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The Whole of the Hidden Thing

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THE WHOLE OF THE HIDDEN THING

by

MARIA OJEDA

Under the Direction of Ruth Stanford, MFA

ABSTRACT

_The Whole of the Hidden Thing_ is an accumulation of found, altered, and replicated objects that harnesses the discarded and unknown histories attached to their constituent, post-consumer parts. From the perspective of the individual, other persons seem to be located across vast psychic distances. This body of work incorporates objects obtained from second-hand sources, particularly clothing, linens, furniture, and small, decorative trinkets to talk about the precarious balance between self and stranger, individual and collective, and the skin-like membranes that exist between people. By looking at objects as both manifestations of culture and carriers of invisible memory, I explore sentiment and intimacy through the material world of things and establish physical mediators for the recognition of shared culture.

INDEX WORDS: Material culture, Intimacy, Textiles, Found objects, Sentiment, Accumulation
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MARIA OJEDA

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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THE WHOLE OF THE HIDDEN THING

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DEDICATION

This endeavor is dedicated to Billy, my partner in life, my mother, from whom I learned strength, and my father from whom I learned to be curious and resourceful.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank everyone who helped me along the way, for their support, criticism, and camaraderie. I especially thank my Sculpture family – you all have been the scaffolding that held me up and allowed me to cycle through successes and failures without fear of falling all the way back down. Ana and Nathan, your kindness, truthfulness, and intelligence have been invaluable resources to me. Thank you for being my confidants and friends.

I also thank my wonderful committee members – Ruth, Pam, and Jennifer – for their time, honesty, and interest. I am grateful for your guidance, the manifestation of my alma mater. Without you there would be no thesis!

Last, but certainly not least, I thank my endlessly helpful and patient husband, Billy. Thank you for keeping it together when I couldn’t, being there for the important moments, and being my last-ditch refuge.
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1 INTRODUCTION

As an individual, I am trying to understand the values and meaning created by the communities I belong to, and how those ideas are reflected in the material culture they produce. Some value is found in the mammalian comforts of softness, warmth, and the pressure of physical contact. Other value is attached by the urge to accumulate and curate material goods, both in keeping with economic value and in spite of it, or from the draws of familiarity and recognizability. It is these small threads of inquiry that connect me to the culture that I inhabit; but my practice is also a process of finding out what that culture is to begin with. I begin with a feeling of attraction towards an object and ask the question, “Why does this satisfy me?” in the hope that the answer will bring me closer to understanding the mysterious organization of other people around me. The objects I accumulate are destined for new stories that I create, but I am not unaware of the stories that already exist within them, hidden away and never to be told again. This aspect of hiding and not knowing is a problem that I am contending with in an attempt to understand and reconcile distances between individuals engulfed in the vast systems of influence and conflicting values that are our contemporary communities. By composing post-consumer objects, particularly worn clothing, linens, and other domestic goods, I invoke an aura of familiarity within fantastic forms that act as sympathetic mediators, through which I and others might catch a glimpse of a shared cultural story. When I talk to people who look at these forms I make, they tell me tales and envision identities for them, drawn from their own contexts, that add to this ever-lengthening story. As individual storytellers, the viewers become participants within a collective narrative that stems from a common set of stimuli: the artworks and, more specifically, the materials they are made from.
2 I BEGIN WITH A FEELING

The materials I use for art-making come from places where second-hand things gather: thrift stores, antique shops, and occasionally used-clothing wholesalers. Upon entering a store, I enter a different mode of thought focused on the process of choosing. Traversing the many rows of racks of clothing and home textiles, my mind turns to color, pattern, and texture. All of this information is consumed and processed through patterns of recognition. Objects take on identities; attached to them are ideas around who they might have belonged to, that person’s age, gender, class, and general sense of style. I also try to enter those moments of home in which a microcosm of material culture, belonging to one person, family, or place, describes someone else’s reality.

When I search for objects my primary means of choosing is through my own feelings of attraction. With a lingering sense of doubt, I trust that these feelings are conditioned by a number of cultural factors out of my control that contribute to “taste”. Certain materials are heavy with connotations of wealth and luxury by virtue of natural purity. Those belonging to this category include silk made from the excretions of worms, linen made from flax, wool from sheep, as well as furs and leather from various animals. Because these resources are scarce or limited, their use produces an economy and aesthetic of the few.

The body of work that is The Whole of the Hidden Thing instead deals with materials that are associated with an American middle class. Within these works are objects made from mass produced fabrics, ripe with the language of consumerism in their tightly woven or perfectly knitted synthetic-cotton, or otherwise, blended fibers. They are machine quilted in large blocks or printed with brightly colored flora, pastoral scenes, and geometric motifs, incorporating patterns that are crowd tested and proven to attract the greatest possible majority of buyers.
within certain demographics. These visual elements, once connected to broader historical traditions, have since lost their initial identity through the processes of mass production. In exchange, they receive a new aura of commonality specific to mass memory, attached through the comforts of familiarity.

In *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproduction*, Benjamin describes aura as product of the “genuineness” of an original. He says that the art object loses its individual authenticity, or its aura, when it is reproduced – a process that removes tradition from cultural artifacts. In other words, the more an object is reproduced, particularly in this age of mass production, the less aura an object has. ¹ Although this widely influential concept of originality seems to fit within certain hierarchies of art, it does not always account for the impactful presence of reproduced objects in contemporary society, and the complex relationships formed between people through mutual encounters with reproductions. I argue for an aura that is formed by phenomena of the masses rather than a hierarchy of originals. A mechanically woven blanket both designed in a software program and created through technological intervention, for example, can accrue meaning as it is used and cherished in many different contexts. One might recognize an identical blanket in another’s home and still feel an attachment to it, as though it were the same one draped over their own sofa or mattress. The feeling of its surface is still impressed in their mind, even if they have never touched its other iteration. Similarly, if I find an item of clothing in a thrift store identical to one that I have owned, I feel an attraction to it through my recognition. Although I have never worn it or touched it, I already have a bias toward it, and I begin to think about the life it has already gone through with respect to my experience.

Even as I am attracted by my chosen materials, the products of these materials also invite others to participate through their familiarity. They draw an audience that is connected through invisible links, which have the potential to birth feelings of kinship once revealed. Other artists, such as sculptor Mike Kelley or filmmaker Lewis Klahr, have used highly reproduced pop imagery to mine American material memory.² Mike Kelley’s *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid and The Wages of Sin*, calls upon common memories of stuffed, treasured children’s toys, all alike in make and style, to create a sensation of nostalgia - a feeling made stronger by its commonplace existence.³ The more a person or object is experienced, the more powerful it becomes. Through its collective recognition it forms new traditions around itself. Rather than an aura that is isolated in its originality, a collective aura grows stronger the more an object is represented, and the more it is known through its representations. As it is experienced by each individual it forms an ever-expanding corpus of individual yet inclusive memories that make up its impact. I am using these catalogued experiences to interact with a host of strangers whose memories digest the artwork into personal systems of understanding.

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3 THE SURFACE OF THE SELF

Memory defines the surface of the self as a space that contains the possibility for different kinds of contact. Remembered touch informs an awareness of personal boundaries and adds an extra-sensory ability to sight. The magnetism of this ability is altered through perceptions of the other surface, colored by familiarity and foreignness of visual texture.

Among the materials present in my sculptures, textiles provide a common ground that is widely felt and recognized due to their broad inclusivity of experience and mimicry of the human surface. Textiles are present in most every culture, and they often carry the authority of another body. Their corporeal familiarity at its core comes from a structure that is firm yet yielding, able to contain and receive. In Material Difference, Polly Ullrich pinpoints the ability of fibrous materials to engage viewers in a somatic relationship with the work: “With an implicit sense of touch as the mediating experience, the viewer can engage the work as a kind of collaborator (not as a passive recipient for a one-way message).”4 Harnessing this ability within the context of the gallery allows for the creation of a space that is conducive to exchange between artwork and individual. By stimulating the many remembered experiences of touch within the minds of others, the artwork is more than seen; it is felt.

In a domestic sense, textiles are intimate materials that cover, providing warmth and protection. They are shelters, second skins, and tools for cleanliness rituals that maintain our division between inside and outside. We find them friendly in contact, exquisite in craft, and authoritative as a barrier; but these potentials can easily go too far or become inverted if the acceptable borders of intimacy are transgressed. Disgust is in the spilling over of inside to outside, or the intrusion of outside to inside: the breakdown of neat compartmentalization.

Textiles can also be carriers for the physical essence of the other, which both sparks curiosity and offends our systemic purity of self. The foreign body becomes present, layered onto bedclothes and the skins of upholstered furniture in the form of sweat, crumbs, and cast-off detritus. This is the weight of the term ‘used’ when it is applied to post-consumer textiles. This physicality is all the more present in the age of science and information. We are aware not only of the visible stains, but also of the invisible world of microbes and bacteria. We envision their undetectable presence and take care that they, as a dangerous multitude of beings belonging to the Outside, do not cross our external barriers. The binary categorization, us and them, is active in personal, social, and political spheres, in which the justification for insulation is protection, and individual or group survival.

Also, within our awareness is the presence of our inside structures: a space we ourselves cannot access but are intimately familiar with. The outside promises a myriad of hopes and risks, but the inside, both physiologically and psychologically, can feel just as confusing and out of reach. The space most present and knowable to my mind is the skin that separates and mediates the two. In Evocative Objects, a collection of writings on “the things that matter,” The Yellow Raincoat, stands out to me as representative of this phenomenon. In it the author talks about his experiences with the world as a young boy, and the yellow raincoat that both protects and restricts. In his words he says, “It would be difficult to imagine an object that more embodies the tension between myself and my environment.” Certain objects, as mediators and artifacts of the way we move and exist in the world, have the ability to capture and embody experiences in a way that more fully describes them than words alone. Among these objects, clothing and textiles

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provide a point of contact for understanding relationships between individuals and the collectives they belong to.

My response to my own drive for self-preservation is in part to reach out, implanting textural messages in sculptures that invite touch in the sterile gallery setting, and also to shrink back, making figures that loom within the safety and comforting weight of garments. *Presider (Bedroom Ghost)* is one of a series of figures that establishes a pseudo-human presence through the use of domestic textiles. Its body consists of linens – a cream-colored, floral patterned comforter and red, floral curtains – draped heavily over a simple armature. The folds appear as a garment that might contain a body, or as a body itself. A thin white sheet covers its upper portion like a hood. Inside the folds of the white hood, where a face would otherwise be, hang four small, half-moon, walnut wood shelves. The shelves, aligned vertically, each hold a symbolic remnant: a bee encased in amber pine resin, a bobby pin with a lock of blonde doll hair, a miniature stack of folded cloth, and a bundle of palmetto leaf clippings. The space that the shelves and remnants occupy is both public and intimate. Its position as the face of *Presider* invites passerby to come close, frontally engaging the figure as their curiosity begs investigation. The objects themselves are materials found in other pieces in the gallery, establishing *Presider’s* authority in the space. It hovers between furnishing and figure, embodying a physical and symbolic closeness to the textiles that we inhabit.
Figure 2. Maria Ojeda, *Presider (Bedroom Ghost)*, 2019, (detail)
Figure 3. Maria Ojeda, *Presider (Bedroom Ghost)*, 2019

In my work the tactile quality of textiles – woven textures, pillow ruffs, cotton jersey, glittering beads, sequins, and plush velvet – are often all packed or sewn together in the same space, some in tight folds and others in loose, draping skins. They form a community of singular objects, each with their own history, but reference a mass of information that becomes its new collective identity. Within these materials I am appropriating the memories of others in the same space as my own. They are like my mother’s closet: full of mystery, wonder and the scent of her, providing numerous sensations of touch as hands play through the hanging, too-big dresses, pantsuits, and old Mardi-Gras costumes. They are also like someone else’s closet, with the stranger’s residue layered within the folds in addition to my own. The push and pull between an interior and exterior, self and other, inclusion and division, are all located on the surface, or skin, of my work.

Beijing-based International artist Yin Xiuzhen, is another artist who incorporates used clothing to talk about community. Her 2008 and 2009 installations Engine, Thought, and Introspective Cavity act as a both bodies and environments for experiencing “what it is to encounter foreign places through corporeal movements and physical interactions between ‘strangers’.”, She also talks about the experience of the individual within society by using her own material memories. In Dress Box, a performance and installation from 1995, she sewed together her own clothes she had kept from various stages of her life and stored them within a concrete lined chest. In an interview, Xiuzhen said about this piece that, “The concrete looked cold, but the clothes felt warm and carried my warm memories. This is how I feel about our society: everyone has a soft side in their heart, but they have to toughen up when facing

society.” Like Xiuzhen, I am harnessing the ability of cast-off garments to talk about the balance of intimacy and the self-distancing an individual must maintain as part of a collective. The garment’s relationship to the body exists in an awareness of its history of contact with others, and the essence of the other that layered onto it. It becomes a stand-in for a stranger. In her larger, environmental installations, Xiuzhen washes the clothes first, distancing their past before using them. In doing this, the anonymity of the previous owner is emphasized within the collectives she sews together, but it is also acknowledged as a presence to begin with. Unlike these installations which invite viewers to inhabit, and interact with others through fabric membranes, the insides of my sculptures are inaccessible, reinforcing the whole as a sovereign, collective body. They are only hinted at with the spilling out of material through hard or soft barriers, or through the packing of material which limits access to the interior. The spectator has to imagine the rest, filling in information that is absent and digesting visual input into systems of understanding.

8 Sheng, “Yin Xiuzhen’s fabric cavities” , 394.
In *Precipice*, a predecessor to the works in *The Whole of the Hidden Thing*, I have stacked folded clothing and linens into layers which disrupt and erupt from areas of flat, white drywall plaster. The plaster is applied in varying thicknesses and the patterns and colors of upholstery show through thinner areas. I obscure the individual identity of each article of clothing, pillow sham, curtain panel, or otherwise, by combining them into a community. The community here takes the form of a tall tower in which rigid right angles attempt, and fail, to contain the chaos of soft materials. Masses of folded, stacked garments and bedclothes jut out from an apparently too-small container, and, rather than being hidden in closet shelves or drawers, they become part of the superstructure. It is not clear whether they will cause the tower to topple or are holding the whole of it in place.
Precipice is a totem calling past lives together from different backgrounds into an uncertain familial configuration. Objects once owned by people of different classes and social status are put into one surface, without knowledge of their former specifications. The previous lives of objects cannot be erased, because they already exist and have impact on the world, and those objects are clues to that past. However, they can only be vague hints at a complete picture. Like the inaccessible spaces inside Precipice, communal space is filled with unknowns in which identity is malleable, and never completely made external.

Figure 5. Maria Ojeda, Precipice, 2018
5 THE ARCHIVE: VALUE AND CONTAINMENT

The interior lives that exist within communities are also the subjects of many works in *The Whole of the Hidden Thing*. The works contain common household objects that remind of specific domestic spaces or are combined in ways that alienate their original purpose. Through the actions of collecting, packing, and selectively curating them with an external gaze in mind, I exercise control over interior and exterior identities. I contain the information located in these second-hand objects by sealing and preserving them within pine resin or stuffing them inside upholstered cavities. Some objects I choose for this destination are those which might have once had sentiment attached to them, are familiar in their make or style and have been discarded. Others are objects of my own sentiment that I have chosen to seal away.

Pine resin is a soft, glass-like material refined from sap tapped out of pine trees. When heated it becomes a viscous liquid, temporarily malleable and receptive to the objects I immerse in it. As I seal them away, like a moment trapped in amber, I am making them inaccessible and immovable. They take on a new identity incorporating the old, but with the designation of the archive. The new state they are encapsulated in prevents them from being interacted with in the same way as before. The objects are untouchable, but still present, like the inside of a body. A new outer limit creates a distance that is both near and far between the viewer and the archived objects. Unlike the fabric skins of other works, these luminous, hard exteriors appear impervious but are, in fact, brittle and prone to cracking. They are in-flexible, and once broken they cannot be returned to their original state. The resin surface also has the feeling of something precious. Purified pine resin is a golden yellow color that holds and reflects light in different ways according to its thickness. By containing the discarded remnants of an unknown person’s material life in this golden atmosphere that is both attractive and disruptive, I am allocating a
different kind of value onto them while preventing their re-entry into the market which they came from.

Upholstery presents a different surface that also contains. Unlike a resin surface, upholstery welcomes contact; it has strength and a structural memory that it springs back to when interacted with. It imitates the surface of our own bodies, stretched tight over a frame and held in place by tension. What is underneath that protective and form-giving surface is often mysterious and vital. I create and interact with these surfaces by giving furniture new upholstery, often obstructing purposeful parts of an object, and revealing layers and structures underneath exiting upholstery. I also pack smaller trinkets and folded textiles into the created or revealed interior spaces. The resulting compacted collections form an archive of partially unseen information.

The action of collecting, which I adopt as a method of material sourcing and art making, marks a certain relationship between individuals and their perceived reality. As Werner Muensterberger says in *Collecting: An Unruly Passion*, “It is almost as if the new owner is reliving old, hidden, and either actual or perhaps illusory sensations of former times, and, in doing so, ascribes to his projects a life and history of their own…the passionate collector combines his own re-created past consoling experiences with the fantasied past of his objects in an almost mystical union.”10 This describes a process of absorption of alien objects, and histories, into an individual’s highly subjective ideation of *their* world. Muensterberger envisions relationships between people and objects that allow them a place of solace within imagined experiences.11 This internal reality is rooted in materiality, but also elusive to those outside the vessel of self.

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11 Ibid, 15.
5.1 Knick Knacks and Bric a Brac: Displaying Sentiment

In *The Archive*, the centerpiece of *The Whole of the Hidden Thing*, decorative trinkets, clothing remnants and pine resin are cast into molds made from found lighting fixtures and glass vessels, acting as a solid representation of the interior. These works, named *Artifacts*, take on the shapes of six molds, each a different form, recreated several times each. They each contain different items, with fur, parts of figurines, tassels, and various textiles protruding from the resin and making up parts of the surface. *The Archive* as an installation is arranged on shelves and filled the back wall of the gallery. Each cast provides a new opportunity for exploration within the whole.

In *Your topmost wall (Artifact #6)*, a small devotional figurine of a Madonna is surrounded by a lace-trimmed slip, a curtain tassel, and other fabric remnants, cast within the rectilinear form of the glass display case the figure was originally kept in. The figure is obscured by the once-soft materials and held static inside a luminous orange and yellow prism. However, its containment is not perfect, and the surface of the prism is disrupted by its unruly insides as tufts of fabric push through, making themselves known to the haptic sense as well. A second cast, made from the same glass case, also holds a variety of fabric remnants, tassels, and a miniature cottage. Its small roof and chimney stick out the top while remnants of a noticeably larger scale form the geological layers below it. In these and other casts from this series, multiple iterations describe the potential for many different interactions around a single reproduced object type, that is the shape of the container. Each piece in *The Archive* is also a compartmentalization of material culture, like many rooms, that are held in the same light but have highly individual characters.
Figure 6. Maria Ojeda, “…your topmost wall” (Artifact #6), 2018
Figure 7. Maria Ojeda, “...with each memory, I carried stones” (Artifact #7), 2018
Figure 8. Maria Ojeda, *Artifacts #1 and #5*, 2018-2019

Figure 9. Maria Ojeda, *The Archive*, 2018-2019
In Artifacts #1 and #5, the fringes and cords of curtain tassels of varying sizes protrude from resin casts of a lamp base and the bell-shaped glass cover of a ceiling fan light. Through the semi-opaque resin, the interior is seen as a shadow as the orange light filters around it. The cast forms seem to inhabit an alternate reality in which the bells and domes of the fixtures have been transfigured into honey-colored fruit, bulbs, and hives. These artifacts translate the domestic language of home into the language of treasure and body. They contain not only material and light, but also memory and sentiment. The combination of domestic and natural elements causes the attached memories to be placed into a different kind of time. They exist somewhere between the forever associated with human preservation and the forever associated with natural fossilization.

5.2 Furnishings: Orienting the Body

The placement of individuals within the domestic organization of home communicates a sense of safety within habitual containment and regulation of porous barriers. I am concerned with the organization of objects, and demarking of specific spaces, that represent exchange between interior and exterior, either of the house itself or between people. In From Woolen Carpet to Grass Carpet Sophie Chevalier talks about particular spaces, and objects within those spaces, as mediators: “The kitchen or dining area mediates sociability as does the garden: the first space is an internal mediator, inside the family, and the second an external mediator.”

Objects given the designation of internal mediator include the fireplace and the dining room table, which take charge of people within a specified space, orienting their bodies around a

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common point. The authority of certain objects to do this is something I am appropriating, as well as challenging, when I put them into a context different from the expected. For example, if a chair, an object made to conform a body to itself, is given a surface that alters its external form and prevents it from acting in the way it was intended, it has a new potential outside of that purpose. Instead, it is emphasized as a body itself because of the same relation to the human body that is being negated.

There are many precedents for the treatment of domestic objects, especially furniture, as body. One prominent artist working with the lives of objects, Doris Salcedo, uses all manner of domestic objects to talk about trauma. In *Atrabiliarios* the shoes of missing women are embedded in cavities made in a wall and covered over with animal skin. The shoes as remnants hover behind the semi-transparent skin in a state halfway between visible and invisible. The visceral quality of the skins is emphasized by the black stitches around their rectilinear borders, stretching and attaching them to the wall. The objects Salcedo alters and puts on display are more than material, they are stand-ins for people: visceral representations of lost individuals. The presence of literal skin as a barrier in Salcedo’s *Atrabiliarios*, and clothes stitched into large translucent skins in Xiuzhen’s installations, are key elements that allow these artists to channel the feeling of one’s body, and more specifically the familiar feeling of a mysterious but intimate interior structure.

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13 Ibid.
15 Ibid, 47.
Parlor Ghost, another of my preceding works to The Whole of the Hidden Thing, is another entity given the status of body. Over the course of several transformations in which I cannibalized old sculpture into new ones, Parlor Ghost emerged intuitively through different identities. It is the convergence of two parts. One part is a cumulative mass made from bits of fabric, bed sheets, quilted pillow shams, wool, hair, and other remnants. The other is an upholstered armchair, sawed in two parts to reveal the internal framing. Inside the old form of the chair is a timeline of many past upholsteries, like tree-rings or geological layers. A new line of questioning begins with the visibility of the record. What were the eras that each of these changes represents? What was the owner displaying about themselves, or the room, by giving it a new skin? The cumulative structure inhabits the chair as an attachment, or a body poised on the back of the seat, settling into its crevices. It also co-mingles with the revealed layers of the chair, cementing a symbiotic relationship between the two parts.
Figure 11. Maria Ojeda, *Parlor Ghost*, 2017
Figure 12. Maria Ojeda, "Far off I heard myself close my eyes...", 2019
A similar organization of materials can be seen in “Far off I heard myself close my eyes…”, in which I have skinned, gutted and stuffed a sofa purchased from a second hand store. The sofa stands on its side, a position that saves space as though it were in storage. Normally unseen parts have been made visible, both by its positioning, and by the partial removal of its upholstery. As in the earlier discussed work, Precipice, I have folded and stacked clothing, and other second hand, domestic textiles, packing them into the sofa’s formerly interior spaces. Like Parlor Ghost, “Far off I heard myself close my eyes…”, negates any receptivity of the furniture object to the human body, and instead reveals to viewers an internal structure. Meticulously folded textiles give way to haphazardly piled cushions, spilling out of what was once the “back” of the sofa. The “front” of the sofa no longer has a seat, and instead reveals a hole as a window to the other side where metal springs describe its former shape. Below this window, a white sheet covers the rest. Standing on top of it all is an animatronic, metal flamingo that likely once existed in someone’s front yard. It bobs its head back and forth in a slow, hypnotic motion, with a scrap of yellow upholstery foam hanging from its beak.

Although this object has been put to rest itself as artwork, it cannot offer physical rest to a person anymore. It has become another sculptural body containing an archive of domestic information. Rather than orienting a responsive body to a sitting or sleeping position, I draw attention its potential for accumulation of distinctly human residues. The mysterious inside and undersides of furniture are faces explored mostly by children and cats who leave their own marks in the frontier of the rarely seen.
6 CONCLUSION

When using previously owned objects as materials for art making, the artists intent is layered over them as a mediator between their past and future identities. As an object maker and an object manipulator, I am both reaching for an evasive other and inserting my own presence onto materials through connections forged by attraction, recognition, and assumption. Whether it is through a recognizable form, or a recognizable material in an alien form, the way in which I work is interventionist. Existing objects are destroyed, made un-usable, encased, or irrevocably combined. An armchair is sawed in half to reveal its inside structures. A disembodied tassel or piece of upholstery is immersed in layers of resin never again to act as attached decoration but newly designated as an independent thing. A figurine is obscured within cut and stratified t-shirts, never again to be admired in its full figure. In taking apart and re-configuring the categories to which these objects belong, I am calling attention to both their alternate identities and the absence of its original belonging. I am also using the language of domestic storage and curation to talk about the packaging of a multitude of identities developed in either a culture or an individual, using myself as a starting point.

My choices belong to both myself and collective culture, deriving material identities from a corpus of pre-existing objects. Whether of luxury or mass production, wedding dress or pillow cushion, these individuals are obscured, or collapsed into a community, when they are inverted, folded, stacked, or stitched together into the skins of pieced together bodies. Each item of clothing, furniture, upholstery, or found sentiment is a collaboration between the fabricated memory I attach, and the pre-existing memory therein. The Whole of the Hidden Thing is a collection of these bodies created by my intervention, in an attempt to provide a source of connection between disparate elements in a way that addresses the invisible divisions between
ourselves and other people. Intimacy is the result of a careful process of enticing and withdrawing, a back and forth between the self and the world, until an understanding of trust can be reached. The place where outside meets inside is the location of this negotiation.
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