels, an old trope that rests in modern advertisements, has been subject to various renditions of its message due to the ever-changing cultures of the post-modern era. Referencing this trope in contemporary discourse alludes to the evolution of motives and ideologies throughout the feminist era. Jean Baudrillard’s value system of signs identify certain recurring imageries in advertisements throughout the post-modern era as sources of functional and social attributes that are constantly surfacing in our perceived reality. Objects in my work and their imageries focus on the dialogue within these characteristics and their ergonomic niche in the domestic space to operate as a replacement for the human body.

As I wish to question the stability of the realities that have permeated through our culture’s images of perfection. Analyzing the devices employed for promoting commodity culture infers the buyer’s objective of achieving an acceptable life.

In the Post-Modern era, home appliances were produced and sold at a higher rate as an effect of the industrial revolution. Hand crafted objects formally held a place in the home for a longer period of time, but the desire to unplug and plug in new appliances increased with the influx of images in advertisements. Performing chores in formal attire relied on the distorted

Roger Herman, Woman in Heels, 1994.
expectations of reality. The functional, symbolic, and status values pertaining to this particular image dissect it in relationship to feminist motives today.

The appeal of this advertisement approach can be discussed using Jean Baudrillard’s system of values for a sign. In this case, the sign is the trope itself, which has undergone variations with the passage of time. Noticeably, the vacuum does vacuums, but has the advertisement’s image accomplished its intended task with just a simple image of an appliance working?

This performance operates under a symbolic standpoint of perfection and a higher status symbol. The appliance will work when turned on, but the ultimate achievement is doing it formally dressed. This imagery, however, is always evolving amongst the increasing population with media permeating through our culture. In order to discuss this in contemporary means, we need to distinguish its meaning in relation to its reality in our culture, especially in events that shape our behavior.

The agendas of various movements operate under their individual’s reactions to current events. The September 11th attacks in 2001 affected every person and movement regardless of their motives. When national security was devastated, the mirage of a seamless and safe world dissolved. The Riot GRRL Proclamation in the late nineties and early 2000’s was a written manifesto based upon a series of statements that compared women and men with the same standards. One of these bold lines states, “BECAUSE we are interested in creating non-hierarchal ways of being AND Making Music, friends, and scenes based on communication plus understanding, instead of competition plus good/bad categorizations”. This battle cry to dismantle systems of patriarchal classifications towards female advances is specifically notable in this era of a granted national security’s instabilities.
It is my intention to assimilate this abrupt yet intrepid manner by implementing materials that operate under particular standards of either gender. The amount of recognized male directors, pilots, and doctors has always steadily overshadowed their female counterparts. The cultural evolution of *vacuuming in heels* negates the expectation of performing a relatively private domestic act in formal attire and instead embraces the ability to do so. In *Jurassic World*, 2015, Bryce Dallas Howard’s character, Claire, is able to run and escape a T-Rex in heels. Reactions from viewers through social media, criticized this scene’s unrealistic possibilities. However, these criticisms appear to have no issue with Christopher Pratt’s character, Owen, ability to train and domesticate a highly dangerous breed of predator, the velociraptor. Since cultural symbols evolve over time, women can readdress wearing stilettos while performing in order to challenge higher patriarchal standards.

*Headboard*, 2016, includes a piece of hybrid furniture between a bed and a table. The surface suspended vibrates, causing the high heel forms, *Damaged Goods*, 2016, fabricated from rubber-eraser material to shake as well. Two pieces of furniture, the bed and the table, are represented through distinguished proportions. Immediately, the viewer familiarizes both private and public areas of the home. The joint nature of these two distinctive sculptures function separately yet seamlessly together in order to stage these scenes for a scripted narrative.

The form of a high heel shoe is fabricated using eraser rubber material similar to Paper Mate’s *Pink Pearl* brand, which further comments on the realities of private versus public spaces given the performing qualities. The act of wearing the heel attests to the previously mentioned in terms of the revival of its new meaning given by the rejuvenation of its status and function. As the object is composed of the material of

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*A writing device product from Paper Mate, fabricated from synthetic rubber.*
the eraser, a device used for erasing mistakes, the two exaggerate each other’s meanings by being compared to one another in an intimate fabrication. The two functions of these objects heighten the spatial qualities of expectations between the public and private by using the symbolic signs embedded in them to carry out their ever changing meaning in various cultures.

The body is inherently needed to experience the proportions of the hybrid furniture as well as visual movement and sound of the treadmill motor operating the piece. It is within the silence that the motor interrupts using movement between the hybrid furniture and eraser shoes. Therefore the piece itself creates another dimension in the gallery space for the work to operate along with the presence of the body. Additionally, the placement of the eraser shoe replaces the body because the object referenced suggests actions such as walking and erasing. The material juxtaposition evident in the imagery causes the onlooker to reinvestigate the function and purposes of the objects within the two pieces. This outcome confronts the viewer’s previous understanding of these objects referenced through the use of uncanny imagery.
The presence of the mundane object in our culture has coexisted alongside with the influx of imageries surrounding objects pertaining to specific signs that are ever changing within our culture. By analyzing how the visual language within an advertisement was used to promise elite status to a consumer for performing a relatively private domestic action, an artwork can reclaim and question these properties and give a new purpose for the objects themselves in its own culture. The stability of the multiple realities constantly arising in our experiences and lives can be questioned and tested. Therefore, the motif of the uncanny in my work begins to be a crucial point in manipulating imagery in order to discuss the image of perfection these objects traditionally represent and the instable environments they have always operated in.
A Safe and Sound Structure

The four stroke process begins when the driver ignites the engine with a key in order to get the vehicle running. As the ring gear cycles in and out, it causes the flywheel to spin faster and faster with each turn. The mechanics begin to move, gracefully sliding and pulling the pistons at the various joints, the four-stroke process begins. First, the intake stroke begins by the piston moving down into the cylinder drawing both air and fuel into the chamber. The second stroke causes the piston to rise, compressing both the air and gasoline. As the spark plug ignites this mixture in the third power stroke, the flywheel mechanisms push the piston back down with momentum as the hot gas expands and ignites. The piston once again pulls out in the final stroke of the process and exhausts the mixture. This cycle continues during the duration of the drive.

Narratives deliver imageries subdued with subtle yet violent threads woven throughout their texts. The following examples provide a proficient examination of the devices utilized in order to aggressively drive the mundane object’s presence into another realm, exposing the reader to another reality, eerily close to their own. These narratives employ the commodity to effectively dismantle our own reality by animating their qualities. The animation of the commodity is effective, as these objects exist in uniform appearance in our every day lives because of their mass production.

The explosions that happen in the engine are only a fragmented imagery depicting automobiles throughout all history. A crinkling head-on collision happens in seconds what hours take to bend and shape the body in a continuous surface of steel.
Each vehicle sitting in rows of the junkyard contain a history of its former driver. Trash, items, and debris scatter across the seats and floor, all remnants of the lives of the drivers. Author Thomas Pynchon’s cars salesman, Mucho Maas, in *Crying in Lot 49*, never understood how every owner or “each shadow, filed in only to exchange a dented, malfunctioning version of himself or another, just as futureless, automotive projections of somebody else’s life.” Each car we own or drive not only encases our beings, but also become an annex to our daily lives and habits.

It is within imagery that a narrative can unfold in both form and content. In *Swing*, 2016, a massive steal and aluminum structure form a basic three-tier chandelier construction. Shattered and broken fragments of headlight plastic are threaded as the outer shell, replacing material traditionally used to decorate the recognizable domestic light object. The pieces are stained yellow by polluted air that the headlights drove through over time. The grime and residue of life color these pieces and signifies my own experience of spending time with the vehicles at the junkyard and reading the stories inside of them. These catastrophic material elements coincide with the iconic yet type casted role of the decorative chandelier. The impeding fall is on all minds that are beneath its light. This object is imbued with premonition and the suspense it projects narrates the story that all viewers know well.

In comparison with Jean Baudrillard’s theory on the ever changing meanings of signs in response to their rapid growth, Brian Massumi’s texts on planned obsolescence dictates the selection of materials as well as their meaning within a particular context. In *Interface and Active Design*, Massumi opens his argument by discussing future advances such as bracelets and earrings quipped with satellite technology as perceived in Nicholas Negroponte’s *Being Digital*. This mention of a high-tech application to an
article of jewelry for the body is perceived as an influx of information, which incorporates the body in its functionality. Thus, the body begins to experience copious amounts of information that begin to infest in its own space. With the influx of media and information, an over load of information is reached at a rate which the body itself is naturally unable to process with its orifices of senses.

The materials that appear in this body of work operate under the notion that they can die in a place of our commercial use and value of it. Hence the junkyard as the graveyard where the shards of headlight plastics signify relics of the bodies that were once valued but replaced with newer versions of themselves because of updates and newer features.

This object’s uncanny qualities in the production and display allow it to question the illusion of perfection. From a generous distance, it appears to be an average chandelier however with closer observance once begins to see the familiar shards. This affect qualifies for an intimacy with the materials and questioning of their original function. As these pieces are placed in a new context within an object, whose signifiers include impending fate, the two’s inherent meanings are drastically exaggerated.

*Swing* hangs at a relative distance close to the gallery floor as in motion of falling. The light that is installed within is rigged to a burglar timer switch, programmed to turn on and off at intervals to heighten the awareness of security in the space and also resembling the nature of headlights in our experiences.

Stephen King’s novel, *Christine*, animates the body of an abandoned vehicle as an entity of its former owner. After Arnie Cunningham, an unpopular high school student, purchases the vehicle, he begins to notices its anthropomorphic qualities and becomes obsessed. This is because the car attacks its owner’s bullies by running them down in flames. After these murders, the car repairs *itself* and waits for the next
opportunity to seek revenge. In one instance, Christine is closely driving behind one of its targets, Buddy Repperton. The bully character stops abruptly in hopes to throw off the following entity. However, Christine stops precisely on time with the Buddy’s vehicle and mirrors its following actions. This exactness serves as an image of the double and provides a platform for the uncanny imagery to be associated with the bodies of the two vehicles. The narrative intensifies the idea that our cars are extensions of our own bodies by characterizing Christine as a possessed vehicle.

The doubling surfaces in Swing in size, structure, and material. The massiveness incorporates not only the viewer’s body but the inclusion of pieces sourced from the vehicle bodies succumbed to a violent fate. This doubling is also replicated in the shared experience of the viewer and their involvement as well as ownership of the object under discussion. The mid-fall is captured in the structure of the piece, which animates the body of the object embedded with imagery of violence.

Extending these devices in narratives in order to disclose alternate realities dent the perfect ones. The Adult Swim television broadcast started to feature short films during its four A.M. hour for its late night viewers. The infomercial series produced by Ben O’Brien and Alan Resnick consists of a series of shorts that mimic the nature of infomercials, especially due to the time in which they were released. One short in particular, This House Has People in It, 2016, advertises for a fictional video surveillance company, AB Video Surveillances, in which the film enraptures each room of a large suburban home. Each member of the residing member of the family performs various actions within each different room. A child plays in his room, a grandmother leisurely watches television while a mother and a father fight in the kitchen over their teenage
daughter lying on the floor, with what appears to be angsty protest. Within the duration of the video, it becomes apparent that the daughter is instead sinking into floor of the home. As the parents run up and down the stairs between the kitchen and the basement observing this phenomenon, the surveillance cameras continue to scan the entire house. This permeation between rooms of the home supplies the viewer’s expectations with psychological references. Within the contrast between the kitchen, the gathering place, and the basement, the hidden, the animation portrays the home as a devouring psychological being.

Between the inhabitants of the home and the entity, the device associated with protection and alertness, the surveillance camera, becomes a device of suspense and captures the unknown. This phenomenon confuses the viewer and challenges what was a trusted understanding of reality, further dramatized by the concrete evidence the
nature of filming offers. *Switching*, 2016, is equipped with an industrial Intermatic® light switch timer, operating the lighting within *Swing*. The sculpture, however, displays a domestic version of the product. The changing intervals between on and off embodies both the imagery of headlights as well as a sense of security. Lighting is used in this situation not only as an aesthetic but a signifier of the known and unknown in relationship to the psychology of the home.

Sarah E. Harford, *Switching*, Intermatic light switch timer, 16”x11”x8”, 2016.

*A product from the company, *Suburban Express*, that controls lights throughout the home to turn on and off throughout the day in order to deter home invaders. This device is also used to effortlessly conserve electricity by controlling frequently used receptacles.*
These sculptures confront the viewer by invading their understanding of a seamless life. Utilizing the mentioned narrative devices and motifs stage these seemingly mundane objects within the context of the unknown. This results in confusion and rejection by the viewer and places the objects in the realm of the uncanny. By doing so, my work exploits the essence of violence in an ambulatory nature both in process and display, which embrace an authoritative affect. Distorting the uniformity of these mass produced objects overwhelms the individual and their expectations of reality. This factor dismantles the script’s security by operating under reality’s contingency.
Conclusion

I use subtle manipulations of domestic objects by rearranging their construction or materials. This motif enables the viewer to confront everything they previously understood by undermining their trust in granted security. The utilization of the double can be exploited by the incorporation of the commodity. By singling out the uniformity of this object because of its mass production, the new portrayal challenges a perceived perfect reality by implementing techniques that animate it. The systems of signs depicting objects in advertisements according to Jean Baudrillard, determines how certain objects change in meaning and context for one particular culture or environment. This ideology compares to that of Brian Massumi’s language regarding the lifespan of the commodity object and how their circulation within our lives increasingly fluctuate as a result. My studio practice unveils the object as a portal for peril to permeate in any staged life performance.
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12 Ibid. 37.
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