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**THE ENIGMA MACHINE:**  
UNRAVELLING THE DOMESTIC EXPERIENCE

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For my parents

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## Nothing is contained

I need the Universe as background.

We float.

### I) Think atmosphere

Noises,

Scratches, scrapings.

TVs going on, switching off.

Ghost writing on the wall

Strange occurrences

The lights flickering on/off

### II) Think noise

Think big THUMP

Think heavy boots marching

Think TV screen pyramids, from wall  
to ceiling

Think bigger than big

Think a speaker, with a microphone and  
the sound of thundering applause.

A little dog hops once, twice and  
jumps through a flaming hoop.

### III) Think quiet!

There's a dripping, dripping,  
constant rattles, constant goings-on,  
watch ticking

A mixer switches on, twirling a netted  
knotted skirt, and switches off.

Someone coughs.

On the TV screen, a tiny glimpse of  
fear followed by the sound of  
hundreds of shopping trolleys.

The sound of a piano drifts on the hot  
evening air.

Scales, arpeggios, a simple melody.

## INTRODUCTION

In today's capitalist society, the environment of the home has become increasingly insular. Though there may be television, Internet and other forms of technology that connect one to the 'outside world', time spent indoors is for many people time spent alone. My body of work is concerned with an individual's experience within the confines of the home, where the exterior (physical space) becomes a reflection of the individual's interior experience.

The home takes on the function of an enigma machine<sup>1</sup> when it becomes a device that constantly encodes human responses. Its workings can become mysterious, for instance, when one ordinary household activity sets off a stream of events, or when its familiar aspects become strange. At its extreme the home can be a 'lethal landscape'<sup>2</sup> when familiar objects take on a menacing character. Unravelling the domestic experience becomes a means to reveal the undercurrents of a 'normal' existence. In my view the home is not a neutral stage on which events unfold. Instead the home shapes us, as we continue with our daily lives. The home becomes an arena in which physical and emotional energy is transferred and animated.

In my view, domestic space is the setting for dynamic interchange. A domestic space<sup>3</sup> is not fixed – it is constantly reinterpreted conceptually, emotionally and in the imagination. I argue that although a domestic space is often accepted as synonymous with boredom and the mundane, it offers the potential for creativity and liberated forms of expression. In my investigation of domestic space, I took into account my experience of isolation and emotional interaction with my environment. I also considered the traditional female presence within the home, and how this may impact on my own (female) interpretation. It is this vision that animates and empowers the series of interlinked, and separate, artworks described in this dissertation.

In the first chapter, I examine the theories that support my creative body of work. The first section offers an explanation of 'lived'<sup>4</sup> space. Subjects are affected by their relation to spaces, therefore domestic spaces are dynamic because there is an interaction between subject and environment. As my concern lies with a subjective experience within the home, I will establish the human subject as embodied – one that is always implicated in her/his surroundings – and engendered<sup>5</sup> – where gender forms an important part of the subject's identity. The myth of the objective 'neutrality' of the Cartesian subject has already been exposed, but needs to be reaffirmed within the present context, in order to speak of identity in terms other than subject/object or binary relationships.

<sup>1</sup> The Enigma Machine was a coding device used by Nazi Germany in World War II. Deciphering the Enigma Machine is seen as one of the decisive events that led to Allied victory (Dodd and Kelso 2000).

<sup>2</sup> I take this term from the series of work by Tony Oursler by the same title (Janus & Maure 2001), showing photographs of ordinary landscapes – a suburban road or a pavement – referring to the fear and danger that lurk within familiar surroundings.

<sup>3</sup> The terms 'domestic space' and 'the home' are interchangeable, although 'domestic space' is a more defined focus on the routine aspects of the home.

<sup>4</sup> I base my understanding of 'lived' space on the theory of Henri Lefebvre (1991b).

<sup>5</sup> The 'engendered' subject is explained in feminist spatial theory (Duncan 1996, Meskimon 1997). The usage of 'engendered' refers to its meaning 'to cause or give rise to' (Pearsall 2001:611) and also implies 'to reproduce sexually' (Meskimon 1997:1). In other words gender difference is present – subjects are not 'gender-neutral' (ibid.).

FIG. 1 (PREVIOUS PAGE): MONDAY AND TUESDAY

Installation view, Upstairs gallery, Michaelis School of Fine Art, Cape Town.

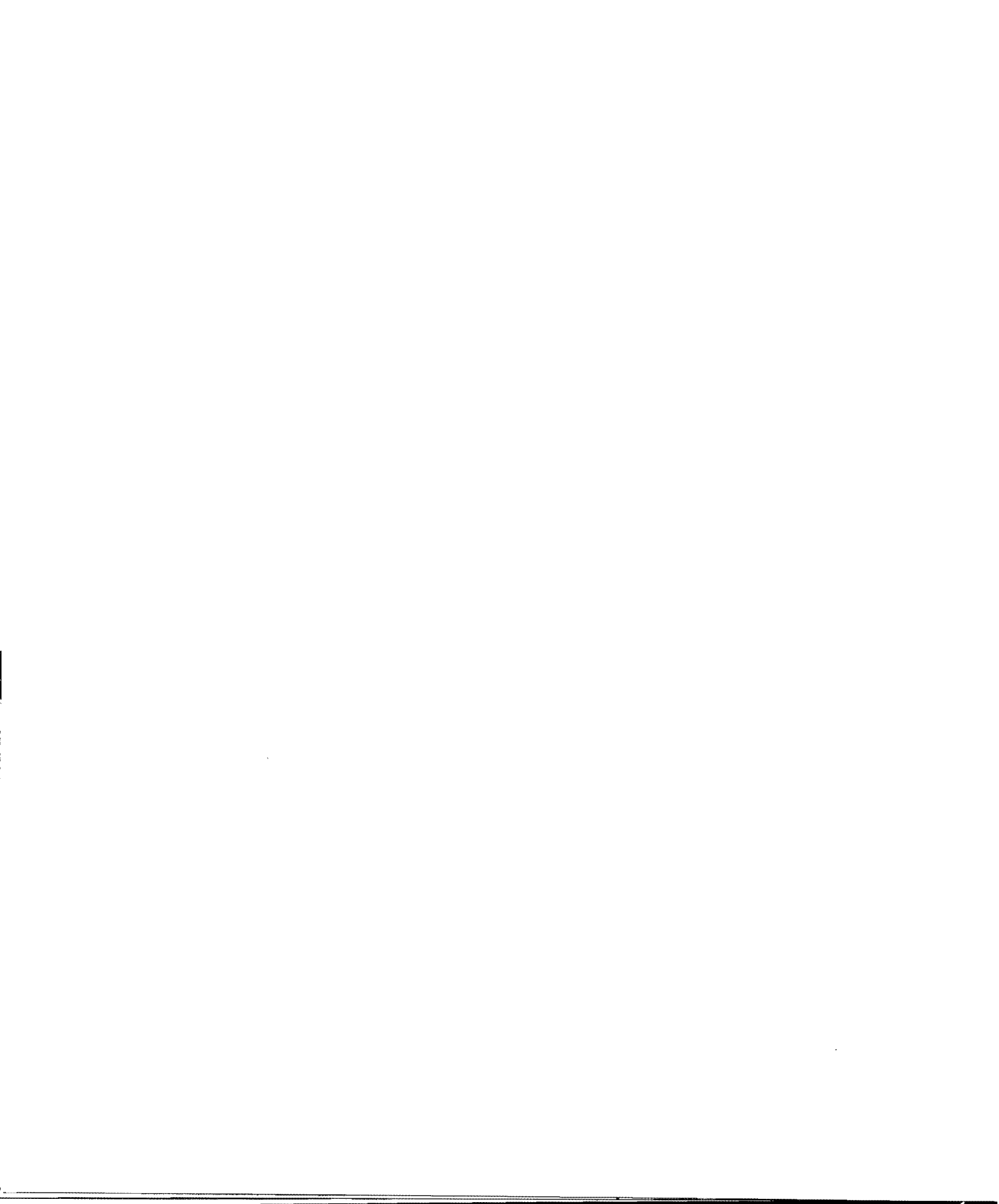
In the second section I argue for an experience of domestic space that is often conflicting where household routine is concerned. The idea that routine can be subverted is proposed in theories on everyday life, but often counteracted by the idea that humans are mechanisms in the social structure. The routine character of housekeeping can be viewed as a moral obligation, a ritual that enforces the status quo. I outline the traditional domestic space and its female presence, in order to show the workings of the ideological machinery – advertising, moral values and futuristic ideals. Following on, I point to ways that these overarching means of control can be re-interpreted and personalised.

The third section considers the issue of technology, arguing that technology can be viewed as something outside human process, or as an extension of human process, and therefore embedded in the social process. The technological ideal is to have repetitive work performed by machines, leaving humans free to pursue more challenging and stimulating aspects of work, or to have extended leisure time. This section examines whether technology fulfils its creative promise. I argue that, in the context of the home, the creative possibilities of household appliances are minimised through established practices. Gender issues, too, intersect with the discussion of technology in the home. I use the bachelor machine paradigm as a device to show how human identity can be personified by the machine, as perceived in the work of the Dadaists. Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray are singled out to describe the ambiguous gender of machines, and I extend the bachelor machine paradigm to the contemporary timeframe by including the work of Rebecca Horn.

In the fourth section I focus on the subjective experience within domestic space. The home is described as a container for emotional states and relates to a female experience. Furthermore, emotional and mental states are reflected in the domestic environment, which could include feelings of anxiety, insularity or insecurity within the subject. The fictional home refers to a situated experience which is different for each subject. I argue that ordinary domestic routine can open up to the imagination, revealing the magical in the everyday. In this way, the domestic experience can be perceived as fertile soil for ideas and creativity.

The second chapter aims to contextualise my work within contemporary art. I discuss the installation as art practice, and situate my work within this practice. My understanding of spatial relations as laid out in chapter one is linked closely to this section. In the second section of this chapter, I refer to artists working with the home as their subject. The discussion refers to use of materials, interpretations of subjectivity within domestic spaces and the use of absurd humour, which relates to my work.

The third chapter is an explanation of my creative work. In the first section I describe the work, before discussing its central ideas in detail. The fourth chapter is an outline of the methods and processes used in the work, which are further elaborated on in the discussion of the individual works. The techniques used to make the work are intricately linked to the content, as is the choice of materials. I include technical information on the mechanical animation of the work and its components. The fifth and final chapter discusses the individual works in detail.



## **THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

## A. SPATIAL THEORY AND THE EMBODIED SUBJECT

### Contextualising domestic spaces as dynamic

Spaces are dynamic where human emotions, relations and experience of the space are concerned, to the extent that one could even question the concept of domestic space as a stable area within the fixed parameters of the home's architecture and societal structures. Instead, domestic space, like any other space, is a 'lived' space (Lefebvre 1991); it becomes invigorated by the changing relationship between its inhabitant(s) and the physical space.

The subject is that which experiences and lives the space in which it is entangled; in other words, the subject is produced along with and in relation to its lived space (Henri Lefebvre quoted in Nunes 1997).

Much has been written on the urban space in terms of how people relate experientially to a constructed environment. Of the precursors to current theorists on the urban milieu, the Situationist International deserves to be mentioned<sup>6</sup>. Influenced by the teachings of Lefebvre, the Situationists investigated the relation between lived space, consciousness and behaviour in an urban setting, which they termed psychogeography. Or: 'the active study of mental states and spatial ambiances produced by the material organisation of the urban terrain' (Kaplan & Ross 1987:2). Their wanderings involved an immersion in spatial forms rather than a distant intellectualising of their effects. The Situationists stressed that the city is an 'intertextual, performative entity' (Enwezor 1999:20) and not only the appearance of its material structure (ibid.). Their conception of the city in these spatial terms shows a perception of space that differs from the modernist model.

At the dawn of the age of modernism, with the advent of steam-locomotion and the subsequent technological advances involving electricity and mechanical production, speed became paramount and time was reconfigured. The city became the antithesis of a domestic space that embodied familiarity and comfort. In the progressive expressions of modernism, the city was the future (Asendorf 1993, Meskimmon 1997). The concept of space in modernist terms signified a concrete, stable and fixed entity. Time, on the other hand, was characterised by mobility and flexibility (Harvey 1989:205). Space was a pre-existent given wherein temporal processes (history) took place (ibid.). In recent years, however, the appeal of time over space has shifted and another concept of space has evolved.

Looking at recent writings on the concept of space, especially the idea of 'social space', it is evident that this shift has altered the way that different disciplines view the idea of space. In social theories, especially in the last decade, space is recognised as an active force in the cultural process. The writings of Henri Lefebvre are receiving renewed attention as a model for contemporary studies (Nunes 1997). According to Lefebvre, space can be understood as not static, but rather produced together with its user or inhabitant. For Lefebvre (1991b) the essence lies in the 'social space' of lived action. Time remains an important factor, but it is the production of space that defines the social. Subjects

<sup>6</sup> The Situationists operated for a brief period, during which their activities were controversially linked to the May 1968 student uprisings in France.

are both in a space and moving through it, insofar as social space is not a fixed entity, but exists as a set of relations between products and objects. Lefebvre argues for a triad of concepts that define his understanding of space: spatial practice (perceived space), representations of space (conceived space) and representational space (lived space) (1991b:38-39). Nunes explains spatial practice as a set of relations between subjects and objects in space, and representations of space as the relations between 'lived' space and a 'conceptual framework'. Representational space, or 'third space', Lefebvre explains, is known as experiential space and it lies between the material (physical space) and the imagination (mental space). It is to this flexible space that studies of material culture refer when speaking of the active agency of the home, the home as 'source and setting for mobility and change' and the 'transformation of the home as vital to the transformation of social relations' (Miller 2001a:2). A domestic space, like urban space, is dynamic: even as the habits and rituals of the home are performed incessantly, there is opportunity for disruption and change.

### **The performance of gender – the embodied subject**

According to Lefebvre's model of productive space, subjects exist in a space that is 'neither empty nor neutral' (Meskimmon 1997:1). Therefore the fixedness of domestic space and the subjects within it can be challenged in favour of an 'intertextual, performative' relationship. Such a reading of space falls within post-structuralist discourse, and is instructive in redefining gender identities in terms other than oppositional. Space becomes an 'organising metaphor' (ibid.) for people's relations with one another. One's position and relation to space and objects within a space defines one's identity. In such an arrangement, identity is a process that evolves; it is not predetermined (ibid.). Spatial theories have proved useful in rethinking gender, in order to shift boundaries and stratified notions of sexuality (Duncan 1996). After reconsidering the domestic space as social process, the home can be viewed not as a bastion of social values but as a mechanism which produces subjects. However, the domain of the home is burdened by social definitions. Foremost, it is defined as a feminine space.

The Cartesian set of oppositions was used as a structuring principle to define gender and to construct hierarchies (Alcoff 1996). In Western culture, from the time of the Enlightenment, and even before, rational thought was valued above emotion. In the dualist world view, masculinity named for itself technology, reason, culture. Femininity was seen to be secondary, and woman took upon herself domesticity, emotions and nature. It is worth investigating the influence of these dualities on our perceptions, to establish what constitutes the feminine, and by extension domesticity and nature.

It can be argued that the Cartesian set of oppositions constantly needs to be challenged as these associations still stand (ibid.). At the time of its invention, the split between mind and body was necessary to establish the rational objective observer and a universal knowledge base. The body, with its immediate preoccupations, was seen as a hindrance in the quest for pure knowledge. Other oppositions followed: inside/outside, private/public, periphery/centre, and so forth. But these oppositions were used to construct gender roles that were fixed in their differences, and which placed the masculine in an advantaged position over the feminine and the Other (Duncan 1996:2). In order to break these

boundaries down, the Cartesian subject has had to be displaced. Feminist, post-structural and post-colonial theories have influenced the repair of the mind/body split and the search for a different model for understanding the world, one which could incorporate difference. In the postmodern paradigm a subject has emerged that is embodied and engendered, where race, sex, class and location make up the identity of the subject, which evolves as a process. Sexual difference (a disputed term in feminist circles)<sup>7</sup> is then read as constitutive of the individual's subjectivity and should not be erased in gender theories. Judith Butler (1990) describes gender as a performative social effect, practised through the repetition of gender norms. Furthermore, she argues that gender categories are unstable, and have to be so, in order to incorporate the complexity of the categories 'women' and 'men'.

I have argued for a rethinking of gender construction that is not fixed, but embodied and engendered. In such a way gender can be seen as performative. There are sexual differences, but 'femininity' and 'masculinity' are cultural constructs.

## B. DOMESTIC ROUTINE – MAINTENANCE AND OBLIGATION

### Domesticity, morality and the illusion of the ideal home

Historically, such human beings have existed. Human beings who have worked – worked hard – all their lives with no other motive than their love and devotion, who have literally given their lives for others out of love and devotion. Human beings who have not sense of having made any sacrifice; who cannot imagine any other life than giving their life for others – out of love and devotion. In general, such human beings are invariably women (Houellebecq 2000, 106-107).

#### *When I make myself imagine*

When I make myself imagine what it is like to be one of those women who live at home, faithfully serving their husbands – women who have not a single exciting prospect in life yet who believe they are perfectly happy – I am filled with scorn. Sei Shonagon, *The Pillow Book*, c. 1000 AD (Ozeki: 1998:17)

Through the ages, women's lives have centred on 'this holy trinity – husband, home and family' (Miles 1988:170). From a Western, historical, patriarchal perspective, women's designated role has been to care for, and nurture. Therefore traditionally, the 'spaces of femininity' were domestic interiors (Pollock 1988)<sup>8</sup>. Whereas domestic space was gendered feminine (see Fig. 2), the bustle and movement of the city was seen as 'her' masculine counterpart (Meskimmon 1997:1). In my own experience, a domestic space still signifies a female presence, though not exclusively a female space.

The domestic, as referring to 'the running of a home or to family relations' (Pearsall 2001:876) is hardly a space for adventure. The home is generally seen as a place of familiarity, what one comes home to. Ideally, I would say, the home is seen as a place for nurturing, safety, protection, comfort, warmth, family unity and relaxation. The media propagates this image of the home and the

<sup>7</sup> If focusing on sexual difference may strengthen inequality between the sexes.

<sup>8</sup> Pollock (1988) argues that, from the 18th century, public spaces became increasingly 'mystified and threatening' but also more 'exciting and sexualised'. For bourgeois women these spaces became 'morally' dangerous. Pollock sees the boundaries of bourgeois city not only as a gendered male/female polarity, but also as areas where social class intersects with perceptions of gendered spaces.

FIG. 2: SELF-PORTRAIT (1932)

CLAUDE CAHUN

Gelatin silver print. 10 x 7.7 cm. Collection of John Wakham, Jersey (de Zagar 1996)



capitalist state supports the norm of a stable nuclear family, which in turn reinforces the current ideology. Through advertising, for instance, images of domestic bliss and the perfect family life are a glaring reminder of the imperfections of actual family relations and the discomfort of the home. My interest in domesticity arises from the recognition of a paradox that defined my own relation to the home. The paradox lies in the cultural concept of 'home': what it should be (according to the governing principles that structure society at any given time) and what it is, the ideal and the real. The 'images of perfection' that advertising and the media roll out in endless succession with constant adaptations<sup>9</sup> are not the focus here. Rather, I will focus on the net that ensnares and elaborates the female experience in the home.

The home is a Western cultural construct informed by religious values – a 'confluence of religion, community and discipline' (Franits 1993). Although these values have become severed from their religious base, the virtues of the home are repeatedly used as a lever for various campaigns, for instance for political or commercial ends. When the home is idealised and moralised, there is a tendency towards conservatism. The Protestant faith views labour as honourable and humility as godliness. Sacrifice and subservience was the accepted fate of women. In Western culture it was long held that a woman should give up her career as soon as she entered marriage. In the Afrikaner Calvinistic religious structure, when taking her vows, a bride had to promise to serve her husband faithfully, but the husband did not reciprocate. (This format has since been revised.)

In the Calvinist 17th-century Netherlands, docility, industriousness and domesticity were regarded as ideal maidenly virtues that would prepare a young lady for her future role in marriage (Franits 1993). Whereas girls were taught domestic skills, such as needlework and weaving, and sound moral habits, boys were allowed to pursue intellectual accomplishments. During this period the Netherlands was experiencing a golden era of material wealth, but the deeply rooted Calvinistic beliefs of the Dutch caused a conflict between the new materialism and morality. The home was viewed as the seat of morality, but conversely the streets and the world outside were seen as the embodiment of the evils of materialism (ibid.). Seen in this light, domesticity was more than the performance of necessary duties around the home. In essence it offered a means of salvation from the temptations of the world outside.

In later capitalist societies, however, these divisions between the private and public became less clear. Television, for instance, introduces images from the world outside into the comfort of the home, which are passively consumed by the inhabitants (Baudrillard 1998). The home is implicated, and its 'good nature' under threat, when its limitations are contested. In other words the tranquillity and safety of the ideal home relies on established boundaries such as purity/danger and inside/outside.

It would seem that the home enveloped by the white light of virtue was the standard put forward. In recent times, although the ideal has been contested (Meskimmon 1997), it is still proverbially played out in the media and in daily life, where the ideal home is clean, fresh and sunny. Hygiene and

<sup>9</sup> For example, the homogenous happy family – heterosexual parents with two offspring – sourced from image libraries.

sanitation guard the home against the disorder of the spaces outside. The home requires maintenance, in the form of everyday routines, to keep germs, dust and insects – the chaos of the natural world – at bay. It is a constant battle, a never-ending cycle of rhythmic motions, to keep the home sweet, comfortable, familiar and safe. One could see cleanliness as a moral obligation (Baudrillard 1981)<sup>10</sup> that needs to be honoured in order for the inhabitants of the home to feel secure.

Another aspect of the idealised home is the technological 'ideal' of a home where these battles with dirt are dealt with by machines, not humans. But today's home seems 'invaded' by technology, as household appliances trail cables, adaptors and connectors behind them, and the latest ideal technological home is now a wireless one. In reality, the presence of those cables shows how sluggish advancement has been to the hi-tech ideal, and their proliferation disturbs the stability of the home, just as the 'natural' invaders do.

The ideal home is therefore an illusion that must be upheld, actively. Routine serves as a means to establish order, yet through it the ideology of a certain timeframe is repeated and reproduced. The ideal is unattainable; it serves only as a model for encouraging modes of behaviour in society.

### A mundane revolution: everyday theory and resistance

*Quotidie*<sup>11</sup>: how many times a day? How many days? The quotidian is on the one hand the realm of routine, repetition, and reiteration: the space/time where constraints and boredom are produced. Far from being an escape from this realm, segmented leisure time such as the weekend is rather a final cog permitting the smooth functioning of the routine (Kaplan & Ross 1987:3).

In a society driven by accumulation and production, it appears that everyday life<sup>12</sup> is subjected to the same structure. However, to escape the routine is possible, as some theories on everyday life maintain. Even within the utter ordinariness and routine of everyday life there exists the potential for social transformation; human desires will not be contained by the 'segmented life' (Kaplan & Ross 1987:3). The reiteration of our actions reproduces an ideology, but never perfectly. When actions become syncopated, these instances may become techniques of subversion.

Routine may be one of the great problems facing modern life, argues Lefebvre (1987:10). In his view the uniformity of rational, linear time threatens to conceal the workings of cyclical time, which he connects to nature. Both linear and cyclical time are 'modes of repetition' (ibid.). Everyday life – the ordinary events of self production, habits and other routines that are a part of our daily lives – takes the form of a cyclical routine, an endless return to the same dishes, the same washing, the same routes, the same order of life. It is different

<sup>10</sup> In Jean Baudrillard's view (1981) every function has a symbolic significance first and foremost. Therefore the woman performing domestic duties within the home is doing so to uphold middle-class values. Symmetry and framing are methods used to separate the middle-class home from the lower classes. It is a sacrifice in return for a social placement.

<sup>11</sup> *Quotidie* refers to Henri Lefebvre's *Critique de la vie quotidienne* (1947), a criticism on the condition of uniformity that characterises modern life.

<sup>12</sup> It may be valid to question whose 'everyday' is referenced, and what is taken for granted in everyday life theory. The theories I refer to are contextualised within late-capitalist Western society. In my view these theories are committed to include every aspect of human life as worthy of critical attention and can be useful in linking different subjective experiences.

to the cycles of nature, as there is no renewal and regeneration. The everyday fits into linear time, where it 'is the invariance of the variation it envelops' (ibid.). These daily actions born of necessity (those that deal with the upkeep of an environment for living in and its inhabitants) are not invested with substantial importance. 'Chores like shopping and housework' are 'commonplace, nothing special, the mundane, the everyday' (Pearsall 2001:876). Thus classified, domestic space (where many of these activities take place) is a 'tamed' (domesticated) space, a place of boredom through the endless repetition of tasks and sameness. In these terms it is not without motion, but the motion is mechanical and inescapable. The routine of everyday life, it can be argued, resists the interpretation of domestic space as dynamic and performative.

To address everyday life as a sphere where human action accounts for more than reiteration asks for a reading of the everyday as a critical concept, with the potential for social transformation. In French theories on everyday life in the 1950s and 1960s the radical potential of the everyday was explored (Kaplan & Ross 1987:1)<sup>13</sup>. French thinkers such as the Situationists and Henri Lefebvre criticised consumer culture's influence on the fabric of social life. The Situationists, influenced by Lefebvre's *Critique de la vie quotidienne* (1947), focused on everyday life – what was then termed social reproduction – instead of the relations of mechanical production. For some, the 1968 student uprisings in France were proof that such a social revolution was possible. Furthermore, the focus on everyday life became important for the social transformation that feminism had in mind<sup>14</sup>. Kaplan and Ross point out: 'everyday life has always weighed heavily on the shoulders of women' (ibid. 3).

In *Critiques of Everyday Life* (2000), Michael Gardiner sets out to show a 'subterranean' stream of thought on theories of the everyday, with a radical tendency. Although criticised for its utopian inclination and humanist stance<sup>15</sup>, Gardiner manages to build on the French tradition of everyday life theories, from Dada and the Surrealists<sup>16</sup> to Henri Lefebvre, and from the Situationist International to Michel de Certeau. The theories Gardiner focuses on argue that everyday life is reflexive and complex. He is convinced that if one can analyse everyday practices, one may recognise their potential to change society. These theories, he states, can address the division between abstract, structuralist theorising and the subjective approach of interpretive studies. In Gardiner's view, mainstream social theories on everyday life have not managed to address the subject in a way that is intersubjective<sup>17</sup> (2000:5). They do not account for the range of 'human affect and emotions, bodily experience and practical

<sup>13</sup> Only over the last twenty years or so have these studies been translated into English. Kaplan and Ross claim that, conversely, post-war American theories on the subject were 'dated existentialist categories involving authenticity and inauthenticity, good faith or bad faith' (1987:1).

<sup>14</sup> Feminist theory opened up new areas for critical study, such as the everyday, with the mantra 'the personal is political' (McDowell 1996:34).

<sup>15</sup> In McNamara's (2000) review of *Critiques of Everyday Life*. Furthermore, McNamara points out that Baudrillard's view of the symbolic order in *The political economy of the sign* (1981), effectively denies the existence of the everyday. In consumer society, the use-value of actions and objects is replaced by their symbolic value. An insistence on 'the real' underwrites the ideology of capitalist society, making everyday life another sign in the symbolic exchange.

<sup>16</sup> Dada and Surrealism are seen as the precursors to an interest in the radical potential of the everyday. Their methods differed. Where Surrealism was more concerned with mining the magical and erotic aspects of the unconscious, Dada had an anarchic agenda – using the everyday to disrupt bourgeois conventions.

<sup>17</sup> In psychoanalysis, 'intersubjectivity' is a different option to subject/object or intrasubjective relations. In intersubjective relationships the Other is viewed as another subjective entity and not objectified (Benjamin 1986).

knowledges, the role played by "lived" time and space in the constitution of social experience, language and intersubjectivity, and interpersonal ethics' (2000:3), explored in the 'subterranean' everyday theories. However, Gardiner cautions: 'increasingly, the "everyday" is invoked in a gestural sense as a bulwark of creativity and resistance' (2000:8), without acknowledging its relation to structures of power (ibid.). Everyday life cannot be separated from social powers; these relations need to be analysed in detail.

I will focus on Michel de Certeau's theory on everyday life in order to explore the relation between everyday life and social powers, and the ways in which the individual can resist the mechanical and repetitive gestures of the 'segmented life'. De Certeau (1984) perceives the individual as determined by relations to its environs and operating within structures of power. He specifies the individual not as an elementary unit, but as a being subjected to complex social relations which determine its actions (De Certeau 1984:xi) – a familiar perspective on human behaviour. However, he believes that humans are not 'cultural dopes' (Garfinkel cited in Gardiner 2000:4) trapped in a system in which they are powerless to object. Instead, activities often assumed to be acts of passive consumption are re-interpreted as 'operations' (De Certeau 1984:xi) that manipulate structures, and as a result resist conforming to the established powers. He sees that everyday activities, such as reading, walking and cooking, are personalised by the individual, from an established norm to a present situation. For example, when cooking from a recipe, there may be a correct way of following the recipe, but people are inclined to add and omit according to personal preference and interpretation. De Certeau takes this perception a step further by analysing these interpretations as the product of a 'collective activity' (ibid. xiv) that can subvert intended use and meaning. In other words he relates these uses (or 'tactics') to structures of power, or what he terms 'strategies' (ibid. xix).

According to Michel de Certeau, there are opportunities within 'strategies' where pods of resistance can operate in less perceptible and non-aggressive ways (Gardiner 2000:171). De Certeau (1984) describes strategies as dependent on the establishment of place. They need to establish a visible, 'proper' base to be able to form relations with what exists beyond it. Thus a subject/object relationship between the powerful and an Other needs to be established (ibid. xix). This relationship is similar to the epistemological model of objective knowledge, which requires a 'fixed' relation to its subject. What distinguishes tactics from strategies are their relation to space: they do not have a specific site. There is no borderline relation with strategies because tactics operate within the power-base of structures. Tactics are temporal and dispersed and rely on the existence of a strategy, they cannot exist on their own (Gardiner 2000:172). Success depends on an opportunistic use of time, on seizing a chance to subvert or personalise existing forms.

When applying the 'techniques' of tactics to capitalist society, humans are invested with an agency that is lacking in Michel Foucault's model of the surveillance or panopticon society. De Certeau references Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977) to explain 'the network of an antidiscipline' (De Certeau 1984:xv). In modern terms the panopticon society is one based on a society

FIG. 3: LIVING ROOM (1991)  
NICK WAPLINGTON  
Colour photograph. (Waplington 1991)



which monitors and disciplines itself. As a result of the breakdown in disciplinary measures from a centralised control, the mechanisms of discipline were divorced from their intended function as a measure of control of the state. However, these mechanisms have been redistributed as smaller, hidden processes within society. Society has adopted these mechanisms automatically to discipline and control itself and others. In Foucault's view, people are 'produced by a matrix of power/knowledge relations' (Gardiner 2000:174), whereas de Certeau gives a lot of scope to agency and practical consciousness. Though individuals may be caught in a system of discipline, through creative and interpretive acts they can still react against this system. Paradoxically in Foucault's model, though humans are subjected to these discipline mechanisms, within these institutions they can still evolve to be highly individualised beings, which aligns with de Certeau's view of human agency.

Michel de Certeau referred to everyday life resisting the bureaucratised social existence as 'a black rock that resists assimilation' (1984:60). Because of the 'inchoate and messy nature' (Gardiner 2000:16) of everyday life, it is difficult to formulate a specialised abstract theory on its workings. For the same reason it is difficult for social powers to formulate a precise method of controlling society. De Certeau does not offer a means for the marginalised to become powerful. Instead, he suggests that by manipulating what is at hand and using the structures of consumerism creatively, the individual can resist the reification of modern society. By granting scope to human agency, his viewpoint offers a perspective that is not completely defeated in its outcome (Gardiner 2000:174).

I felt the following photographs (Fig. 3-5) demonstrated an aspect of tactics. Often De Certeau is called upon when speaking of interventions and interpretive gestures in art structures (Bourriaud 2002). Here I wish to show that 'tactics' could refer to a simple, effortless act, such as a momentary daydream. *Living room* (1991), a collection of Nick Waplington's photographs of Northern England family life, illustrates the resistance that lies in the living. The living space is a playground, a stage and a festival. The family relationships are tender, the games robust, life is concrete. Waplington's friends may be situated outside the power structures – living in council houses with walls that need painting – but these scenes indicate that human experience is not controlled and stultified by a disciplined society.

### C. MACHINES AND THEIR MAKERS – PROCESSING TECHNOLOGY

Technology can be seen in its broader social meaning as the extension of human processes – as part of a productive system (Terry & Calvert 1997). In its narrow meaning technology can be defined as tools, machines developed to assist humans in a multitude of tasks. Earlier instrumental conceptions of technology overlooked its social implications: from a positivist outlook, technology was seen as a means to control and master nature for human survival and progress. Initially, this definition was sufficient when 'civilisation', aided by technological advances, seemed to be set on the inevitable path of progress (Terry & Calvert 1997:2). With the collapse of grand narratives, the 'neutrality and autonomy' of technology came to be questioned, revealing an ideological bias to scientific knowledge, and by implication, to the development, distribution and control



FIG. 4 & 5: LIVING ROOM (1991)  
NICK WAPLINGTON  
Colour photographs (Waplington 1991)

14



of technology (*ibid.*). Terry and Calvert argue that the idea of technology as tools distances the effect from the user. Technology has to be seen in relation to both its designer and user, in order to comprehend it as embedded in the social (*ibid.* 3). Technology is a human process, its workings 'configuring, effecting, mediating and embodying social relations' (*ibid.* 4).

Placing technology in a 'networked sphere' of intentions, uses and creative misuses, disturbs the purposeful, logical perception of science. For example, creative misuses of technology can give rise to new uses, like the telephone, which was at first intended for business communication only (*ibid.* 5). Conversely, the creative potential of technology can remain unexplored, or minimised through established practices, which appears to be the case in its application in the home.

### The creative possibilities of technology

Aronowitz asserts that the main ideology of technology is its potential to solve all the ethical, economical, health and political problems in the world (technology as saviour) (1994:15). However, while technophiles are hailing the new cybernetic society, focusing on exploring the exciting possibilities of play in the age of information, he argues that many of the major crises in modern life remain unresolved (*ibid.*). There exists the conflicting notion that, while technology is seen as the key to solving all of humankind's problems, it is also seen as a threat to humanity itself.

The liberating promise of technology is that, when automation frees humans for more creative pursuits, this time will be used to devise even more effective systems to reduce labour (Aronowitz 1994). However, Aronowitz indicates the problems caused by the systematic implementation of automation, such as unemployment,<sup>18</sup> de-skilling and work speedups. Furthermore, technological invention has yet to be applied together with more favourable working systems. At present, although the conditions of labour have changed since industrialisation, the quality of work as a function remains repetitive and repressive<sup>19</sup>. Data processing or other computer-mediated work follows the same managerial structure as did the production line before, where the difference between intellectual and manual labour – and the unfavourable conditions of manual labour – is still maintained. Computerisation offers the possibility of improving a worker's management and control over the work process, but this can only be realised once the organisation of work is adapted to a more appropriate system (*ibid.* 27). The systems that are in place at present should be more flexible and forward thinking (creative), and less isolated, to enable the gradual reduction of repetitive labour.

By identifying technology as 'interface/actor-network' (Terry & Calvert 1997:5), instead of 'tools', this facilitates an understanding of the 'networked relations' involved in the design and application of technology. Technology behaves systematically, ordering and influencing human lives, 'fashioning our vision of

<sup>18</sup> Although unemployment worldwide is not in all cases directly linked to technological development, in reality technology does essentially mean the abolition of paid work (Aronowitz 1994:29).

<sup>19</sup> Aronowitz (1994) argues that the authoritarian structures in place in the work environment are similar to the subjugation of labour that characterised 19th-century capitalism. Computers make it easier to police workers and maintain the panopticon society through networked information structures and surveillance.

social relations and what it means to be human' (ibid.). Machines embody human conceptions of gender (ibid. 7). Furthermore, technology as an ordering system can be seen to configure its user, constituting a process of bodily submission in postures, gestures and movements (Gomez 1994:132), an interpretation based on Foucault's notion of the panopticon society. This view reiterates Aronowitz's conception of the authoritarian structure of labour conditions, applied in this instance to the home.

Feminists have argued that, in a society where many patriarchal systems remain intact, the question regarding the application of technology in the home is a gender concern (Berg 1994:165.). In a study conducted on gender relations in the European white goods manufacturing industry (Cockburn & Fürst-Dillic 1994), the issue was raised that women as users of technology in the home are seldom involved in the design process. Engineers and designers of domestic appliances are mostly male (Gomez 1994:132.). These designers and engineers are not required to have intimate knowledge of housework, but neither are the needs of the user rigorously researched to inform the design and functionality of household appliances. In a study conducted to determine to what extent women have a say in the development of household technologies, it was argued that the (male) engineer and designer are the voices of authority, capable of foreseeing the needs of the 'absent woman' and her housework. Gomez argues that male teams are configuring the female body by making decisions on technologies that affect the amount of time spent on the housework and even physical posture, for example bending down to load washing (ibid. 135). This argument elaborates the point made earlier that the designer and user of technology have to be seen in relation to one another, when technology is seen as a social process.

Just as women's exclusion in the developmental stages of new household appliances indicates a failure to understand the needs of users in the home, another example, that of the 'smart' house shows how the liberating promise of technology is bypassed for a 'surface' treatment instead. In a study of the 'smart' house, its developers laud their creation: switches with sophisticated dimmers automatically control all the lights, and its security system is of a superior standard (Berg 1994:170)<sup>20</sup>. As advances in technology promise the reduction of human effort, it should follow that the ideal hi-tech home should be maintenance free. However, no attention was paid to find intelligent ways to lessen the amount of housework to be done, and the focus was rather on atmosphere and security. With all the high-end technology that was developed for the 'smart' home, no time was spent on considering a home that could maintain itself (ibid. 175-176). In my view, this study of the 'smart' house is absurd by implication. In these examples the creative possibilities of technology are not realised on the domestic front, for reasons of economy, isolated research and development, and perhaps a lack of motivation on the part of the designers and engineers.

<sup>20</sup> This study was conducted in 1994, more recent studies should indicate to what extent the 'smart' house has developed.

FIG. 6: THE ELEPHANT CELEBES (1921)

MAX ERNST

Oil on canvas. (Asendorf 1993:44)



**FIG. 7: THE BRIDE STRIPPED BARE BY HER BACHELORS, EVEN (LARGE GLASS) (1915-1923) MARCEL DUCHAMP**

Oil, varnish, lead foil, lead wire and dust on two glass panels (cracked), each mounted between two glass panels, with glass strips, aluminium foil and a wood-and-steel frame. 277.5 x 175.9 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, bequest of Katherine S. Dreier, 1953. (Jones 1994:197)



## The ambiguous machine: gender associations in the bachelor machine paradigm

The creative potential of technology has often been explored by writers and artists. Machines signify both threat to and fascination for humankind. In literature, from the 18th-century to the present day, the machine has come to embody human qualities and reflect society's shifting view of a utopic or dystopic future (Asendorf 1993). The bachelor machine as a visual expression stems from a literary tradition that eroticised machines. One example can be seen in Alfred Jarry's *The Supermale* (1902): 'Bereft of ornaments and comforts, under a simple coat of red-lead paint, the machine exhibited without modesty, almost with pride, its organs of propulsion' (Asendorf 1993:105). Max Ernst's painting, *The Elephant Celebes* (1921) (Fig. 6), can be seen as an example of the eroticised machine. At the turn of the previous century, the rhythmic mechanical shaking of rail travel was compared to sexual stimulation. 'Propelling machines' in their many forms were sexualised in cultural expressions (Asendorf 1993).

The machine as an extension of human fears and desires became a tool for the Dadaists to reflect on social relations in Western society. 'The machine played an important role in creating and gendering ideas of personal identity during and just after World War I', argues Zabel (1998:22). Artists were engaging with the machine aesthetic to align themselves with the changing environment. Structures were being built that inspired the human mind: skyscrapers, bridges and factories. On the other hand, mechanisation heralded a change in labour, social structures and relations, which threatened to degrade the human spirit.

Dada's fascination with machines, and its sexualisation and feminisation of them in art, was often criticised by feminist writers for its misogyny (Sawelson-Gorse 1998). The machine created by man, the 'daughter without a mother', becomes a means of controlling the Other. The concept of the castrating female was used in Dada (and Surrealist) works to illustrate 'the raging feminine', the threat to the 'male world of high-tech, efficiency and instrumental rationality' (Huysen 1986:72). However, machines were not only feminised, but masculinised as well.

The bachelor machine, a term used after Marcel Duchamp's work, *The Bride stripped bare of her Bachelors, Even* (1923) (Fig. 7), was said to refer to a malcontent, 'anti-social masculinity' (Spector 1993:58). In the work of Duchamp, the bachelors are separated from the bride in the upper half. Their mechanical attributes refer to a closed cycle where desire is deferred; ultimately these machines remain celibate. 'The bachelor grinds his chocolate himself', is the suggestive phrase used by Duchamp to describe the bachelors' self-satisfaction (ibid.) In the literature of Michel Carrouges, the bachelor machine is defined as a 'psychological phenomenon', where the machine refers to 'eroticism and its negation' (ibid.), an ambiguous interplay.

In contemporary art, Nancy Spector sees Rebecca Horn's use of the symbolic form of the bachelor machine as different to Duchamp's examples, for instance in the work *Les Délices des Evêques* (1997) (Fig. 8). Horn's machines are 'desire machines' that perform and play. More importantly, they interact. The

**FIG. 8: LES DÉLICES DES EVÊQUES (1997)**  
**REBECCA HORN**

Installation view, Projekte in Münster, Münster.  
Praying stools, swing construction, violin,  
binoculars, laurel leaves, coal, blood, rope and  
the eternal light, metal construction, motors.  
Dimensions variable. (Haenlein 1997:348)



FIG. 9: HOMME (1918)

MAN RAY

Ready-made: egg-beater. Original photograph

50.7 x 38.5 cm. Vera and Arturo Schwarz

Collection, Milan (Schwarz 1977:149)



machines 'act, shake, tremble, faint, almost fall apart, and then come back to life again' (Celant 1993:18). The humanised machines reflect their makers. They are not 'perfect' machines, embodying the human wish for eternal life. Instead they 'introduc[e] the hidden dimensions of liberated and decisive female desire, disrupting the closed circle of the bachelor machine paradigm' (Spector 1993:59).

To return to the work of Duchamp, I wish to point out that the assigned gender of machines is questionable. Duchamp and Man Ray show a subject's identity (and gender) as a result of process, not as a fixed category (Zabel 1998:27). For instance, Man Ray presented a photograph of an eggbeater, entitled *Homme* (1918) (Fig. 9), as a self-portrait, creating a pun on his own name. A few years later he titled a print of the same photograph *Femme*, showing an ambiguity in gender perceptions, while positioning himself in terms of the 'dominant and highly mechanised world view' (ibid. 28). In other words, this representation of the egg-beater as male or female brings into question the perceived 'masculinity' or 'femininity' of inanimate objects. Gender is assigned to lifeless objects by association<sup>21</sup>. The work of Marcel Duchamp also reflect a 'bi-gendered, two-way flow' (Jones 1998:151). For example, Duchamp's alter ego, Rose Sélavy, afforded him the opportunity to dress up as a woman and to subvert gender roles.

Machines as indicators of human drives reveal the conflicting perceptions held about technology and its relation with, or extension of, the human process. The humanised machine can be tied in with animistic beliefs when inanimate objects are believed to have a soul, or 'mana'. The spirited machine becomes a symbolic form of human desire and emotion, and reflects subjective identities.

#### D. THE FICTIONAL HOME – FEAR AND DESIRE MADE VISIBLE

##### An imagined space: domestic space as metaphor for emotional states

Domestic space has been discussed as a concept, desire and metaphor in feminist studies. In *A Room of One's Own* (1935), Virginia Woolf writes about the obstacles that confront women in pursuing a creative life. She sees female creativity as dependent on a physical space (where to write) and a mental space (to be able to write freely). In more recent feminist writings, female desire is referred to as an internal space – 'a desire of one's own' (Benjamin 1986). Experientially, female desire is associated with a space or place within the self, if pure femaleness is seen as being, not drive. In psychoanalysis, D.W. Winnicott uses spatial metaphors to explain a relationship that is flexible between mother and child, where the parent becomes a container for the child's anxieties, 'detoxifying' these emotions for the child (Psyche 2003). Benjamin argues that, as a metaphor for desire, the container is not an object or receptacle, but a continuum (Benjamin 1986:95). In this instance Benjamin speaks of female desire, where women's desire is often based on the fantasy of ideal love. 'Released into abandon by someone else who remains in control' (ibid. 97). This concept of

<sup>21</sup> In French, objects are gendered male, female or neutral. This can bring confusion for the learner, if her/his gender associations are different to the ones defined by French grammar.

freedom, abandonment and the controlling Other is a distorted version of the 'safe space' (ibid.).

When domestic space is used as a metaphor for the hidden currents of emotional life, it can refer to the complexity of, not only female passion, but anger as well. Female aggression can be a slow-burning anger that doesn't erupt, but is made physical through actions seemingly born out of love: over-mothering, obsessive behaviour and hen-pecking (Garb 2002:23). The artist Ann Hamilton refers to the ambivalence in the complex character of femininity as 'passionate but repressed' (Princethal 1999:59). The situation can be likened to a pressure cooker, where on the surface everything appears to be normal, but hidden tension is slowly building up and manifesting in subtle ways.

### The threat of the domestic interior

The limitations imposed by the boundaries of the home are such that being inside the home can be an oppressive experience in itself. Although the home is ideally held to be a safe and comfortable space, an environment in which we first structure our gender and our sense of identity, the place of child-rearing and 'coming home', of intimacy and belonging, it is also very often a battleground where we face conflict with our surroundings. Domestic strife and violence are inherent in the home. Contrary to the illusion of domestic bliss and a comfortable repose after a hard day's work, the home is where the most private fantasies, raging arguments and private tortures have to be endured.

From a feminist stance, it can be argued that gender divisions are policed by allowing or denying women access to certain areas, especially by appealing to women's 'vulnerability' in terms of physical safety (Meskimmon 1997:4).

Women's place in society is defined by boundaries – 'ground rules and social maps'<sup>22</sup> (Ardener cited in Meskimmon 1997:4) that are socially ingrained. The threat of violence and rape is used to patrol these borders. In modern society, public space is seen as 'threatening' to women at night (ibid.). Thus women should stay in the home at this time where they will feel safer. The paradox of this situation is revealed when the home itself becomes a site of anxiety, reflecting the emotional state of the inhabitant. For example, an emotional reaction to the home can be read as frustration with the oppressiveness of the social structures and the fear of being confined to the home. Without necessarily agreeing with these limitations, one is implicated in the ideological structures<sup>23</sup>. The home can be read as a container for the anxiety of the individual within domestic spaces.

In Hubert Selby Jr's novel *Requiem for a Dream* (1978),<sup>24</sup> the fridge comes alive. The novel shows desolation and loss as drug addiction slowly unravels the lives of Harry, his mother Sarah and his girlfriend Marion. The fridge terrorises Sarah, she is alone in her flat, paranoid and spaced out on prescription drugs. No one visits her. She is wired. Sarah's hallucination is the culmination of a list of things going wrong. The fridge becomes a monster; she is losing

<sup>22</sup> These rules relate to social class and gender.

<sup>23</sup> The scripts that control our actions may be rooted in ethical beliefs of individual responsibility in society. These beliefs are not of our own free will, they are what society stands by. It is impossible to separate the ideology from a personal moral code. After all, our opinion and behaviour are shaped by experiences in the world.

<sup>24</sup> The film *Requiem for a Dream* (2000), based on the novel, was directed by Darren Aronofsky.

**FIG. 10: HOMEBOUND (2000)**

**MONA HATOUM**

Installation view, Duveen Galleries, Tate Britain, London. Kitchen utensils, furniture, electric wire, light bulbs, computerised dimmer unit, amplifier, speakers. Dimensions variable. (Grosenick 2001:189)



her mind. In contemporary society, isolation is one of the trade-offs for the kind of specialised, insular lives we live. The home becomes the setting for an apocalyptic disaster that is played out to the horror of the lonely – actress, audience and orchestrator making a total of one.

The scene from the novel addresses issues surrounding claustrophobia and danger in the home. The ubiquitous home appliances often signify monotony and boredom through their repetitive motion and reference to domestic work. In the example of the bachelor machines, they are used to speak of repressed desires and frustration. White goods, unlike machines with sex appeal (cars, hi-tech audio-visual equipment, power tools), can display a remarkable vulnerability. It is fascinating that in some cases these 'invisible helpers' can turn on their user with malicious intent, even if only in the mind of the user. A room can become a weapon<sup>25</sup> where any slippery floor surface or any projection can be responsible for serious injuries.

The dissociation of familiar objects in familiar places induces anxiety or stress in the subject. The discomfort of the home may have less to do with physical comfort, and more with a feeling of being 'out of place'. Feelings lodged within the subject have to be contained and 'worked through', or these will be projected onto another subject (or spaces).

What becomes clearer is that the individual's experience within the home cannot be separated from a subjective experience of spaces. Hegel's saying comes to mind: 'the familiar is not necessarily the known' (Lefebvre 1991:15). The feeling of discomfort in spaces of familiarity – when the ordinary becomes strange and threatening – is associated with feelings of antagonism towards the home (Garb 2002). The uncanny or *unheimlich*<sup>26</sup> is a term often used to describe this emotional state. 'Something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light', is Schelling's definition of the uncanny which Freud adopted (Pollock 2003:144). In psychoanalytical terms the uncanny signifies the return of repressed primal drives. In visual art theory and criticism the term is often used in the context of the home as the familiar. For example, Mona Hatoum's work *La Grande Broyeuse* (Moulin Julienne x 21) (2000) (Fig. 11), a larger-than-life manual food processor, threatens and fascinates with its Jurassic proportions (Garb 2002). Her exhibition *The entire world as a foreign land* (2000), which takes its title from Edward Said's writings on exile – contains the work *Homebound* (2000) (Fig. 10), a group of household implements connected with cables that become conduits for an electrical current. Here the threat is direct – if you touch them you become part of the current. Steel wire cables prevent access. Hatoum addresses the instability of existence; for the exile, home is an impossible dream.

### The liminal edge of the real

In the performance of domestic duties, those that are mechanical and repetitive, such as loading the dishwasher or washing the dishes, leave the

<sup>25</sup> David Hickey writing on Robert Gober's work, refers to the home as a place of torture, where ordinary surfaces can become weapons: the corner of a table or a protruding handle. In cases of domestic abuse, the home is obviously a place of torture and danger (1993:37-38).

<sup>26</sup> In *The Uncanny* (1919), Freud stresses the ambivalence of the word itself: heimlich, the word for home, meaning familiar, becomes Das Unheimlich, indicating that its strangeness derives from what was once familiar, a home of some sort' (Pollock 2003:144).

FIG. 11: LA GRAND BROYEUSE  
(MOULI-JULIENNE X 21, 2000)  
MONA HATOUM

Installation view, Duveen Galleries, Tate Britain, London. Mild Steel. Main sculpture: 343 x 575 x 363 cm. Each disc 4.5 x 170 cm (diameter). (Grosenick 2001:188)



FIG. 12: HEADSTAND FOR TWO PEACOCK EGGS (1981)  
REBECCA HORN  
Film still from *La Ferdinand* (1981) (Haenlein 1997)



mind free to explore the realms of the imagination as a means of escape. The Surrealists explored the unconscious using techniques that involved automatism, chance, dreams and games such as the 'exquisite corpse', believing that beneath the surface of appearance lies a hidden dimension, an irrational life that defies control by reason. Through the erotic they thought they could access these hidden currents and escape the propriety of bourgeois life. They expected an open realm of the imagination or unconscious that they would be left free to explore.

'Without fantasy no imagination, without imagination, no image' (Van Nieuwenhuysen 1999:13), meaning that artistic invention is in every case reliant on an element of fantasy. Furthermore, the viewer's reception of an image stimulates an imaginative response (ibid.). For instance the work of Rebecca Horn, *Headstand for two peacock eggs* (1981) (Fig. 12), signifies a poetic (and erotic) image, when the ordinary – a uniformed nurse in the film – is turned upside down.

'...An undeniable and sometimes frightening thread of the miraculous [is] woven into the very fabric of life' (Miller 2001b). A reviewer of Haruki Murakami's novel, *Sputnik Sweetheart* (1999), once commented on this tale in which reality sheds its skin to reveal another, startling solution. In the literature genre of magical realism, narration overflows with fantastical situations and irrepressible life, sometimes even after death (in the novels of Isabel Allende, Gabriel Garcia Marques and Salman Rushdie). In Murakami's novel (though not of the magical realist genre) an unusual disappearance brings the stability of the perceived reality into question. Its implication disturbs the conventions of space and time.

What is fascinating about the fantastical or miraculous is not so much that it presents an escape from the real world, an exit to another world, but that it reveals the fantastical in this world. Reality is never what it seems.



## **CONTEMPORARY REFERENCES**

## A. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE INSTALLATION AS ART PRACTICE

In contemporary art practice the installation is a way of engaging with the space the work is exhibited in, in order to activate the relation between viewer, space and work. According to Suderberg, the installation engages 'aural, spatial, visual and environmental planes of perception and interpretation' (2000:2). The immediate, physical experience of the artwork is important as an initial encounter, whereafter the work can be accessed intellectually. In the context of my own work, the viewer is always considered as an active subject moving through the environment that the work is shown in, and whose passage through the space will affect the reading of the work.

The installation as art practice is informed by many phenomena, including 'vernacular architecture, multimedia projections, urban gardens, shrines, land art, earthworks, trade shows, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century panoramas, Arte Povera, follies, and the visionary environments of "folk" artists' (Suderberg 2000:2). Duchamp in his collaboration with the Surrealists is credited as one of the innovators of the installation as art form (Nodelman 2003:57). For example, *Mile of string* (1942) (Fig. 13) obstructed the viewer's movement within the exhibition space, in effect forcing the viewer's active participation in the work. The web of string also visualised the contingencies that affect a viewer's response to a work of art, over which the artist has little control (ibid. 60).

In the trajectory of art history, installation as practice developed at a time when the limits defining different disciplines in art were questioned. At the same time, the materiality of art had become problematic, and often this reflected its status as a commodity. The performance art and happenings of the 1960s and 1970s created art outside of art institutions – such as galleries and museums – in forms that were ephemeral, in order to resist commercial pressure. Lucy Lippard argued for the 'dematerialisation' of art where the eradication of 'uniqueness, permanence and decorative attractiveness' (Suderberg 2002:20) in the artwork becomes a strategy against power structures<sup>27</sup>. The form of installation that developed in this timeframe was reactionary. Often short-lived, installation became an ideal mode for reflecting nomadism and fluidity.

I feel the use of the installation in contemporary art as an oppositional stance to power structures has changed. I would rather agree that the installation is a technique that adapts to the forms of everyday life (Bourriaud 2002). The artist functions within certain structures, therefore the work will reflect an immersion in these. The work functions as a set of operations that may reveal these structures but cannot suggest an objective point of view, since the artist is always implicated. In other words, if knowledge is situated, a neutral perspective is impossible, because a subject will always be gendered and embodied. This shift reflects the influence of post-structuralist, feminist and post-colonial theories, which support this thinking.

<sup>27</sup> Lucy Lippard's *Six Years: the dematerialisation of the art object from 1966 to 1972* (1973) was conceptualised as an art object itself. The work functions as a critique on art criticism's ideological base, by disrupting chronology and linear index, leaving the reader to draw her/his own conclusion (Suderberg 2000:20).

FIG. 13: MILE OF STRING (1942)

MARCEL DUCHAMP

Installation view, *First Papers of Surrealism*, Whirlaw Reid mansion, New York. String. Dimensions variable. Photo. John Schiff, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Marcel Duchamp Archive. (Steiner 2000:27)



FIG. 14: SOCKS ON RADIATOR (1998)  
WOLFGANG TILLMANS  
Colour photograph. (Verwoert 2002:30)



The idea of entanglement within a space was put forward by Henri Lefebvre to describe a relationship that is dynamic between subject and space, as stated previously. In my work I see this idea functioning in different ways. Since the viewer has to 'enter' the work in order to view the details, she/he becomes part of the work. The viewer's actual participation is indicative of the silent reading of the work that takes place, informed by the viewer's own subjectivity, as explored by Marcel Duchamp. It is the viewer who brings multiplicity to the work by interpreting the work through her/his own context, an accepted idea in contemporary art practice<sup>28</sup>. Therefore the creative act is the collaboration between artist and viewer, as stressed by Duchamp (Buchloh 1985:111). The viewer's navigation through the space mirrors the unstable relation between the artwork and the viewer's understanding of it.

The viewer becomes implicated within the work, which becomes a method to 'ensnare' the audience both literally and figuratively, to force a transformation from passive onlooker to accomplice. It is a different state of being to immobile contemplation. As an example, the artist Annette Messager encourages the viewer to enter her game, to become part of her fiction (Romano 1991:102). Taken further, this effect can be a state of dependence, when entanglement effectively means being captured. By placing the viewer in a close physical relation to the work that is uncomfortable, even threatening, the artist may be able to elicit a response to the work that is not diluted by logic.

The viewer's immersion within the space is indicative of the immersion within a domestic environment, where events happen simultaneously. As argued before, the home requires maintenance, which could become overwhelming. Furthermore the subject's experience within domestic space is charged with emotional and psychological content. In my view the subject's relation to these spaces can therefore never be completely detached.

## B. CONTEXTUALISING THE HOME IN CONTEMPORARY ART

Many artists work with aspects of domestic space as their subject. As my concern lies with a subjective experience in these spaces, I will focus on artists with similar intentions. Another aspect that informs my work is to remain within the ordinary language of the home, so that the work retains a sense of ephemerality. Therefore I will be referring to artists' use of materials and temporal aspects.

A number of artists are specifically concerned with the transience of the everyday and human lives, and capture glimpses of the ordinary-turned-beautiful. There are many examples in photography that capture the fleeting, where 'if one thing matters, everything matters'<sup>29</sup>: ordinary objects become precious. One such example is the work of Wolfgang Tillmans (Fig. 14 and 15). His still-life photographs could be read as subtle memento moris, they speak of an 'unusual dimension, that of liberated time' (Verzotti 2001:14). The objects photographed in domestic interiors allude to a human presence and are a reminder of the small things in life.

<sup>28</sup> In post-structuralist thinking, Roland Barthes' *The Death of the Author* (1968) argues that the text is open for interpretation by the reader, and the author's intention is yet another interpretation of the text (Buchloh 1985).

<sup>29</sup> The title of Wolfgang Tillmans' show at Tate Modern, London (2003).



**FIG. 15 (TOP): STILL LIFE, TALBOT ROAD (1991)**  
**WOLFGANG TILLMANS**

Colour photograph. (Verwoert 2002:42)

**FIG. 16 (BOTTOM): SEMIOTICS OF THE KITCHEN (1975)**  
**MARTHA ROSLER**

Video 6:09 minutes. Video stills. Electronic Arts  
Intermix, New York. (de Zegher 1996:25)



FIG. 17: DÉPENDANCE/INDÉPENDANCE (1995-1996)

ANNETTE MESSAGER

Installation view, Musée d'Art Contemporain, Bordeaux, France. Fabric, stuffed animals, nets, cord. Dimensions variable. (Grosenick 2001:357)



Other artists working with notions of domesticity use 'humble' modes of production in order to comment on the structures that exist around them, or on a fragile state of existence, avoiding connotations of beauty that could undermine their critique. Many female artists have worked with materials from the domestic sphere, such as Martha Rosler's use of domestic utensils in her video work, *Semiotics for the kitchen* (1978) (Fig. 16), and Yayoi Kusama's appropriation of an ironing board for her work, *Ironing board* (1963) (Fig. 18)<sup>30</sup>. Techniques associated with domesticity, such as knitting, sewing and embroidery, are used in Ghada Amer's subversive embroidery 'paintings' and Annette Messager's sewn objects in *Dépendance/Indépendance* (1995-1996) (Fig 17).

In art, sewing and sewn objects gained significance as 'woman's work'. Feminist artists working with non-hierarchical materials<sup>31</sup> did so to address gender inequality and to work with materials familiar to female lives. Ann Hamilton refers to the 'mythical eternal needlework' linked to 'figures of determined female resistance as far back as Penelope and Ariadne' (Princethal 1999:57). Through using materials from the home and depicting domestic spaces, feminist artists questioned the boundaries conceived of as 'high' and 'masculine' in modernist art practice. By reinscribing methods, materials and subject matter, these female artists claimed importance for areas of reproduction (and everyday life). Sewing has become a recognised work method in art practice, and is still used extensively by female artists.

In the context of the present, the use of 'humble' methods and materials from the home as an established art practice relates to different contexts that are not exclusively feminist in approach. The materials of the home, used as readymades or converted into assisted readymades, refer back to their use-value, and can disrupt notions of structure and permanence.<sup>32</sup>

The relation between the subject and the home – which I explore in my work – informs the work of Annette Messager and Mona Hatoum, in different ways. Messager uses the home as a hideout, a layer of protection against the outside world. She spins a web of truth and lies from its interior, constructing multiple identities for herself that further obscure and confuse her intentions. *Dépendance/Indépendance* is a forest of suspended objects that invites the viewer in, but also ensnares and traps – as testified by the stuffed animals caught up in the netting. She reveals the darker, secretive aspects of the female psyche that seep in and contaminate. Sometimes there are indications of black humour, such as examples of her work consisting of small pillows gorged with colouring pencils or stuffed birds dressed in knitted jerseys. Messager's work is a constant flow between revealing and concealing, between what can be displayed and what remains hidden (Romano 1991:102). Her use of netting and veils serves the purpose of never divulging the whole intrigue.

<sup>30</sup> In my own work, *Tuesday*, I appropriated the ironing board as well.

<sup>31</sup> Materials not traditional to art making, implying a criticism of traditional art practice.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Hirschhorn's use of tinfoil, masking tape and other non-hierarchical materials comments on the state of the late-capitalist world today, with specific reference to Western cultural history and the 'globalised' world. His 'monuments', for example one dedicated to Georges Baraille, are temporary constructions sometimes erected outdoors in a similar fashion to the stalls of informal street vendors, reflecting on the limitations of the capitalist vision, and the tendency of things (and ideas) to fall apart.

FIG. 18 (TOP): IRONING BOARD (1963)

YAYOI KUSAMA

Sewn stuffed fabric, iron, ironing board, paint.  
111.8 x 142.2 x 69.9 cm. Storm King Art Centre,  
gift of Hanford Yang. (Zelevansky et al. 1998)

FIG. 19 (BOTTOM): CAGE-À-DEUX (2002)

MONA HATOUM

Mild steel and painted MDF. 201.5 x 315 x  
199.5 cm. (Garb et al 2002:1)



FIG. 20 (TOP): SPY CLOTHES (2000)

TIM HAWKINSON

Clothing and various mechanical components.  
120 x 57.5 x 52.5 cm. (White Cube 2002)

FIG. 21 (BOTTOM): BIDIBIDOBIDIBOO (1996)

MAURIZIO CATTELAN

Taxidermied squirrel and mixed media.  
50 x 58 cm. (Grenier & Kinley 1999: 30)



The work of Mona Hatoum is concerned with a feeling of antagonism towards the home, as mentioned before. Where her work has previously dealt with issues surrounding institutional structures that restrict and regiment the body, the work discussed here focuses on the home as the uncomfortable – even threatening – familiar. Hatoum's view of the restrictive home reveals another form of institution: the domestic construct. *Cage-à-deux* (Fig. 19) is a hamster cage – recognisable as a household object in *Homebound* (see Fig. 10) – that has been resized to human proportions. The cage refers to a home, but one without comfort. In this instance, the home is a prison, where human beings are contained and often under stress. Hatoum refers to the possibility of violence committed in spaces of familiarity, when the security of the home is taken to its extreme. This work functions on a monumental scale (and refers to Minimalist artworks), but sometimes she also makes use of ephemeral material to speak of domesticity, such as her works created from human hair, wax paper imprints and a basket woven from pasta.

Even work using sophisticated technology can reveal an anxious undertone, discernible through the technological optimism that often characterises 'high-tech' work. One example is Tim Hawkinson's work, *Spy clothes* (2000) (Fig. 20), where the laundry basket has a more sinister purpose. The buttons on the shirt are fitted with surveillance equipment that tilts and turns in relation to the viewer. The work indicates a paranoid view of the extent to which technology penetrates our lives. Although the work is humorous to a degree, in my view it has a darker side which relates to the suspicions that may cloud intimate relationships.

The humorous aspect seen in Hawkinson's work is paramount in the work of Maurizio Cattelan, who revels in undermining structures of authority. Cattelan's intention to disrupt and destabilise strikes a chord. In the work *Bidibidobidiboo* (1996) (Fig. 21), a stuffed squirrel lies pathetically slumped over a yellow linoleum kitchen table, a tiny gun at its feet, with the dirty dishes piled high in the miniature sink behind it. Its real tragedy lies in the minute details – this is a bloodless suicide. The work leaves a disturbing impression of futility. Its precarious position on the floor in a crowded exhibition space<sup>33</sup> – the table, chairs, sink, geyser and the unfortunate deceased are all only squirrel-sized – adds to the fragile power of the work. In instances where absurd humour is introduced, anxiety becomes amplified.

These artists address aspects of the home that relate to my work in terms of method and content. The work of Wolfgang Tillmans brings mundane objects to the fore, granting them importance. At the same time, their ephemeral nature remains intact. The use of non-hierarchical materials will be explained in the context of my work. It is important to note that its use has changed, but that these materials can still signify disruption. Annette Messager and Mona Hatoum, even Tim Hawkinson, deal with issues surrounding an experience of anxiety. And the work of Maurizio Cattelan, with its absurd staging, captures the tragicomic nature that taints everyday life.

<sup>33</sup> The exhibition *Abracadabra* (1999), curated by Catherine Grenier (Pompidou Centre) and Catherine Kinley (Tate Britain) invited fifteen contemporary artists to reflect a 'spirit of optimism and play, of fantasy and imagination, even of magic' (Grenier & Kinley 1999) within the everyday. Cattelan's entry can be read as a subversion of this 'spirit of optimism'.



## **BODY OF WORK**

My body of work consists of seven separate works, although each should be seen as constitutive to the whole installation. The spatial relation between the work, the environment and the viewer is important in conveying a sense of being 'within' the work. The work comprises found household appliances and objects, sewn fabric parts, cables, connectors and controller units, together indicating a domestic environment. Animated by the movement of the appliances and accompanied noise, the environment becomes a living, breathing entity.

## A. THE TUPPERWARE DAYDREAM – DOMESTIC SPACE AS CONTAINER

The domestic space is demanding, it requires maintenance and refuses to rest<sup>54</sup>. The activity necessary to preserve its present state is a will to establish order, where the cycle of duties in a home – cooking, cleaning and self-hygiene – becomes a defence against the chaos that threatens to overwhelm the home. Therefore the immersion within the environment of the work may indicate that the boundaries between inside and outside, order and disorder, are penetrable and temporary. I have mentioned the insular quality of the domestic experience before: on the one hand it refers to comfort and protection within the home, on the other hand to feelings of isolation. One can compare the domestic space to the ubiquitous Tupperware container found in the kitchen, when the inhabitant feels sealed off from interaction beyond the confines of the home. When opening the domestic space to the flow of relations, emotions and mental states, the insularity falls away. I am intrigued by the immediacy of spaces and the psychological response to domestic space in particular. The home is the exterior to the fiction of appearance. On the inside, the home does not show 'the real' as opposed to the 'act', rather it becomes another performance, which may reveal emotional and mental states of the inhabitants.

## B. THE UNDESIRABLE MACHINERY OF THE HOME

Household appliances form a part of the backdrop to our lives. Their importance is obscured by the fact that although they are necessary 'helpers', they rarely capture the imagination. The appliances I have chosen are recent generic models, with neither a state-of-the-art aesthetic nor a retro appeal. They are of similar size and with a certain relation to the human body and hand, unlike larger economic investments such as dishwashers, stoves and fridges. The appliances' second-hand appearance, with their scratches and flecks of rust, encourages notions of personality and lived experience. Household appliances have a limited life span, some have to be discarded when broken, as there are no small parts manufactured for the repair of cheaper models. They are transient objects rather than über-machines.

In this body of work the ordinary appliances of the home are afforded a different status. They are important in the context of the work, and humanised. They are threatening in some of the works, for example *Monday* (2003)<sup>55</sup>, but in smaller groups they are less so, in some cases inspiring humour, for instance *Friday* (2004). When Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray appropriated machines and objects from the domestic sphere, they managed to bestow a measure of

<sup>54</sup> One can consider the 'animated' home as a living entity with a will of its own. In my own experience the home could sometimes reveal a spiteful character, producing dustballs out of thin air.

<sup>55</sup> The work is discussed in detail in the last chapter.

FIG. 22: BICYCLE WHEEL (1913)

MARCEL DUCHAMP

Wood, steel and aluminium.

128.9 x 64.1 cm. (Asendorf 1993:214)

vulnerability on their creations<sup>36</sup>. Unlike appliances with a more universal or flamboyant appeal to status, the household appliances of my work are undesirable machines.

### C. THE STATUS OF THE READYMADE

In the context of my work, the household appliances, compressors, ironing boards, paper towel dispensers and dishcloths are assisted readymades. The functionality of these objects is extended to adapt to the fictional home. By taking an ordinary object and placing it in a gallery context, the status of the object changes from mass-produced commodity to work of art. In my installation the appliance has importance as an art object in the arrangement of the work. Singled out in a space for exhibition, its stature 'grows' to accommodate a reading of its symbolic function.

At the same time, the appliance remains bound to its mundane properties and low status. The readymade can be seen as an index to its ordinary application<sup>37</sup>, indicating its domestic source and its manufactured status. A single appliance refers to a succession of appliances: not only one kettle, for instance, but also any and every kettle that has ever been used in a household. Thus the status of appliances is not valued individually, but as a signifier for a ubiquitous thing. Seriality is implied by the nature of the object as mass produced and easily available.

*Bicycle Wheel* (1913) (Fig. 22) the first readymade assemblage<sup>38</sup> of Marcel Duchamp, changed the understanding of what constitutes an artwork. The revolution of the readymade was in its rejection of the autonomous artwork, implying that traditional artistic practice had become obsolete (Buchloh 1985:111). Part of the readymade's subversive intent was to remove transcendental methods of perception and conception in aesthetic practices (ibid.). The readymade exists as a mass-produced object. To invest the object with meaning is to layer meaning upon it. When the object is simply seen in its nominalist terms (to relate to linguistic interpretation) – as a signifier open for interpretation by the viewer – and not valued for its relation to other areas such as production, consumption, economy and material properties, its radical history will be overlooked (ibid.).<sup>39</sup>

The second-hand status of the appliances relates not only to a mass-produced object that may be discarded, but also to a history of use. The mass-produced object is therefore not an index for shiny consumerism as it would be if all the appliances were brand new. The appliance relates to aspects of economy, such as conspicuous consumption and the eventual redundancy of its kind.



<sup>36</sup> Here I am specifically referring to the bachelor machines, not the readymades, of Marcel Duchamp.

<sup>37</sup> According to Rosalind Krauss in 'Notes on the Index (part I & II)', in *The Originality of the Avantgarde and other Modernist Myths* (1985) (Buchloh 1985:120).

<sup>38</sup> *Bicycle Wheel's* assembled character causes some confusion as to the exact date of the invention of the readymade. Some argue that the first readymade is Duchamp's *Bottlerack* (1914) (Buchloh 1985: 111).

<sup>39</sup> Although the incorporation of the readymade into institutional art is well documented, in recent years it still manages to spark heated debate, for example when Tracey Emin exhibited *My Bed* (1998) for the annual Turner Prize, Tate Gallery, London. The work was based on her own bedroom – the artist showed an unmade bed strewn with dirty underwear, cigarette butts and other paraphernalia – that described her everyday life. The press seized upon the chance to question the validity of contemporary art, as did conservative art critics.



**FIG. 23: INSTALLATION VIEW**  
**WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY AND SUNDAY**  
Installation view, my studio, Michaelis School of  
Fine Art, Cape Town.

## **D. ANIMATION, HUMAN BEHAVIOUR AND CONTROL**

The animation of my work is mechanical, not digital. It is not a computer animation, screen-bound or projected. The animation concerns physics, the result of problem-solving involving gravity, momentum, friction and material limitations. Collaboration with an engineer was essential to overcome these obstacles. Through the result of this process, the physical world is challenged to meet the expectations of the imagination.

Mechanical animation is the transference of energy from an electrical power supply to an inanimate object, resulting in movement. In my work the inanimate objects, in most cases household appliances, are equipped with a motor that rotates or an element that heats up. The appliances in the work are all connected to a power supply, which is clearly visible in all the cables, plugs, adaptors and extension cords. The viewer is aware of the flow of energy through the electrical cords. In the control boxes, a microprocessor controls relay switches which regulate the 'behaviour' of the motors. The flow of electrical currents through the cables is immediate and visible in its effects, yet electricity seems 'invisible'; it does not have a particular colour or a smell, and takes on the form of its conduit. The invisible flow of control and power produces an underlying tension within the work.

The mechanised motion of the appliances refers to patterns of behaviour reproduced in a domestic space. This encompasses the routine actions of domestic duties, but also the staid habits of the inhabitants. From this perspective, humans are mechanisms with automatic actions. The mechanisation is controlled to start and stop and start again, locked in an endless cycle. It is an oppressive and claustrophobic realisation.

The potential for disruption is latent in the automated system. With any mechanism – regardless of the regularity of its movement – unpredictable results may occur, for example mechanisms suddenly wear out, there may be a power surge or complete breakdown. Considering the precariousness of the network of cables conducting the live current and the use of the appliances far beyond their normal function, the threat of disruption is evident. Therefore the safety of the installation and the continuation of the motion exist in a fragile state, as does any system subjected to a relentless driving force.

Systems theory in psychology views any regulated order as inherently possessing the capacity for sudden, 'discontinuous' change (Dell & Goolishian 1981). 'Order through fluctuation' as a theory posits that systems have the inherent capacity to change, viewing all systems as based on a 'nonequilibrium' ordering process. Repression under rigid regulation can lead to outburst, allowing the system to reorganise and continue. The laws for social organisation are different to those of physics, but applicable in relation to my body of work, where the mechanisation becomes indicative of human behavioural modes. The monotonous movement of the machines suggests repression by an external force.

The automated action can be taken to its extreme when the human psychological state deteriorates completely. Usually, in mechanics and electronics, a machine

functions as an extension of the human body (Philippi 1996). Its mechanism follows a rational and logical sequence, as can be expected. In the terms of technology and physics, repetition means that a system works to a regulated order. Therefore the outcome of an experiment can continuously prove itself, and the results are considered stable. However, in the symbolic context of art, automatism can be linked to human psychosis. When applied to psychoanalytic theory, repetition warns that the individual 'lacks control and self-determination' (ibid. 364). Contrary to machines, in humans repetitive action can in extreme cases be read as a possible psychological breakdown.<sup>40</sup>

The household duties referred to by the mechanised action become symbolic of a broader system in which the individual is entrenched. Human behaviour is controlled in order to maintain the structures of power. Through everyday actions, humans reproduce systems of control and enforce codes of conduct by participating in the production/consumption exchange, without it being their intention to maintain these structures (Baudrillard 1998). The system is invisible but influences behaviour. It remains important for society to recognise the ways in which it participates in patterns of exclusion, intimidation and even violence – for example, when humans subordinated to a rigid system of authoritarian control react with violence against family members. When we acknowledge that the experience within a domestic space is an interaction that takes place within structures of power, our actions can be seen as supportive mechanisms to these structures. However, within these structures remain the opportunity for disruption and change.<sup>41</sup>

### 38 E. CONNECT, EXTEND AND ENTANGLE – THE TRANSGRESSIVE FUNCTION OF THE LINE

In my work the connectors, cables and plugs are important as indicators of electrical flow<sup>42</sup>. Spreading out horizontally in many colours, the cables and connections have a graphic quality. In their volume the cables add up to a confusing network of connections and extensions, forming a rhizome structure. As a flexible arrangement that can accommodate expansion, the graphic lines of these connections suggest a transgressive function.

The maintained order of the work is under constant threat of disruption. For safety reasons, electric cables should be hidden under the floorboards or in walls. In the modern home, electrical cords are 'threaded' through the internal walls of the building to connect plug points to the power supply. In my work, however, the cables are exposed and prominent, making it difficult for the viewer to cross the floor. The exposed cables suggest an unearthing. In contrast to the sewing thread, which connects and orders, the cables hold the potential to proliferate and grow, indicating an unstable environment<sup>43</sup>. Within this space the viewer



<sup>40</sup> Philippi writes on the uncanniness of the machine elements in Mona Hatoum's work, *Short Space* (1992).

<sup>41</sup> This point was argued in Chapter 1, Section 2, on everyday life theories and resistance.

<sup>42</sup> In a similar fashion to Mona Hatoum's work, *Homebound* (Fig. 9), although in her work the objects within the electrical circuit are catalysts themselves.

<sup>43</sup> In the artist Lee Bul's work *Siren* (2000), for instance, the relationship between women and technology is explored as 'simultaneously threatening and seductive, controllable and proliferating, human and monstrous' (Volkart 2001:133). The work, a silicone cyborg with feminine 'tendrils', is discussed in relation to avant-garde fantasies of 'woman as machine' or 'machine as vamp', and recent writing on 'fantasy' femininity (ibid.).

can become 'ensnared', becoming part of the work. The electrical currents pose another risk.

Order relies on established boundaries<sup>44</sup> (de Zegher 1998:99). In my view the transgressive function of the line/cable lies in its resistance to delineate. The cables are never straight, following a twisting route between connectors, with an unsettling effect. The connections themselves are interchangeable, thus appliances can be added to the existing collection, or their arrangement modified. A paradox is repeated in the experience of the work. A feeling of security is supplanted with a sense of threat, and vice versa. On the one hand the functionality of the work is reassuring: the animation relies on a controller and a programmed set of movements, one after the other, and parts of the work are securely attached to the wall. Thus a measure of control is present, and a sense of security within the space can be established. However, danger is inherent within the system. Furthermore a transgression of the ordering system is taking place. There is resistance to order not only in the nature of the cables, but also in the implication of the process of re-assigning or extending the functionality of the appliances. As an extension of human function or tools, the appliances become indices for human qualities in the work. Changing the roles and expectations within the conventions of domestic space – and making 'light' of the seriousness – is the ultimate transgression of the work.



<sup>44</sup> De Zegher writes on Mona Hatoum's work *Recollection* (1995), referring to Mary Douglas' *Purity and Danger: an analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo* (1966). Douglas argues that dirt is 'a destructive force' with the potential to disrupt, thus symbolising both 'danger and power' (de Zegher 1998:99). The transgressive function of dirt was mentioned in Chapter 1, Section 2, on domesticity and morality, and relates to the ability of the cables to defy order.



## **METHOD AND PROCESS**

The techniques I used to construct the work were informed by the domestic context. I was drawn to objects within the domestic environment that could retain their original character while having the potential, through configuration, to become instilled with a new meaning. Furthermore, the work had to conform to the functional aesthetic of the kitchen, where every piece should have a fabricated appearance. In effect, the configuration of the objects and materials had to be seamless. The works are assisted readymades in the Duchampian tradition, with a sewing hand in evidence. The implied female presence is further strengthened by the appliances' connotation to the home, as described in the literature.

## **A. CHOICE OF MATERIALS**

The materials chosen are a reflection of my subjective experience of the home. The second-hand appliances indicate character, while the sensuous fabrics frame the work as feminine. The colours of the fabrics and cables are important for enhancing the manufactured aesthetic of the work. At times the mundane associations of the materials might threaten to engulf any other association. This becomes a matter of slippage, where the transformation from the mundane to the artwork is never complete.

### **Household objects and appliances**

The materials chosen from the home include household appliances, fridge compressors, ironing boards, dishcloths (both as fabric and readymade), paper towel dispensers and paper towels. By configuring the household objects or extending the purpose of the appliances, their meaning becomes amplified and extended as artworks.

### **Fabric**

The fabrics used in the work range from dishcloths to chiffon and organza. The woven thread that makes up a piece of cloth is often used as a metaphor for human relations. 'Tightly knit', 'intertwined', 'social fabric', and 'interwoven' are words that speak of communities and physical closeness.

Dishcloths were chosen for their humble status and ephemeral quality. As easily recognisable domestic objects, dishcloths appealed to me as near 'universal' symbols of domesticity. The weave of the cloth forms a pattern that can be beautiful seen close up, but is usually lost as soon as one registers the dishcloth in its totality.

My decision to work with sensual fabrics was due to a natural attraction to the skin-like quality of chiffon and organza. Fabric is similar to human skin, in that it can protect and contain yet it is permeable. Furthermore, I wanted to give shape to a material that is soft, flexible and resistant to being shaped in its delicacy and smoothness. Chiffon and organza have another quality that makes them special: the weave is looser and the strands of fabric thinner, making the cloth transparent. When worn as underwear, the cloth forms a barrier that is barely there. My use of chiffon and organza indicates the erotic.

### Cables, plugs and adaptors

I explained the transgressive function of cables, plugs and adaptors in the general commentary on the work. Cables, plugs and adaptors also indicate the relation between the 'high-tech' ideal of a wireless home and the 'low-tech' reality experienced as a 'growth' of extension cords and plug adaptors and a possible overload on the power supply. The use of 'male' and 'female' plug adaptors is a further subtle reference to the erotic undertones of the work.

## B. CONFIGURATION OF THE WORK

The configuration of the readymades and fabrics involves a manual process, although the end result must look fabricated to work successfully as extensions of household appliances. Where steel or wood are used for supporting structures, as with the mixer supports, the material is painted in white enamel as a continuation of the manufactured aesthetic of small white goods.

### The thread that holds things together

Sewing has connotations of healing and mending. In my work, thread holds things together. The stitching is robust – in the work the fabric pieces are firmly sewn together. The sewn pieces form part of a long process with the stitches as the timeline. The thread connects fabric, cables and tubing, and so the line continues, looping back onto itself, then pushing forward again. Little is left of the chance to unravel. Only here and there a few wilful threads from the fabric resist the strict order. The sewing defines a sense of order.

## C. TECHNICAL INFORMATION ON THE MECHANISATION OF THE WORK

The following electrical components were developed by myself in consultation with an engineer. A considerable amount of time and energy was spent on the mechanisation of the work, in order to create an environment akin to domestic spaces. This technical process is 'hidden', and should be so; the animation of household appliances and objects must seem effortless, as if the appliances themselves are instilled with life.

### Control boxes

A standard operator interface was developed for the control boxes, which can be adapted to suit the requirements of the specific mechanisms. Each mechanical animation has its own unique set of requirements and particular problems to solve. Extending the function of the appliances requires non-standard and specific driving and control methods, to fulfil the requirements of the operation within the limitations of the appliance's body size and power capacity.

### Appliance control system

The system consists of a master controlling unit and four slave units. Each of the slave units has two standard 15 ampere household plugs, to control up to eight household appliances in total. Daisy-chain power and control cables link the slave units to the master unit, which is plugged into the mains and supplies power to the entire system (see *Monday*, p.49). The power to each appliance is individually controlled and switched by relay switches in the slave units. The appliance connects to the common power cable in close proximity to the



specific appliance. The relays are controlled by a programmable micro-controller in the master unit. To operate the system in either a manual or an automatic mode, a key pad and a liquid crystal display on the master unit provide a simple user interface through a menu system. For manual operation, the user can select any appliance to be 'on' or 'off' through a single keystroke. In the programmable mode, any appliance can be switched 'on' or 'off' remotely. The program has a total capacity of 127 steps of 30 seconds each. A new combination of appliances can therefore be switched 'on' or 'off', every 30 seconds. The program is stored in non-volatile memory, and will not be lost when the mains power is removed.

The operator must consider the total power consumption of the combination of appliances that may run simultaneously. Appliances that contain heating elements, for instance kettles, demand considerably more power than appliances containing motors or lights.

### Hair dryers

The total power dissipation of the 12 hair dryers running simultaneously (see *Wednesday*, p. 54) is considerable, exceeding the average consumption of a suburban home. Therefore, it was imperative to bypass the heating elements. Relay switches to control the 'on' and 'off' switching of banks of three dryers each are fitted in the plug adaptors. A larger than normal transformer was used, to supply the total current demand of the dryer motors. The standard manual or automatic operating procedures are applied to the control of the hair dryer banks. The banks can be switched 'on' or 'off' remotely, and a sequence can be programmed into the system in real time and set to repeat the same sequence continuously. The program is stored in non-volatile memory and will not be lost when the power is removed.

### Dishcloth mixers

To create the desired effect of the spinning dishcloth net (see *Thursday*, p.56 and Fig. 26), power to the mixer motor had to be controlled precisely to slowly build up turning momentum, without twisting the column into a tight knot. Sufficient power must then be maintained to keep the dishcloth net spinning in the desired cone shape, with a wide centrifugal spread at the bottom end of the column. The blades are attached permanently to the mixers to withstand the weight of the dishcloths. The standard manual and automatic control circuits are used, with a real time 'learning'<sup>43</sup> cycle. The program is stored in non-volatile memory and will not be lost when the power is removed.

### Kitchen towel dispensers

A motor and driving gear are hidden inside the tube of the kitchen towel roll, and rotate the entire tube and roll (see *Friday*, p.59). The only visible alteration to the kitchen towel holder is a pair of thin white wires extending from one side of the holder to a control box mounted elsewhere. The control of the motor allows the kitchen towel to roll up or down at various speeds, with the standard manual or automatic operation.

<sup>43</sup> The 'learning' cycle is used in every instance of mechanisation, although the application is different for the appliance control system, which has a liquid crystal display. The learn cycle is activated by pressing a set combination of buttons, whereafter the cycle that is manually entered by using the control button, will be repeated when the system is set to run in the automatic mode.



### Orange-squeezers

The type of motor used in the orange-squeezers (see *Saturday*, p. 61 and Fig. 27) does not allow many variations in the operation and control. The original circuit uses a pressure switch to start the turning motion of motor. This switch was bypassed and replaced by a controllable relay switch in the controller box. A micro-controller is used to control the 'on' and 'off' switching of the orange squeezer motor either in a manual mode, or in an automatic mode. The device is programmed in a 'learn' mode, and then set to mimic the pressing of the control buttons. The program is stored in non-volatile memory and will not be lost when the power is removed.

### The pulley system

The system is driven by a robust windscreen wiper motor that can withstand the weight of the pods (vertical gravitational force) and the tension of the cable (horizontal force) (see *Sunday*, p. 63). The motor has three variations in speed for both the forward and reverse direction movements. Control of the motor direction and speed can be done either manually or programmed to run a specific sequence continuously. A programmed sequence can be entered through a 'learn' mode, where a current manual control sequence of movements and speed is stored in memory in real time. When the system is set to run in the automatic mode, the stored sequence will be repeated continuously.

The nylon pulleys are those used in yachting, but the standard ropes for these pulleys were too thick for the purposes of the project. Fishermen's trace was used instead. It is relatively unobtrusive and sufficiently strong not to stretch excessively. The pulleys were positioned so that the zigzag crossover of the cable will not allow the pockets to get entangled. These were carefully attached in order not to slip backwards or add additional friction to the pulleys. To prevent slippage on the nylon of the pulleys, rubber strips were attached to the 'driving' pulley.

The power conversion from the mains to 12 volt, and the controlling circuits, are all contained in the control box. As a safety measure, a metal plate fixed to the back of the box dissipates the heat generated by the transformer, rectifier and current-limiting resistors.

University of Cape Town

## **INDIVIDUAL WORKS**



**FIG. 28: MONDAY, TUESDAY AND SATURDAY**

Installation view, Upstairs gallery, Michaelis School of Fine Art, Cape Town

**MONDAY**

2003

Household appliances, compressors, control units, cables and connectors.  
Dimensions variable.

A group of household appliances is arranged on the floor in a programmed system where a control unit activates the individual machines (Fig. 1 and 28-30). There are kettles, steam irons, electrical fans, fridge compressors, a hotplate and a grater, orchestrated to switch on and off intermittently. Occasionally, the kettles release steam when they come to the boil, so too the irons, as they heat up. The electrical fans make a low noise and rotate from side to side before switching off again. The buzz of the fridge compressors is unmistakably familiar – although the machines are not encased in fridges. The hotplate heats up to orange, with visible heat waves. At short intervals the grater emits a loud sound, an exclamation mark in the otherwise placid noise pattern. The cables that connect the appliances to the control units and power points are exposed to show the coloured earth, neutral and live wires. Smaller slave units contain the relay switches and emit a clicking sound when activated by the master control. The profusion of cables, plugs and connectors is a prominent and deliberate feature. The cables are of surplus length; they function as conduits and also point to an extended purpose, like the appliances.

The network of appliances and cables is familiar and strange at the same time. At first sight the work attempts to connect to a well-known household experience where appliances perform their regular functions. The main difference is that they are taken out of the familiar domestic environment and put within the gallery space, controlled by a microprocessor and not human intervention. The sounds connect to memories of the familiar and to a particular situation for the viewer.

University of Cape Town

The appliances are programmed to perform in a slow symphony. The rhythmic changes in tone reveal an orchestrated performance which is gentle, unhurried and reassuring. However, a degree of expectation is posed for the viewer. I draw the comparison with a film that unfolds slowly without committing to a plot structure, leaving the viewer to comment, 'Throughout the film I was waiting for something to happen'. In a similar sense the appliances do not deliver to an expectation; there is no climactic event. Unlike Rebecca Horn's machines, these machines do not 'flip out' (Celant 1993:18); they merely repeat the program, at a slow tempo. The tempo suggests bodily rhythms and flows: blood coursing through the veins, a steady heartbeat. When electricity flow was first 'discovered', it was compared to the human spirit, and later a relation was drawn to the human nervous system (Asendorf 1993). The connotation of the human body is applicable to the work in its reference to physiological processes over which humans have no conscious control. These processes carry on without humans 'thinking' them to happen. In the work, an 'invisible hand' controls the activity of the appliances: their automatic actions are outside the viewer's control. The machines of the home are seemingly alive, inhaling and exhaling at regular intervals.

There is danger, both physical and imagined, which disrupts the initial familiarity. The automatic actions of the appliances become disturbing, they could be benign or hostile. As an imagined threat, the work is suggestive of the quiet invasion of technology within the home, as more and more appliances are acquired. Though small in stature, the appliances become an entangled mass of hostile machines, rejecting their secondary status.

FIG. 29: DETAIL OF MONDAY



**FIG. 30: MONDAY, TUESDAY AND SATURDAY**  
Installation view, Upstairs gallery, Michaelis School  
of Fine Art, Cape Town.





**FIG. 31: MONDAY AND TUESDAY**

Installation view, Upstairs gallery, Michaelis School of Fine Art, Cape Town.

**TUESDAY**

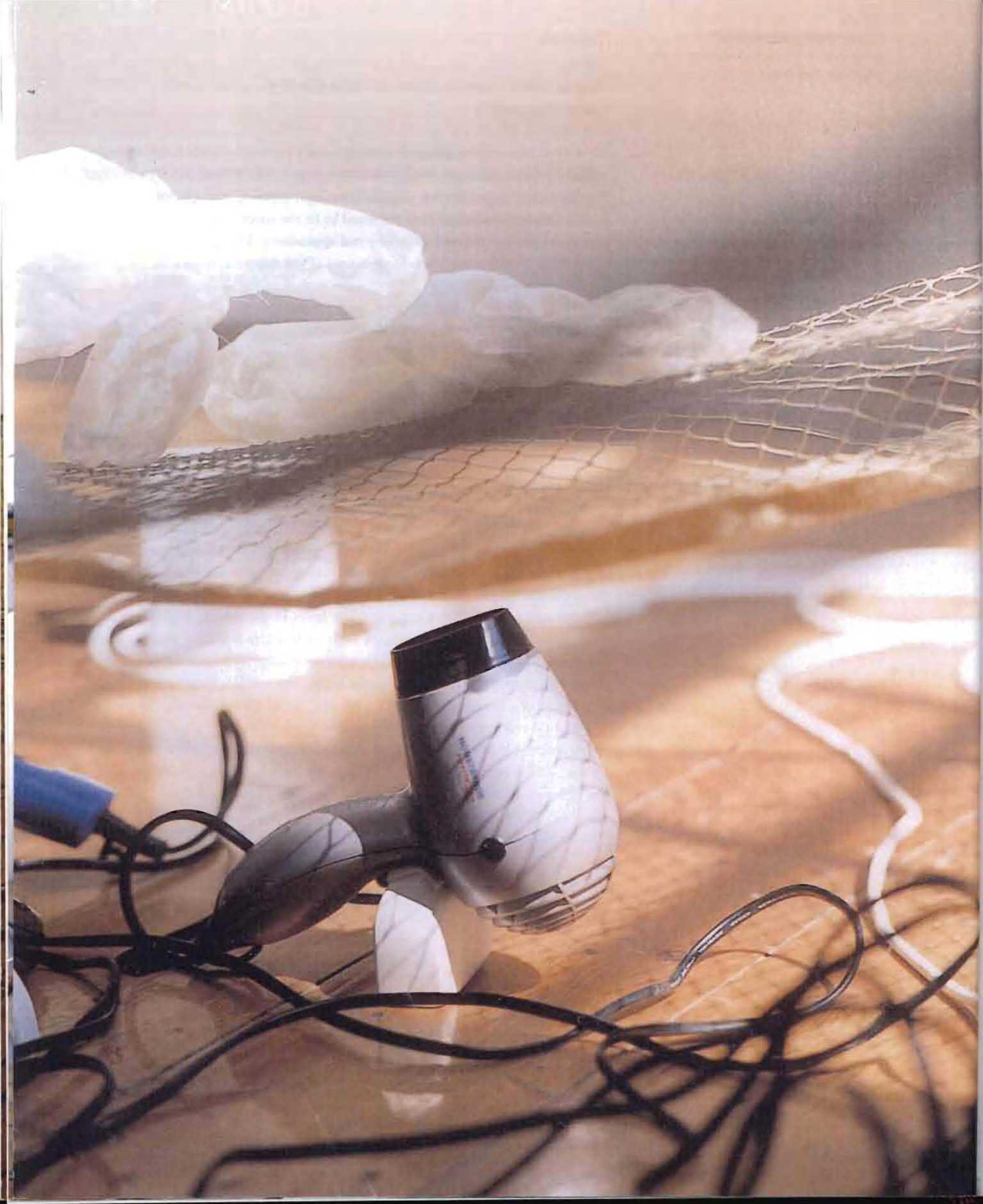
2004

Ironing boards, crushed organza, invisible thread and plastic rings  
Dimensions variable

This work comprises a group of ironing boards punctured with holes through which crushed organza tubing is threaded (Fig. 1, 28, 30 and 31). The ironing boards were stripped of their original coverings, exposing the wooden chipboard. Holes were cut into the wood to fit the tubes, and afterwards the ironing board was restored to its original appearance. The fabric was measured and altered to echo the general appearance of the domestic object. In every instance, where the tubing penetrates the surface of the board, the hole is 'framed' with cotton binding. Low-quality materials and quick methods such as staples were used, in keeping with the 'integrity' of the budget mass-produced ironing board.

Bound together, and arranged at different heights, the ironing boards form a family structure which, although passive, suggests movement through the space. The steel legs of the ironing boards are slender, giving an appearance of gazelle-like grace. Although of humble origin, they have acquired an air of mystery. This work belongs with the appliances, forming a slow-stepping procession through the maze of cables.

The crushed organza tubes are transparent, revealing supportive plastic rings sewn in place with invisible thread. The tubing connects the ironing boards, but in effect defeats their function. In this work the sewing stitch is exaggerated and becomes a violation. The holes in the ironing boards cut the surface into a mesh of openings with little surface area left. The sewing needle has changed into a dagger, in an obsessive reworking of the burdened ironing board. The tubes threaded through the holes, like sewing, loop back again, suggestive of a circulation device for air. The extrusions are visceral, the plastic rings could refer to a skeletal structure, the crushed organza that covers the rings is skin-like and permeable. If indeed a device, the purpose of the tubing remains unclear, taking on the form of an alien growth. Interrupting the familiar floral 'body' of the ironing board, a new avatar emerges.



**FIG. 32: DETAIL OF WEDNESDAY**

Installation view, my studio, Michaelis School of Fine Art, Cape Town.

**WEDNESDAY**

2004

Hair dryers, plug adaptors, extension cords, control unit, chiffon/net/sheet, wood and enamel paint

Dimensions variable

This work is made up of four groups of hair dryers with wooden supports, plug adaptors, a control box, netting and sewn chiffon pods (Fig. 23, 24, 32, 33). Twelve small hair dryers are positioned in groups of three on the floor. The hair dryers display brand names: 'Logik', 'Safeway', 'Remington' and 'Carmen'. Placed on the floor, they are supported on wooden blocks. The hair dryers are connected to two-point plug adaptors that also order the jumble of cables. A net is suspended above the hair dryers with groups of chiffon pods finely attached to it. As the hair dryers switch on, the pods are blown up, seemingly floating, before coming to rest on the net again. The hair dryers sound a monotonous baritone when switched on. In the grand orchestration of the body of work, they form the wind-section. The sound of their unfaltering mechanical tone is absurd.

The work refers to a fragile state, where the task expected from the appliances is overwhelming. The humanised appliances are not intimidating, instead they are vulnerable in appearance. Their position on the floor seems unsteady. Whereas the appliances of *Monday* indicate a disturbance of security, through instability and reference to danger, the drama surrounding the hair dryers refers to the threat they pose to themselves. If pushed to the extreme, they could burn out. The task they are performing without much success points to their physical limitations. A larger hair dryer or a fan, with much more power, would have a more spectacular effect on the pods. As an absurd cause-and-effect experiment, the work points to failed attempts and uncertain results. The sheet holds connotations of the bedroom and connects to other sensual references. In this work the sheet suggests a safety net, which adds to the precariousness of the work.



## **THURSDAY**

2004

Electrical hand-held mixers, dishcloths, control units, Velcro, plastic and mild steel

Dimensions variable

The key elements of this work are two hand-held mixers, to which a skirt made from netted dishcloths has been attached, in a manner suggestive of a functional extension (Fig. 23, 26 and 33). The netted dishcloths were configured using a craft process, but are intended to seem as robust as any store-bought net. The dishcloths were cut into strips and stitched together, then netted using a fisherman's needle in the traditional method. Alterations in the case of the dishcloth mixers involved attaching cups to the blades for the attachments to look functional, not tied on. As the mixer is activated, the dishcloth net spins out slowly, opening up to its fullest extent before gradually coming to rest again. The mixer is supported on a welded steel platform which is mounted to the wall. A control box fixed to the platform controls the motion of the appliance. The two mixers are set up as a pair with co-ordinated movement.

Hinging on the absurd, the work is suggestive of an unresolved conflict between escape and restraint. The dishcloth as readymade signifies a ubiquitous symbol of domesticity, laden with associations of the home. The knots are heavy and robust, and the netted form of the dishcloths relates to capture and captivity. In their immobile state, the dishcloths become weights to the mixers, thwarting the purpose of the blades. But when the slow ascent of the netted dishcloths starts, a process of transformation begins. The motion suggests a slow dance, where the spinning dishcloths become pretty twirling dresses. The mundane dishcloth is transformed into something of grace and beauty in an alchemical process that never reaches its completion. The daydream shifts back to reality, the skirts come to rest, the dishcloths are once more ordinary rags.

The hand-held mixers could be electrical variations of Man Ray's eggbeaters with their anarchic ability to 'stir things up' (Zabel 1998:28). In this work, however, instead of the vicious beating – often to little effect – that hand-operated eggbeaters imply, the anarchy is tempered by notions of feminine deceit. On the surface the work infers, on a moral note, that the drudgery and boredom of the everyday cannot contain the human spirit, and grants the escape of the imagination to be resistance in itself. Thus inconclusive flights of fancy may be a way to escape restrictive realities. But the absurdity points to another possibility, that the magical escape is momentary, a petty daydream to pass the time. The pretty skirts, in the context of the work, are veils that obscure the realisation that a flawed situation remains unchanged. The absurdity implies a continuation of the same fantasy, without a resolution to the conflict.



**FIG. 34: FRIDAY**

Installation view, my studio, Michaelis School of Fine Art, Cape Town.

**FRIDAY**

2004

Paper towel dispensers, paper towels, motor and control unit  
Dimensions variable

A pair of kitchen towel dispensers, set up on the wall, is animated so as to disperse paper towels (Fig. 34). Each has had a motor inserted, connected to a wheel, which translates the motion onto the cardboard tube inside the towels. The paper towels scroll up and down at intervals. The movement varies from a smooth rolling motion to jittery motions and rhythmic pulses. The paper towels are perforated and pure white. In their white casings, the work becomes almost invisible against a white wall.

Indispensable, yet throwaway, the paper towel exists to wipe, absorb and be discarded. The lightness of the work reflects its ephemeral quality and the passing of time. The paper towel has no pretensions. In this instance it is granted an extended life as part of the performance, even a touch of beauty. The perforated texture of its surface exudes a delicate air. In motion, the towels catch the eye. One can imagine a fully automated house where paper towels are dispensed at the flick of a wrist. The individual movements indicate personality traits, humorous and slightly melancholic. The automated machine is spirited, it has a life of its own that can subvert the wishes of its master.



**FIG. 35: SATURDAY**

Installation view, Upstairs gallery, Michaelis School of Fine Art, Cape Town.

**SATURDAY**

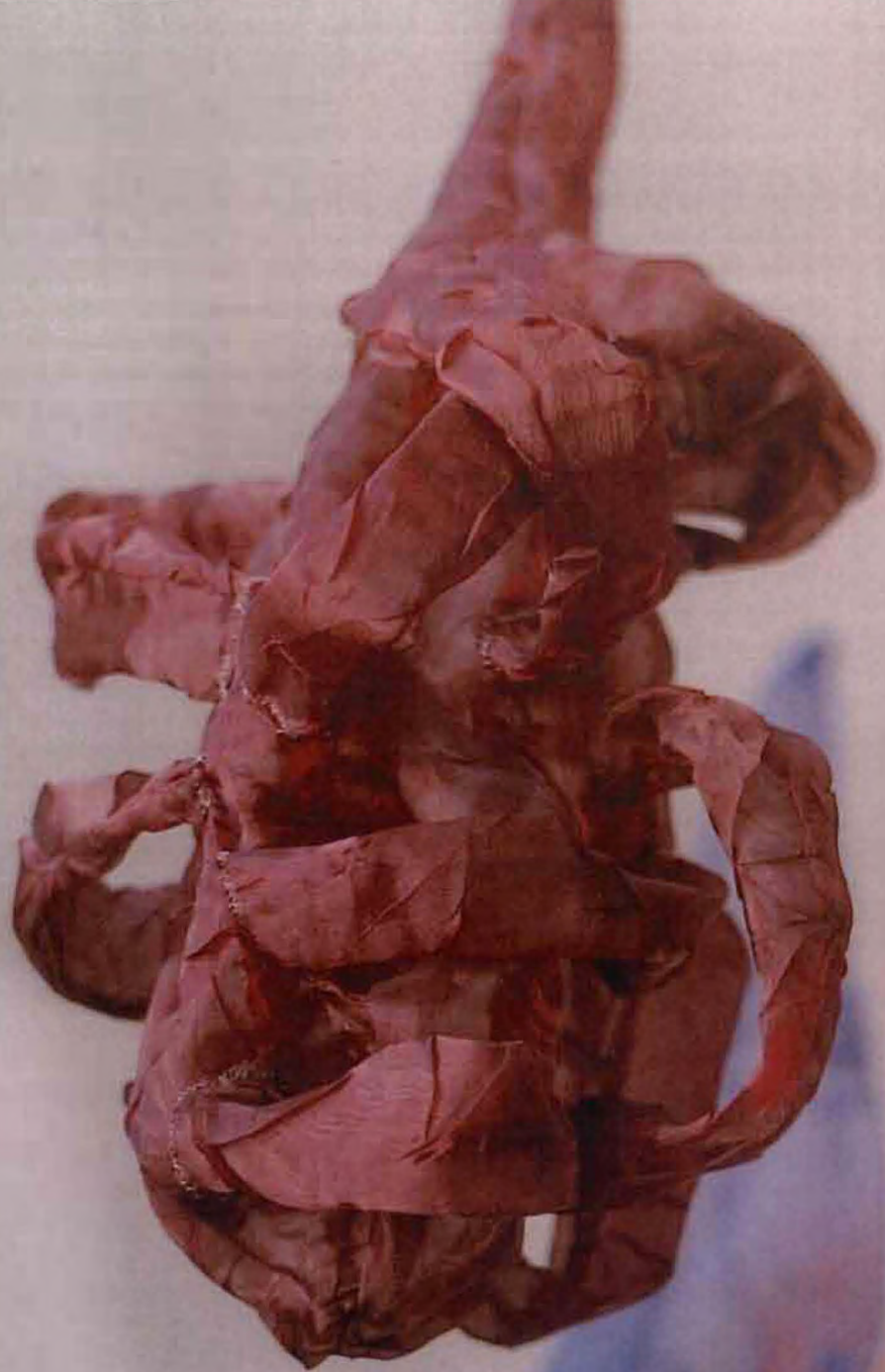
2004

Orange squeezers, chiffon, organza, netting and control units

Dimensions variable

Two hand-operated orange-squeezers with fabric protrusions are connected to a control box (Fig. 1, 27, 28, 30 and 35). The chiffon additions are made with detailed sewing techniques. The movement is a basic stop-and-start rotating action, with the characteristic noise of orange-squeezers. The work is paired up, like the dishcloth mixers, but here the suggestion is one of intimacy, through the quality of the fabric and the interaction when the protrusions touch. They are a couple, and the mechanical motion is the production of love.

The hand-operated squeezers suggest a reworking of the Duchampian bachelor machines, but here the mechanisms have been altered to show voluptuous protrusions in the absence of fruit. The frustration of the squeezers is that there is no progression. Together they spin, sometimes touching, but without affecting the rotating action, doomed to endless encounters without any lasting connection. Haruki Murakami uses satellites as a metaphor for human isolation. Although they appear beautiful from afar, in essence they are '...prisons, where each of us is locked up alone, going nowhere' (Murakami 2000:129). There will be connections and times spent together, when 'orbits cross paths' but ultimately we are bound to our own track, nothing more than 'lonely lumps of metal' (ibid.).



**SUNDAY**

2004

Chiffon, organza, netting, sewing thread, control unit, motor, pulley wheels, mild steel and enamel paint

Dimensions variable

Strung across the room above eye-level, a pulley system transports empty pods made from chiffon and organza, on a regular cycle (Fig. 23, 25, 33, 36 and 37). The pockets are elongated shapes of indeterminate origin, with bumps, protrusions, skirts and holes. Some are pleated, ruched, smocked or gathered – using techniques of clothing production to create both shape and style. The pockets of chiffon and organza are cut from patterns (usually made up of four parts) and the finishing is meticulous. The fabric is cut out, then sewn together, taking care to add pleats, ruches or other techniques as required. They are all machine-stitched with precision, and colourful in the extreme, ranging from bright blues and pinks to murky brown and dull yellows. The colours are fantastic and surreal, with an artificial quality. The line, which is looped, crosses at points forming a zigzag pattern. The motor drive emits a low sound while generating movement that is deliberate and rhythmic. The pods slowly move forward, then speed up, before slowing down again, to come to a gradual stop, before changing direction and continuing as before.

The work is a washing-line fantasy reminiscent of a drying line with multicoloured clothing variations. The washing line is complicated by the kineticism of the work. The automation and set route that the pods follow creates a production-line effect. In essence the movement cuts through space, animating emptiness. The motion of the pods suggests the unvarying routine typical of domestic work and the chaotic effect of washing, drying and 'getting everything done'. Associations of the tasks within the home and their tyrannical effect are almost tempered by the absolute lightness of the pods. Empty, transparent, made from feminine fabric, they glide sensuously.

The pods of chiffon and organza are intimate and suggestive. Sexuality is subversive. In my work the sensual qualities of fabric and shapes are a reminder of the bodily experience and the strangeness that does not want to be contained by definitions. The shapes themselves are slippery, one wonders about holes and protrusions. The slippage occurs visually as well. As each pod moves, it slips from view, obscured by other pods, which are also moving.

## CONCLUSION

My body of work describes a subjective experience in domestic space, where desire, emotions and mental states are made visible. The work attempts to undermine the notion that what is familiar is easily understood, and to examine associations of domestic spaces that were based on binary oppositions. Instead, the domestic experience reveals a complex interaction with one's environment, where the functional logic, which circumscribes household duties and everydayness, is punctured by human responses. The body of work claims importance to an area of life, which can often be dismissed or deemed of little consequence, possibly because its imminence serves as a reminder of our own time-bound existence.

The work involves a conflicting experience within domestic spaces. On the one hand, routine threatens to overwhelm and destroy a sense of personal freedom. On the other hand, there are moments when the complexity of the human condition comes to the fore. Routine remains an inescapable part of life. On the positive side it establishes a sense of continuity and stability. Yet, at times, routine can have a corrosive effect, dulling sensation and causing frustration.

I have extended the purpose and function of household appliances to become characters in a performance. The living, breathing space subverts the stability of the surroundings and points to an experience of the everyday that steps outside conventional modes and habitual workings.

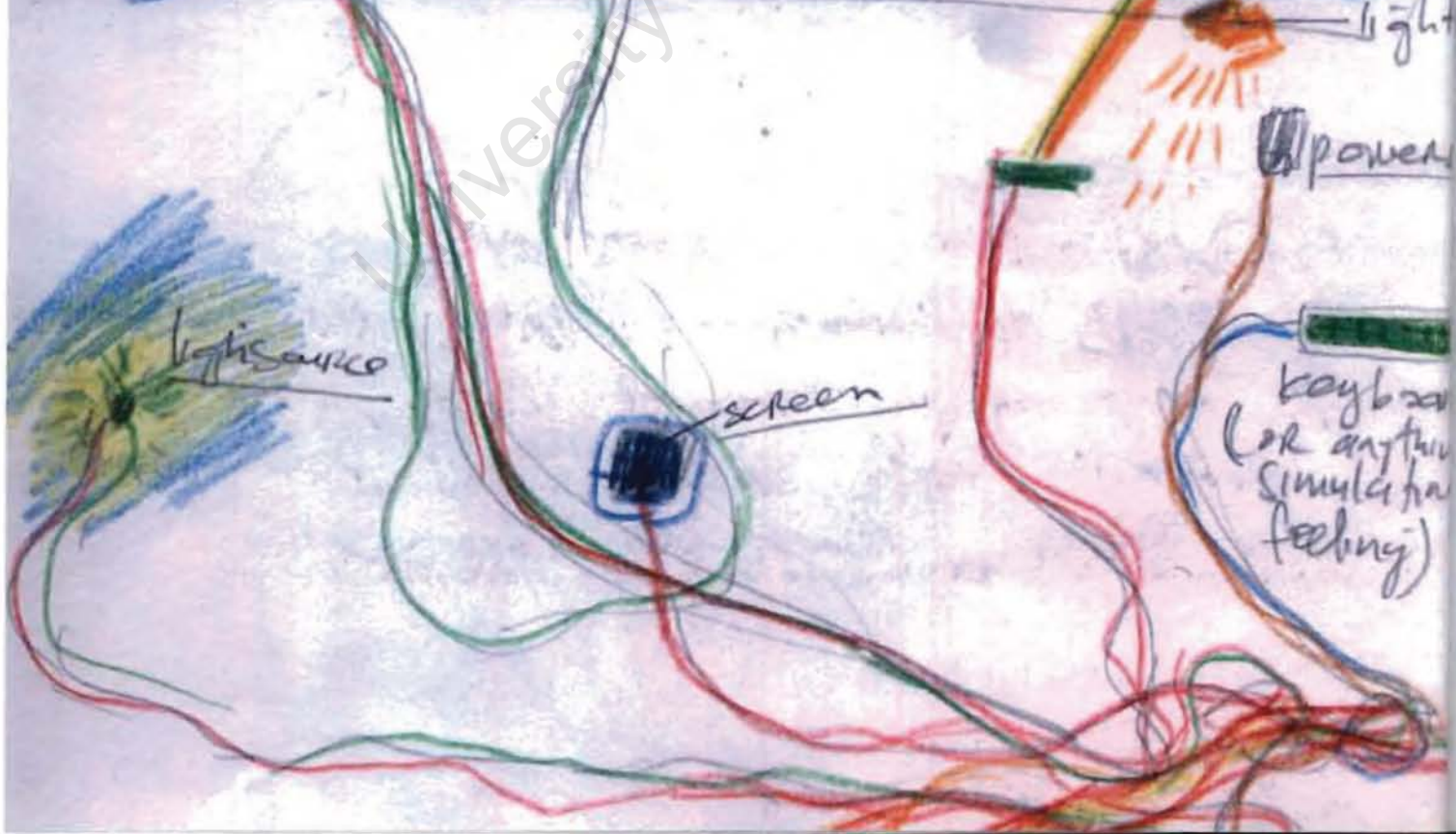
FIG. 37: SUNDAY

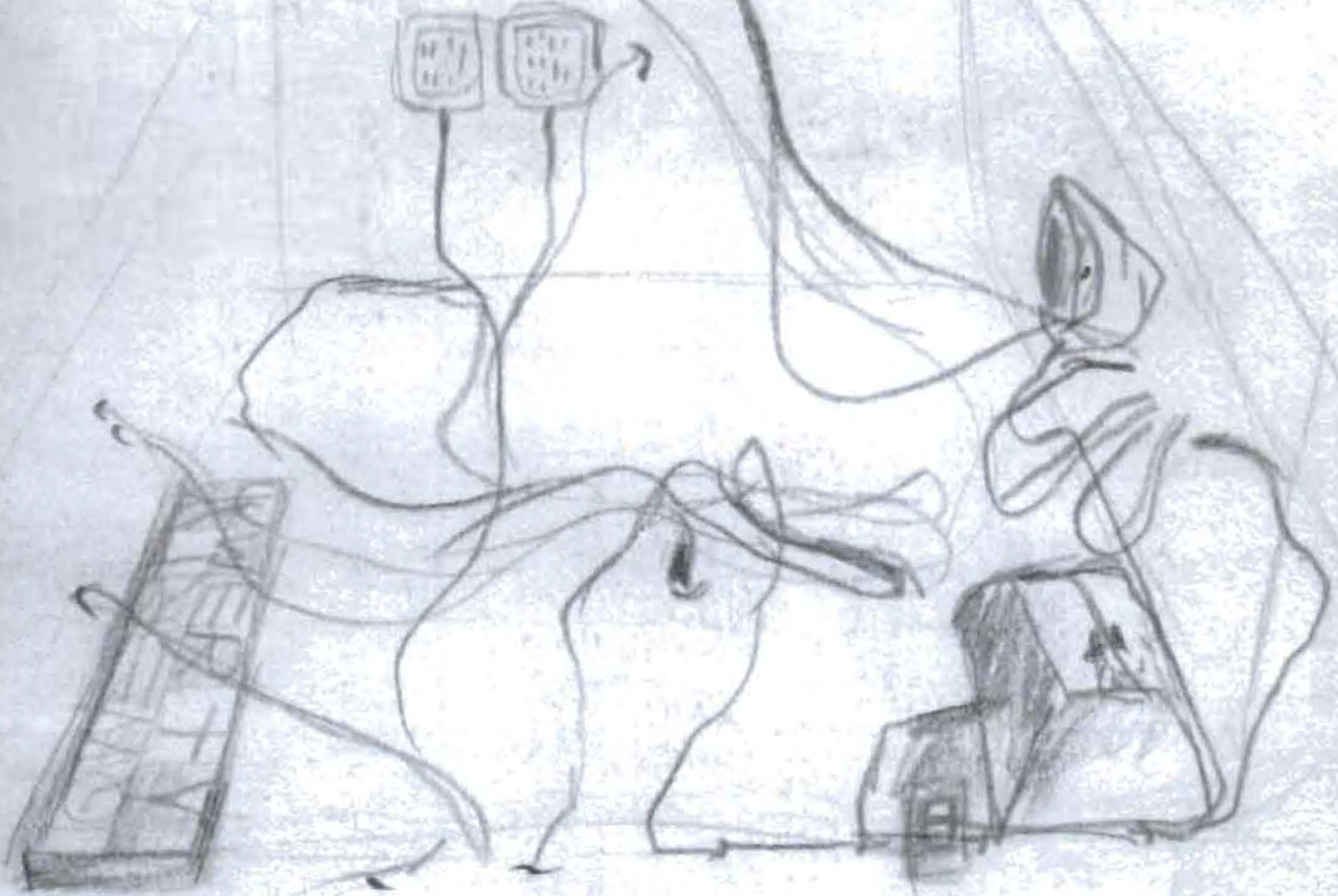
Installation view, my studio, Michaelis School of Fine Art, Cape Town.





**SKETCHES**





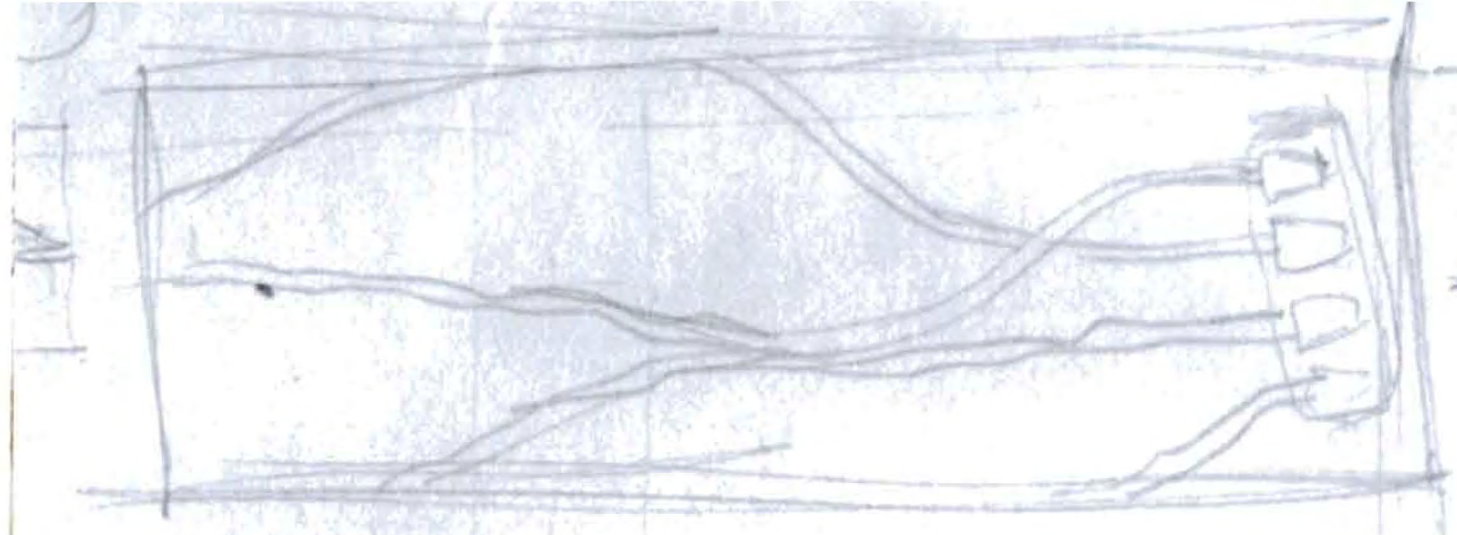
speakers  
 keyboard  
 monitor  
 memory  
 switch

ADD light  
 currents  
 heat  
 heated water (kettle)  
 steam (iron)

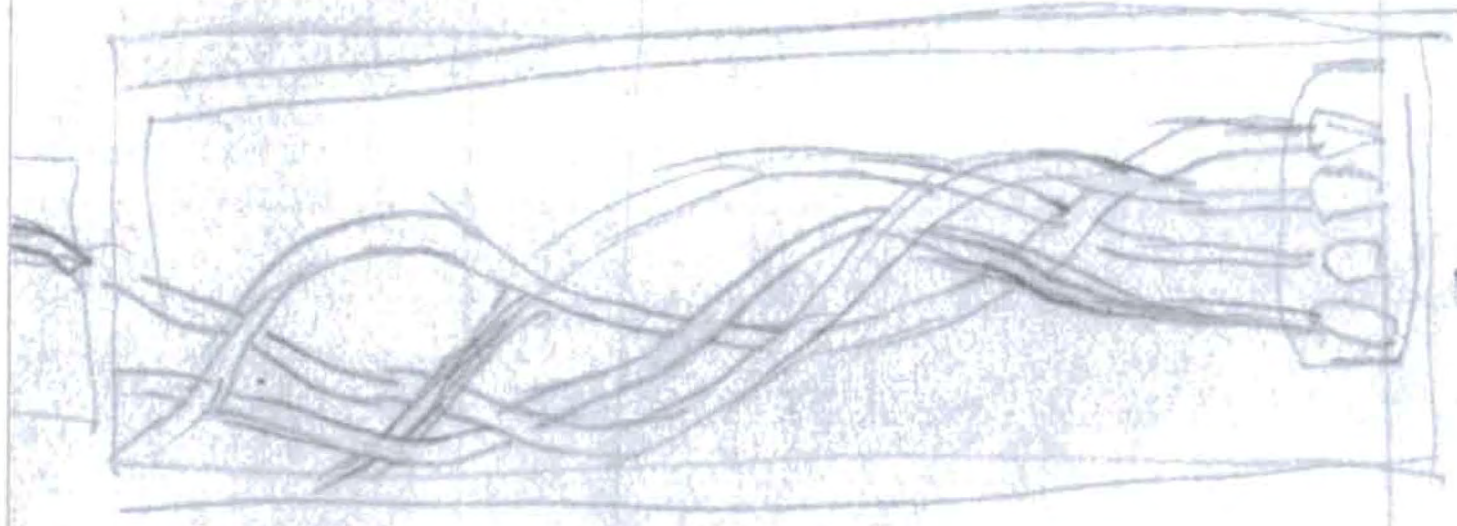
→ NOISE - through speakers in stereo...

kettle  
 zzzzzzz / hummmmm / plonk / plink  
 SCANNING SOUNDS  
 TV SOUNDS  
 RADIO

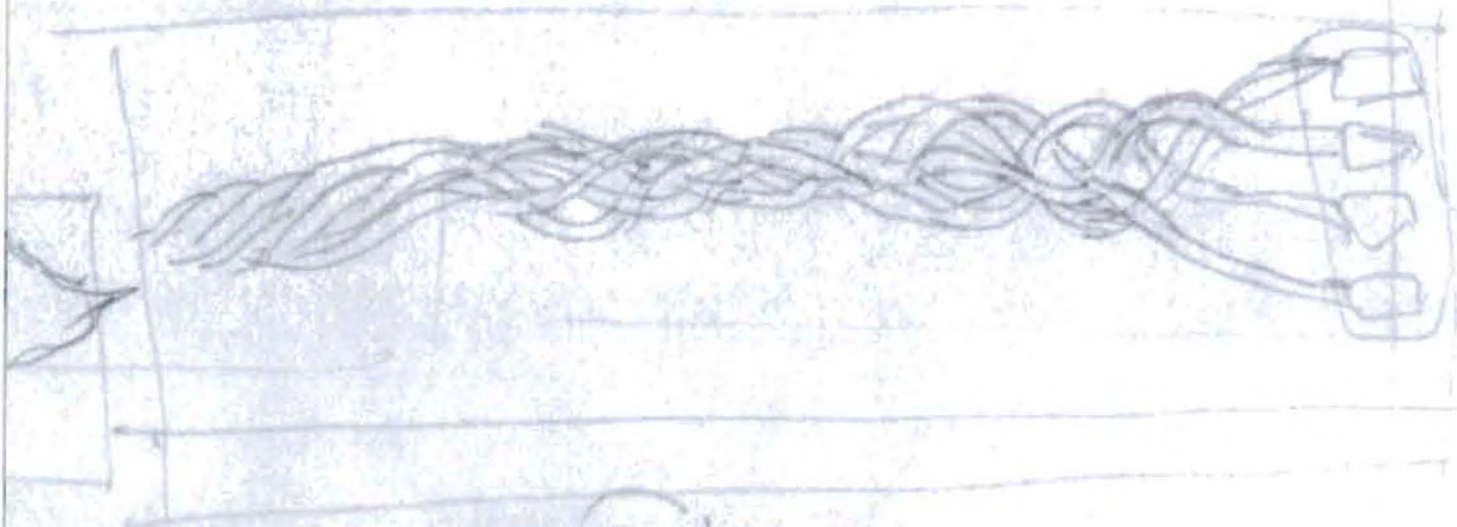
but focus on small noises everywhere  
 clicks + frays wiring  
 replies sounds (when plugged in)  
 distinct humming sound in audibility  
 as if someone is saying



1



2

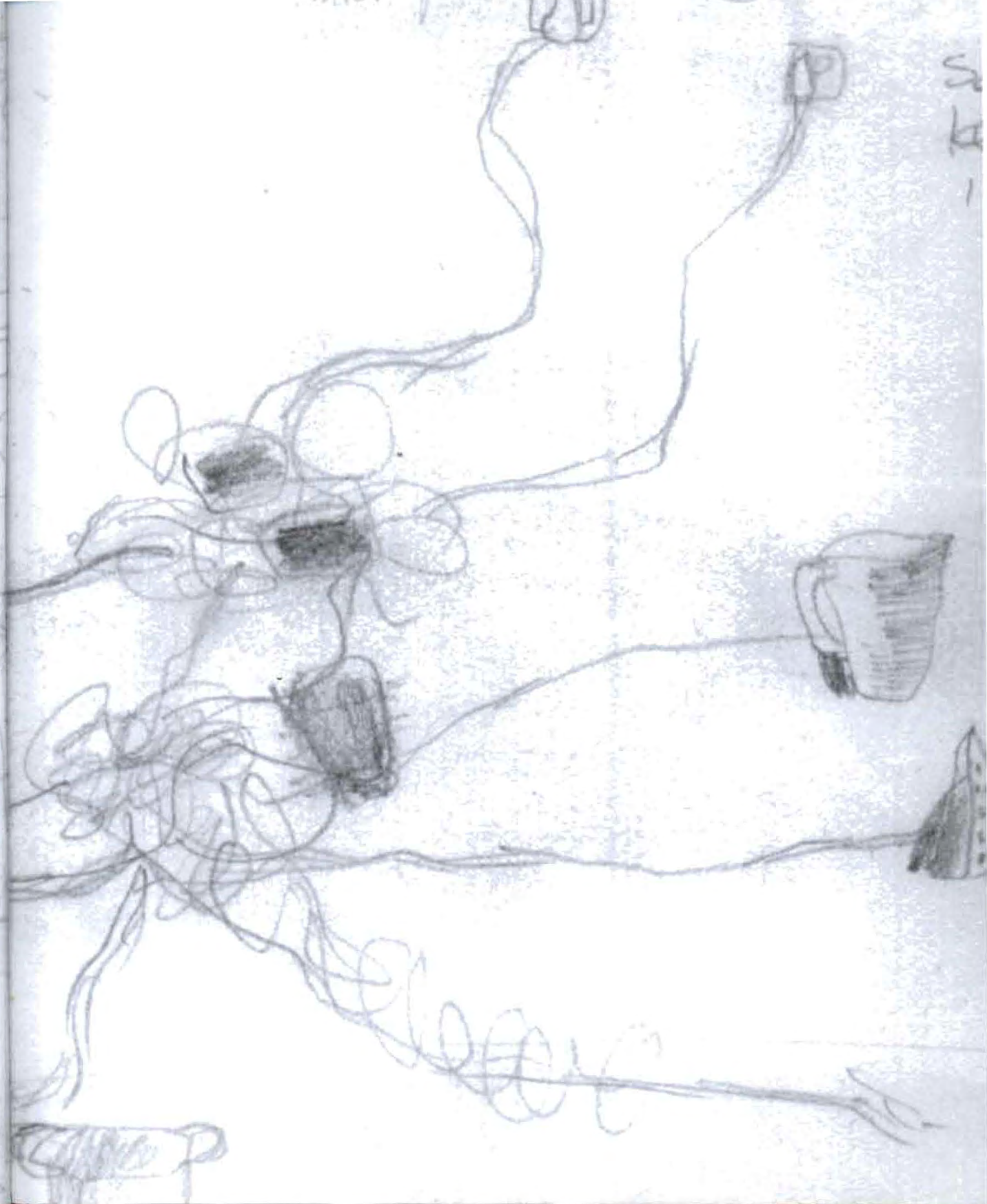


3

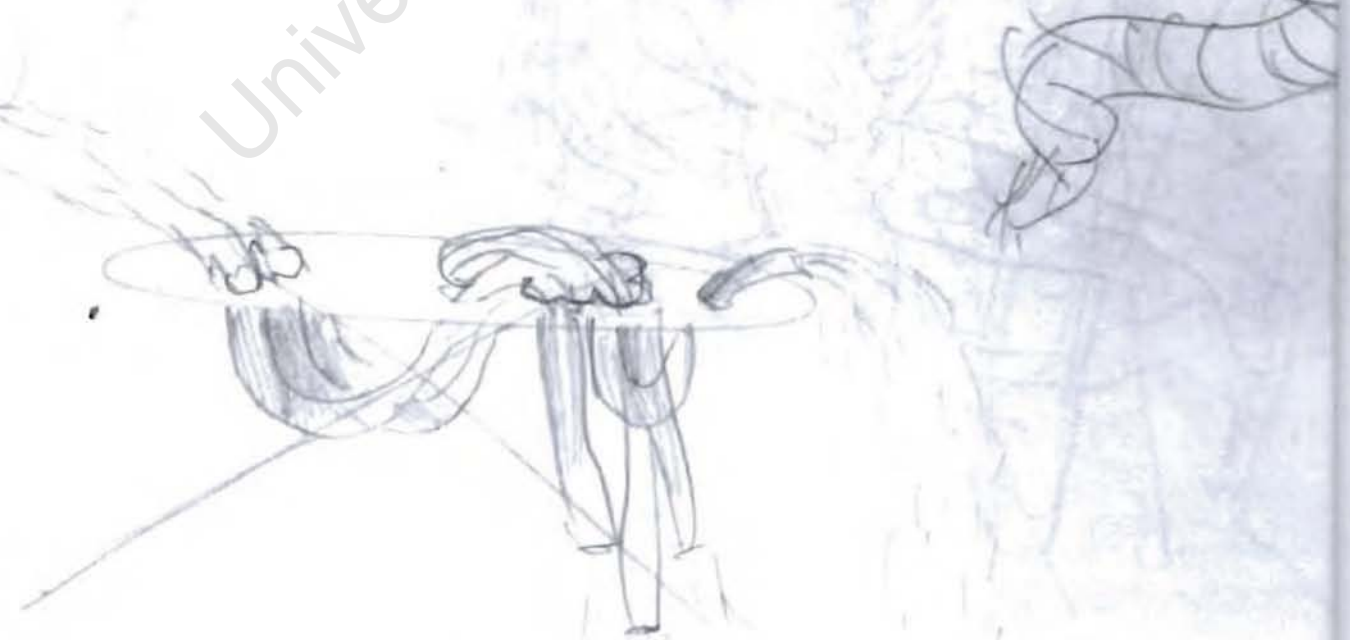
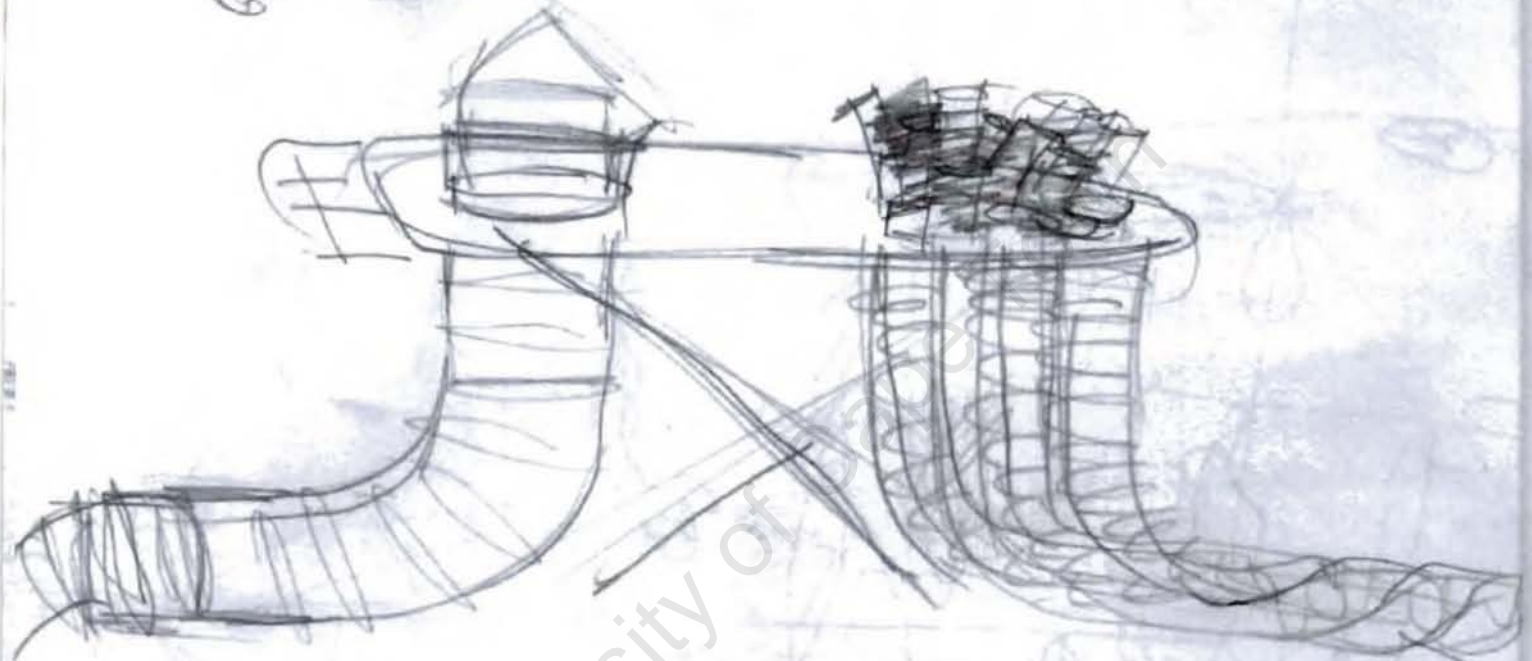
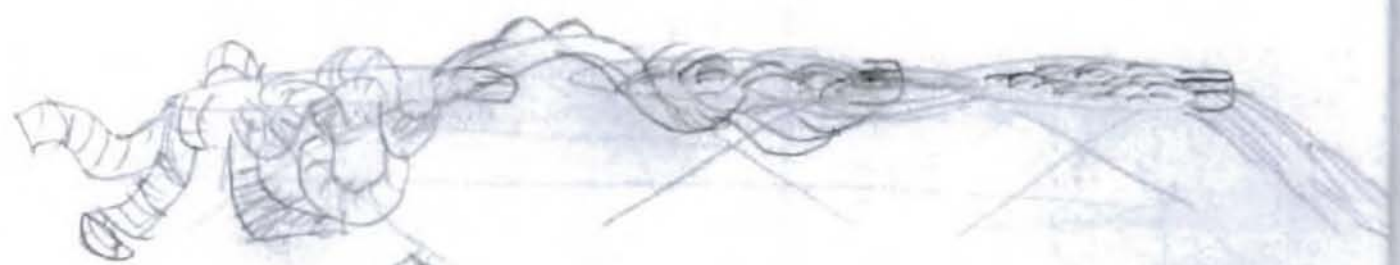
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CABLE



QUEST  
CABLE

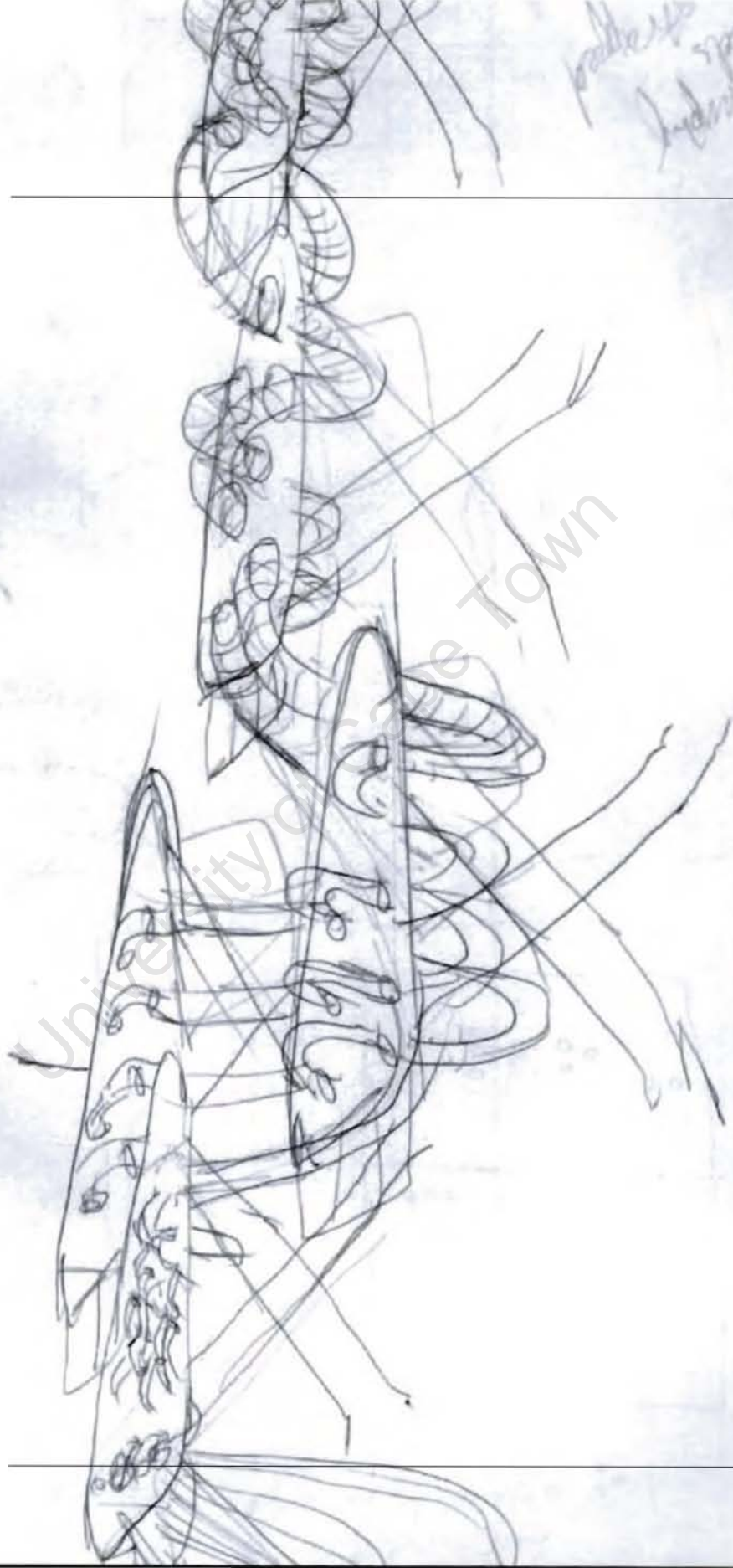


Handwritten notes at the top of the page, including the words "cup" and "cup" written twice.



University of Toronto

Hydrology  
Spring  
1904





$$\frac{4\frac{1}{2} + \frac{3}{4}}{2}$$

1 -  $9.75 = 30.64$       $r = 2\frac{22}{7}$   
 2 -  $9.5$       $30.5$       $3.14$   
 3 -  $9.5$   
 4 -  $10$

5 -  $10 = 14$  ~~down~~  $28$  diam.

6 -  $9.75$

7 -  $10$

8 -  $10$

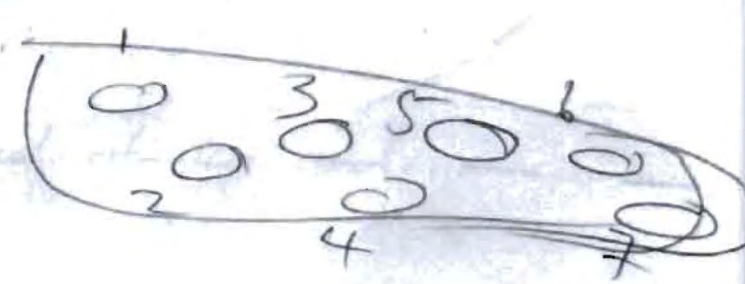
9 -  $10$

10 -  $10.5$

$2(3.14)5 = 31.4, 31.5$

$3 = 5?$

70 needed.



$9.5 = 30.1$

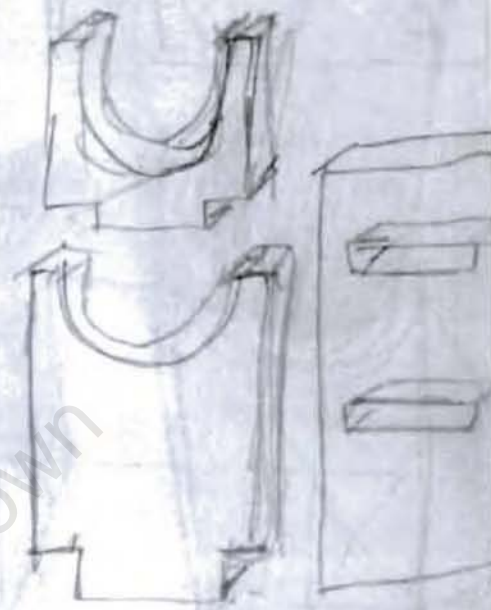
$3 \times 10 = 30$   
 $3 \times 10 = 30$   
 $1 \times 7 = 7$

Money Low.

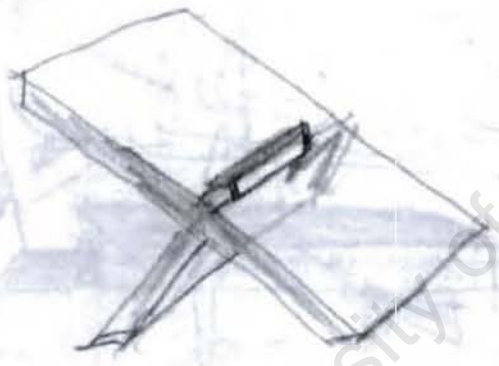
Drawings cut into foam. Mounted on  
cartoony cutouts.

Does this foam last under dif. temperatures?

①



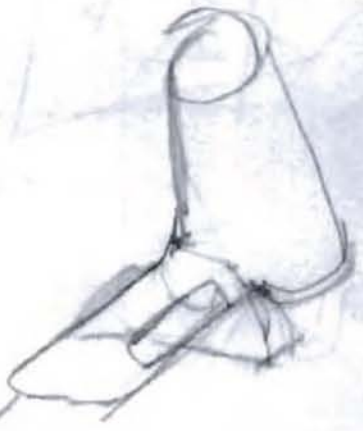
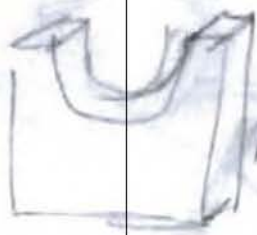
②



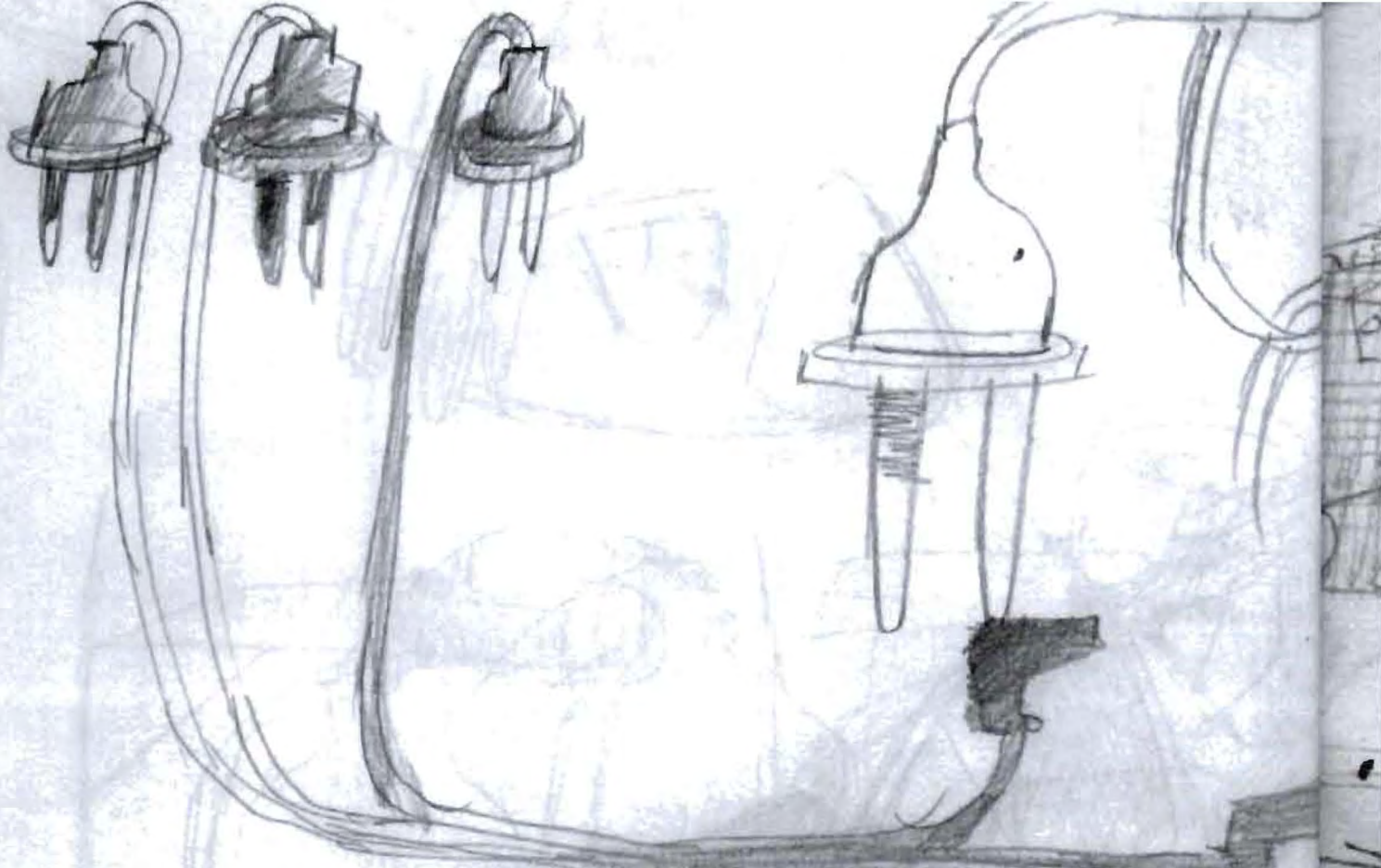
③

(a)

(b)



University of Cape Town



SHADOW PUPPETS

PROTECTIONS

SILKSCREEN  
PRINTS

TVS

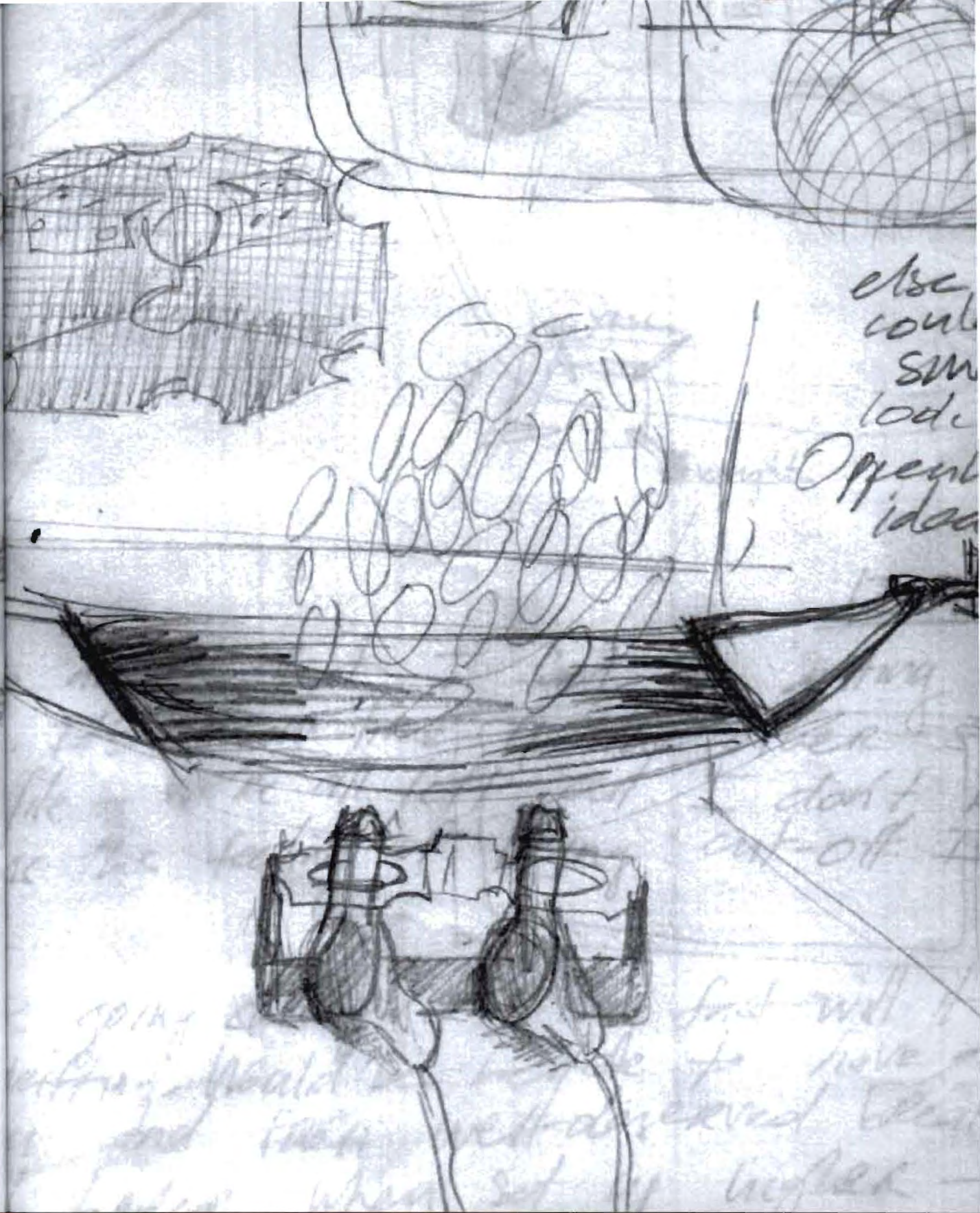
BRAINSTORM

ASSOCIATIONS WITH APPS

IDEAS / CONCEPTS FOR DISSERTATION



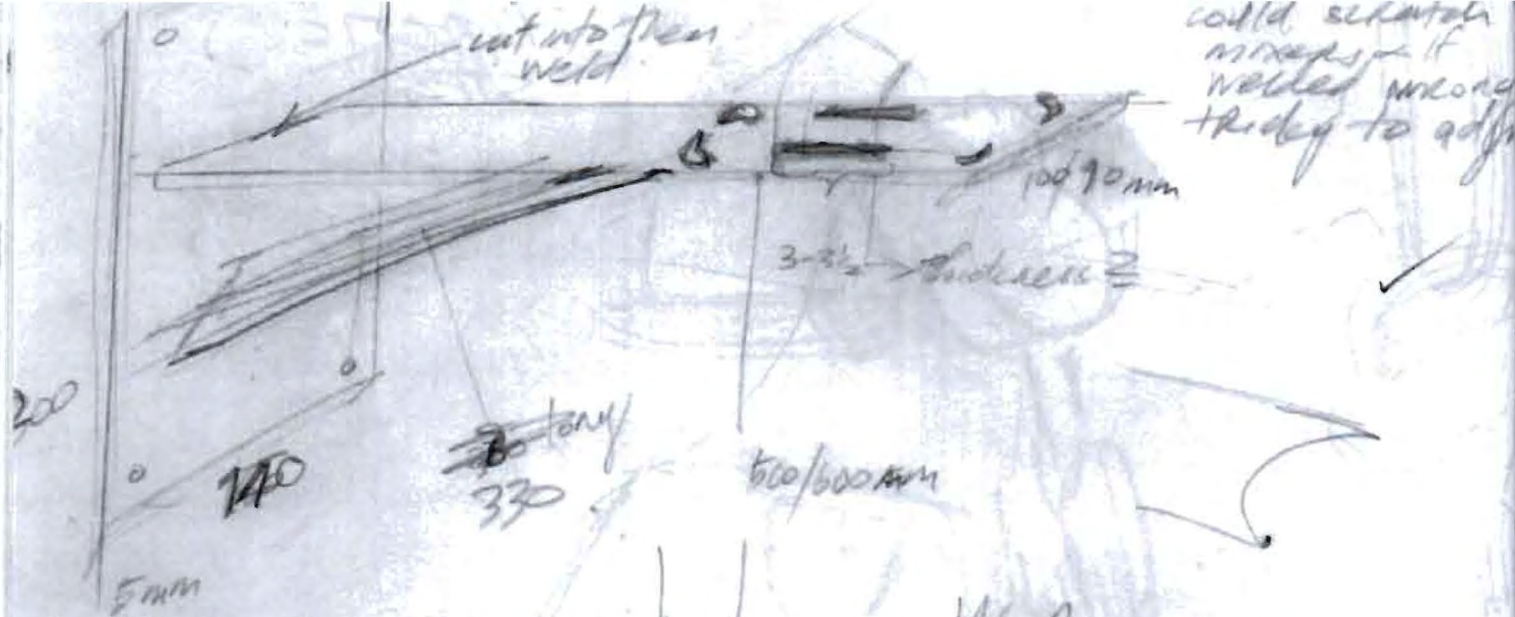
made from  $\approx$   
sect through / white  
plastic / resin / peroxyl



also  
could  
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idea

don't  
out-of

first will  
have  
not discovered  
higher



- Steel
- 2x 300 x 10 x 5
  - 1x 300 x 100 x 10
  - 1x 300 x 90 x 10
  - 1x 500 x 100 x 10
  - 1x 600 x 90 x 10

Wood

$$3\frac{1}{2} \times 8 = 28 \text{ cm}$$

≈ 35 cm, 3 cm thick



Bozal Exhausts

(65.41 steel)

8/77



bottle  
base treacher /  
or transparent  
perspex glass  
died plastics

slip through at  
top of blade

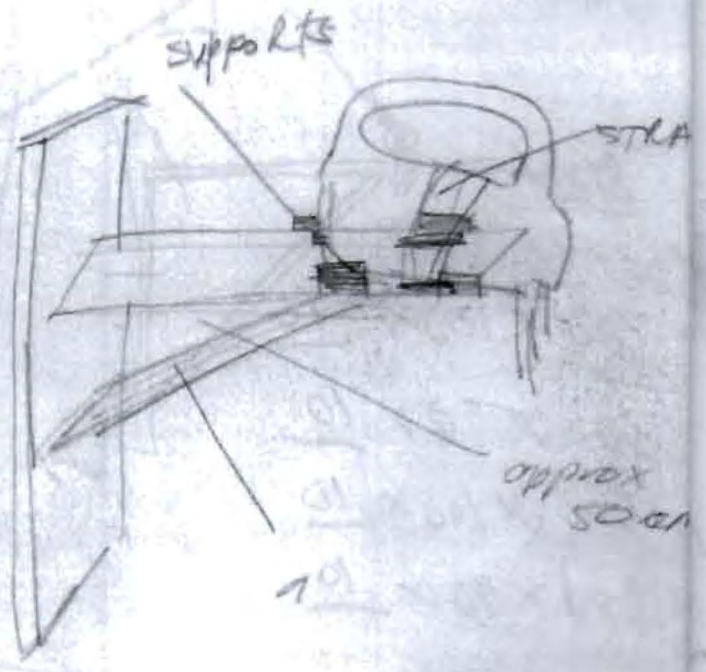
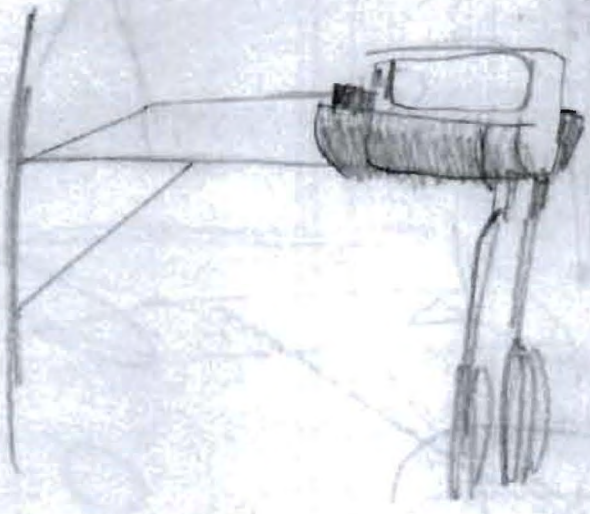
fit snugly

work  
ed so  
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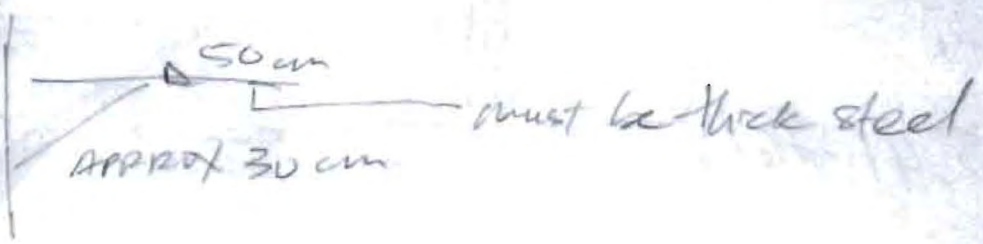


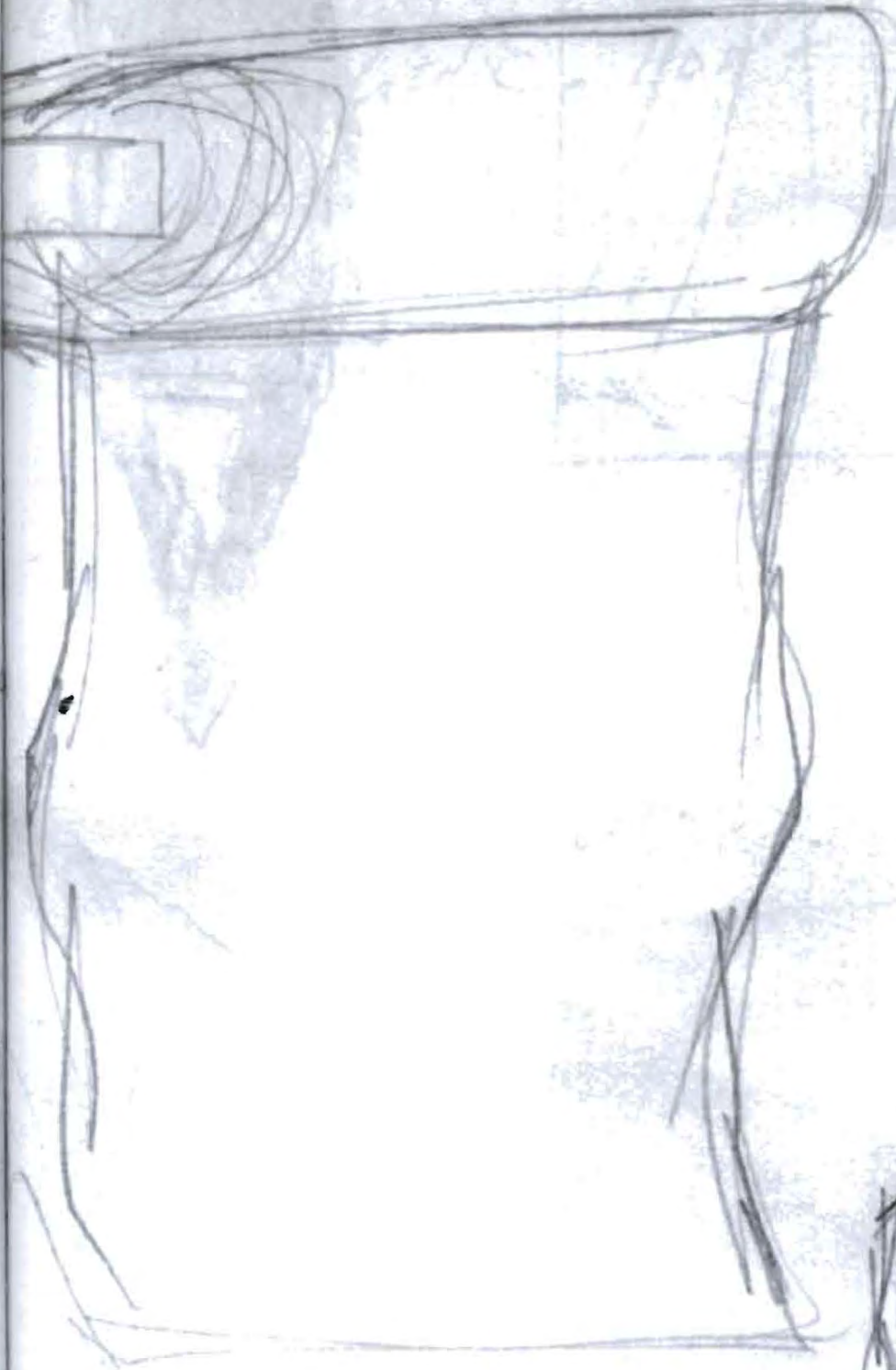
STRAPS  
PLASTIC  
STEEL

slak  
elegant  
sturdy



approx  
50 cm





APER HANDY)

& TOWELS

WORDS

computer printouts of  
old kind perforated  
the side

soak > absorbent  
thirsty drink

Spillage slip

kitchen Roll "you h  
waste ala

napkin useful

serviette

communicate

animate automate



wipe  
greime  
greasy

disintegrate

> tear a tear

tearing tender

to paper tissue paper

wood paper pulp

low quality common

cheap human waste

food kitchen made



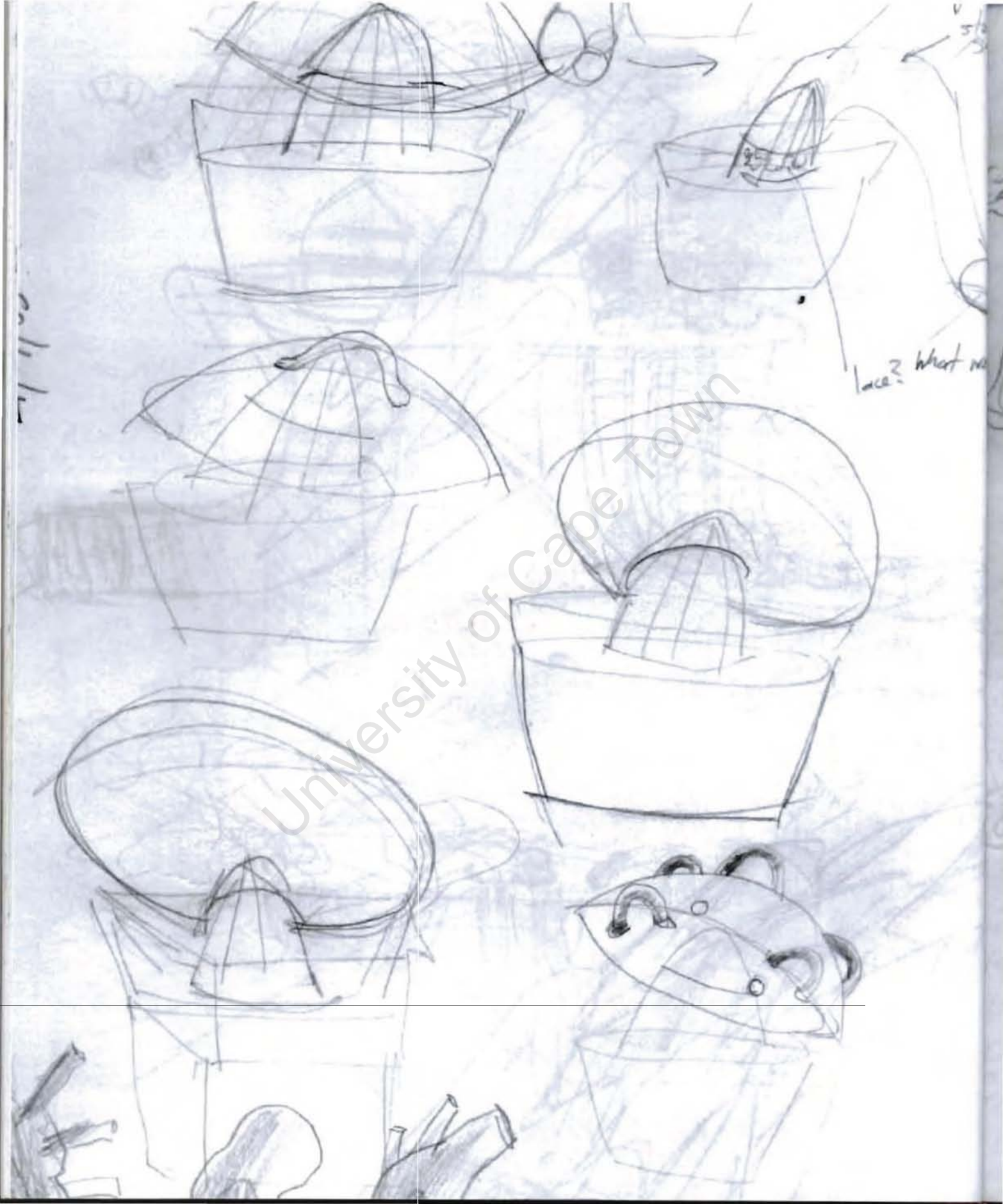
1)

Access pantyhose & lead weights

pantyhose, goldblades (silver) & figure

Pantyhose colour too mundane (camel) construct rather to look like fishnets or shiny stockings. Construct to keep shape better or toes - foam balls (plastic) this a pity when the squeezer gets lost - either make translucent / echoing fuel shape.



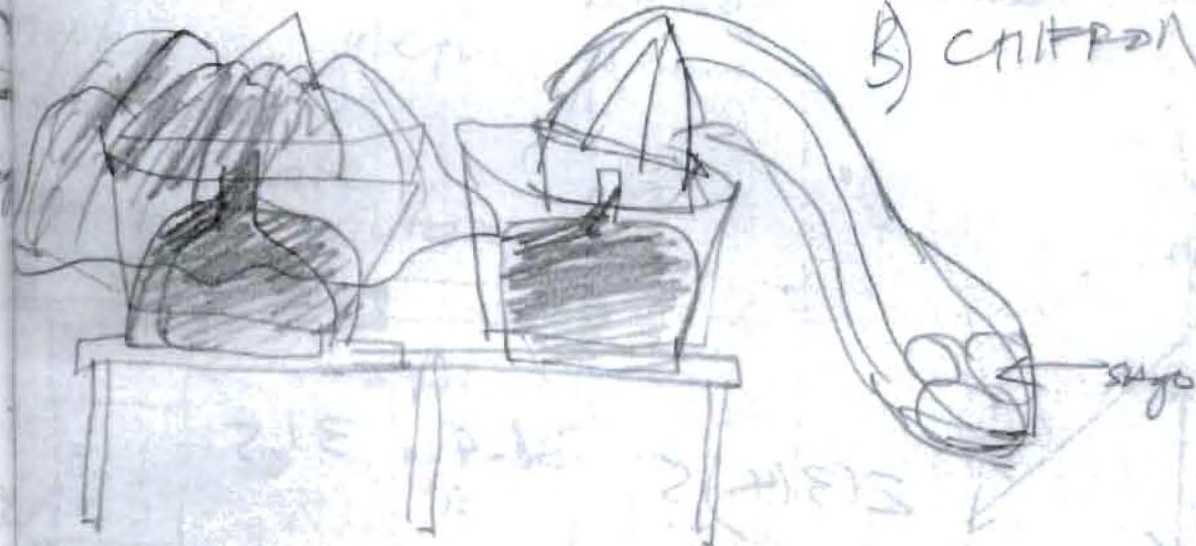


1/2  
300  
1/4

A) CABLES



B) CHIPPON



- ① on presentation - on the floor
- mounted on wall
- on furniture



42  
13  
20



best of my best for  
 - total 19 y/m/27\*

- mild steel / Aluminium  
 what it should look like



Steel / Aluminium  
 knees =  
 length =

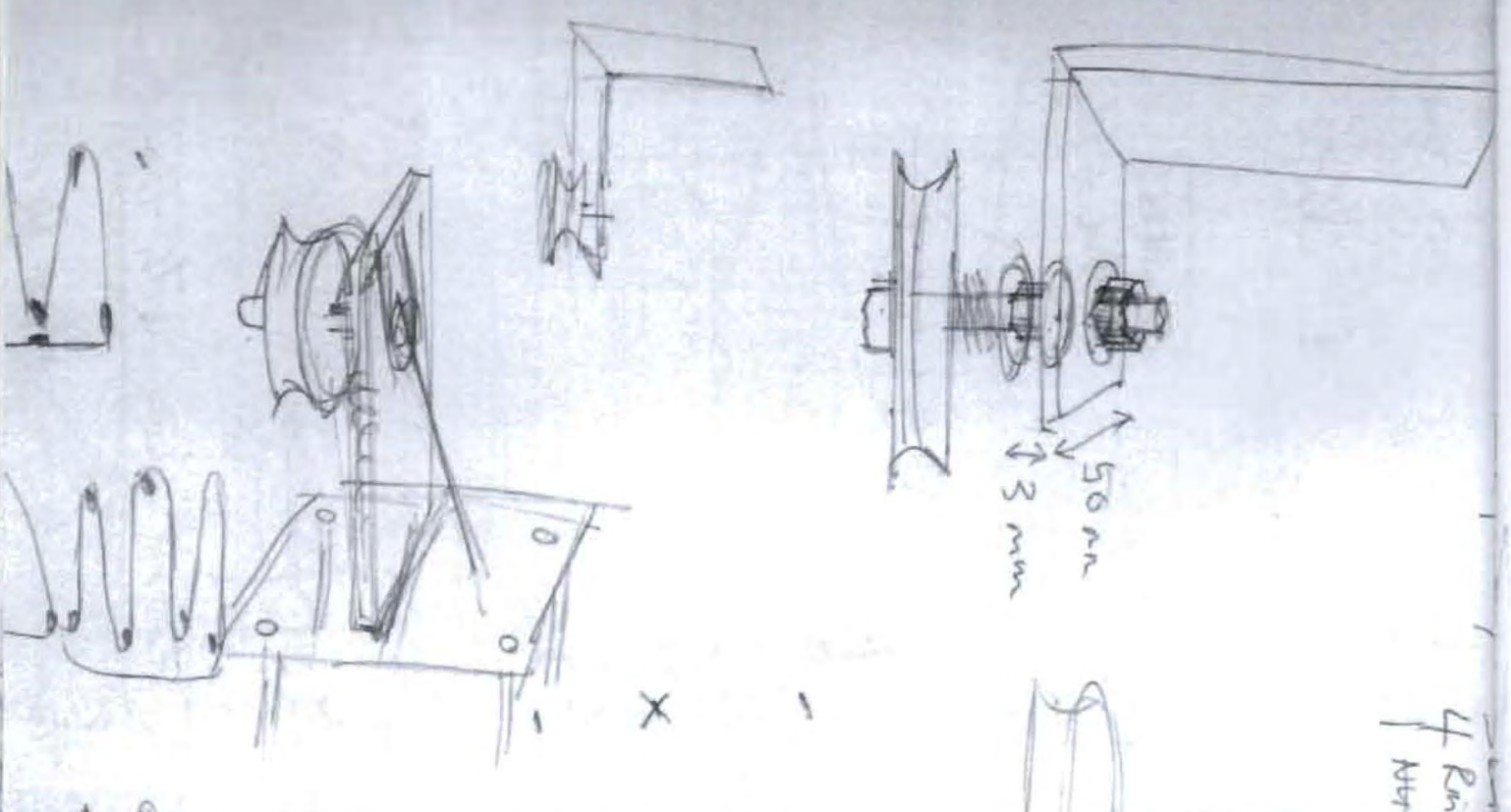
Bolts ④

locks - yachting shop.  
 make  $\geq$

from fishing shop.  
 with thickness, how to attach the  
 eyes to it.

- necessary allowance or weights -  
 ⑤

- ①
- ②  $M \geq$



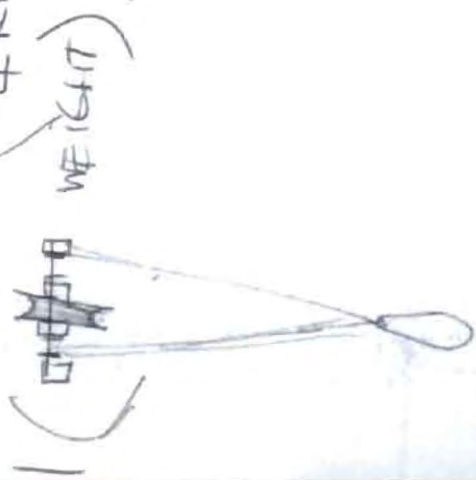
4 Rins  
 144

4 Rows  
After



8X WHEELS.  
7X PULLEYS.

ETC X 7 (1 bolt  
3 nuts  
4 Rings)  
1 (WEIGHT)

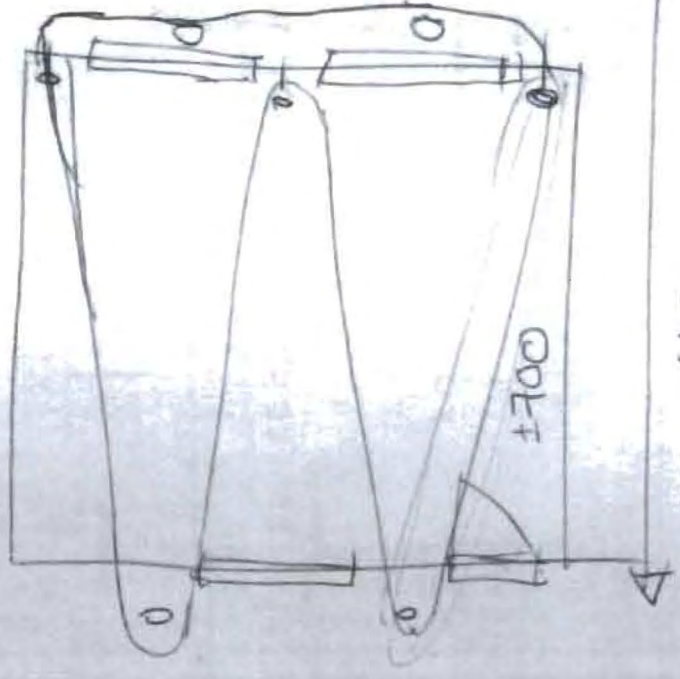


wheels don't work with trace...  
OR on groove  
- then made to specs by...

\* Length of trace - measure

but first buy to test.

studio Box 640 m.



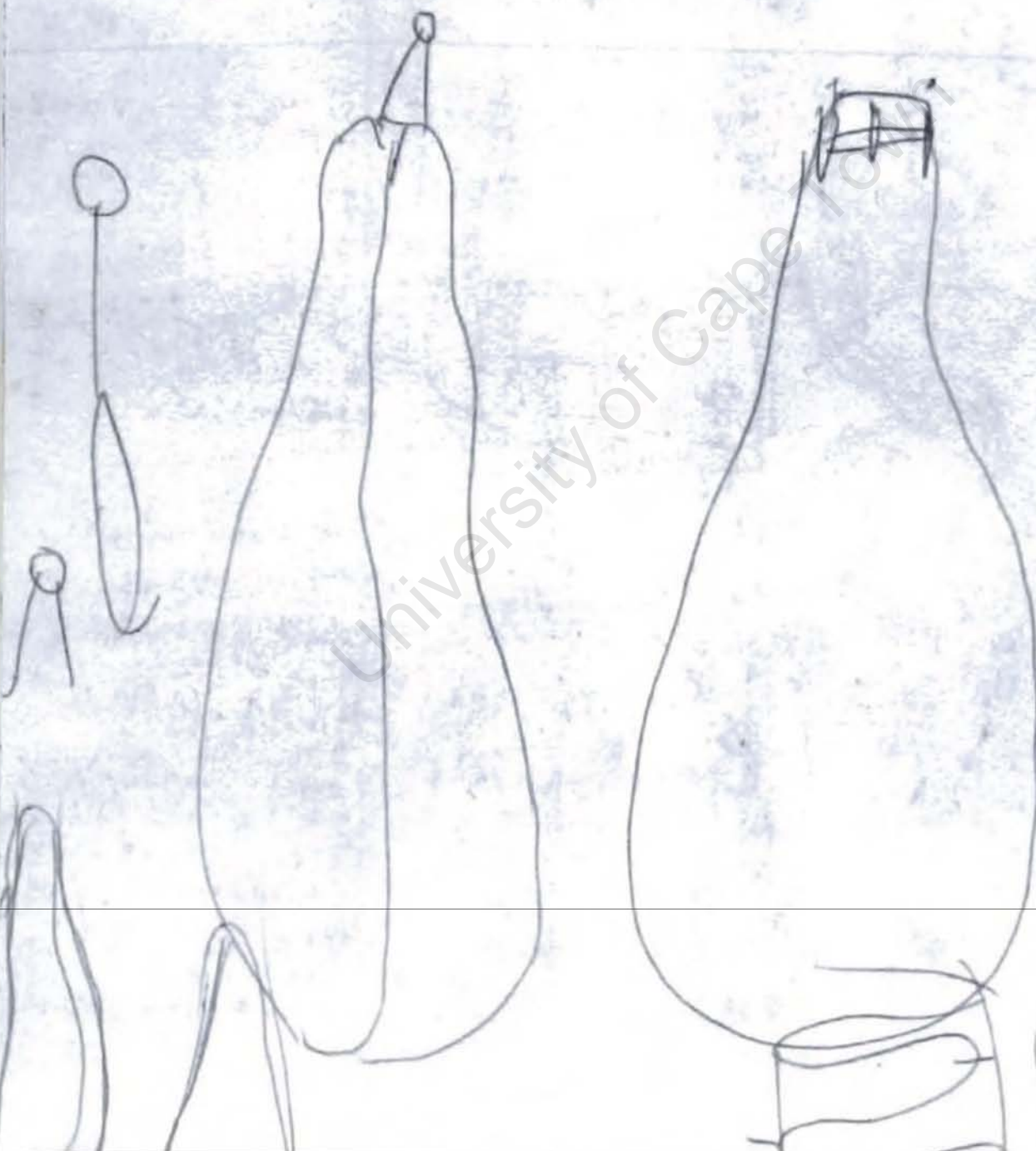
if → looks for fishing / sewing  
to support the trace from  
slipping (but low will be good)

\* Ludo Discounter @ PLEIN STREET

Some with lights inside ...  
OR. too cartoonish some  
of these repetitive element to be  
worked in



CLANK  
THE  
HANDLE



University of Cape Town

repetition

useless tasks

meaningless

sense of work

material for: weddings, debutantes -  
memorable occasion, not everyday

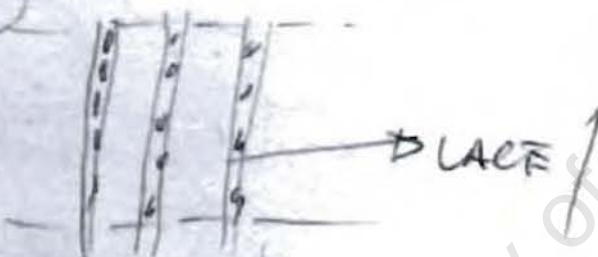
transport one so  
else

Q: should there only be bags. or other shapes (g  
idea of thin, long pieces) as well?

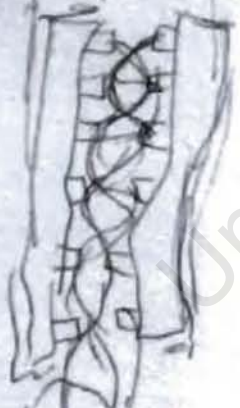
1



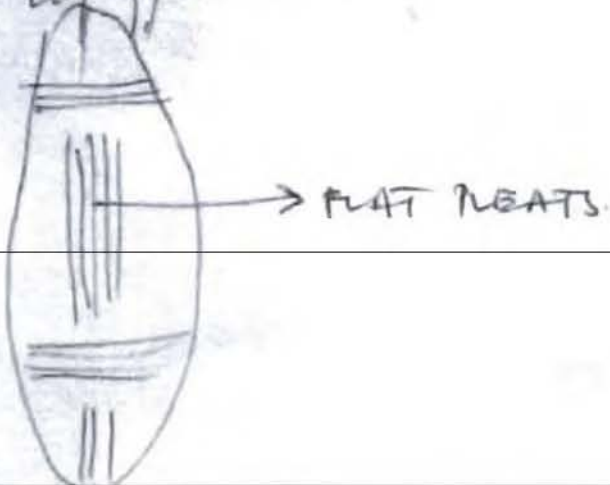
2



3



4



going back to  
processes + used

Q: why sewing, u  
materials, m  
meaning of col

hi tec - plastics, etc  
future

take out of Regu  
context. Woman's  
level in the col  
texture & charac  
material: soft,  
light, touch, b

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