



WELCOME HOME!

LILLIAN HELLING





TABLE OF CONTENTS

ARTIST STATEMENT	2
INTRODUCTION	5
NARRATIVE	7
THE IMPORTANCE OF SANITATION	9
COMFORT OBJECTS & THE HOME	12
INSTALLATION	15
PROCESS	23
RECIPES	30
BIBLIOGRAPHY	33

LIFE
IS
BEAUTIFUL
WHEN U
CAN POO



ARTIST STATEMENT

Control of the distinct physical experiences of comfort and discomfort often comes from objects rather than ourselves. I remember being at a concert and needing to use the bathroom the whole time, and it ruined the entire experience. Certain objects control this comfort, yet they aren't the objects we appreciate in reference to our well-being. Once they are unavailable, their absence is immediately noticeable. By shifting scale, texture, and color, I force these unnoticed objects to become a spectacle. This recontextualizes them into a strange, yet almost familiar, still life setting.





INTRODUCTION

When I was first looking into creating my final body of work for Senior Studio II, the body and how dependent we are on the objects that keep us comfortable fascinated me. Personally, as soon as I physically become uncomfortable in a situation, it can become all that I think about. Waiting in line, standing at a concert, watching a movie... we put ourselves in certain situations for our own eventual enjoyment, yet this also puts us in the position to become physically uncomfortable. Even attending something such as a music festival, the entire day is geared towards having an amazing time seeing bands you love. However, you must consider many different factors about your day that on a normal day, you wouldn't have to think about. Is it going to be hot or cold? Rainy? What should I wear that will be best geared toward my comfort throughout the day? If I bring a jacket and it's too warm, I'll have to carry it around all day. Should I bring a water bottle? I don't want to get dehydrated. Hopefully there will be somewhere to sit. And oh god, the port-a-pottys... I should definitely use the bathroom before I leave, I don't want to have to wait in those lines too long. Will I be able to wash my hands? Will there even be toilet paper?

The list goes on and on and on. Every time I leave the house for an extended period of time or are attending an event, inevitably these

thoughts will be going through my head. I began to wonder what objects are related to those questions. I also began to wonder if we could ever be as comfortable in other places as we are in our own homes. These questions drove me to attempt to understand these objects that I found to be most integral to our daily comfort by recreating them. I also wished to see how other people understood and appreciated these objects in relation to each other. Which objects are valued in terms of providing comfort, and which aren't?





NARRATIVE

Comfort is something that has one definition, yet can be created by many different objects. Every person has unique objects that they use in order to generate comfort in their living space and elsewhere. A living room couch is a different kind of comfort object than a comfortable pair of shoes, since the couch is defined by the space it is in. I was more interested in the items that people have in their homes, the ones which had their use and worth defined based on their setting.

I attempted to define comfort by researching the history and idea of the home, as I found that I am at my absolute highest comfort when I can go back to the space that I created for myself. If I asked you what the most comfortable item in your apartment or home was, my guess would be that you would say your bed or your couch. I wanted people to consider that a toilet brings the most comfort of all, or is at least of equal importance to a couch. Try to imagine living without a toilet. Without toilet paper, towels, and Q-tips. If you haven't showered in days, do you feel comfortable? I'm assuming the answer is absolutely not. All of these items in the bathroom tie into your daily comfort just as your couch or bed does. Through these considerations, I decided to focus on objects from the bathroom in my work-- a room that everyone has that they do not appreciate when examined in the context of comfort. When I'm at a concert and I need to use the bathroom, however, it's significantly more uncomfortable than the lack of a comfortable chair.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SANITATION

With the history of the toilet comes the history of hygiene, sewage systems and human waste disposal. Before mechanized toilets, it was common that latrines and chamber pots were tossed into the street and cesspools emptied into rivers. Conditions were awful and only got worse in increasingly industrialized cities until there was a definitive need to create an efficient, working waste disposal system. London was the biggest developing city in the 19th century, and therefore had notably worse conditions. Homes, streets, public buildings, and the rivers were all contaminated with human and animal excrement. Massive amounts of waste were produced on a daily basis with no proper disposal system. In one case, “an inspector recorded visiting two houses in St. Giles where... outside... the yard was six inches deep in excrement” (Bryson, 357). People were living with six inches of their own shit in their backyards.

Quickly, diseases became rampant; specifically, there were multiple cholera outbreaks. The first outbreak that occurred in 1831 “killed 6,536 people... In the 1848-1849 epidemic, 14,000 people died in London alone and 50,000 people nationwide” (George, 24). Nothing changed until 1858, when an event called The Great Stink of London forced the city into action; a hot summer combined with a drought had led the contam-

inated Thames to sit and cook in the hot summer sun. Sir Joseph Bazalgette was given the job to design the first major sewage drainage system, with “five distinct, large-scale sewers that cross London” (Rathje, vol.1, 380). Although he may not be considered a hero in the classical sense, “his sewers may have saved more lives than any other public works” (George, 26).

These times of uncertainty, where waste, bad smells, and disease piled up in an industrialized city, are where I found the most interest. Few people consider what it was like before we got to where we are now. It is assumed that there will always be a working toilet in a clean bathroom nearby; it’s not considered a luxury. One can easily forget that a couple hundred years ago, it was uncommon to even have a bathroom indoors. Dealing with sewage wasn’t considered a necessity that was connected to eradicating a deadly disease, it was a hassle that no one wanted to touch. It took centuries to get where we are now, and now a public bathroom is taken for granted. I would



Death - The Silent Highway-Man of the Polluted River Thames, 1858

argue that now, our bathrooms are one of the biggest luxury items that we own that go the least regarded. Bathrooms with running water are still not accessible to people throughout the world. In fact, “2.6 billion people don’t have sanitation... four in ten people have no access to a latrine, toilet, bucket, or box” (George, 2). To add insult to injury, toilets are often used for the disposal of unwanted objects. The forgotten toilet swallows up garbage without the flusher giving it a second thought.





COMFORT OBJECTS & THE HOME

Home is universal, and around the world, people create places for themselves where they feel at home. From the outside, these places can look very different . . . from culture to culture . . . the human penchant for building shelters can be expressed in seemingly infinite ways. But no matter what they look like on the outside, they all fulfill some basic human needs. (Allen, 1)

The bathroom has the tendency to feel unfriendly and sterile, with its cold ceramic surfaces. Designing bathrooms with this material was for hygienic reasons, “rather than bodily comfort, [as] non-poreous vitreous china, enameled iron, and ceramic tile were favored over such potentially moisture- and germ-gathering materials as wood, marble and wallpaper” (Lupton 26). Although wood or patterned wallpaper might make it feel warmer and more comforting, the bathroom is still a comforting, private place in terms of function. It serves a specific kind of comfort, inextricably tied to private, personal spaces found in the home.

The way human beings adjust to their environment, in terms of comfort, is pretty remarkable. The conditions in the 1800s were absolutely repulsive, yet that was daily life, and reality. Whatever we are accustomed to becomes our baseline for daily comfort. Whenever the quality of our life is above or below our baseline is when we truly notice our conditions; often, our conditions at home are that baseline. I wanted to level the playing field and attempt to question the hierarchy of comfort objects in our home.



INSTALLATION

Humor is an important factor in my work. By making an entire scene with a toilet and an armchair, I wanted to embrace silliness. I considered, why would seeing a strange, pink toilet in a gallery setting immediately make people smile uncomfortably? Seeing everyday objects out of context, especially in a large size that commands attention, is a jarring experience. Additionally, I considered the perfection and use of pink in the Barbie Dream House toy, an idyllic representation of the home. I applied shiny pink glaze, a color that implies this perfection, to objects that are strange and gross. Along with these larger objects, I added doilies and napkins that appear to be fancy but are actually cheap, dollar store fabrics. I continually attempted to present my work in a context that people can relate to by presenting familiar items, but then subverting this familiarity by making everything strangely imperfect.

By combining objects that don't normally go together, I hoped to create situations that were similar to real life. However, each object functions differently than it would in a normal context. By combining these objects in strange ways, they become a ridiculous spectacle. The objects also each become a character on the stage, which is emphasized by physically raising the objects on a platform. The hand marks I left give the objects

a bodily quality, as do the fleshy colors. In this way, the toilet, armchair, sink and table take on their own personality and importance. Humanizing these objects adds to the discomfort of the scene.

I believe when looking at these comfort objects, discomfort follows; the varying textures of clay, the juxtaposition between the pink glaze and the fleshy maroon areas, the strangeness of the set up, and the cheapness of the fabrics all create a sense of unease. The objects become uncanny and strange, as they beg to be looked at, show the marks of being touched, yet they would never be used as they normally function in daily life.













CONCLUSION

Although we cannot be comfortable in all situations, there is one place we always will be comfortable—at home. We believe we design and choose our home, and therefore our comfort; however, the objects are predetermined, and we choose from different iterations of those objects. They create our comfort, not the decisions we make. By making these objects in clay and creating these strange scenes, I am attempting to understand and reiterate their importance within our lives.

PROCESS FABRICATION

I determined that I would create my objects in a large scale, so I used a combination of coil and slab building to make the objects. With my clay being 25% grog, it would crack very easily. To deal with cracking, I used a slip mixture that was a combination of my clay body, distilled white vinegar, shredded toilet paper and sodium silicate. I wanted to accentuate my own hand in the making of these objects, so I combined pinching with the coil building. I allowed the marks of my hands, made through the pinching of soft clay, to remain throughout the drying process. Every large sculpture was built in pieces, to lessen the chance of things breaking in firings, and to help make transportation of the objects easier.







CLAY BODY & GLAZES

I knew I needed a strong clay body in order to achieve what I wanted. I also wanted a generally white clay body, since the glazes I chose for the work were bright pinks and yellows. I found a clay body to hold up at cone 6 and showed off the glaze well. The clay body was somewhat difficult to work with because of the aforementioned grog percentage, but it had excellent strength. If cracking was dealt with early on in the process, and the work was left out drying for a long period of time, then cracking was much less likely to occur in the finished work.



FIRING METHODOLOGY

I had never worked at a large scale before, and it is a steep learning curve when dealing with firing. Each piece had an individual shrink slab, and grog underneath in order to prevent cracking during the firing. I used electric kilns, normally front loaders, to fire my work. When bisquing, I fired the work to cone 06, and the glaze firings went to cone 6. When firing the biggest pieces, it was ideal to load them straight into the kiln while they were leather hard, and allow them to dry uncovered in the kiln for a day or two. I used a custom bisque schedule with a 24 hour preheat to insure the pieces had time to dry. When firing to cone 6, I used the pre-programmed Fast Glaze with an hour preheat each time.







TECHNICAL INFORMATION

CLAY BODY RECIPE

Epk	10
Grolleg	10
Tile 6	15
C+C	15
Wollastonite	15
Frit 3124	5
Alumina	5
<hr/>	
Coarse Grog	5
Medium Grog	10
Fine Grog	10
<hr/>	
Nylon Fibers	

GLAZE RECIPES

Pink

Nepheline Syenite	18
Silica	30
Whiting	20
C+C	18
Frit 3134	14
<hr/>	
Tin Oxide	7
Rutile	3

Mustard

Nepheline Syenite	18
Silica	30
Whiting	20
C+C	18
Frit 3134	14
<hr/>	
Rutile	10



Helke Green

Barium Carbonate	21
Strontium Carb	12
Wollastonite	3
Nepheline Syenite	25
Flint	27
OM-4	9
EPK	3
<hr/>	
Chrome Oxide	.5

FIRING SCHEDULE

BISQUE FIRE CONE 06

FOR HEAVY, WET SCULPTURE WORK

Segments: 7

Ramp 1: 60°F/hr to 150°F

Hold: 12 Hours

Ramp 2: 30°F/hr to 190°F

Hold: 12 Hours

Ramp 3: 30°F/hr to 350°F

Hold: 1 Hour

Ramp 4: 150°F/hr to 900°F

Ramp 5: 100°F/hr to 1200°F

Ramp 6: 150°F/hr to 1700°F

Ramp 7: 108°F/hr to 1823°F



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, John S. *Home: How Habitat Made Us Human*. Basic Books, 2015.

Print.

Bryson, Bill. *At Home: A Short History of Private Life*. Doubleday, 2010.

Print.

George, Rose. *The Big Necessity: The Unmentionable World of Human*

Waste and Why It Matters. Metropolitan Books, 2008. Print.

Lupton, Ellen, and J. Abbott Miller. *The Bathroom, the Kitchen, and the*

Aesthetics of Waste (A Process of Elimination). Kiosk, 1992. Print.

Rybczynski, Witold. *Home: A Short History of an Idea*. Viking Penguin Ink,

1986. Print.

Zimring, Carl A., and William L. Rathje. *Encyclopedia of Consumption and*

Waste: The Social Science of Garbage (Volumes 1 & 2). Sage Publi

cations, 2012. Print.



SHOW CARD

**WELCOME
HOME!**



WELCOME HOME!

LILLIAN HELLING

BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS IN CERAMICS THESIS EXHIBITION

OPENING RECEPTION: MAY 5, 2017, 5 - 7 PM

EXHIBITION HOURS: MAY 5 - 9, 11AM - 5PM

**SAMUEL DORSKY MUSEUM OF ART
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT NEW PALTZ
1 HAWK DRIVE, NEW PALTZ, NY
12561**

LILLIHELLING@GMAIL.COM

@LILLIHELLING

