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Through collage and three dimensional model sculptures, my work seeks to visually navigate domestic interior and exterior spaces tied to specific childhood memories. I am interested in the visual investigation and recreation of my childhood home and familiar domestic constructions. I describe specific memories by building autonomous domestic structures that include everyday items to indicate common interior and exterior surfaces. I explore both two and three-dimensional space with the use of collage and model making materials. My work employs three dimensional spaces, and the illusion of space to reveal its possibilities; I play with physical space and the illusion of space to support and challenge one another. My written thesis describes my work and process in detail. I will also examine the notion of home and childhood, the influence of my own memories, and the creative impact of artists Ann Toebe and Paul Pfeiffer.

HOME BASE

by

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Approved by

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Committee Chair

## DEDICATION

To my family for their unfailing love and support.

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis written by KATHARINE W. AUSTIN has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

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## HOME BASE

Through collage and three dimensional model making, I subjectively navigate the interior and exterior spaces of my childhood home. These spaces are meaningful as they represent the place where I became who I am. During my first year as a graduate student, I learned my parents were selling my childhood home. Subsequently, I asked myself, “If I never saw my house again, what would I remember of it?” To begin, I painted two small scale sketches from memory; they represented my internal navigation of my home. I included only essential spaces that were necessary for me to recognize and remember my home. As a result, I developed the basis for my thesis; I aim to illustrate a subjective childhood memory through an objective sculptural process. I achieve this by building three dimensional models of childhood events linked to personal domestic spaces from memory.

To start my visual investigation of household spaces and structures, I created small collages that illustrated interior and exterior household spaces simultaneously. From collages, I understood that my process and image were tied. I gessoed, painted and textured strips of color positioned on the wall. To create these colors, I used acrylic, ink, watercolor, guache and molding pastes. I designed these colors without a predetermined image and then stored these strips until needed. With an arsenal of colors, I created collages illustrating a specific location, often including domestic architectural elements,

from memory. These collages reveal vital and intuitive decision making that visually break the picture plane and collapse and compress the interior and exterior spaces; which essentially illustrate both inside and outside. While making my collages, I researched and studied artists like William Christenberry, Milton Avery, Pierre Bonnard and Ann Toebbe. Two dimensional painters and collage artists, like Ann Toebbe, break architectural planes and collapse the perspective to create flattened spatial environments.

Ann Toebbe, a contemporary mixed media and collage artist, creates perplexing domestic interiors through the use of multiple perspectives and utilizing shapes of color and pattern depicting everyday household items. One of Toebbe's works in particular, "*The Grocer's Wife*", 2011, cut paper, paint and glue on paper, recreates household space, furniture and everyday items that are identifiable and provides a sense of location; however, she breaks the space into shapes of color and pattern, which creates a flattened and disorienting space. Toebbe illustrates a birds-eye-view perspective of her domestic living space and then playfully changes the orientation and viewpoint, which generates constant navigation and movement throughout the space. Toebbe investigates and challenges the orientation of the composition and constantly questions which way is up, down, over and under. Similar to this concept, I create two dimensional collages of a physical space where the architectural planes have been flattened and collapsed. The viewer falls into this disorienting space and constantly questions the navigation and location of inside and outside. Similar to Ann Toebbe, I flatten domestic spaces using cut paper, paint and adhesive, break architectural planes and distort physical space using multiple perspectives. I playfully navigate and break the architecture of domestic spaces

using shapes of color relying on my memory and internal navigation of the space. This process is achieved through collage making and constructing and illustrating paper maquettes.

Coinciding with my collages, I constructed small scale paper maquettes of my childhood home. Using cut pieces of blank paper, I formed idiosyncratic paper shapes and created three dimensional maquettes without a preconceived image in mind. Then I playfully matched the inside and outside of the paper to coincide with the interior and exterior spaces of my home in ink. These ink-illustrated, monochromatic paper maquettes exhibited the concept of inside and outside existing simultaneously. They also pushed the illusion of space and depth as the drawings existed on a two dimensional surface, but were a part of a greater three dimensional form. The illustrations alluded to a deeper space that existed on a thin piece of paper, and so I continued to create three dimensional domestic structures, but instead with durable materials and on a larger scale. To achieve this dual spatial concept, I began investigating and studying new artists, like Paul Pfeiffer, whose architectural models visually investigate physical space and the illusion of space.

Paul Pfeiffer, an architectural model maker, builds cinematic domestic spaces and then adds live film of another location to mentally reposition the viewer to another space. Pfeiffer successfully creates a physical and spatial illusion by building large scale model homes, often based from movies, from which he films an interior space from a specific angle. The angled perspective of the viewer coincides with an iconic moment from a notorious film. He then cuts an eye hole into a projected film screen, displaying the



angled interior shot, where the viewer peers in and sees another angle of the same interior, but from a different physical viewpoint. Pfeiffer challenges the viewer to physically place themselves in the model's interior, only to change their position and mentally redirect their attention to a different location within the same model. Though Pfeiffer's models are based on film, he recreates the cinematic spaces from recorded research and from memory as the viewer of the film. This enhances an intimate relationship with the viewer and his work, as the viewer observes and exists in his staged space. Pfeiffer lures the viewer into his projected two dimensional spaces only to transport them to a physical three dimensional location, whereas in my work, the viewer falls into a three dimensionally flattened space; this compression is comprised of multiple perspectives and spaces that exist simultaneously.

My sculptural works illustrates space and the illusion of space. This is achieved by recreating my home from memory, and then merging significant spaces and perspectives into one simultaneous experience. "Memories and the ability to turn them into some new, something momentous, thus becomes a key element...which is dynamically and constantly enriched by the same source." (Lange 7) As I navigate my memory of a structure, I include factual and symbolic elements to these flattened and disassembled spaces, which provide a subjective narrative of the memory to the space.

One sculptural work, "*Porch Perception*" represents the notion of inside and outside domestic space existing simultaneously within a two dimensional surface on a three dimensional scale. This piece illustrates the back porch adjoining the kitchen vestibule. The kitchen window oversees the porch, a platform where individuals enter or

leave. For me, this convergence of space is significant as both domestic locations have similar roles; to exist as neighboring platforms capable of observing both indoor and outdoor activity. I built the porch on a small scale, using old pieces of wood that mimicked the actual weathered surface. However, having recently built a model of the kitchen vestibule, I wanted to build a flat kitchen surface that stood three dimensionally. The flat surface indicated the kitchen by imitating the slanted roof, and then using cut pieces of pre-colored paper, I collaged onto the flat surface on both sides. One side indicated the viewpoint of standing on the porch and looking inside the kitchen window, while the other side illustrated standing inside the kitchen and looking outside onto the porch. Both collages create the illusion of deep space while existing on a two dimensional surface.

Though I encountered several problems attaching the porch and kitchen vestibule together, I decided to rest the vestibule on a paralleling narrow shelf, made out of the same wood as the porch. I also decided to add the residential chipmunk that lives under the porch and eats from our blueberry bush. The chipmunk provides comical subjective narrative to this piece. "*Porch Perception*" represents a convergence of space and medium. This piece combines sculpture and collage, resulting in an outdoor platform that leads directly into a standing two dimensional surface that suggests deep interior space.

Another sculptural work, "*Ring Retrieval*" illustrates the play between physical space and the illusion of space. When I was little, I often dressed up in my mother's closet, often without her knowledge or permission. At some point in time, my mother

discovered the loss of an important gold ring, for which I was ultimately and unjustly blamed for the ring's disappearance. For years, the missing ring haunted me out of guilt. Recently an opportunity arose for me to search my mother's closet for her ring, again without her knowledge or permission. I did not find the ring, but I still believe it is there in my mother's closet. I decided to build my mother's closet and the immediate space surrounding her closet. I built with the intention of placing two small gold rings, one on top of the floorboards of the closet, and one underneath the floorboard of the closet, to acknowledge and emphasize the existence of the ring. I also decided to paint the structure's outside surface dark and the inside closet space with light acrylic paint to illuminate and direct the viewer's attention to the rings. I cut two strategic openings and left the closet door ajar so that the viewer can see the ring from multiple angles. The two rings exist simultaneously and represent the one ring. Furthermore, though the structure is three dimensional, the architectural planes are flattened and lead out to suggest a deeper space. The compressed perspective further distorts the composition to appear both flat and spatial. This structure is significant as it visually represents a household space while illustrating a personal childhood memory.

My collages and sculptures cohesively illustrate personal time and space. I respond to a specific location or moment in my memory, similar to artists like Ann Toebe and Paul Pfeiffer, and I incorporate familiar objects and known places into my work. I am attracted to surface, texture and sculptural forms in architecture. I chose particular childhood memories that are connected with a specific space or location, which is then compressed into a small scale structure. My sculptures, though they appear

isolated, are contextualized by everyday household furniture and architecture. Though my objective construction process reflects subjective memories, I create with the notion of placing the viewer as a physical presence in my house. My structures engage with the viewer as they reveal domestic sensations of return and origin. I construct significant memories that I want to visually pass on through art. My memories and my capacity to transform them into something new, are strengthened by the same foundation, my fixation with my childhood home. I want my profound connection to my home to resonate with the viewer and their innate sense of home.

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