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Home Life: Cultivating a Domestic Aesthetic

Jessica J. Lee

Abstract

Home Life is an exploration of environmental aesthetics as it applies to the domestic realm. I consider Kevin Melchionne's argument that through notions of taste, grace, and performance, everyday domestic chores can become heightened artistic practices. I argue that this does not go far enough in overcoming the traditional view of art as aesthetically superior to popular or everyday artefacts and practices; rather, it encourages the limitations of traditional aesthetics values within the domestic setting. Through examples, including Pauliina Rautio's study on laundry, I consider the possibility that domestic practices are made up of actions that are not performed with a viewer in mind but are completed out of necessity or desire. Synthesizing Arnold Berleant's engagement and Richard Shusterman's soma-aesthetics, I argue that, in addition to sensory engagement, imagination and memory play a crucial role in our experience of domestic life.

Key Words

body-centred environmental aesthetics, domestic engagement, everyday aesthetics

1. Introduction

Consider these scenarios:

Making the bed in the morning, tossing the sheets up into the air and letting the air waft through them: we have seen this image countless times in commercials and films. It attempts to show us that making our beds can be a beautiful experience, replayed in slow motion with the light softly filtering through the window.

Or you might remember making dinner at one time, noticing how pleasing the consistent motion of chopping carrots can be, their slight give and dense crunch under the blade. The warmth of a heated pan and the sizzle of sautéing onions, or the refreshing spurt of cold water from the tap, which slowly starts to bubble and rumble on the stove.

Perhaps you recall the scene from Disney's *Cinderella* in which the young protagonist sings while thoughtfully scrubbing the floor. Bubbles float into the air, reflecting her image before bursting with soapiness onto the floor. Cleaning is made all the better by the lilting song she delights in, and the calm moment to herself, blurring the lines between cleaning and art. The spell is only broken by the fat cat Lucifer, who maliciously tramps over the newly-cleaned floor with muddied paws.

Frequent moans of "I don't want to clean up" and "I can't be bothered to make dinner/do the laundry/take out the rubbish" might be more familiar. Yet each of the previous examples betrays a certain aestheticization of their everydayness, a certain sensory attention that attempts to override the displeasing qualities of domestic drudgery.

This paper is an exploration into the sensual qualities of domestic life, focussing on how environmental aesthetics and a posture of aesthetic engagement can contribute to a richer experience of domestic practices and spaces. The aesthetic here is not only the one through which we make a multitude of daily judgments,^[1] from what to wear, what to buy, how to arrange our coffee tables, but also the small pleasure afforded by the simple *awareness* and presence of mind during our everyday lives. Neither is it simply the lofty feelings enjoyed when we witness a beautiful painting or sculpture. It is in part an effort to restore the meaning of 'aesthetic' to its original connotation: to perceive or sense. This could be as simple as noticing the tactile pleasure of running water while doing the dishes or as complex as associating the smell of a particular soap with a grandparent and therefore taking pleasure in its use.

By critiquing an art-based approach to aesthetics, I hope to demonstrate that, in order to consider sensual and imaginative qualities of domestic activities, one must adopt a model based on *perception itself* rather than on the *objects perceived*. This approach, therefore, might be akin to a Tibetan Shamatha (literally, 'peacefully abiding') meditation practice whereby one is taught simply to be in one's body, noticing one's breath and the sense data received in the moment.^[2] It is a practice of attentiveness and of cultivating inquisitiveness. Yet in domestic aesthetics there must also be the possibility for *contemplation* of sense data, insofar as so much of what individuals find pleasing is composed of past experiences, memories, and nostalgia, ideas often informed by cultural production and context. This kind of exploration by necessity synthesises numerous approaches in current aesthetic theory: Saito's approach to the everyday, Arnold Berleant's model of aesthetic engagement, and Kevin Melchionne's concern with the possibility for cultivating an everyday domestic aesthetic, among others. Further, there is an obvious difficulty in restricting this exploration to the aesthetic. Its catchment extends as far as the therapeutic and self-help, touching the borders between cultural studies, gender studies, and home economics. Recognizing this, I will explore it within the limitations of current aesthetic theory, citing examples from other disciplines only where necessary.

In Sections 2 and 3, I will explore the possibilities and limitations provided by Melchionne's approach to domestic aesthetics, arguing that more attention to the experience of the practitioner is required in order to expose the prevalence of traditional aesthetics in the domestic space. I consider the alternatives presented by Berleant and Richard Shusterman, and argue that an approach that synthesises various methods in aesthetics is necessary if we are to account for the physical body, memory, and imagination.

In Section 4, I will explore the domestic pleasures afforded through a sense of accomplishment, through engagement with surface qualities, and through awareness of tactile, aural, visual, and olfactory sensations in the moment, and how all these are shaped and enhanced through imaginative capacities such as memory and nostalgia. By examining Pauliina Rautio's case study of laundry, I argue that the process of completing the wash offers aesthetic possibilities through a number of

avenues a) by engagement with socially-determined qualities, such as cleanliness; b) by physical engagement with pleasing tactile and olfactory sensations; and c) by imaginative play between memory or ideals and real-time engagement with an activity. The corollary of this exploration is that the aesthetic value of domestic practices must be assessed on the basis of how they are experienced rather than simply on how they constitute artistic practices.

2. Glass Houses

Taking inspiration from Philip Johnson's *Glass House* in Connecticut, Kevin Melchionne's "Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decoration and Environmental Aesthetics" considers the tension between composition and comfort, the notion of the inhabitant as a curator of her or his space, and the relationship between domesticity and grace. Noting that Johnson's house represents the absolute extreme of domestic order, Melchionne discusses the inherent problem with such living arrangements, that is, the house subordinates all goals, particularly liveability, to its artistic vision. This is not solely due to the house's rigid order and composition but also due to its glass walls, which "render the occupant perpetually self-conscious of being watched; the sparseness of the furnishings and the extreme orderliness of the house, where even table-top bric-a-brac are discreetly marked with indications of their correct location, mean that one can never truly feel at home."^[3] In this way, the house undermines the Western association of houses with shelter, privacy, and tranquillity.^[4] It appears to embody Tim Ingold's notion of "the building perspective," wherein composition *precedes* dwelling in the meaningful creation of a space.^[5] Yet Melchionne believes that the *Glass House* can illuminate the ways in which domestic practices, the everyday things that make up *dwelling* or *inhabiting*, can be an artistic practice.

By intensely heightening awareness of itself as a domestic qua artistic space, the Glass House provides an intensified version of what *any* homemaker does. The acts of living, making, and caretaking are all part of what Melchionne terms *homemaking*.^[6] Johnson sets out a composition or arrangement for his household; to rearrange or replace an object incorrectly would disrupt this composition. Obviously, the average homemaker does not inhabit his or her home with such rigidity; any inhabitant who continually and unconsciously returns objects to their assigned spots lives in perfect harmony with their composition. As a 'radical aesthete,' Johnson's embodied experience of this order would not be one of frustration and restriction but rather one of pleasure, indicating that "pleasure resides in the implication of the body in an aesthetically pleasing scheme, not just an experience of space as an aesthetically pleasing visual field."^[7] For the average person, Melchionne notes, such pleasure is derived from the interaction with his or her own living space.^[8] By including the body in his definition of aesthetic pleasure, Melchionne emphasizes the importance of total sensory engagement rather than disinterested, disembodied aesthetics. This is consistent with Berleant's recognition that "[t]he spectator has been transformed into an actor, wholly implicated in the same continuum in which everyone else is involved."^[9] Not only does this continuity extend between an

aesthetically-perceiving body and the world, but also to all other forms of "action, perception, and consciousness."^[10] Further dislocating the notions of the relationship between a traditional art-object and a viewer, Melchionne's assertion also seems consistent with Saito's idea that our aesthetic engagement in daily life is usually not one-pointed but rather multi-dimensional.^[11]

3. Domesticity as Art?

The role of the homemaker in maintaining the order of a space – in preventing the build-up of clutter, so that the order of the composition is not obscured – can be likened to that of a curator. A composition, therefore, must exist before tidying can occur.^[12] Melchionne goes on to point out that "the tidy home *invites* visitors and occupants alike to view it as a work of art."^[13] Melchionne advocates what Ynhui Park refers to as the world "transfigured into an artwork," where art serves as the aesthetic paradigm for the entire world.^[14] Domesticity *itself* might also be viewed as an art, and therefore the entire practice of inhabiting as *aesthetic*. Yet it is not entirely clear why domesticity, and the home, for that matter, needs to be treated *as art* in order to be recognized as aesthetic. Elevating domestic drudgery to the status of art assumes that art is of a higher aesthetic order than domesticity.^[15]

Art and domesticity need not be treated as part of a hierarchy or degree of aesthetic quality. Both belong to the category of that which can be considered aesthetic.^[16] Rather, I wish to emphasize the importance of engagement in both cases, while stressing that neither ought to be considered more or less engaged or particularly *different* in mode of perception or consumption. The way in which they *are* different is in their genesis and construction. Art, in the institutional sense, is generally created with the category of art in mind, while domesticity occurs as a matter of course in daily life. As Yuriko Saito points out, "While a hierarchy may exist among more or less appreciable objects *of the same kind*, there is no inter-kind hierarchy concerning aesthetic values."^[17]

Further, Park explains that "the world-artwork transcends any classification of the form of art and the artistic genre of a particular form of art, and thus comprehends all possible forms of art and all possible genres of a particular form of art into a single unnamable [sic] holistic artwork,"^[18] indicating that the notion of a world-artwork is to be so expansive as to engulf the very category of art itself, thus making the world-artwork "unnamable" and uncategorizable. In this case, then, domesticity understood as artistry, while practicable, cannot be measured against a distinctive category of art.

The risks in treating the everyday or domesticity as aesthetic *only* on the basis of artfulness are numerous. Doing so reifies the belief that art and the aesthetic are continuous or even synonymous. It offers little criticism of the problems of traditional, art-based aesthetics, such as a lack of attention to the participant's embodied experience of a work, the hegemony of vision over the other senses, and the difficulties of attending to composition and organic unity in everyday life. And, lastly, it provides a myriad of cultural stipulations on objects or practices in order to even be considered artful, let alone aesthetically-rich. Furthermore, as Allen Carlson notes,

it is particularly difficult to fit use-objects, which so many domestic objects and practices are, into the label of *work of art* because of their utilitarian quality.[19]

Alternatives to the art-centred model of aesthetics include functional beauty. A toaster might be considered aesthetically appreciable based on how well it makes toast, just as a method for cleaning a dirty bathtub might be considered aesthetic based on how easily it removes grime, the amount of effort required for good results, and whether the method has any side-effects such as bad smell, water pollution, or drain clogging.[20] Yet, quite often simple functionality does not signal aesthetic appeal. Consider, for example, a “threadbare couch, dingy wallpaper” or “chipped dishes and cups, and cracked driveway,” none of which exude aesthetic appeal but still function all the same.[21] Aesthetic appreciation might correlate with objects or practices that do not suit their goals particularly well, such as when we use decorative egg-beaters instead of shiny KitchenAid mixers. The egg-beaters may fulfil the goal of being aesthetically-pleasing and *kitsch*, but they certainly do not fulfil the function of beating as well as the electrical mixer. Similarly, function is not the only link to aesthetic behaviors or judgments, as we might be motivated by both social and aesthetic reasons to clean up our appearances, despite the fact that our clothes and bodies function all the same regardless of stains, stray hairs, or bad breath.[22] In many cases, recognizing and cultivating a relationship between function and aesthetics is valuable,[23] but function cannot be the determining factor for every aesthetic judgment.

Rather, it seems prudent to begin where Melchionne noted aesthetic pleasure resides in the body. Through Berleant’s model of engagement, it is possible to understand domesticity, and art for that matter, on the basis of total involvement rather than on object’s status as art or its functionality.

3. Grace and the On-Looker

Melchionne’s call for the aesthetic enrichment of domestic labor is followed by his advocacy of *grace*. The possibility for grace resides in the cultivation of good habits, discussed above. “Grace enters into domestic practice when a homemaker seeks to accentuate or, at least, retain the spectacular dimension of a space without destroying the equilibrium of labor and pleasure rooted in habit. In short, the homemaker seeks to inhabit a beautiful space without becoming a slave to it.”[24] In this way, a tension between habit and spectacle, and particularly between liveability and composition, must be maintained. Grace is specifically located, therefore, between the “fresh eyes of the visitor and the embodied pleasures of habit accessible only to the occupant.”[25] One must go about his or her daily tasks with “an economy of effort,” removing the appearance of drudgery from domestic tasks and elevating them to the level of well-styled gracefulness. A balance is therefore struck between effort and the appearance of effort, as is required in the case of successfully entertaining guests.[26] In this sense, “The aestheticization of domestic process likens it to a performance.” But this performance, Melchionne argues, is not simply for the pleasure of the on-looker, but also for the

homemaker, who takes pleasure in the process.[27] While Melchionne affords the homemaker some pleasure in the performance of domesticity, it is on the basis of grace and artfulness, rather than on the basis of his or her own everyday experience. Domesticity, here, is artful as a performance, working only from within the reaches of an art-based model of aesthetics.

But, as Paul Souriau notes in *The Aesthetics of Movement*, grace often takes *more* effort rather than less, more in order to give the *appearance* of ease and effortlessness.[28] Souriau explains that simply exhibiting vague qualities of ease or effortlessness do not necessarily amount to gracefulness; rather, gracefulness is the effect of certain qualities, including "conformity with *personal habits*," which may not be limited to the artful choreography described above.[29] Finally, Souriau asserts that the actual appearance of gracefulness depends upon an elegance in movement and an avoidance of "gauche or embarrassed" actions, but that when this elegance is *put on* or overtly intended, it is certainly not graceful. "Naturalness is an essential condition of grace. The most elegant gesture will not please me as much if I feel it is done with a preoccupation with elegance: it is no longer freedom of movement, no longer perfect ease." [30] One must act within the bounds of one's own comfort and on one's own basis, constructing a balance of behaviors and domestic order that suits oneself.

There exists a delicate balance between spontaneity and choreography within our domestic lives simply because, for many, a taste for aesthetic balance demands it. This is demonstrated by the often precarious balance between order and disorder in our organizational regimes, and in the work of negotiating composition and liveability in a domestic space. Excesses of mess, clumsiness, orderliness, and perfection are often experienced as too extreme for an inhabitant. Saito goes as far as to say that "there is something almost inhuman and repugnant about the sign of order that controls every inch of space or every moment of our life. The reverse also holds true; that is, an environment or a life that lacks any order or discernible organization is not appreciable." [31] But as she goes on to point out, "Our appreciation of order and mess thus does not seem to be directed towards those qualities in themselves. It is rather toward the way in which we negotiate between exerting control over these inevitable natural processes and accepting them by submitting ourselves to such processes." [32] In this sense, we seek balance in the surface qualities of our domestic spaces not solely for the sake of cleanliness and messiness themselves, but rather because the balance between the two is often more pleasurable.

A similar balance, I believe, applies to our domestic routines, insofar as gracefully choreographing the way we clean the bathroom might seem delightful if performed for an audience, but often we are simply attempting to get a job done and cannot be bothered to do it with grace and design. We may instead attend to the negative aesthetic qualities of some housework, attending to it *on* its own terms and without the added stipulation of choreography. Does this mean that the aesthetic value is diminished? No, because the aesthetic value in the choreographed and ordered scenario is determined by its visual appeal to onlookers, while the spontaneous scenario

gives itself over to function and need, affording the possibility of aesthetic attention. It is more valuable to focus on the experience of the inhabitants *themselves*, since, barring dinner parties or houseguests or times when we *do* put on certain behavior, we rarely go about our household activities as if for an audience. Imagine subjecting your neighbors to the ins and outs of your toilet-cleaning regime! For the inhabitant, the entire gamut of sensory data,, both negative and positive, is experienced not just through the visual senses but also through the entire body in our movements. By focussing primarily on the sensory engagement of the inhabitant, it is possible to generate awareness of the aesthetic possibilities of our domestic routines, however clumsy or unlikely they might seem.

Richard Shusterman notes that body consciousness and somaesthetic reflection have traditionally been discouraged by Platonic Western philosophy, [33] but advocates a renewed awareness of the body as a method for cultivating enjoyment and combating a growing reliance on outside stimulations.[34] A balanced approach between reflective awareness of one's interactions with the world and unreflective awareness in spontaneous, unchoreographed action provides a method through which aesthetic awareness within the domestic sphere might be cultivated. As he notes, a focus on one's body as foreground necessarily involves a feeling of one's environmental background, indicating a "vision of an essentially situated, relational and symbiotic self." [35] Shusterman further affirms that habit and bodily movement *do* and *must* respond to a body's situatedness in an environment, because these external stimuli contribute to the possibilities and limitations afforded to the body. [36] But he underscores the importance of a certain *unconsciousness* that would leave room for spontaneity, thus preventing daily life from becoming entirely unwieldy or unmanageable. Deliberate attention to one's actions, while increasing the possibility for graceful action, requires increased effort in order to break habitual body patterns and maintain fixed attention. [37]

Likewise, as Berleant notes, "Deliberate attention to perceptual qualities is a central mark of the aestheticThe physical senses play an active part, not as passive channels for receiving data from external stimuli but as an integrated sensorium." [38] This deliberate attention or engagement advocated by Berleant amounts to an awareness of engagement as it happens. This emphasis on continuity between body and environment is crucial in order to overcome the tyranny of performing for others, thus affording the participant with a greater awareness of his or her own body, activity, and environment. Through a renewed attention to our engagement, it is possible to cultivate more aesthetic possibility. Furthermore, it would theoretically *reactivate* the senses branded as passive, like smell, taste, and touch. [39]

The entirety of the human sensorium is engaged in this domestic exchange and gives rise not solely to the apprehension of sensation but also to an understanding and experience of place and situatedness. The olfactory, gustatory, and haptic senses contribute to experience, as do more somatic sensations of the muscles and bones. The synaesthesia of these forms of perception amounts to an

environmental perception that engages the entirety of the sensorium. So, Berleant writes, "We become part of environment through interpenetration of body and place." [40]

Surface qualities and immediate sense data, however, are "unavoidably superficial"[41] if taken alone as the single characteristic of environmental perception, for social, physiological, and psychological factors also shape and determine our experience. "Human perception blends memories, beliefs, and associations, and this range of meanings deepens experience." [42] It is necessary, therefore, to consider the ways in which imagination and memory play a role in our cultivation of a domestic aesthetic.

4. On Laundry

Pauliina Rautio's recent study of beauty in everyday life indicates that hanging laundry, for one member of her study, engages not solely the bodily senses in an interaction with the environment but also the imagination and memory in appreciating that interaction. [43] Laundry-hanging remains a routine practice with qualities of *repetition, meaning-making, and aesthetic value*.

The practice of hanging laundry, while still common throughout Europe, has grown into relative obscurity in much of urban and suburban North America, yet the aesthetic possibilities of the practice are multi-fold. As Saito notes:

Laundry hanging is an activity that we literally engage in. It is instructive that many writings in praise of this activity point out that it is a delightful experience both for aesthetic creativity and contemplation. Many claim that there is an "art" to laundry hanging, such as creating an order by hanging similar kind of things or items of the same color together or by hanging objects in order of size. Furthermore, the reward of skillful laundry hanging is also aesthetic: the properly hung clothes retain their shape and carefully stretching clothes before hanging minimizes wrinkles. Finally, the fresh smell of sun-soaked clothes and linens cannot be duplicated by scented laundry detergent or softener. [44]

That supporters of laundry-hanging now appeal to our sensory and imaginative faculties through color, smell, and memory is telling.

In Rautio's lengthy exploration of laundry, the author introduces a woman's letters documenting beauty in her everyday life. Laura's letters are disproportionately weighted to the subject of laundry, among other things, and convey the moments of serenity, sensory or imaginative delight, and at-oneness resulting from the act of hanging laundry on the line. The laundry line, for Laura, marks a physical space of belonging and a place that serves as a constant in an ever-changing world. In particular, it is through the routine of doing the laundry that Laura marks the seasons:

The moment that you can start taking laundry outside to dry, [sic] marks the beginning of spring and makes a concrete change on the level of daily chores. It is

however not a set date when it happens but depends on a number of seasonal weather factors. There is solemnity in the concrete affirmation of spring approaching. There is also solemnity in the ease with which the changes in the season are noticed. Such an ease tells of being in tune with one's environment.[45]

Laura finds herself immersed in an environment with seasons, a multitude of haptic and olfactory data, and plentiful memorial and imaginative associations. Rautio goes on to explain that, for Laura, laundry does not simply seem to be aesthetically constituted of tactile qualities, but rather is largely evocative of her aesthetic imagination. Emily Brady refers to this as the perceptual qualities of an object and the imaginative capacities of a perceiver coming "together to direct appreciation." [46] The idea that emotions are tied to the practice and space of the laundry line illustrates Dewey's notion that "emotions are attached to events and objects in their movement. They are not, save in pathological instances, private." [47]

Laura marks a contemplative ceremony in laundry-hanging, noting the sensory pleasure gained in just noticing her environment and bodily interactions with it. [48] In addition to engaging with the immediate sensory environment, she marks her experience of beauty with imaginative or nostalgic contemplation. This indicates that she experiences this aesthetic engagement *through* contemplative distance and serenity, but not through total disinterestedness. She takes her memories, emotions, and thoughts *with her*. In her being open to her surroundings, to the ways objects might appear, feel, smell, or sound delightful and invite memories, aesthetic possibilities arise. It is because of this openness and awareness that we might see aesthetically-valuable experience emerging from the integration of sense data with an imaginative sense or consciousness. She enacts Brady's notion that "imagination encourages a variety of possible perceptual perspectives...[and] perception also supports the activity of imagination by providing the choreography of our imaginings." [49] The possibility for aesthetic pleasure, in this case, resides in the perceiver.

Thomas Leddy, in his work on surface qualities of aesthetic objects and environments, argues that everyday aesthetic judgments are constituted by the properties of neat, messy, clean/unclean, ordered/disordered; the list goes on. [50] The aesthetic engagement with everyday tasks, such as laundry, takes place on the basis of these judgments; we wash our clothes because they are dirty, and having clean clothes is generally more pleasing. Laundry takes on aesthetic significance in its movement from one surface aesthetic pole to another: from dirty to clean, and again, in the cycle of wear, from clean to dirty.

Yet as Rautio points out, this is only *one* of the ways in which laundry garners aesthetic attention. Laura's interest in hanging laundry, which is only a fraction of the entire process of doing laundry, rests in the wider scope of how the activity reminds her of her environment, generates a sense of ease and belonging (her children playing, her laundry hanging on the line) and evokes an almost nostalgic sense of domestic life and

homemaking for her family. As her letters describe these moments, it emerges that this sense of aesthetic pleasure or satisfaction is developed specifically from certain plays of color and light, texture, and arrangement of the laundry items. She takes pleasure in arranging her children's clothes according to their moods, enjoys matching the clothes pegs to the items, and notices the surrounding colors of the yard across which her laundry line spans. In this sense, she is aesthetically engaged with surface qualities, tactile features, visual arrangements, and her own memories. Each of these enters into an imaginative play in the sense that Richard Kearney describes the aesthetic as originating in the play of imagination. [\[51\]](#)

It is through imaginative play that an activity completed numerous times becomes something new and pleasurable for Laura; it is fluid and is perceived differently each time. "Laura seems to feel her new solitude through dwelling extensively on colors, scents, and sounds. And in doing so, all that surrounds her routine task seems to unfold as if new. She notices her yard in a new way through a single color. The things she picks up as if new are plain have been there all along." [\[52\]](#) It is in this posture of engagement, completely kinaesthetically and imaginatively, that Laura's simple routine of hanging laundry takes on significance apart from other tasks.

5. Conclusion

In "Building Dwelling Thinking," Heidegger writes that dwelling "remains for man's everyday experience that which is from the outset 'habitual'." [\[53\]](#) Here, we have seen that the cultivation of a domestic aesthetic takes its root in the notion that the way in which we dwell arises out of habit. In our habitual patterns of dwelling, from cooking to cleaning to resting, we draw together activities, people, ideas, and places. We make a *house* into a *home*.

Through an exploration of current perspectives in environmental aesthetics, I argued that a domestic aesthetic must take into account the experience of the dweller rather than solely the detached experience of a guest or viewer. In this way, one might take an approach to aesthetics that acknowledges the myriad of sense data available through a number of household activities. It undercuts the need for an art-based aesthetic within the domestic sphere. By removing the significance of the traditional audience or viewer and emphasizing the experience of the participant, one is able to overcome the difficulties presented by an art-led hierarchy of aesthetics. By emphasizing aesthetic engagement, one is able to shift the focus from the object of aesthetic judgment to the practice of engagement and the participant, forming a continuity between body and environment.

Engagement with a place and activity stimulates memories, associations, and our sense of timing. The colors, temperatures, and physical settings of laundry, for Laura, help her develop a sense of place, season, and emotion. In many ways, her emotional state is related to the practice of laundry-hanging, in that certain physical aspects of the practice stimulated memories or thoughts, which in turn instilled a feeling of peace, belonging, and contentment in Laura. Our imaginative associations spring from the more foundational

experience of tactile, visual, and olfactory sensations. For example, it is through the practice of hand-washing our clothes that we are connected not solely with the sensory stimulation of water, soap, and cloth, but also with our shared imaginings of washer-women throughout history, the domestic ideals presented by past ages, and our own personal ideals of domesticity. These ideals are themselves expressed in and through our cultural imaginings of them in everyday life and cultural production.

Like Heidegger's dwellers, we strive to make connections. We do not necessarily clean the house for the sake of cleanliness itself, we clean for our own satisfaction and to make our homes more comforting for ourselves and others. Likewise, meal preparation is not simply perfunctory, but serves the goal of sensory pleasure too. We connect our necessary actions to our pleasurable sensations and to the imaginative associations they conjure up. As Heidegger's distinction between building and construction reveals, in dwelling we do more than just construct our homes. We stay with them, care for them, turn them into places of meaning and meaning-making; our aesthetic sense of the home arises in this process.

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Endnotes

[1] It is this version of the everyday aesthetic with which Saito is primarily concerned. See Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[2] Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, "Shamatha Meditation: Training the Mind," *Shambhala Sun*, May 2002, http://shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2137 > http://shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2137 (accessed August 22, 2009).

[3] Kevin Melchionne, "Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decoration and Environmental Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56, 2 (Spring 1998), 191-200; ref. on 191-192.

[4] This association can be traced from antiquity until roughly the present. See Hannah Arendt, "The Public and Private Realm," in *The Human Condition*, 22-78 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

[5] Tim Ingold, *The Perception of Environment: Essays in*

livelihood, dwelling and skill (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 179. One ought to note that Ingold, too, argues that the "building perspective" is problematic and undermines the importance of "the dwelling perspective."

[6] Melchionne, "Living in Glass Houses," 192.

[7] *Ibid.*, 193.

[8] *Ibid.*, Although, he notes, the possibility of this on practical levels usually restricts such pleasure to single persons who both live alone and can afford to maintain an artistic order.

[9] Arnold Berleant, *Art and Engagement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), pp. 59-60.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

[11] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 123.

[12] Melchionne, "Living in Glass Houses," 194-195.

[13] *Ibid.*, 195.

[14] Ynhui Park, "The Transfiguration of the World into an Artwork: A Philosophical Foundation of Environmental Aesthetics," in *Real World Design: The Foundation and Practice of Environmental Aesthetics*, ed. Yrjö Sepänmaa (Lahti: University of Helsinki, 1995), 13-20; ref. on 13.

[15] See Katya Mandoki's *Everyday Aesthetics* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007) for a more detailed treatment of the problem of the aesthetic when treated as synonymous with art.

[16] Yrjö Sepänmaa, *The Beauty of Environment: A general model for environmental aesthetics* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1986), p. 18.

[17] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 129.

[18] Park, "The Transfiguration of the World into an Artwork," p. 20.

[19] Allen Carlson, "On Aesthetically Appreciating Human Environments," in *The Aesthetics of Human Environments*, ed. Arnold Berleant and Allen Carlson (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2007), 47-65; ref. on p. 49.

[20] Glenn Parsons and Allen Carlson, *Functional Beauty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008), pp. 91-100.

[21] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 159.

[22] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 160.

[23] See, for example, Yuriko Saito, "The Role of Aesthetics in Civic Environmentalism," in *The Aesthetics of Human Environments*, (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2007) pp. 203-218.

[24] Melchionne, "Living in Glass Houses," 197.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] *Ibid.*, 198.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] Paul Souriau, *The Aesthetics of Movement*, trans. Manon Souriau (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983), p. 83.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 86. *Emphasis mine.*

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 92.

[31] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 173.

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] Richard Shusterman, "Body Consciousness and Performance: Somaesthetics East and West," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 67, no. 2 (Spring 2009), 133-145: ref. on 135. See also, Richard Shusterman, "The Silent, Limping Body of Philosophy: Somatic Attention Deficit in Merleau-Ponty," in *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 49-76, and pp. 4-5 of Shusterman's introduction.

[34] Shusterman, *Body Consciousness*, p. 6.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 190.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 178.

[38] Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), p. 14.

[39] Yi-Fu Tuan, "Place: An Experiential Perspective," *Geographical Review* 65, no. 2 (April 1975), 151-165; ref. on 152.

[40] Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, p. 17.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

[43] Pauliina Rautio, "On Hanging Laundry: The Place of Beauty in Managing Everyday Life," *Contemporary Aesthetics* 7 (2009).

[44] Yuriko Saito, "The Power of the Aesthetic" (paper presented at the *VIII International Summer School of Applied Aesthetics*, Lahti, Finland, June 15-18, 2008).

[45] Rautio, "On Hanging Laundry," Section 3.

[46] Emily Brady, "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," in *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*, eds. Allen Carlson and Arnold Berleant, (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004), pp. 156-169; ref. on p. 161.

[47] John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee Books, 1980), p. 42.

[48] Rautio, "On Hanging Laundry," Section 3.

[49] Brady, "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," p. 161.

[50] Thomas Leddy, "Everyday Surface Qualities: Neat, Messy, Clean, Dirty," in *The Aesthetics of Human Environments*, ed. Arnold Berleant and Allen Carlson (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2007), pp. 163-174; ref. on p. 163.

[51] Richard Kearney, *The Poetics of Imagining: Modern to Post-Modern* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998).

[52] Rautio, "On Hanging Laundry," Section 4.

[53] Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Basic Writings*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), 343-364; ref. on p. 349.