

LIVED AND LOST SPACES:  
A STUDY ON THE USE OF PERSONAL SPACE IN CONTEMPORARY ART

by

AYŞE AYDOĞAN

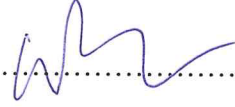
Submitted to the Institute of Social Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts

Sabancı University  
May 2018

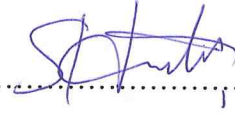
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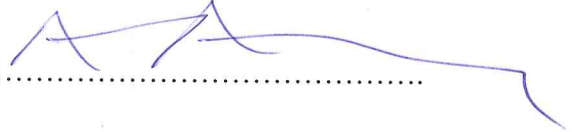
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DATE OF APPROVAL: 21/05/2018

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## ABSTRACT

### LIVED AND LOST SPACES: A STUDY ON THE USE OF PERSONAL SPACE IN CONTEMPORARY ART

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M.A. THESIS, May 2018

Thesis Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Wieslaw Zaremba

Keywords: space, personal, home, contemporary art, sense of self, memory

Personal space is a frequently referenced entity in contemporary artwork in various contexts and through a variety of media. This paper establishes personal/private space and its loss as the main point of discussion for selected contemporary artworks which amplify these issues. The context of personal space in this paper is the one defined in the discourses of Bachelard and de Certeau; the indoor domestic space in which one finds comfort, feels belonging, performs everyday rituals and continuously confirms their sense of self. Throughout this paper, contemporary artists, with a focus mainly on Sarkis, Rachel Whiteread, and Do Ho Suh are analyzed based on their representations of personal space; their varying methods are identified in their approaches towards the issues of homesickness, belonging and identity. This paper finds that the re-creation of space is a shared method between the aforementioned artists' selected works. Each artist is identified re-creating space through whichever medium as best serves the process of catharsis. The effects and intentions of the selected works of the mentioned contemporary artists are compared with each other and with the author's own works.



## ÖZET

### YAŞANMIŞ VE KAYBEDİLMİŞ MEKANLAR: GÜNCEL SANATTA KİŞİSEL MEKAN KULLANIMI ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

AYŞE AYDOĞAN

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Mayıs 2018

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Wiesław Zaremba

Anahtar kelimeler: mekan, kişisel, ev, güncel sanat, benlik algısı, hafıza

Kişisel mekan, güncel sanatta çeşitli bağlamlarda ve farklı teknikler aracılığıyla sıkça karşımıza çıkan bir konudur. Araştırma, kişisel/özel alanı ve bu alanın kaybını baz alarak, bu konu üzerine yoğunlaşan güncel sanat örneklerini incelemektedir. Araştırmanın konu edindiği kişisel mekan kavramı, Bachelard ve de Certau'nun söylemlerindeki gibi kişinin rahat ettiği, kendini ait hissettiği, günlük ritüellerini gerçekleştirdiği ve devamlı olarak kimlik algısını doğruladığı domestik iç mekan anlamında kullanılmaktadır. Araştırmada, güncel sanatçılardan özellikle Sarkis, Rachel Whiteread ve Do Ho Suh'a odaklanarak, işlerindeki kişisel mekan temsilleri üzerinden ev özlemi, aidiyet ve kimlik kurgusu konularına ilişkin yaklaşımları incelenmektedir. İncelemenin bulgusu, bahsi geçen sanatçıların işlerindeki ortak yöntemin, mekanın yeniden yaratımını içerdiğidir. Her sanatçı, kendi katarsis sürecine en uygun bulduğu yöntem ve malzemeyle, geçmişe dair mekanları yeniden kurgulamaktadır. Bu kurguların amaç ve etkileri, birbirleriyle ve yazarın kendi işleriyle karşılaştırılmaktadır.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my advisors Wieslaw Zaremba and Yoong Wah Alex Wong for their invaluable guidance and patience. I am extremely grateful to my jury members Ahu Antmen and Selçuk Artut for taking the time to provide me with their much appreciated input. I would also like to thank my family for their continuous support and belief in me, and my friends Kıvanç Martaloz and Çağlar Çakar for their never-ending excitement, encouragement and help throughout this process and always.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Why is *Bedroom in Arles* (1888) (Fig. 1) one of Van Gogh's most distinctive paintings? The painting shows a simple, small room with some worn-out objects: a few crooked pictures on the wall, two chairs, a bed, and some dishes on a table. Michel de Certeau claims that "a place inhabited by the same person for a certain duration draws a portrait that resembles this person based on objects (present or absent) and the habits that they imply" (de Certeau et al., 145). In the tradition of still life painting, especially in *vanitas* paintings, there is an aim to display the "intimation of an unseen life" (Gross, 35). When thinking about Dutch still life, Charles Sterling asserts that "the sought-after effect is that of a still life which moves us by showing fresh traces of man's presence" (qtd. in Gross, 37). Through *Bedroom in Arles*, the viewer can see an intimate reflection of the room's owner, who is, in this case, the artist himself. Van Gogh was a pioneer in handling the intimate: "...[Van Gogh's art] became the first example of a truly personal art, art as deeply lived means of spiritual deliverance or transformation of the self; and he did this by a most radical handling of the substance of his art" (Schapiro, 12). Van Gogh's painting of his room is one of the most striking examples of the utilization of the room iconography as an autoportrait of the artist up until that point in art history (Fleckner, 249-250). The relationship between the artist and his space becomes the subject of a psychological analysis expressed through the medium of art (Fleckner, 251).



Fig. 1  
Vincent van Gogh, *Bedroom in Arles*, 1888

Since Van Gogh, many artists have utilized objects and spaces with similar sentiments of intimacy, in a variety of artistic media. In this paper, I discuss three contemporary artists' selected works to establish their approaches and the ways in which they explore the relationship between personal/domestic objects/spaces and one's sense of self. These artists are Rachel Whiteread, Do Ho Suh and Sarkis. I have detected in the particular works of these artists a similar sensitivity as they approach spaces and objects. This sensitivity is partly based on a *loss* and a yearning to remember this *loss*; the lost object can be a person, a home, a fragment of time, or one's own sense of self. They are all in some way rebuilding or re-creating spaces that are temporally or spatially unreachable. In the present tense and current location, these spaces are only accessible through memory. Between the three artists, Rachel Whiteread and Do Ho Suh's works are the most similar to each other in that they re-create the space from scratch, making a close replica by using one type of material. In contrast, Sarkis' works mostly feature found objects, he incorporates light and sound elements in his work, and creates more fictional spaces. Establishing these methodical differences as a structural base, this paper compares and contrasts the selected works of these three artists under a variety of headings revolving around memory, remembering, re-creating and displacement. Accompanying these three artists, selected works from artists and fiction writers such as Ilya Kabakov, Absalon, Louise Bourgeois, Vincent Van Gogh, Kurt Schwitters, Edward Hopper, Orhan Pamuk and Virginia Woolf are also mentioned throughout the paper.

Before delving into representations of personal space in contemporary art, the first chapter of this paper discusses the concept of personal/domestic space in two contexts. First is the understanding that personal space is fundamental in the development and affirmation of the individual's sense of self. The second is that personal space is the only place where the individual can truly express herself without any constraint. These two assertions are supported by readings encompassing, but not limited to, Henri Lefebvre's description of 'representational space', Erving Goffman's definition of 'backstage' space, Walter Benjamin's analogies of memory and excavation, and Yi-Fu Tuan's take on the experience of space and topophilia. Once these two functions of personal space are established, it becomes possible to view the works of selected artists in a similar context of loss, displacement and remembrance.

The re-creation process of the selected artists are taken as comparison points in the

explanation and evaluation of my own works. The paper will explore in detail my installation work *Rooms (Bilkent, Tepebaşı, Dikilitaş)*, in which I pay homage to my past living spaces. My choice of wire as material and my past bedrooms as subject matter will be discussed in reference to the aforementioned concepts and selected works of the artists explored. Through the discussion of this work, the concepts of memory, memory accumulation, collecting, the urge to possess, the miniature, and the difficult act of remembering will be explored. In addition, two other works, comprised of a short animated film and a photobook, will also be discussed throughout this paper. My photobook *Screen* is tackled in regards to the distinct separation and antagonism of public vs private space; along with notions of voyeurism, as well as feelings of not belonging; of being the outsider, looking in. *The Man, His Room and His Things*, my short stop-motion film, will be referenced as an expression of yearning for past events and people through the relationship of the individual to her personal space and objects.

This paper intends to remind the reader of something that is almost always taken for granted: our personal/domestic spaces. In this regard, the paper aims to gather a selection of theory, fiction and artwork dedicated to this most intimate and necessary of things that one is lucky enough to have.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW: PRIVATE SPACE AS SECOND SKIN

### 2.1. Sense of Self Through Personal Spaces/Objects

*Our successive living spaces never disappear completely; we leave them without leaving them because they live in turn, invisible and present, in our memories and in our dreams. They journey with us* (de Certeau, 148).

The sense of place has a very significant meaning in human psychology. The term refers to the need for belonging, to have familiarity, attachment through personal history and affirmation of sense of self supported by a place. In her book *The Lure of the Local*, Lucy Lippard discusses this sense of place in depth, but in the context of the broader geography of the hometown, more so than personal dwelling. However, Lippard's observations about the individual's relationship with such places can be applied to the microcosm of the dwelling unit as well. As a general thesis, Lippard asserts that having no sense of place can cause alienation and an inability to recognize one's sense of self, and suggests sense of place as a remedy: "[lure of the local] is the geographical component of the psychological need to belong somewhere, one antidote to a prevailing alienation" (Lippard, 7). One's personal space (room, house) is the smallest unit in which she can experience belonging and authority. The home is a space that the individual can personalize without limitations: "As we become accustomed to, and lay claim to, this little niche in the world, we project something of ourselves onto its physical fabric" (Cooper, 131).

The home experience is ubiquitous in that there is a two-way impact in this relationship. The individual makes her home, and the home influences the individual's perception of herself. The space becomes a symbol of the self through a continuous loop of projection and reflection. The individual feeds the space with what she puts into it, how she arranges and re-arranges it, and these all are "...messages about ourselves we want to convey back to ourselves" (Cooper, 131). Author Pier Vittorio Aureli writes about the artist Absalon, who, in an unfinished project entitled *Cells* (1990-1996) (Fig. 2) created prototypes for six rooms intended for different cities to which he would be travelling for work. These rooms are for him to live in only; they do not propose any utopian living prototypes for the rest of society. They are furnished minimally and painted completely white, referencing the original ascetic ideals that Aureli investigates (Aureli, 7 -2/6). These rooms are a tool for Absalon to alter his way of living and his domestic rituals.

The work ambitiously underlines the power of space in changing one's everyday acts and one's sense of self overall.



Fig. 2  
Absalon, *Cell no. 1*, 1992

Henri Lefebvre, in his seminal work *The Production of Space*, distinguishes between a number of spaces; in some cases overlaid on top of each other, contained within one another, or transformed from one to the other over time. His take on Bachelard's notion of the dwelling in his *Poetics of Space* is that the latter links this absolute and intimate space of dwelling with representational space (Lefebvre, 121). Representational space, in Lefebvre's discourse, is the space of habitants, which is experienced through imagination and where the inhabitants interpret the objects of the physical space symbolically. Thus, it is the space of imagination, ideals, poetry and theory. "Redolent with imaginary and symbolic elements, they [representational spaces] have their source in history – in the history of a people as well as in the history of each individual belonging to that people" (Lefebvre, 41). This statement can explain why the home can be interpreted as a representational space. The history of an individual is their personal past and memories, which are represented in the objects, furnishings, walls, ceilings, and floors of their house. These objects do not only have a physical dimension but also an alternate symbolic dimension. Lefebvre distinguishes childhood memories as one of the aspects (along with dreams and psychoanalytic uterine images) of representational space, and the bedroom and dwelling as sentimental centers of this space. He also describes representational space as being alive; communicating to its dweller through symbols (Lefebvre, 42). For Lefebvre, Bachelard's topophilia and poetic sensibilities enable him to insert the metaphysical aspect of the representational space in to the intimate space of the dwelling. Thus it is the home where one finds the representations of one's mental ongoings, memories of the past, and therefore sense of self. Lefebvre asserts that, "the relationship of Home and Ego, meanwhile, borders on identity"

(Lefebvre, 121). This is a lived space, and not a conceived one. It has an origin that comes from childhood, adversities and successes; therefore it is subjective (Lefebvre, 362). After the mother, the house constitutes the child's whole world for a long time, where she experiences love and security: "It is no longer an inert box; it has been experienced, has become a symbol for self, family, mother, security" (Cooper, 138). Home is a familiar place from which the individual exits and goes back into on a daily basis. The familiar aspect comes from the existence of a past. The home is a representation of the past of the individual. "... in an ideal sense home lies at the center of one's life, and center (we have seen) connotes origin and beginning (Tuan, 128). In both Lefebvre's and Tuan's analysis, there is a mutual idea of a center, an origin, through which personal space gains its significance as a place for affirmation of identity.

The personal space which is so fundamental in identity affirmation is inevitably accompanied by the objects that reside inside of it. Objects make the 'representational' aspect of the personal space; without them, there would be nothing to symbolize the past. Psychological research claims that in early childhood individuals begin to form strong bonds with objects. Introduced by Donald Winnicott, the notion of the *transitional object* (or *comfort object*) can be seen as the earliest example of object dependency in the human life span (Habermas and Paha, 134). This object serves as a substitute for the initial mother-child bond and as a comforting item. The transition between perceiving everything as one and separating oneself from the external world is accompanied by the transitional object. In adolescence, which is the phase in which identity is being shaped, ownership and accumulation of objects begins. In this period, there is an increased dependence on personal objects as tools for affirming the individual's life narrative and reassuring one's sense of self (Habermas and Paha, 134). This is also why adolescents' rooms in family dwellings are highly personalized and often have a very different style of decoration than the rest of the house which reflects an image of the collective family self. The adolescent tries to declare individuality and separation from parents through manipulating her personal space as much as possible (Cooper, 135).

When thinking about the significance of personal objects in particular, the act of collecting must be mentioned. Collecting (as in accumulating) is an act that speaks volumes about a person's unique relationship with her possessions and the sanctity of

this bond. The endowment effect<sup>1</sup>, in a social psychological context, might explain the attachment to one's belongings; however, collecting is a distinctive urge primarily associated with memory accumulation and nostalgia. As Walter Benjamin puts it: "Every passion borders on the chaotic, but the collector's passion borders on the chaos of memories" (Benjamin, 486). This act values objects not for their function or usefulness, but for their history and what they represent. Being a passionate collector of books, Benjamin saw his books as objects of contemplation which aroused memories of his experiences of acquiring them, reading them, and the places in which he found them and stored them (Sontag, 120-121).

Each object one chooses to keep, primarily due to its subjective meaning and not to its function, is part of an individual, private collection. People are not the archivists or biographers of their own lives, but they tend to keep mementos for the purpose of maintaining their sense of self (Tuan, 196). They surround themselves with objects as reminders of their past and their identity. One reason why people look at their past is so that they can get their bearings on their sense of self; because the present is a mere moment that gives no insight into what one has experienced. "To strengthen our sense of self the past needs to be rescued and made accessible" (Tuan, 187). One method for this rescue is the accumulation of such objects, because, as Yi-Fu Tuan puts it; "objects anchor time" (Tuan, 187).

Accumulated objects can also be a source of inspiration. As in Lefebvre's description of objects in representational spaces, the objects one accumulates can become symbolic and connote things outside of themselves. Collected intentionally or not, these objects fuel the creative process of the individual, and in the case of artists, can even be incorporated into artwork. "Creative artists are those who can find a convincing visual solution for a problem that was never previously formulated. In the solution, and even in the formulation of creative problems, objects stimulate and help develop the artist's thought" (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 28). Thus, objects one is surrounded by enable a creative process through which one can realize an artistic expression of the self. The artist Sarkis emphasizes the importance of his past lived spaces (studios and homes) in the creation of his artwork; not just in providing physical space to work in; but also as inspirational sources. For him, the studio is essential in determining the

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<sup>1</sup> Coined by behavioral economist Richard Thaler, the term endowment effect puts forth that people tend to ascribe more worth to things simply because they own them.

outcome of a work, in terms of size, material and subject matter. In an artist talk entitled “Architectural Space in My Work”<sup>2</sup> at Istanbul Modern Museum in 2009, Sarkis talks about the studio spaces and rooms he used throughout his life and how these spaces affected his work.

Personal spaces/objects constituting one’s sense of self is one of the two aspects through which the paper intends to analyze the artwork of selected artists. Many of the works discussed throughout this paper allude to this aspect by depictions of memory (accumulation) through objects and imprints on spaces. The upcoming chapter discusses the second aspect of personal spaces, which focuses on their role in providing a space in which the individual can experience being her authentic self, through activities of unconstrained leisure and creativity possible only through privacy.

## 2.2. I Must Be Myself<sup>3</sup>

*I Must Be Myself* is taken from the name of a chapter in Orhan Pamuk’s *The Black Book*<sup>4</sup>, in which the character Celâl reflects on being alone in his living room among his familiar objects after a long day of socializing and pretending, and realizing that this is the only place he feels he can truly be himself: “After a long day’s night, a man’s being left alone to sit in his own armchair and be himself is like a traveler’s coming home after a long and adventurous journey” (Pamuk, 160). It is as if the individual no longer has to be dramaturgical<sup>5</sup> because he is alone and at home. This fictitious anecdote demonstrates the kind of relationship between home and inhabitant that is the focus of this paper. Clare Cooper asks about the house, “...why in this particular box should we be ourselves more than in any other?” (Cooper, 131). De Certeau describes this relationship as such: “The body has at its disposal here [private space] a closed shelter, where, to its liking, it can stretch out, sleep, hide from the noise, looks, and presence of others, and so ensure its most intimate function and upkeep” (de Certeau et al., 146). Home is the place where one feels nurtured, safe, and relaxed. Compared to other primates, for human beings the home is a space in which one can recover from sickness, be cared for, gain back health and strength; it is a shelter from the harshness and

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<sup>2</sup> (author’s translation) Original: “İşlerimdeki Mimari Mekan”

<sup>3</sup> “*Kendim Olmalıyım*”

<sup>4</sup> Kara Kitap

<sup>5</sup> Erving Goffman, in his book *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (1959), uses the term “dramaturgy” in sociological context as a metaphor for individuals’ behaviour of taking on different roles in their interactions with others in varying settings, similar to theatrics.



ongoing activities of the outside world. Here, one can take a pause and this is a significant reason for forming emotional ties with such places (Tuan, 138). Referring back to Van Gogh's *Bedroom at Arles* (1888) previously mentioned in the introduction of this paper, Van Gogh's own description of what the painting should evoke in the viewer suggests that his sentiment towards the depicted room encompassed states of calmness, rest, and being at peace. In a letter to his brother Theo<sup>6</sup>, Van Gogh writes: "...the color has to do the job here, and through its being simplified by giving a grander style to things, to be suggestive here of rest and of sleep in general. In short, looking at the painting should rest the mind, or rather, the imagination."<sup>7</sup>

In his book *Less is Enough*, Pier Vittoria Aureli mentions a project by the Swiss architect Hannes Meyer called *Co-op Zimmer* (1926) (Fig. 3). Aureli notes that, contrary to his contemporaries, Meyer thought that the unit for living is the room and not the whole house (or flat). Based on this notion, he designed a room with minimal furnishing (both in style and number) and one piece of leisure equipment, which is a gramophone. Aside from the immediate readings of capitalism critique and asceticism, the room here is actually separated from notions of property ownership and conveyed as a space for isolation from all social regulations and requirements. As Aureli puts it, in this room "...privacy is not property, but rather the possibility of solitude and concentration – a possibility that our 'productive' and 'social' lives often tend to eliminate" (Aureli, 5 -6/6). Represented in the *Co-op Zimmer* project by a simple gramophone, the concept of leisure is also included among the things one can engage in, in a space of privacy and free of social constraint. This inclusion also alludes to the contrary issue of controlled leisure. Perhaps Meyer chose the gramophone instead of a radio because it is a piece of equipment that can be fully controlled by the user in terms of choosing what one is exposed to. Here the gramophone stands for a break from production, labor and societal needs. However, outside of the room, even leisure may become a social, constrained and precisely organized form of activity. Henri Lefebvre describes such leisure spaces as contradictory spaces because they aim to bring together traditional spaces of conformity with potential spaces of enjoyment and fun. He describes the passivity of lying on the beach as a different leisure space from these contradictory spaces that have been artificially constructed for leisure with effects of controlling one's actions and interactions. The beach, which is in essence a natural

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<sup>6</sup> Dated 16 October 1888

<sup>7</sup> Vangoghletters.org. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, Huygens ING, the Hague, 2009. Accessed 24 April 2018. <http://www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let705/translation.html>

space, becomes a mostly unconstrained space of enjoyment where the body is exposed and passive and the individual becomes contemplative of nature (Lefebvre, 384-5). Similarly, the bedroom, with a bed upon which one lies and thinks, or listens to music, or daydreams, or does nothing at all, naked or clothed, also becomes a different and unconstrained space of leisure, even more so than the beach because there is absolute privacy. Perhaps Hannes Meyer chose the gramophone because music can be the ideal company to thought and contemplation; the most personalized and unbound leisure one can have. Bachelard claims that the most significant benefit of the house is that “the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace” (Bachelard, 6).

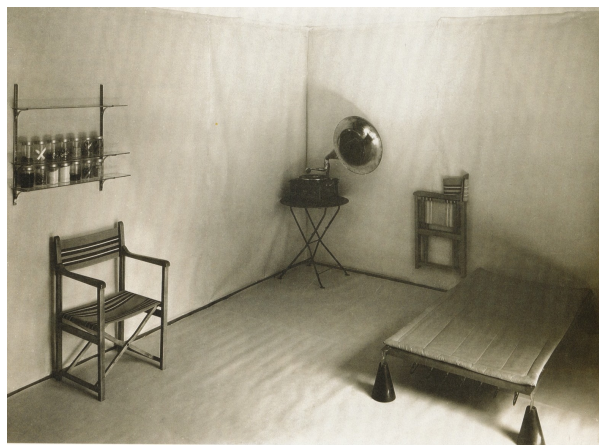


Fig. 3  
Hannes Meyer, *Co-op Zimmer Project*, 1926

The notion of having the means to contemplate and daydream in a private room is strongly reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf claims that "... a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction...", and explains this statement through the thought stream of a fictitious female character (Woolf, 6). The room is a basic necessity, not only for dwelling, but also for creative production and uninterrupted solitary time in which one can do anything of one's choosing. Woolf's protagonist enviously describes the university library accessible only by men: "...the urbanity, the geniality, the dignity which are the offspring of luxury and privacy and space" (Woolf, 25). Parallel to Woolf's understanding of the need for a room to write in, the visual artist's studio is also a significant space for the enabling of unconstrained creative production and expression of the creative self. From the 1920s onwards, artists' began identifying with their studios; because their studios were rare spaces of free expression of aesthetic sensibilities and beliefs in a time of political, social, and artistic turmoil (Fleckner, 258). In the process, the studio surpassed being merely a space for making art; it became the subject and source of inspiration for art

(Fleckner, 259). Sarkis, one of three main contemporary artists investigated in this paper, chooses as the subject matter of his work the many room-studios he has inhabited over time. The studio appears as a prominent entity in his work; it is very significant to him as a place of creation: “The ‘studio’ has always been a shelter for him, a space allowing him to harmonize in a simultaneous way, the mental and physical space in which the artist can merge” (Zabunyan, 33).

Lived space is where the private realm emerges and there is a constant conflict between this space and the outside public one (Lefebvre, 362). In his book *The Presentation of Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman refers to the spaces of the private and public realms as the backstage and frontstage of performances. Goffman asserts that people’s everyday actions are a performance; but there are spaces he calls backstage areas where the performance can be dropped: “Here the performer can relax; he can drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character” (Goffman, 115). Continuing the metaphor of performance for one’s societal interactions, the backstage is the space where there is a certainty that no audience member will enter (Goffman, 116). This statement enables the inference that individuals’ personal living spaces (homes) are included in the backstage spaces of Goffman’s description because they are private and forbidden to intrusion. Within the house, there are also spaces of backstage and frontstage. Bedrooms, in which most intimate activities including sleep take place, are consciously separated from more active parts of the house, which can be considered frontstage spaces (Goffman, 123). Living rooms are open to guests and therefore become backdrops to performances that expresses one’s social identity (Cooper, 136). Privacy and a lack of (or very controlled) intrusion thus appears to be the most significant element in creating a personal space where one feels most comfortable. Even one additional person can be enough to crowd a space and limit the freedom of the original inhabitant. The crowding of inanimate objects usually does not cause this effect; it is primarily people who cause the type of crowding that leads to constraint (Tuan, 59). On the importance of privacy, Tuan reflects; “Privacy and solitude are necessary for sustained reflection and a hard look at self...” (Tuan, 65). In his article on the conceptual analysis of privacy, Irwin Altman states that privacy regulation serves the end goal of ‘self-identity’. The paper uses this term to mean “...a person’s cognitive, psychological, and emotional definition and understanding of himself as a being” (Altman, 25). To be *able* to regulate one’s privacy by managing to separate oneself from the outside world when needed and place boundaries around oneself when desired,

is fundamental in defining and understanding the self (Altman, 26).

The notion of home as a secure and familiar space that becomes a second skin is an angle that the artist Do Ho Suh also focuses on: “Clothing is the smallest, most intimate inhabitable space that you can actually carry. Architecture is an expansion of that” (Artforum). This statement also justifies his use of fabric for re-creating his past homes in his projects including *Seoul Home/L.A Home* (1999). Do Ho Suh continues, “... it [the apartment] became a kind of skin, and I felt so comfortable that I was not even aware of the space around me anymore. Eventually, I even started to experience this space as entering inside of me, as if it had shifted from a skin to something like an internal organ. At that point, I didn’t really see space at all- the apartment became about the orientation of my things, my movement, and my routine inside” (Artforum). Among his work, the most literal representation of this sentiment is in his *Self-Portrait* (2014) (Fig. 4). Formally, this work is very reminiscent of Louise Bourgeois’ *Femme Maison* (1946-47) (Fig. 5) series. Here too is the figure of a house merged with a human body; but with an almost opposite approach in its implications. Although Bourgeois’ houses have also become the identities of the figures they are imposed on, there are negative connotations of entrapment, choicelessness, blindness, and involuntary exposure. Do Ho Suh’s portrait depicts the house stuck in his torso, as a part of his insides “like an internal organ” and not something trapping his body. The home is vital to his survival and well being.



Fig. 4  
Do Ho Suh, *Self-Portrait*, 2014



Fig.5

Louise Bourgeois, *Femme Maison* series, 1946-47

To sum up, the second aspect of personal spaces regards the notion that these spaces are where individuals feel authentic and free from social restraint. Thus their loss causes a sense of displacement and a yearning to retrieve them back by remembrance. Throughout this paper, the selected artwork display this urge to remember (and remind others) by re-creating these spaces and objects through various methods.

### 3. ANALYSIS OF ARTWORK: LOSS OR ABSENCE OF THE INHABITED SPACE

#### 3.1. Memory and Time

*...for authentic memories, it is far less important that the investigator report on them than that he mark, quite precisely, the site where he gained possession of them (Benjamin, 576).*

On the importance of spatial memory, Bachelard proposes that to gain insight into one's sense of self, a study of the sites one has intimately inhabited is fundamental. He calls this study *topoanalysis*. Bachelard recognizes that, "...thanks to the house, a great many of our memories are housed..." (Bachelard, 8). Art and literature critic Mario Praz also recognizes the significance of intimate spaces as testaments to one's sense of self. He uses the term *stimmung* to suggest the capability of an interior in displaying the characteristics of its inhabitant (Rybczynski, 43). Praz has written an autobiography titled *The House of Life* (1958), in which he describes his house of thirty years in great detail, along with his memories surfacing from each detail. Praz's spatial autobiography is a wonderful example of Bachelard's topoanalysis put to use. In this chapter on memory and time, the works from selected artists are reviewed as topoanalytic expressions emphasizing the lived aspects of spaces along with their capability to store and represent memory.

Rachel Whiteread's monumental work *House* (1993) (Fig. 6) is the concrete cast of the interior of a house in London that had been scheduled for demolition shortly after the work's creation. By literally solidifying the negative space within the walls of an entire house; Whiteread wants to preserve and capture the metaphysical space within it – things that have happened and the people that have lived in this doomed building. She has described her works featuring casts of rooms, floors, and stairways as "taking photographs or making prints of the space" (Mariño, 104). Although there is an emphasized anonymity, the humanistic approach of the work is its forte. The exposed concrete is the solidification of the intimate and everyday lives of unknown people (Townsend, 19). Interestingly, along with this notion of mummifying the past, Shelley Hornstein asserts that *House* rejects the concept of nostalgia and the warmth of home (Hornstein, 55). The work juxtaposes the notion of the comfortable, familiar home with feelings of foreignness and unfunctionality – creating a "monumental intimacy" (Gross, 46). This is achieved through the transformation of it into a solid concrete block which

denies entry to its interior (Hornstein, 55). Whiteread re-creates the home as an uncanny object which leads the viewer to recognize something they usually would have ignored: “Our gaze shifts from the everyday to a heightened experience of the object in its newly-articulated form and place (even when that place is on the same site it originally occupied in its ‘original’ site” (Hornstein, 58). The house from which the work *House* was cast was an old piece of architecture mainly ignored, until Whiteread transformed it into an object demanding attention and curiosity. The house which was doomed to be forgotten is now memorable. The work can be interpreted as a monument to the original house from which it was cast along with all that it housed while it stood (Hornstein, 67).



Fig. 6  
Rachel Whiteread, *House*, 1993

Just as Whiteread mummifies the lived space, Do-Ho Suh, in his work *rubbing/loving* (2016) (Fig. 7) tries to capture the experiences of his emptied apartment flat by first covering the interior entirely with white paper and then rubbing the whole surface as he seems fit with colored pencils and pastels. The artist realized this project just before he vacated his flat after 20 years of living there. Suh removed the rubbed paper after display in order to exhibit it in other venues. Apart from memorializing the space with actual marks, Do-Ho Suh describes the process of making the rubbing as another significant part of the work: “It [the process of rubbing] brings up a lot of memories, and it’s also very physical. ... I literally had to caress every surface with my fingertips, and I started to wear off my fingerprints. I was actually giving up my own body to the architecture. The project became a spiritual quest” (Artforum).





Fig. 7  
Do Ho Suh, *rubbing/loving*, 2016

Material-wise, the two works are very different from each other. Whiteread's work is concrete – which is both a word for concrete as a material, and an adjective, with the connotations of solidity. It has volume, and in the case of this work, a very large one. Suh's work is removed paper from a space, so it lacks volume and consists only of area. Where Whiteread solidifies the negative, Suh leaves it empty; furthermore, he gets rid of much of the volume of the positives as well. Whiteread empties the walls of the house, and discovers that she, as a viewer, becomes the wall.<sup>8</sup> In Do Ho Suh's *rubbing/loving*, the walls become paper; or in the case of his series of works including *Home within Home within Home within Home within Home* (2013) (Fig. 8), they become translucent, thin fabric. They are like x-rays of the actual houses, skeletal and fragile. In *rubbing/loving*, the choice of paper as material also makes the work fragile; easy to tear, stain, dissolve, and fade. Although not at all fragile, Whiteread's casts are also prone to stains as marks of time. In most of her works, the casting technique gives way to impressions of damage and stain, resonating as the result of continuous use of the objects in a length of time (Gross, 38). When the cast is perfectly clean and stain-free, this is a deliberate choice. Similarly, Do Ho Suh voices the lived aspect of his space by deliberately staining it himself by rubbing with pencil.

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<sup>8</sup> Artheadful. "Rachel Whiteread Interview pt 1." Online video clip. YouTube. YouTube, 2 Feb 2011. Web. 30 Sept 2017.





Fig. 8

Do Ho Suh, *Home within Home within Home within Home within Home*, 2013

In his work *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away* (1988) (Fig. 9), artist Ilya Kabakov creates a large-scale installation comprising of the accumulated personal objects of a fictional character accompanied by explanatory captions. As the name of the work foreshadows, Kabakov's character refuses to throw away anything, in an effort to preserve his memories. The work resembles a personal museum; an autobiography told through objects. This imaginary character claims that, "to deprive ourselves of these paper symbols and testimonies is to deprive ourselves somewhat of our memories" (qtd. in Breakell, 1). In this work, objects are emphasized in their ability to serve as testimonials to people and events of the past.



Fig.9

Ilya Kabakov, *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away*, 1988

The same sentiment is present in Orhan Pamuk's *Museum of Innocence*. The archival instinct of the fictional character Kemal is very similar to Kabakov's character. Kemal collects things that signify memories of his lost love Füsün and displays them through meticulous curations in a museum.

In my stop-motion animation film *The Man, His Room, and His Things* (2015) (Fig. 10), I attempted to emphasize this special bond we develop with our objects. Through the narrative of an old man's ordinary day in which he spends all his time holding and looking at his objects, my aim was to convey a love story between a person and his inanimate objects. These objects are representational; they stand in for people, events, moments, and most importantly what makes that person the way she is. At the end there is a loss of these representations because the protagonist loses his memory, and the objects become meaningless. They become vacant shells of what they used to be.



Fig.10  
Video still from *The Man, His Room, and His Things*, 2015

Reminiscence and memory are not only triggered by objects but often by mere spaces stripped from their objects. In one of Edward Hopper's latest paintings, *Sun in an Empty Room* (1963) (Fig. 11), the depicted interior is completely empty except for shapes made on the wall by sunlight. This painting is mentioned in the poet Claude Esteban's series of essays on Hopper's interiors based on the reading of Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*. It is imagined by Esteban that the room is "...not simply empty, it is deserted. Those who lived in the house, just yesterday, have left..." (qtd. in Williams, 129). The room is not defined by its emptiness, but rather by the fact that it has not always been empty. Esteban even observes "...traces of a vanished object, a table perhaps, placed there for a long time, and which has left its mark" (qtd. in Williams, 129). There is an aspect of the room that suggests that it is a lived space full of memory and narrative. There is power in its present silence; especially because it has been full of sound for a

long time in the past.



Fig. 11  
Edward Hopper, *Sun in an Empty Room*, 1963

In each work discussed in this chapter, there is an emphasis on the depiction of the lived aspect of spaces and objects. Whether it be a hoarder's accumulation of used objects, a bare space stripped of everything it once held, or the solidified air of a whole house, each work points to something which is no longer there, something lost. This leads me to delve deeper into this loss, and the displacement it entails.

### 3.2. Loss and Displacement

In her essay *The Wrong Place*, Miwon Kwon investigates distinctions of 'wrong' and 'right' places. At first she presents the idea that 'wrong' places are unfamiliar and alien, thus the opposite of what is deemed to be 'home'. This logic makes places that feel like home the 'right' places. However, she then argues that this may not necessarily be true because what makes a place 'wrong' or 'right' is its relation to the subject experiencing it; that these are not objective qualities that the place holds (Kwon, "The Wrong Place", 38). She claims, "...it is we who are wrong for this kind of "new" space" (Kwon, 39). Sometimes a 'wrong' place can expose problems about what one has believed to be her 'right' place (Kwon, "The Wrong Place", 42). Kwon criticizes aforementioned thinker Lucy Lippard for her 'nostalgic' solution to alienation through 'returning to the local'; however Kwon too is ambivalent towards always placing oneself in unfamiliar, unstable, uncertain and estranged places as a way of self discovery and self knowledge. Kwon claims that this may be too disruptive for the integrity of a sense of self (Kwon, "The Wrong Place", 39). She finds it problematic to continuously displace oneself from home: "It seems our very sense of self-worth is predicated more and more on our suffering through the inconveniences and psychic destabilizations of ungrounded transience, of not being at home (or not having a home), of always traversing through

elsewheres” (Kwon, “The Wrong Place”, 33). Although ambivalent towards the home as being the ‘right’ place in all cases, Kwon acknowledges that being continuously deprived from the comfort and familiarity of home can be psychologically disruptive. Throughout this chapter on loss and displacement, I will attempt to observe the effects of the loss of personal/domestic space reflected in selected artwork of Do Ho Suh and Rachel Whiteread, and how the artists choose to convey this loss in their methodology.

Artist Do Ho Suh’s most well-known body of work consists of fabric to-scale houses as replicas of his living spaces in different cities. These works are attempts at re-creating spaces as transportable objects. The fabrics can be dismantled from their metal armatures, packed, carried, and re-installed in a different space. As Do Ho Suh describes, “... I don’t really get homesick, but I’ve noticed that I have this longing for this particular space, and I want to recreate that space or bring the space wherever I go” (Art21). In Suh’s art, displacement is a core issue and expressed through an autobiographical approach. In another work entitled *Fallen Star 1/5* (2008) (Fig. 12), Suh depicts two of his homes in literal collision; one of them is his home in the United States which he inhabited in 1993 while attending the Rhode Island School of Design, and the other is his childhood home in Seoul, Korea. The artist describes the title of the work as, “a ‘star’ that falls from outer space. If there were a living being on that star, that being would be alien to us –a visitor from another world. The title implies the notion of ‘displacement’” (qtd. in Starkman, 118). The Korean home is the *fallen star* which comes from outer space and lands on top of the New England home. The past crashes down on the present. Not only are the houses separated through time, but also through location – which highlights a cultural distinction. The work brings them together physically in the form of a destructive collision.



Fig. 12  
Do Ho Suh, *Fallen Star 1/5*, 2008

Unlike Do-Ho Suh, who usually works with his own living spaces, Rachel Whiteread had no personal connection to the house she cast in concrete in her work *House* (1993), but there is a common notion in both works, in regards to the preservation of everyday living and the sanctity of lived spaces. There is an act of saying good-bye to the actual space, but also of creating a replica of it, almost like a souvenir. Yi-Fu Tuan asserts that, “The passion for preservation arises out of the need for tangible objects that can support a sense of identity” (Tuan, 197). Whiteread chose to cast a house that was set for demolition in *House*, and Suh used his own flat right before moving out of it in *rubbing/loving*. In the physical sense, the *loss* is the space being demolished or vacated in these cases; however, metaphorically, it is the disappearance of the future experiences of that space. That space can now only remain as a memory.

In both cases, there is reconstruction of a precise replica of the space/object which is temporally or spatially no longer there. The works point to this lost object by replicating it to extreme precision and/or standing exactly where the lost object used to stand. This is reminiscent of a term called *infrathin* by Marcel Duchamp, which he specifies as being an adjective rather than a noun. Duchamp exemplifies this term in a number of ways: like “when the tobacco smoke smells also of the mouth which exhales it”, or “the difference between 2 mass-produced objects from the same mould... when the maximum precision is obtained” (qtd. in Lawson, 78). There is an extremely thin threshold between the object from which the mould is made and the object cast from this mould. They are in reality two separate, different objects, but they seem exactly the same and refer to one another. Their difference is only made tangible by the fact that they can never be in the same space at the same time (Lawson, 79). Thus, the existence of one in front of our eyes emphasizes the undeniable fact that the other is not there – that it *cannot* be there.

Besides dealing with space as a whole, both Do Ho Suh and Rachel Whiteread also take on individual objects as a source of subject matter. These objects are domestic and they are the things that fill up homes and make them habitable. In psychological research, it is observed that personal objects gain significance during transition periods like relocation, separation and growing independence (Habermas and Paha, 12). Townsend observes the early object-based works of Whiteread as emphasizing the “singular experience of space”, in contrast to the communal aspect of her later works such as *Ghost* (1990) (Fig. 13) and *House* (1993) (Townsend, 23). Although the communal

aspect of these works is irrefutable, there is also a personal reference to notions of home. Whiteread has commented on *Ghost* as having her family home as a starting point<sup>9</sup>.



Fig. 13  
Rachel Whiteread, *Ghost*, 1990

Rachel Whiteread's first solo exhibition featured three works consisting of *Shallow Breath* (1988), *Mantle* (1988) and *Torso* (1988); which are respectively the casts of the space underneath beds, of a dressing table, and hot water bottles. Whiteread described these works as the elements of a small bedroom and a reference to her leaving home for college. She has also stated that she uses "furniture as a metaphor for human beings" (qtd. in Mariño, 87). As with larger scale works of spaces, Whiteread's smaller objects also transform the familiar into the foreign. In *Amber Bed* (1991) (Fig. 14), Whiteread first builds a mould around a mattress, then fills the mould with an amber hued rubber. The result is the exact same form of the original mattress, but accompanied by an unusual sense of mass and weight (Hornstein, 61). This encourages the viewer to become aware of the original object itself, which was invisible due to its everydayness and familiarity (Hornstein, 67). The object is emphasized through its absence and the stripping of its mattress-ness. There is an "alienating familiarity" exuding from these objects (Gross, 46).

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<sup>9</sup> Artheadful. "Rachel Whiteread Interview pt 1." Online video clip. YouTube. YouTube, 2 Feb 2011. Web. 30 Sept 2017.



Fig. 14  
Rachel Whiteread, *Amber Bed*, 1991

Do Ho Suh has made a series of household appliances (personal, not generic); including a stove, refrigerator, toilet, radiator, etc. Whiteread has produced a series of casts of the insides of closets, undersides of dressing tables, chairs and beds, and hot water bottles. Unlike Suh's objects, Whiteread's are generic and lack individual experience, but they represent a shared experience of the everyday (Townsend, 8). Townsend observes that "those voids of beds and baths were the not-very-special traces of not-very-special objects, made special" (Townsend, 10). Whiteread's *Torso* series (Fig. 15), which are casts of hot water bottles are reminiscent of Do Ho Suh's *Radiator*<sup>10</sup> (2013) (Fig. 16), as they are both objects that are a source of warmth. Radiators transform a space into a place for human habitation. A hot water bottle is an intimate extension of a radiator, which one must hold close to one's body to feel its heat.



Fig. 15  
Rachel Whiteread, *Pink Torso*, 1995

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<sup>10</sup> Full name of the work is *Radiator, Corridor/Ground Floor, 348 West 22nd Street, New York, NY 10011, USA* (2013)



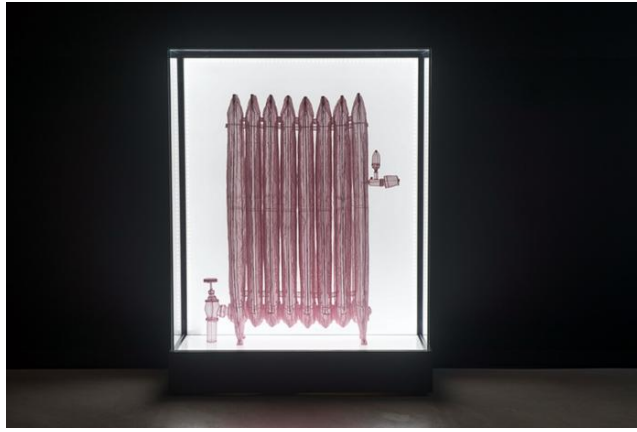


Fig. 16  
Do Ho Suh, *Radiator*, 2013

Two works in particular connect Do Ho Suh and Whiteread because they are based on the same choice of subject matter. These are *Bathtub*<sup>11</sup> (2013) (Fig. 17) and *Untitled (Bath)* (1990)<sup>12</sup> (Fig. 18) by the respective artists. The bathtub is a particularly intimate domestic object. Although the subject matter is the same, the effect of the two pieces are completely different. Do Ho Suh's bathtub is like a blueprint of the object. Displayed within a LED light casing; it is almost like an x-ray. By way of contrast, Whiteread's work is the cast of the underside of a bathtub, and so it is essentially a bathtub sized dent on a block of plaster. It still resembles a bathtub, but there is an unfunctional aspect that is difficult to trace. Aesthetically, it is far from being light and airy, and is quite unlike Do Ho Suh's bathtub.



Fig. 17  
Do Ho Suh, *Bathtub*, 2013

<sup>11</sup> Full name of the work is *Bathtub, Apartment A, 348 West 22nd Street, New York, NY 10011, USA* (2013)

<sup>12</sup> Whiteread actually has a series of bathtub casts in varying media; but for sake of practicality the paper focuses on the original piece dated 1990.





Fig. 18  
Rachel Whiteread, *(Untitled) Bath*, 1990

The artwork mentioned in this chapter have in common the subject of a lived space from the past. Do Ho Suh's Seoul home comes crashing down on his present home, while Whiteread embalms the air of a long gone living room. These entities come back to haunt us from the brink of being forgotten. Similarly, the works featuring everyday objects shed away their everydayness and become reminders of the forgotten and often ignored. They suggest a sense of self tied to the intimate domestic space, a perception of who we are, who we used be. Where we live and where we once lived. The objects stand as replicas of what once was there and what they once were.

### 3.3. Outside, Looking In

*...that the frame is dark blue, that slight movements of the curtains, lights that momentarily go on and off, and rooms that are well lighted will make bright orange tracks on the windows and in the sad and guilty memories transformed into these images: We live but for a short time, we see but very little, and we know almost nothing; so, at least, let's do some dreaming (Pamuk, 183).*

The inside-outside relationship is very distinct when it comes to separating the private/intimate space and the exterior public space: "The house both encloses space (the house interior) and excludes space (everything outside it)" (Cooper, 131). However, these spaces are not completely cut off from each other. In this chapter on being on the outside and looking in, I will discuss the act of witnessing the interior domestic space from the outside. This will be based on selected works emphasizing the forbidden intrusion of the gaze and the feeling of being on the outside – referencing the idea of the loss of personal space as mentioned in the previous chapter on loss and

displacement.

Windows are mentioned in Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* as transitional objects, along with doors and the sills of entrances as thresholds. These thresholds can also be categorized as the aforementioned concept of *infrathin* by Duchamp, as they refer to a state of being 'in-between' and also of representing "a gap or shift that is virtually imperceptible but absolute" (Ades, Cox, Hopkins qtd. in Lawson, 78). All of these "non-objects" such as windows, doors, etc. (which become objects only through the existence of their surroundings) have two bearings: from outside to inside and vice versa. The window and the door connect the space of the room to the outside space. They are significant thresholds opening up to different kinds of spaces; indeed 'crossing the threshold' is a common saying which has ritualistic connotations (Lefebvre, 209-10). In a variety of cultures, rituals involving the threshold of the house are common: taking shoes off, entering with the right foot, orientation of the door to the south, polishing the doorknob, etc. (Cooper, 142). Since doors and windows as thresholds are such significant non-objects which accompany private spaces, looking through them in the orientation of outside to inside is an act of seeing the private space of someone else. When describing the bourgeois apartment building, Lefebvre points out that the bedrooms, bathrooms and other intimate spaces are usually located at the back of the house, while other rooms like the living room face the street. The intimate spaces are pushed to the back, together with the acts that they represent. Lefebvre concludes, "If the outside dominates the inside-outside relationship, this is because the outside is the only thing that really matters: what one sees and what is seen" (Lefebvre, 315). The house's two constituents, its interior and its façade, can be seen as parallel to the individual's psyche: "...an intimate interior, or self as viewed from within and revealed only to those intimates who are invited inside, and a public exterior ... or the self that we choose to display to others" (Cooper, 131).

In my photobook project *Screen* (Fig. 19), I walked around my neighborhood at night and took photographs of windows through which objects were visible. The name *Screen* emphasizes the two things which windows do: by connecting our indoor space to the outside, they offer the inside through a frame to the outside like a TV screen. However, windows are also usually paired with curtains, so that they are *screened* to hide the inside. My aim was to see what people offered to show me through their screens.



Fig. 19  
4 double page spreads from the photobook *Screen*, 2016

The distinction between the inside and the outside is very prominent throughout the history of residential architecture. Going back to Neolithic times, it is possible to see the most accentuated separation of the interior and exterior in the almost subterranean shelters of this period, half immersed in the ground. Subsequently, dwellings have come out of the ground and gone into the sky, but still the idea of screening the private space from the outside has not been fully abandoned (Tuan, 107). Henri Lefebvre criticises the modern architectural tendency of transparency in attempts of achieving an impression of weightlessness. For Lefebvre, there needs to be a separation between the inside and the outside; which are in essence the private space and the public space. However, the purging of such opaque elements from architecture has not managed to change people's perception of the private, internal space having to be shielded from a dangerous outside world. People expect their private spaces to be physically protected and visually screened from external influence and surveillance. Lefebvre asserts, "The sphere of private life ought to be enclosed, and have a finite, or finished aspect" (Lefebvre, 147).

The separation of the private interior and the public exterior is even more sharp at night, when illuminated interiors show their cosy warmth through windows to the dimly lit (if

lit at all) streets outside. This sharpness of separation was the essence of what I experienced while taking photographs at night for my photobook *Screen*, and it is this same feeling that I hope is conveyed to the viewer of the book. Two desires emerged in me whilst taking the photographs: first, wanting to be in my safe and familiar home, and the feeling of not belonging on the streets at night. Secondly, wanting to see what was visible from *my* window, and an urge to see my own space, through a window, with the eyes of a stranger.

The paintings of Edward Hopper frequently depict the juxtaposition of private and public space. Often in his work, warmly lit interiors present themselves to the darkness of night time streets. The viewer is forced to adopt a voyeuristic gaze. Hopper reflects the intimacy of private life so successfully that “even when an interior is not specifically marked off from an exterior we are left with a sense of intimacy – even in outdoor scenes” (Renner, 16). Two paintings by Hopper especially take on the theme of looking through a window into the intimate dwelling space from the outside; which are *Apartment Houses* (1923) (Fig. 20) and *Night Windows* (1928) (Fig. 21). In both work, there is a frame (of the window) within a frame (of the canvas) which removes the viewer twice over from the interior space depicted. Also in both paintings, the figure whose privacy we are intruding upon is unaware of the fact and busy with her own work. *Night Windows* is especially unnerving because the figure it depicts is only partly visible. Additionally, the fact that it is a night scene emphasizes the aspect of voyeurism and immediately pulls viewers’ gaze to the shiny light interior. Formally this painting and the photographs in my photobook are parallel. Hopefully they are also similar in their unsettling atmosphere of intrusion and curiosity inducing depiction of windows as screens.



Fig. 20  
Edward Hopper, *Apartment Houses*, 1923



Fig. 21  
Edward Hopper, *Night Windows*, 1928

In my photobook *Screen*, I was careful to show interiors devoid of people so that the objects, the walls, and the light are the only things that tell the story. I encourage the viewer of the book to build a narrative through inanimate objects and a partial view of the space. There is a similar encouragement in my project *Rooms* (Fig. 22), where the viewer is invited to take a light and examine every corner of an intimate space devoid of figures. Here the wire membrane is minimally obstructive so that there is a clear view of the whole room, and an additional tool – the spotlight- which allows the viewer to project enlarged shadows of the room on the walls of the exhibition space.

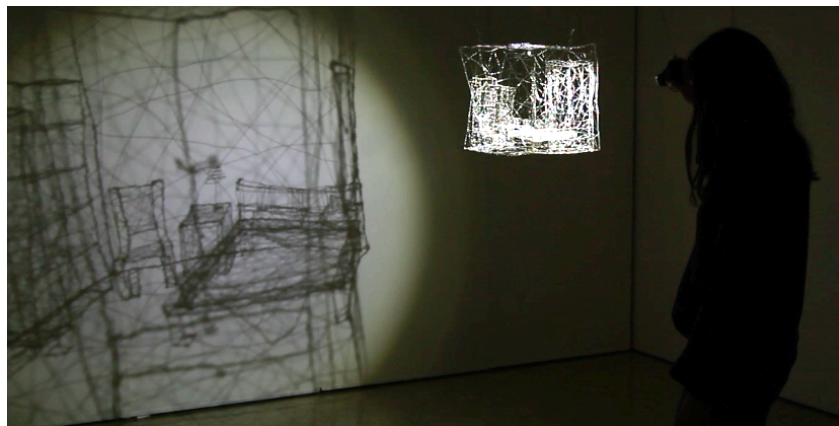


Fig. 22  
*Rooms (Tepebaşı)*, 2018 (installation view)

### 3.4. Re-creation as Resolution

In her book *Replacing Home*, Jennifer Johung discusses the possibilities of reconstructing nomadic and portable spaces of home through examples from contemporary art, architecture, and design. Identifying the unchanging need to ‘be in

place' and to belong somewhere, Johung discusses selected works as alternate solutions to these needs in an ever changing, globalized world (Johung, xi). Johung's proposal of replacing home is based on a perpetual act of re-creation, an ongoing process of re-situating (Johung, xv). While talking about his work of portable fabric homes, artist Do Ho Suh states in a similar way that "...in my mind, I think this notion – home – is something that you can infinitely repeat" (Art21). This chapter on re-creation as resolution focuses on such works by artists which re-create lived spaces from the past or from far away, in a way that encourages a confrontation with the past and an acceptance of the influence of this past on one's sense of self.

The installations in which Sarkis re-creates space (be it his studio or childhood home) are not about bringing those spaces into the gallery, but rather about forming a bond between the exhibition space and the re-created space in question (Akbulut). In the installation *Çaylak Sokak* (1986) (Fig. 23), Sarkis reconstructs his childhood home which was also where he began making art for the first time. The environment in which Sarkis' personal items are displayed provokes in the viewer a sense of entering a dream-like, sacred space. There is a manipulation of light and sound to induce an experience of the artist's memories. Sarkis' method of re-creating space is very unique in that instead of replicating the space exactly, he expresses his spatial memory through utilizing unusual combinations of objects to create a variety of tableaux. Through these tableaux, the viewer gets a sense of Sarkis' presence and gains an entry into the depths of his past.



Fig. 23  
Sarkis, *Çaylak Sokak*, 1986  
Installation view at Maçka Art Gallery, 1986



This re-created space which has been exhibited in different venues is brought back to its home, thus achieving a topophilic resolution. The objects of *Çaylak Sokak* left their original space, travelled abroad<sup>13</sup>, and came back to their home for good in 2002. (Fig. 24) There is a similar cycle in Orhan Pamuk's *Museum of Innocence*<sup>14</sup> where, although fictitious, the objects that have been collected over the course of decades are returned to their original location (the character Füsün's house), which is actually the location of the museum building in Çukurcuma, Istanbul. They have been transformed into museum items, just like Sarkis' objects, which are on display indefinitely at the house in Çaylak Sokak.



Fig. 24  
Sarkis, *Çaylak Sokak*, 2002<sup>15</sup>

Sarkis built the *Çaylak Sokak* house once more in 2010, in an exhibition called *İkona*<sup>16</sup> (Fig. 25). In this instance, Sarkis focuses on the blueprint of the house, stripping it off its objects and miniaturizing it. The result is a miniature, gold model of the *Çaylak Sokak* house, reminiscent of a maze. Its aesthetic simplicity and gold plated material conveys an aura of sacredness and mystique, and it stands in the middle of the gallery space as an archeological find from ancient times. Sarkis states, “this exhibition invites that living space to the exhibition space like an *ICON*, referencing the 1940s, 1950s, 60s, 70s, 90s... and today”<sup>17</sup> (“Çaylak Sokak’tan Bir ‘İkona’”). This re-creation is a reminder of Benjamin’s metaphor of memory as digging site for ancient cities.

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<sup>13</sup> Paris, 1989

<sup>14</sup> The museum, based on the book with the same name

<sup>15</sup> The caption reads: “‘Çaylak Sokak’ Çaylak Sokakta, 2002”. Translated as: “‘Çaylak Sokak’ at Çaylak Sokak, 2002”.

<sup>16</sup> Kazım Taşkent Gallery, Istanbul

<sup>17</sup> (author’s translation) Original: “Bu sergi o yaşam yerini bir İKONA gibi bu sergi mekanına davet eder, 1940’lara, 1950’lere, 60’lara, 70, 80, 90... lara ve bugünlere göndermeler yaparak.”



Fig. 25  
Sarkis, *Ikona*, 2010  
Installation view at Kazım Taşkent Gallery, 2010

Ilya Kabakov's method of accumulating what he refers to as garbage becomes his tool of re-creation. He observes that, "a dump not only devours everything, preserving it forever, but one might say it also continually generates something; this is where some kinds of shoots come for new projects, ideas, a certain enthusiasm arises, hopes for the rebirth of something" (qtd. in Breakell, 3-4). It is almost an act of recycling in which he transforms the clutter into an artistic expression; dealing with issues of the personal and the political.

There is also a strong connection between Ilya Kabakov's archivist display of objects in *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away* (1988) (Fig. 26) and the museum display of Pamuk's objects in Museum of Innocence (Fig. 27). In both works, the objects are behind glass cases and accompanied by personal captions; these give them an air of authority and significance. This also alludes to the aforementioned metaphor of archeological excavations as memory, because the display of these objects is very reminiscent of museums where archeological findings are displayed. In the works, there is a juxtaposition of the personal and the collective. Pamuk and Kabakov both demonstrate a personal take on the archive, a notion also discussed by Hal Foster as he describes archives as "found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private" (qtd. in Breakell, 3). The popular notion that museums and archives are supposed to house *grand* things is almost mocked. As Pamuk claims, "we don't need more museums that try to construct the historical narratives of a society, community, team, nation, state, tribe, company or species... The future of museums is inside our own homes" (Pamuk, "Innocence of Objects", 57). This is a novel approach to bringing together fiction, art, and museums, all around the context of the personal.



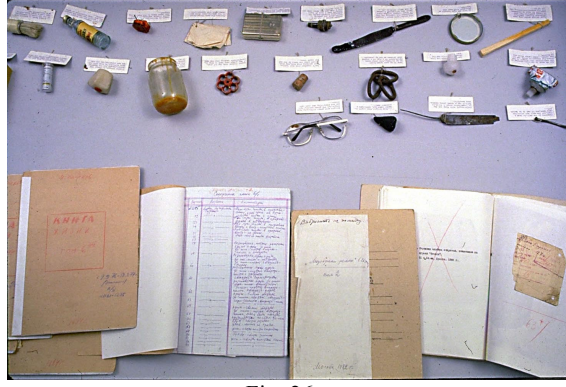


Fig. 26  
Ilya Kabakov, *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away*, 1988 (detail)



Fig. 27  
Orhan Pamuk, *Museum of Innocence* (detail)

Sarkis references his studio space in his installations almost exclusively. In a press conference for his exhibition MIRROR<sup>18</sup>, he describes his studio as a “no-man’s land”. When asked about his studio in Paris, he claims that it is not in Paris; but that it is connected to everywhere else in the world (Akbulut). The exhibition brings together Sarkis’ current studio and his family’s house on Çaylak Sokak in the gallery space in either sides of a wall, creating a mirror effect of these spaces.

Sarkis’ *My Room on Krutenau Street is Turning to a Satellite* (1989), is an installation work depicting the artist’s room-studio in a series of re-created models of varied sizes. Here, Sarkis reveals his most intimate space that he has inhabited during the years of 1982-1990 in Strasbourg (Özpınar, 45). This private space of creation is re-created as an art object and shared with others in public space (Fleckner, 267). Comparison of the dates reveals that Sarkis moved out of this studio a year after the making of the work. Perhaps this was an act of good-bye, or of premonition by the artist. Either way, it is

<sup>18</sup> AYNA, January 18 – February 19, 2017, Dirimart Dolapdere, Istanbul

evident that Sarkis values his spaces of artistic production and feels the need to document, preserve and re-create them through photographs and artwork.

This urge to document the personal space of artistic production and transform it into an artwork is the fundamental concern in Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau* (1933) (Fig. 28). The space in question in the work is Schwitters' house in Hannover which he inhabited through the years of 1923-1937 before moving to Oslo to flee the Nazi threat. Schwitters both lived and worked in this space. His approach to re-creating his space is very different from other mentioned artists because he turns the space into an artwork while continuing to live and work in it. It is a process of gathering objects that he finds important, such as mementos from friends, art objects, and things that possess artistic and cultural references. Schwitters displays these objects in niches in his studio he built specially for this accumulated memory storage (Fleckner, 263). Here too is a re-creation of the personal space that utilizes artistic tools in self-expression. Schwitters merges with his artwork and he inhabits it. The space shapes him and he shapes the space.

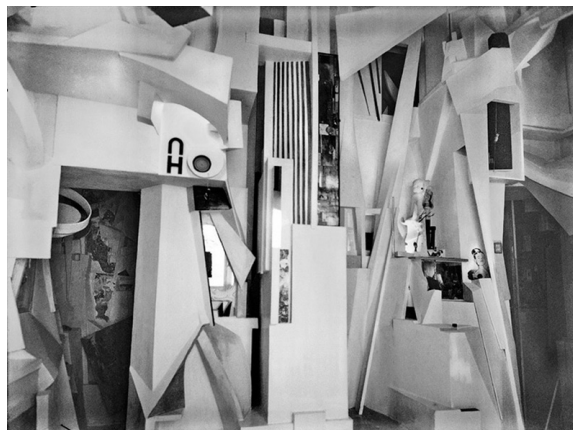


Fig. 28  
Kurt Schwitters, *Merzbau*, 1933

Rachel Whiteread's studio and living space also appears in a number of her works. *Untitled (Stairs)* (2001) (Fig. 29), *Untitled (Basement)* (2001), *Untitled (Cast Iron Floor)* (2001), and *Untitled (Apartment)* (2000-01) are all cast from the same apartment and studio space Whiteread occupied in East London. The apartment had served first as a synagogue in the 1900s, later as a Baptist Church till 1941, than as a warehouse and as a textile factory (Mariño, 99). About her architectural pieces, Whiteread comments, "there's a sense of puzzlement in just looking at them and thinking: We live in that kind of place. How do we function physically within a place like that? This is definitely what I do when I look at my works. I think about how they affect me physically" (qtd. in

Gross, 41). Whiteread casts the negatives spaces of the floor, the stairways and the upper floor rooms of this building, just as she had done with earlier architectural works like *Ghost* (1990) and *House* (1993). The way these pieces are arranged in the gallery space also invokes confusion, as she has fractured a once whole architectural space (Mariño, 102). Whiteread concerns herself with how the spaces in which we function daily affect us. Her artistic exploration is of re-creating the space in such a way that this question is made palpable and inevitable for the viewers as well.



Fig. 29  
Rachel Whiteread, *Untitled (Stairs)*, 2001

Do Ho Suh's main choice of subject matter is his own living space. His re-creation method is almost an antidote to displacement. The artist states that, "I didn't want to sit down and cry for home. I wanted to more actively deal with these issues of longing. I decided not to be sad about it" (Art21). Here, the art works as a personal solution to Suh's feelings of yearning for home. In his installations of *Seoul Home*<sup>19</sup> (2012) (Fig. 30) and *348 West 22nd Street*<sup>20</sup> (2000) (Fig. 31), there is a vital aspect of separation in the method of display which highlights Suh's sentiment towards his past home (Seoul) and his current one (New York). *Seoul Home* is suspended from above, while *348 West 22nd Street* is on the ground where the viewer can enter it. Kwon describes the effect of the *Seoul Home* as a "ghostly apparition", almost as if something out of a dream (Kwon, "The Other Otherness", 18). For Do Ho Suh, although this home still stands, it is a part of his past. Thus, it is also rendered inaccessible in its display, as opposed to *348 West 22nd Street* which stands solidly on the ground, sharing the same 'real' space as the viewer.

<sup>19</sup> Full name of the work is *Seoul Home/Seoul Home/Kanazawa Home* (2012)

<sup>20</sup> Full name of the work is *348 West 22nd Street, Apartment A, New York, NY 10011, USA* (2000)

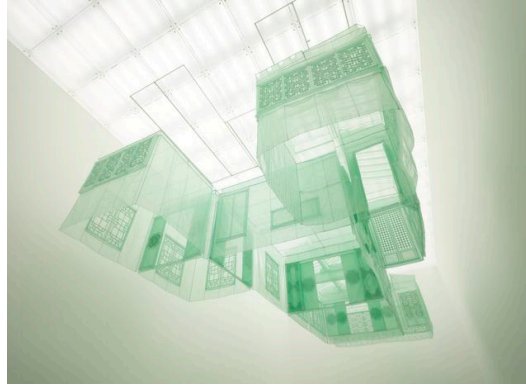


Fig. 30  
Do Ho Suh, *Seoul Home/Seoul Home/Kanazawa Home*, 2012

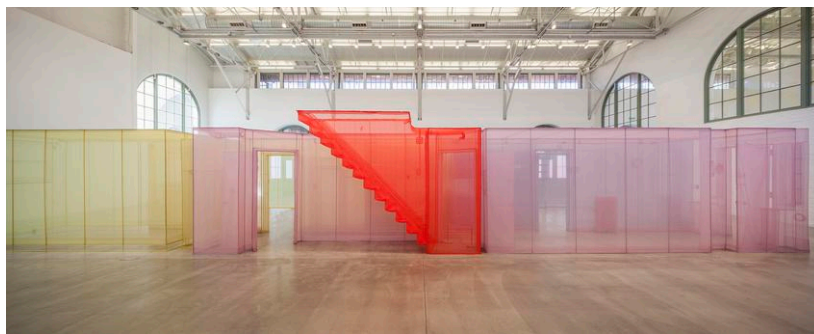


Fig. 31  
Do Ho Suh, *Apartment A, Unit 2, Corridor and Staircase*, 348 West 22nd Street, New York, NY 10011, USA, 2011-14

Throughout this chapter on re-creation, the artwork discussed have an approach of transforming an intimate space (whether it be an intimate space of creation such as a studio, or an intimate domestic space) into a public experience. The personal becomes public through the medium of art. The archival re-assembly of the “trivial” personal items in Kabakov and Pamuk’s projects also transform the personal to the public. I find that re-creating these intimate spaces encourages both their artists and the viewer to contemplate how we physically and metaphysically place ourselves in the world. We access where the artists live(d), where they produce(d), where and how they accumulate(d) their memories: their bend in space-time.

## 4. PERSONAL METHODOLOGY: RECREATING SPACE AS A PERSONAL DIORAMA

### 4.1. The Act of Remembering

*...since memory, which is very sensitive and hates to be found lacking, tends to fill in any gaps with its own spurious creations of reality, but more or less in line with the facts of which it has only a vague recollection, like what remains after the passing of a shadow.*

José Saramago<sup>21</sup>

The analogy of remembering/memory as archeological excavation first appears in the 1890s, mentioned in the writings of Freud (King, 12). However, Freud's analogy regards memory pathologically, in a context of repression due to trauma. Freud claims that nothing is completely lost, and that the memory stores everything beneath deep layers, making them inaccessible by the subject (King, 14). The power of this analogy is rooted in its suggestion of difficulty and reward: "The metaphors of archeological excavation and the finding of keys to open the locked doors of memory suggest the act of remembering as the uncovering of a *secret*" (King, 15). In this chapter on the act of remembering, I will take a closer look at what remembering entails in terms of its limitations and implications. The focus will mainly remain on the discussion of the role of remembering in my work *Rooms*, supported by selected examples of contemporary artwork.

The metaphor of archeological excavation is advanced by Walter Benjamin in the 1930s. Benjamin regards memory as a medium, rather than an instrument, with which one can investigate the past. One delves into memory like one is digging into a site where ancient objects are buried deep within. He asserts, "...genuine memory must therefore yield an image of the person who remembers, in the same way a good archaeological report not only informs us about the strata from which its findings originate, but also gives an account of the strata which first had to be broken through" (Benjamin, 576). Benjamin also refers to memory as reading oneself backward. He finds that time is irrelevant in remembering; because memories are not ordered. They are events turned into tableaux. "Benjamin is not trying to recover his past, but to understand it: to condense it into its spatial forms, its premonitory structures" (Sontag, 116). Benjamin uses memory to understand himself in the present and for the future. He

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<sup>21</sup> Saramago, José, *All the Names*, translated by Margaret Jull Costa, New York: Harcourt Inc., 1999, p.170.

wants to remember places, events and people for the understanding of himself; through the emotions the places contain for him, his reactions caused by the events, and his confrontation with himself evoked by his interactions with other people (Sontag, 115).

In my project *Rooms* (Fig. 32, 33, 34), I create miniature settings by ‘knitting’ wire, and then I transform them into large-scale spaces through the medium of shadow projection. These settings are my past living spaces -bedrooms. One of the most crucial parts of this work, and what gives it a process-oriented characteristic, is that I rebuild the spaces entirely by memory. Thus the remembering process forms a major part of the work.

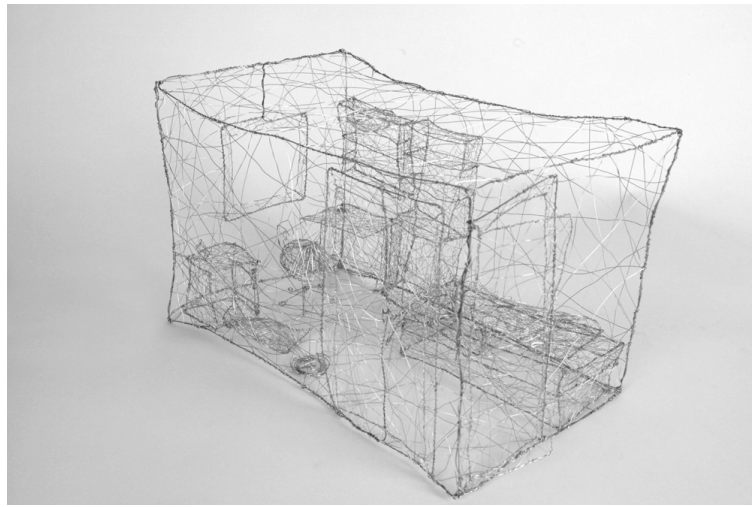


Fig. 32  
*Rooms (Bilkent)*, 2018

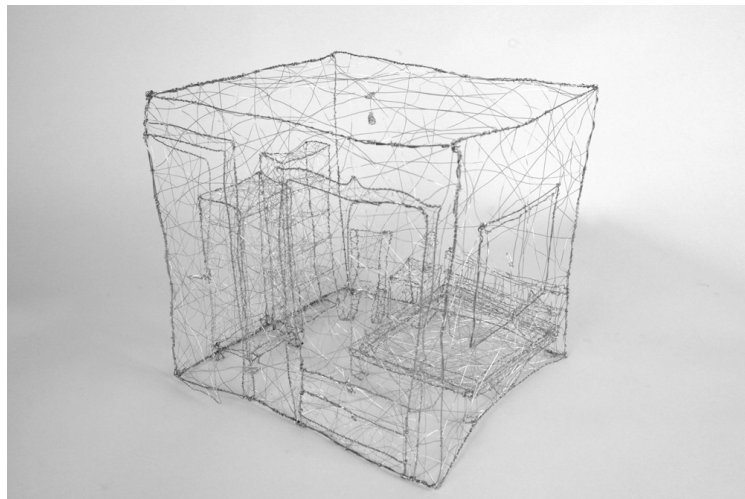


Fig. 33  
*Rooms (Tepebaşı)*, 2018





Fig. 34  
*Rooms (Dikilitaş)*, 2018

The act of remembering is a challenge for me, and it encourages me to recollect not just the furniture, objects or the layout of the space but also what kind of a person I was while I was living in that particular room. The important thing is not that I get everything right and perfectly fit. I welcome all faulty recollections leading to distortions and questionable proportions. This is one reason why I chose to work with wire instead of balsa wood (Fig. 35), which was my initial choice as material. The wood made the space look like an architectural model; measured, structured and geometric. The wire as a material gave me more flexibility with my unsure recollections, and an aesthetic that looks almost sketchy and warped – just like (my) memory. The resulting room is not only a wire model of a room, but furthermore I hope it becomes my own projection of that room; just like Benjamin’s aforementioned assertion that “...memory should yield an image of the person who remembers...” (Benjamin, 576). One of my aims is that through these rooms, the viewer can get a sense of me, as if it were an unusual autoportrait.

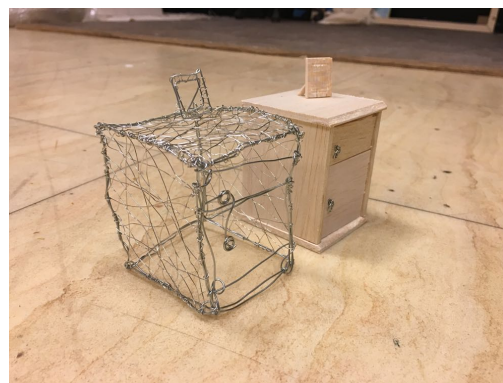


Fig. 35  
Wire versus balsa wood as material  
Study for *Rooms*, 2018

While trying to remember these past rooms, I have noticed that the ‘logic’ of memory is peculiar. The room I remember the best is my oldest room, and from a merely chronological standpoint, this does not make sense. However, this room was my childhood bedroom. Although there were countless rearrangements of the furniture, redecorating of its walls and a constant circulation of objects, I have a very clear picture of this room in my mind. To this, Yi-Fu Tuan gives an explanation, in that the human-life cycle is an important criteria when investigating the experience of space in relation to the passage of time. “...ten years in childhood are not the same as ten years in youth or manhood. The child knows the world more sensuously than does the adult,” he asserts (Tuan, 185). Another peculiarity is that there are certain portions of a room that I have completely forgotten, as a whole. These can even be portions that I must have faced every day, like the space across from my bed. I think that I *must* remember this portion because I *must have* looked straight ahead from my bed in the many times I have lain on it. I can only deduce from my complete lack of memory that in those many times I have faced that forgotten portion of the room, I was perhaps daydreaming or was completely disengaged because I was contemplating something else, and certainly not paying attention and not registering my vision. The issue may simply be one of too much familiarity. Yi-Fu Tuan claims that as individuals become familiar with a space, there is an inclination towards taking it for granted. “In time a new house ceases to make little demands on our attention; it is as comfortable and unobtrusive as an old pair of slippers” (Tuan, 184). That sight of the space across from my bed did not demand my attention because it was a sight I was used to, and it was the same every day. That space, rather, enabled me to stare straight at it and see the reflections of my mental images.

Within the aforementioned analogy of memory and archeological excavation by Freud and Benjamin, there exists the possibility to remember anything if you dig deep enough. The idea that nothing is truly lost and all is filed away in memory is a comforting thought for the sake of wholeness and self assurance. However this is not a certain fact (King, 15). There is also a psychoanalytic theory that memory is revised based on the circumstances of the present, which Freud calls *Nachträglichkeit*. This term is defined as ‘retranscription’ and also referred to as ‘afterwardness’ (King, 11). Thus, even if one does manage to remember anything one calls upon, there is still uncertainty about it being a full recovery of the lived experience or a version of it distorted by the context of the present. When I view the process of remembering in my project *Rooms* considering



these shortcomings of memory, I become aware of the possibility that a huge portion of what I have remembered about these rooms may be faulty. However, I do not see this as a set-back. The unreliability of memory is an inevitable part of what remembering entails. The important thing for me is not to make these rooms objectively true, but to make them as loyal to my memory as I can. Edgar Degas makes a point about the creative and freeing aspect of working from memory: “it is very well to copy what one sees. It’s much better to draw what one has retained in one’s memory. It is a transformation in which imagination collaborates with memory. Thus one’s recollections and invention are liberated from the tyranny which nature exerts” (qtd. in Renner, 65).

In Rachel Whiteread’s casts, there is often a remembrance of things that are still in the present but so ordinary that they are almost invisible. Jennifer R. Gross describes her work as an “archeological survey of the present” (Gross, 47). Whiteread urges the viewer to remember the things that are in front of their eyes everyday, like an old mattress or a whole house. The way she triggers this response is through a meticulous technique of moulding and casting, which is not unlike archeological methods of careful digging and recovering. The resulting work also resembles archeological finds: blocks of sooted material displaying human imprint and years of lived experience. They urge the viewer to look at the ordinary everyday objects and spaces surrounding them as if they were relics from an ancient time and to remember the present.

There is another way in which Whiteread’s casts provoke remembrance, which Melanie Mariño likens to Roland Barthes’ notion of photography producing death while attempting to capture life (Mariño, 87). Like a photograph, Whiteread’s work embalms life, and in such a way that it ends up emphasizing its mortality. The works refer to real objects and spaces that are no longer there (Mariño, 105). As Jennifer Gross points out, even their aesthetic exudes morbidity; reminding the viewer of sarcophagi and mausoleum slabs (Gross, 35). The artist describes her work *Ghost* (1990) as an attempt to “mummify the air in a room” (qtd. in Gross, 38). Her choice of the word *mummify* directly communicates to the aforementioned readings of morbidity, and also of a sense of preservation in the face of death. All these in turn bring us back to the analogy of archeology and memory: “for her works function both as archeological document and mnemonic provocation, exhuming forgotten layers of history as they innovate new spaces for recollection” (Mariño, 105).

In Do Ho Suh's *rubbing/loving* (2016), there is a similar approach of archeological recovery and reconstruction. The method of pencil rubbing on a paper over an object is used in archeological reconstructions. This is also what artist Do Ho Suh does, but the purpose here is to unveil memories and to remember. There is a devoted act of carressing every inch of his house, which makes the process as important as the output.

The works discussed in this chapter point towards an act of remembering and of unveiling the past. I find that Benjamin's analogy of excavation and memory surfaces in each of these works, and in my own work *Rooms*. Whiteread's casts remind us of their moulds, just as Suh's pencil-rubbed surfaces make us think about the space from which they came. The final outputs remind us of the process of their making and the sentiments that ignited this process.

#### 4.2. The Miniature

*The cleverer I am at miniaturizing the world, the better I possess it* (Bachelard, 150).

The way Bachelard perceives the miniature is by immersing himself in its 'poetic image'. He takes on the role of a phenomenologist of the imagination, meaning that he lets go of logical, psychological, and psychoanalytical assessments, and focuses on the image that encourages him to imagine and daydream. As a philosopher he chooses to look at imagination as a scientist would look at empirical data. This 'poetic imagination' is required to get into the miniature world and I find that this holds true for my project *Rooms* as well. As Bachelard puts it, "One must go beyond logic in order to experience what is large in what is small" (Bachelard, 150). In this chapter on the miniature, I will attempt to justify my choice of miniaturizing space in my work *Rooms*, and provide theoretical framework along with examples of artwork that utilize miniaturization of personal space.

In my work *Rooms*, I am building an alternative dollhouse based on my previous living spaces (Fig. 36). Child therapist Susan Scheftel states in an article that the dollhouse is a very useful tool during therapy for children to act out their fantasies or concerns through narratives of their choosing. Even without creating a narrative, just the rearrangement of furniture can also be suggestive (Scheftel). There is a power that lies in a miniature

parallel universe. Bachelard puts it as the “...familiarity with toys and *the reality of toys*” (Bachelard, 149). Walter Benjamin also reflects on this ‘reality of toys’ in an essay inspired by a visit he made to a toy exhibition in Berlin.<sup>22</sup> Benjamin asserts that playing with miniature objects is liberating for children who find themselves in a world of giants; because they can create an alternate reality more suitable for their size. Adults like to play with toys because it is a means of relief from the problems of the real world. Toys become a miniature universe that they can manipulate, unlike the actual-sized real world (Benjamin, 100).

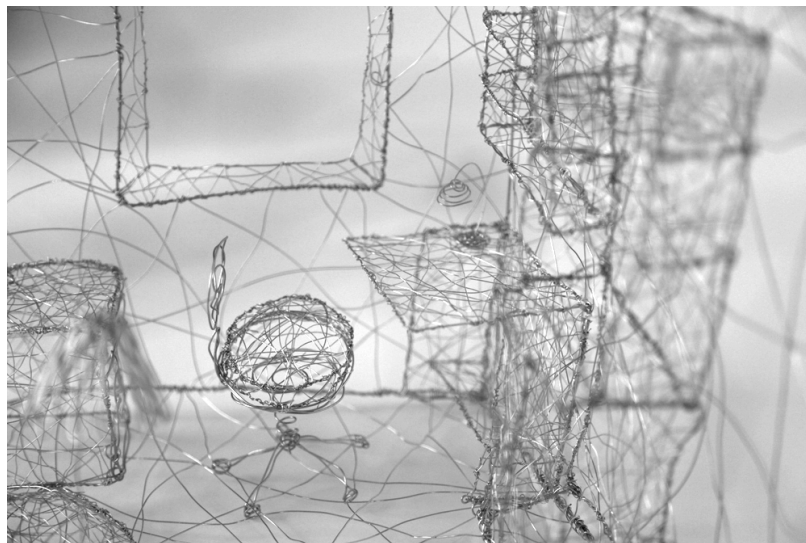


Fig. 36  
*Rooms (Bilkent), 2018 (detail)*

Writing about Benjamin, Susan Sontag refers to his fascination with the miniature. Sontag explains this interest with three effects that miniaturization of things have: making portable, concealing, and making useless. She links things being portable through miniaturization with the needs of Benjamin’s nomadic living. The portable can be possessed and carried around by someone who is continuously wandering. The concealing power of the miniature is tied to Benjamin’s enthusiasm for deciphering things. Effort is required to fully understand the miniature; it does not reveal itself directly. The third outcome of making something miniature, as Sontag finds, is to make it useless. The miniature’s most important and distinguishing quality is that it is miniature. Functionality is not in the equation anymore; it is no longer valuable due to its function. Sontag identifies a contradictory element in the nature of the miniature: “For what is so grotesquely reduced is, in a sense, liberated from its meaning – its tininess being the outstanding thing about it. It is both a whole (that is, complete) and a

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<sup>22</sup> Märkisches Museum

fragment (so tiny, the wrong scale)” (Sontag, 124).

My ‘poetic imagination’ urges me to see myself as a little person, inhabiting this miniature space. However, my miniatures are unfunctional and immobile; encaged in a wire cocoon. They are less visible and out of reach because of this delicate wire membrane, unlike a usual dollhouse, which has three solid walls but lacks the fourth for intrusions and alterations. My miniature is preserved in its walls, just like the real settings that have inspired it are preserved in the past. I cannot physically enter these spaces, but I can somehow possess and hoard them.

According to Robert Morris, an intimacy is created when the viewer interacts with a small-sized art object. This is because to be able to observe the work, the viewer moves closer to it, thus narrowing her field of vision. Her sight is exposed exclusively to that object, which creates a private experience. However with larger works, the viewer must pull back and position herself at some distance in order to grasp the whole of the work. This expands her field of vision and gives the work a public aspect (Kwon, “The Other Otherness”, 11). This intimacy of the miniature is an aspect I wanted to utilize in my work *Rooms*. My purpose is to be able to emphasize the subject matter of personal/private space through the required spatial closeness of the viewer and the work. This closeness reveals things that cannot be observed from a distance. Thus, when the viewer leans in to look at the work closely, she will discover details as if she were being whispered a secret.

Rachel Whiteread’s clear resin cast of a dollhouse titled *Ghost, Ghost II* (2009) (Fig. 37) is one work that demonstrates the power residing within the miniature. In contrast with her earlier work *House* (1993), a real-size concrete cast of an actual house, this one is much smaller and translucent, so it is possible to absorb it as a whole at once and to see its insides. However, as Rem Koolhaas asserts, “transparency only reveals everything in which you cannot partake” (qtd. in Townsend, 28). This is also the nature of my miniature rooms that are covered with wire. There is a transparency which invites the gaze, but which denies physical entrance. Whiteread’s signature method of casting the void of objects transforms their insides into barriers, like a kind of exoskeleton (Hornstein, 55). When cast with a clear material, this denial of entry is even more pronounced. Even if it was not cast in solid material, entry would still be impossible due to the fact that it is miniature –unless the viewer could shrink down to its scale.



Fig. 37  
Rachel Whiteread, *Ghost, Ghost II*, 2009

Do Ho Suh's aforementioned work *Fallen Star 1/5* (2008) is a miniature work in the scale of 1/5 as its name implies. It is an extremely detailed model of a collision between two of his homes; one in Korea and the other in the United States. They both show the façades and the latter also displays the interior of the house through a cross-sectional dissection (Fig. 38). This work is a part of a project entitled *Speculation Project* (2006-) which is to consist of a thirteen-part reconstruction of the same two houses in increasing scale. The first work, entitled *Fallen Star: Wind of Destiny* (2006) is a miniature white resin model of the Korean house sitting atop a tornado-like white structure. The second work, entitled *Fallen Star: New Beginning 1/35* (2006) portrays the collision of the Seoul and the New England homes as in *Fallen Star 1/5*, but in a smaller scale as pointed out by its name. As the works grow in scale, the collision between the homes also transforms in nature. In the third work, entitled *Fallen Star 1/8* (2006) (Fig. 39), the two houses are merging, and the collision is starting to mend itself with new bricks sealing the space between them. This refers to a period of assimilation and settlement in Suh's life in New England (Starkman, 124). No matter the difference in scaling, all works display an extreme amount of precision and detail.



Fig. 38  
Do Ho Suh, *Fallen Star 1/5*, 2008



Fig. 39  
Do Ho Suh, *Fallen Star* 1/8, 2006

Sarkis also re-creates spaces in miniature in a number of his works. Aforementioned work *Ikona* (2010) by Sarkis is one such example of a miniaturized personal space. Another of his work entitled *My Room on Krutenau Street is Turning to a Satellite* (1989) is an installation consisting of colorful light effects surrounding the remakes of his studio space in six different sizes; ranging from real-size to a miniature one of about a few centimeters. By gradually miniaturizing the space, he ends up turning it into a sculpture (Fleckner, 265). Thus, the space becomes an art object, offered to the viewer through the filters of the artist's memory.

Looking at all of these examples from contemporary artists that utilize miniaturization of space in their work, I find that they have common purposes in doing so. Some of these purposes are to create intimacy between the viewer and object, to make the space in question possessible and hoardable, and to ignite the viewer's 'poetic imagination' which is the best way to make the space accessible. These purposes are also what I have in mind for my project *Rooms*.

### 4.3. Shadow-play

The installation and display of the miniature wire rooms in my work *Rooms* is as equally significant as the individual rooms themselves. In this chapter on shadow-play, I will attempt to justify my choice for utilizing light and shadow in the installation of *Rooms*.

In the installment of the project, each room is displayed separately in a white cubic space with three surrounding walls. Through the placement of a spotlight in front of each wire room, there will appear on the opposite wall an enlarged shadow of that room.

(Fig. 40).

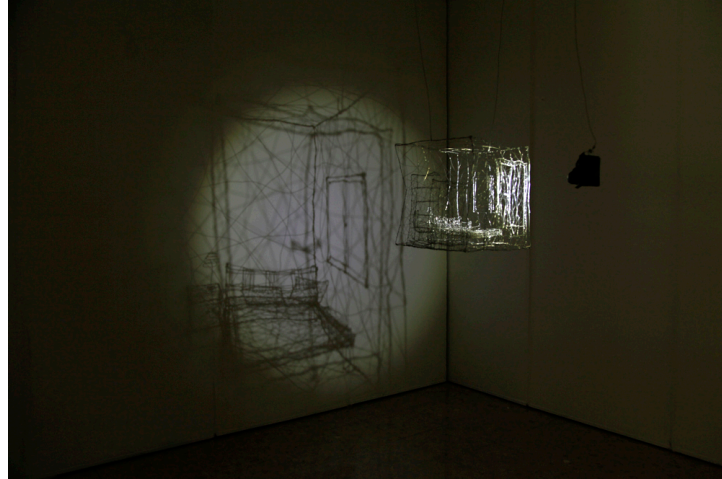


Fig. 40  
*Rooms (Tepebaşı)*, 2018 (installation view)

Like the wire room, the spotlight also hangs from the ceiling and is not firmly fixed. The viewer may move it around the room's perimeter to see other angles of the room and to zoom in or out by moving the light closer or further away from the object. There is an investigative act which allows the viewer to treat the light like a flashlight. The details of the miniature wire room is made accessible through the light and its mobility (Fig. 41). The viewer shines the light upon the past, unveiling the remembered details of the spaces I once occupied daily.

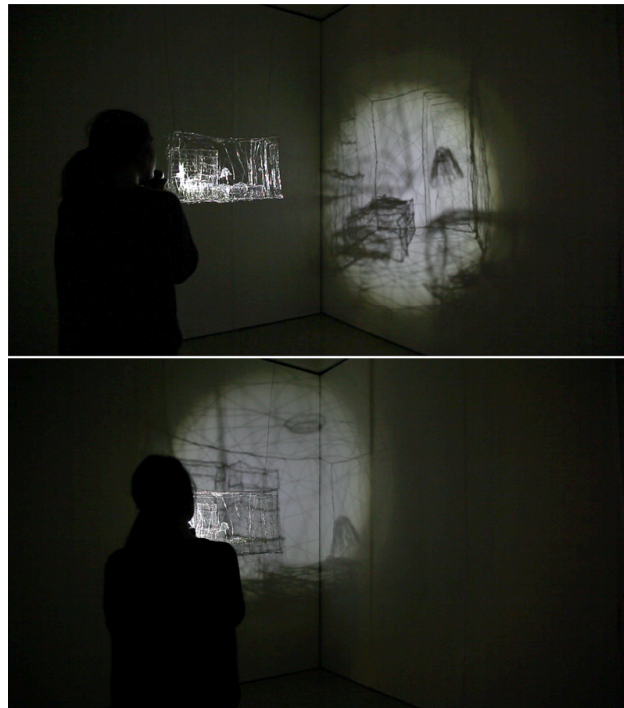


Fig. 41  
*Rooms (Bilkent)*, 2018 (installation view)

The wire rooms in themselves are difficult to grasp in their entirety because they are



miniature with lots of details and also because they are made from one material. The light serves as a decoding tool that the viewer can utilize to enlarge details and get a sensation of almost entering the room. Due to the movement of the light, the position of the viewer within the room is flexible. Objects come in and go out of focus as the light moves; offering an infinite variety of angles to the viewer. The process resembles a virtual reality tour of the space.

The viewer is not only bound to observe the shadows, but also encouraged to look at the miniature room and its details. When the spotlight shines upon the wire rooms, their metallic color catches the light and reflects it like a luminous, delicate silver object. (Fig. 42) This is reminiscent of Sarkis' aforementioned work *Ikona* (2010), in which the miniaturized space is presented as a golden precious find. My aim is to present the wire rooms as delicate, fragile, and precious objects that reflect my process of remembering and turning the memories into miniature realities. I attempt to evoke in the viewer an experience of finding something from the past and illuminating it. Coming back to Benjamin's aforementioned analogy of memory and archeology, I try to place the viewer in a position of discovering and recovering things from the past.



Fig. 42  
*Rooms (Bilkent)*, 2018 (detail from installation view)

Before settling on the idea of having one spotlight on the room, I tried a few approaches of placing the light. My first try was to have three spotlights on one room in order to project shadows on all three walls (Fig. 43). However, this resulted in having the shadows of the spotlights as well; which effectively distracts the viewers' perception of



the illusion of the shadows. In addition, having too many spotlights on the room discourages the viewer from approaching and looking at the actual miniature room and keeps their focus only on the shadows. The spotlights create a barricade around the object and limit its accessibility.

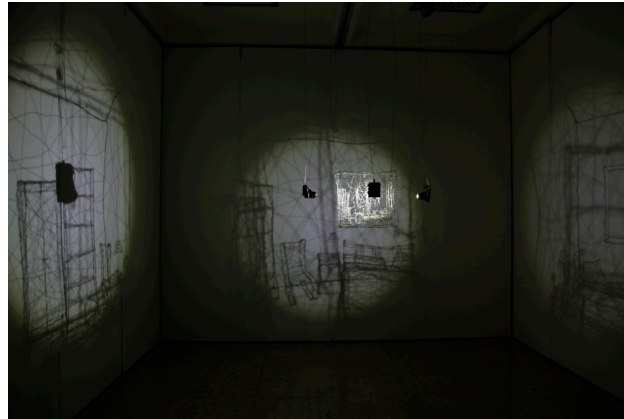


Fig. 43  
Trial with three spotlights  
Study for *Rooms*, 2018

My second trial with the light was to place only two of them so as to eliminate the shadow of the spotlights on the walls (Fig. 44) This had a better result than three lights; however, it created an arbitrary effect because one wall was left empty of shadows. I could not justify leaving a wall empty in a cubic space with three walls. Furthermore, having two spotlights upon the miniature room also looked asymmetrical in an arbitrary way.

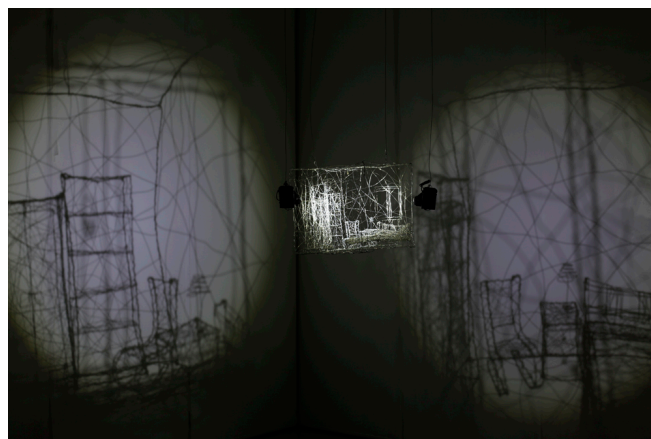


Fig. 44  
Trial with two spotlights  
Study for *Rooms*, 2018

My final try was again with two lights, but having one of them point down from above the object. This created an enlarged shadow directly underneath the object, on the floor of the gallery (Fig. 45). The shadow offered me a vision of the room I had never

experienced before: a bird's eye view. Although at first this fascinated me, I quickly decided that it does not fit in with my purpose of re-creating my spatial experience of the room. Looking at the room directly from above is not a natural way of experiencing the space and it alludes to other notions that distract from my purpose. In the final installment of the work with one light, the viewer may take the light and hold it over the miniature room to get a bird's eye view shadow of the room. However, this will be the viewer's choice and not something I condition them to experience especially.

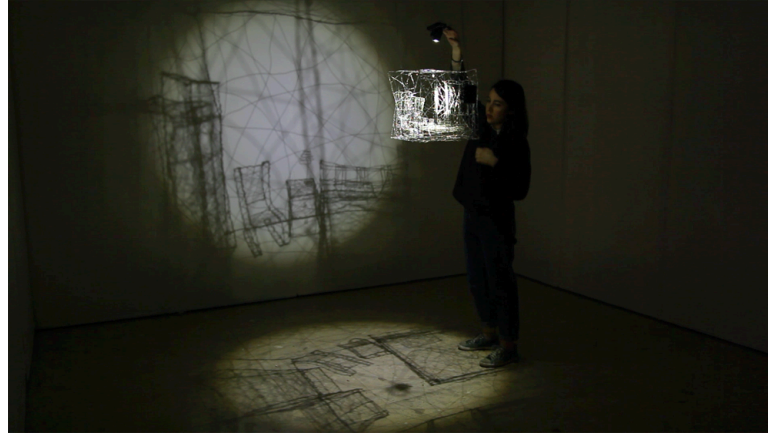


Fig. 45  
Trial with two spotlights, one directly from above  
Study for *Rooms*, 2018

After these trials with the light, I decided that having only one spotlight serves my purpose best. With one spotlight, the viewer will have an experience of discovering. She will enter a darker room with only one shadow and will have at her disposal only one light. She will be able to move it however she likes, without any limitations from other lights. The viewer will also be able to observe the miniature room directly, without the physical obstruction and glare of three spotlights on it (Fig. 46).



Fig. 46  
*Rooms (Tepebaşı)*, 2018 (installation view)

## 5. CONCLUSION

We live in houses, in rooms. Yet we rarely notice these spaces: how we function within them, and how they affect our everyday rituals. Although we may not be aware of it, we have a deep connection with our environment which manifests itself through many outlets such as dreams, fantasies, art and intuitions (Cooper, 143). Our rooms - the smallest unit of living space we inhabit - are where we situate ourselves in the physical world. The objects in our rooms and houses are a part of this shell, like internal organs, so vital yet silent and unnoticed. The main objective of Rachel Whiteread's works is to encourage the viewer to contemplate their physical place in the world (Gross, 38). I am convinced that this is true on some level for each artist discussed in this paper and for myself. Once we manage to recognize the significance of these spaces and objects - their integrality to our sense of self - we can have the means obtain the greatest insights about ourselves and others.

The artwork discussed throughout this paper serve as significant topoanalytic<sup>23</sup> data into the artists who have produced them. As mentioned in the introduction, the use of the room iconography as a portrait of its owner is the paper's main point of focus. To make it clear; I do not favor reading biographical narrative into an artwork or fiction writing to understand its artist/author. However, as Susan Sontag observes, "one cannot use the life to interpret the work. But one can use the work to interpret the life" (Sontag, 9). With this idea in mind, I have attempted to review the meaning of chosen subject matter and technique in a selection of artwork dealing with spatial memory in a context of personal reference.

Throughout this paper, I have discussed a variety of artwork, but have mainly focused on the works of three contemporary artists: Sarkis, Rachel Whiteread, and Do Ho Suh. After an intensive period of looking at, reading about, and attempting to analyze their work, I have found that all three re-create lived spaces in their unique way as an ode to the significance of these 'ordinary' spaces in constituting our spatial memories and identities. Their works bring the past to the foreground like a ghost, an apparition that seeks closure. They are spaces that want to be remembered for the memories and experiences contained within them.

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<sup>23</sup> Referring to the aforementioned concept *topoanalysis* coined by Bachelard. Bachelard proposes a study of the sites of one's intimate inhabitation in order to gain insight into one's sense of self.

The sentiment behind my project *Rooms* comes from a place of sympathy, gratitude and attachment towards the intimate spaces I have occupied for a period of time. I want to remember these rooms because I want to remember my life and experiences during the time I lived in them. I want to remember my experiences because I want to piece together who I am: "...the ability to tell a coherent story of our life – obviously based on our memories of it – seems synonymous with our concept of identity" (King, 22). What the viewer gets when they engage with this project is hopefully an experience of an unusual autoportrait based on my spatial memories. I offer reckless veyourism into these ghost spaces and hope that there exists a trigger which will encourage the viewers to contemplate their own intimate spaces and memories.

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