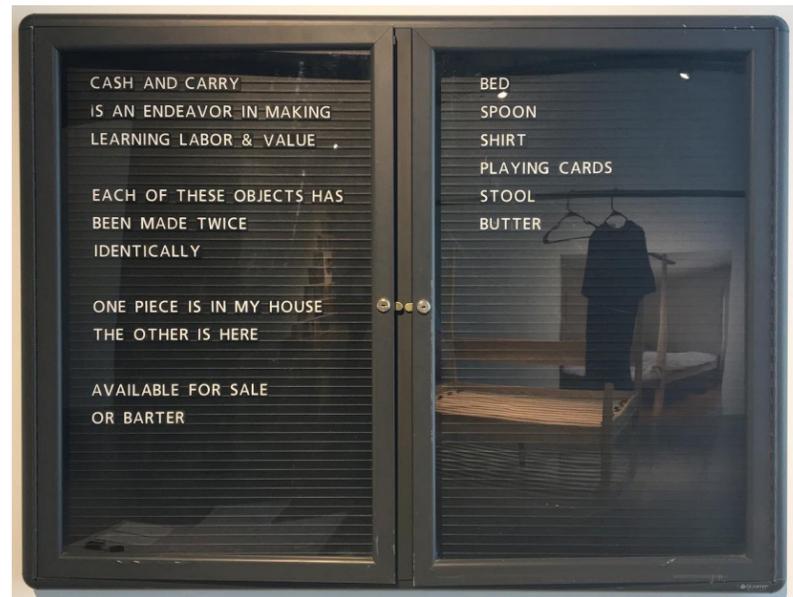


CASH AND CARRY



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A supporting paper
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
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by Grant McFarland

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The Art Newspaper: Tell us about your cabin in the woods... Is the house a work?

Oscar Tuazon: Well, it isn't really—it's a house. But it might become a work at a certain point. For me, a house is the ultimate sculpture. I think of trying to solve those problems of living as a sculptural process.

From Jonathan Griffin's interview with Oscar Tuazon in The Art Newspaper, 26th October, 2017

Cash and Carry is made up of two sets of six objects (bed, spoon, shirt, playing cards, stool, butter). One set is in my apartment, while the other is shown in the gallery. Each object in the gallery has a corresponding piece that calls to mind the other object in my home.

I've spent so much time at home throughout the pandemic that I've only been thinking about and making domestic objects. So, for this show, I made the six objects that I wanted, needed, or wanted to learn how to make. Some are well made, others less so, depending on my skill level and the learning curve of the particular task.

OVERVIEW

It's easy for me to lose track of the difference between the intangible¹ value and the quantative² value of what I'm learning. It's difficult to remember that each hour spent in class is time I have purchased, that each exam or paper costs a precise amount of cash. It's hard to remember that the knowledge I'm learning in school, or skill I'm building has been bought.

Instead, I get lost in the moment, treating each bit of time in the studio as an island, assigning value to each object I create independant of the cost of my credit hours. It's a soothing way to spend time, thinking that you have endless freedom and opportunity to just create.

I made a list of skills I learned in school to try to nail down the value of the things I do, the things I make, the money I have made and spent. I ended up proving to myself the absurdity of quantifying value. I remembered things I had forgotten about, rediscovering abilities I haven't used in ages.

The exercise of trying to figure out which experiences have been worthwhile and worth the money spent is a futile one; everything bleeds together to shape one's life to the point that it becomes somewhat impossible to extricate the wheat from the chaff. The question of the value of an education comes down to this: as far as I can tell, I spent far too much money on my undergraduate degree, but, when I attempt to define the value of that time, I am unable to separate the cost from the experience.

Additionally, being in debt has been and will continue to be an education of its own, though not one I understood I was undertaking when I began my Bachelor's degree. I don't even know how to begin to quantify the lessons learned from the experience of being in debt, nor how to separate them from other parts of my life.

I also feel that I have been taught to exist in a vacuum; that the things I do are mine alone, that the things that I make have sprung miraculously from my head. That's not quite right. I feel I've been taught that the world exists for my inspiration; that I should go around and endlessly collect information with which

1 By which I mean the way experiences create a lasting impression on my life, ie. the feeling of finishing a long hike, or learning how to feel the wood grain part under a knife blade.

2 By which I mean the tangible cost and benefit that in assigned to interactions, ie. the cost of attendance and my hourly wage at the University of Minnesota.

to make new things which can be presented as mine alone and utterly worth existing. This ethos pervades the academic art world, and I have found it a hard one to avoid.

Every semester, inevitably, a student asks “But what do you do with that thing (sculpture) once you’re done with it?” They are referring to the physical constraints of the world that act on all art: time, decay, storage, etc. I used to respond coyly with some platitude that it would stay in my studio, or I would take it apart and make something new. I was under the assumption that the student just didn’t get it, that they were part of that sad group of people who couldn’t appreciate the standalone value of art.

But they’re right. Ignoring the material considerations of what happens to things we make after we make them is foolish. Why shouldn’t it matter what happens to a piece of art after you make it? Why would you want to make something that is fugitive and wasteful, just for the spectacle of the gallery?

What the student is really saying is “This thing you made has served its purpose, what will become of it now? Will you keep it and let it take up space in your life and mind and studio and house? Will you destroy it and prove that it’s a wasteful creation, that it was only ever made to be thrown away?”

Considering this question of value, I made the decision sometime in early 2020 to only make things that I considered useful. I know that definition is mutable to the point of hardly being worth denoting, but hey, you have to start somewhere right? So that’s my line in the sand. Useful can mean many things. It doesn’t preclude art, but I probably won’t be making many things that just sit around to be looked at. So here’s what I’ve got:

I want to make things that serve a function.

I’m interested in making things well, but I don’t want to talk directly about craft. I’d rather just steer clear and avoid that distinction.

I want to know what the things I make are worth, monetarily or otherwise.

I want the things I spend time making to be worth the space they take up in the world.

Spending so much time in my apartment in the midst of a global pandemic has forced me to question my motivations and habits. I began to think about how I use the studio space as an escape or consider it a space separate from the rest of my life. I would like to avoid that going forward.

In “Actual Double”, a conversation between Oscar Tuazon, Miwon Kwon, and Nico Machida in Tuazon’s book *Live*, Tuazon talks at length about how the artist’s home can become the studio, or even a sculpture, and how the studio can eventually replace the gallery and museum. As someone who concentrates heavily on making, Tuazon compares the act of building to the act of living, and how both of those acts manifest in sculptural objects. His definition of sculpture is incredibly narrow, but stable,¹ which allows him to navigate across the boundaries of building and sculpture.

On a much less critical, more personal level, I want to spend time shaping my life, and the lives of the people close to me, positively. Creating objects to surround myself with, objects that help me do things, objects that make my life more comfortable or liveable, or that simply make my life fit me better, this is a way to shape my world. I have a drive for and attraction to the act of exploration and making. And I want to utilize that drive to outfit my own self.

Anna has an apron that I love. She made it for herself. The apron doesn’t have any buckles or straps, it just consists of one long loop of cloth, so that there aren’t any points at which it feels extra heavy. It feels like wearing a heavy shirt with no sleeves. Because the fabric wraps up around the back, the lower portion sort of hugs your legs, which is nice for keeping it out of the way of machines.

Anna has talked a lot about how some of Andrea Zittel’s early work influenced her, specifically her clothing (the A-Z Uniform Project). The concept was to make a garment from one piece of yarn that wraps around the body over and over by knitting. As Anna has explained to me, knitting is a continuous twining of a single strand over and around itself to create a larger piece of fabric. Now, this apron is not knit, nor is it made from a single strand, but I (having heard both of the Zittel uniforms and this apron from Anna) associate it with this idea of a continuous cloth embrace.

¹ Tuazon says “by calling something a sculpture, you set it apart from other things. A sculpture is useless. It’s something that doesn’t assimilate with other objects.” He places this definition in opposition to the much more “porous” and “diffuse” way sculpture is often spoken of, as a kind of catch all for art in between media.

The way I think of these things matters. As does the process through which I gained the information about Andrea Zittel. I didn't read it, or spontaneously realize it, someone told me a story full of things they knew about, which stuck with me and got me thinking about new ideas, making new connections. I want to remember and recount these methods and memories of learning as often as I can so as to avoid creating a feedback loop in my head that credits myself with everything I do.

I also want to create an environment for those around me (family friends, guests, neighbors) and build my life in a way that emphasizes my relationships. I make things for people who are important to me. Mostly as gifts, but also occasionally out of necessity. This line of thinking led me to the kernel of this project.

Cash and Carry is an assortment of objects, tools, furniture, and other things I found myself wanting in my day to day life.

I made two of each object, as identically as possible. One object is for me and the other is for sale. The show consists of one set of objects in the gallery alongside placeholders that reference the set in my apartment. The objects are put up for sale or barter.

I think the monetary component of this project is integral. I don't like that the economy I exist within is so exclusively based on money, but it is, and to act otherwise feels disingenuous. There is some humor in trying to barter with art in a gallery. What is a wooden spoon or a deck of cards actually worth?

ON MAKING

I make things because I like things. I like to have things, I like to touch things and feel how they work. I make because I like to know the objects in my life. I like to shape the objects in my life. I want to shape my life. I make because I want to learn how to (how to do things, how to treat things, how to use things, how to use my body).

After I learned how to weld during my third year of college, I began to notice welded things everywhere: handrails, chairs, windowsills, stairs, car parts, road sign posts, and uncountable other places. I began to think about the world I lived in as being *made*. Of course, I knew that my house had been built and the roads in my hometown were cleared and paved, but it is simple to gloss over the process of creating if all you see is the end result. Especially in next-day-delivery, fresh-produce-every-day-of-the-year, bright, shiny, 21st century America, where everything arrives fully formed. You don't often see the seams of the way the world is built.

But the world is built. The pants I'm wearing were made in India, the kiwi I just ate was grown in New Zealand, the book I'm reading was printed in Germany.¹ My dining room table was made in Mount Airy, North Carolina from American white oak. Someone made all those things (or grew, in the case of the kiwi). Someone laid the floor in my apartment, and lots of someones paved the road I live on. I could make a table, and with a lot of work maybe a pair of pants, but I don't know how to grow a kiwi or pave a road. So, the world is built, and there is space between me and the building of that world.

Noticing this built-ness is like discovering the answer to some long contemplated mystery. How things are put together, where they come from, how they serve a purpose within my life, that's how I figure out the world. And so, it follows that in trying to figure out the world, I try to physically make things. This is an exercise in creating and an endeavor to influence my surroundings. This kind of thinking has been my method for a long time. I wasn't the kid who took apart all the radios in the house or something,² rather, I would disappear with my nose in a book. I was always attempting to bury myself in a story, to create a new

¹ This isn't really a comment on globalism, just pointing out the distance between the making and the using that is present in so much of my daily life, although globalism and American imperialism massively increase this distance.

² All I ever wanted for Christmas as a child were LEGOs. I would sit in my room all day long building small plastic brick worlds and living in them. But I did have a fascination with the tangibility of physically framing a story, hence the LEGOs.

world around me.¹

For a long time now, I've had dreams of making a house. Building a space to live within and around. Everything made just so, to my (our) liking. Counter height at 39 inches instead of 36, lots of south facing windows, a small footprint with an open floorplan, and a studio building outside. Modest, but purposefully built.

The idea of making my own living space, that's what's been driving me for the last few years, deep down. It's risen to the surface more often lately. I've started to set aside other projects in favor of those that have an impact on my surroundings and my home. I'm not doing anything particularly new, but my focus has shifted.

To be clear, I am not advocating complete self reliance or independence from greater society. I'm not saying that I'll always make my own butter, or sew all my clothes going forward. This isn't the beginning of a departure from consumerism, because I don't feel capable of such a feat, nor are the ethics of such a thing clear cut by any means. This is just the act of exploring what it takes to make some everyday objects.

¹ I always loved (and still love) fantasy stories the most. I can't get enough of well developed worlds. I think I have a hard time with memoirs because I'd rather spend time with the surroundings than the person. Also, books without maps in the front frustrate me to no end, I want to be able to understand the layout of the world.

OBJECTS

Bed



Print of my bed in the gallery.



Bed and print together.

Within the context of the resting of the body, there is something essential about making a bed for oneself. To labor over a place in which to recline and sleep contains a level of contradiction. The act of making for rest allows room for an admission of intimacy and vulnerability. I will make this bed, then I will sleep, letting myself be away from the world in which I made the bed. A bed is for resting the body. The body, after use, requires a place to recuperate.

In the gallery, each object has a corresponding piece that denotes the other half of the set. The image of my bedroom invites to viewer in, but only so far. Where is the closet, what is under the bed? What does the view out the window look like? Only one slipper is visible, where is the other? You can see the bedroom floor in the image start to slip into the plane of the gallery, as if it wants to cross the boundaries of time and space and let you in. When you move near enough, you see that the image is a halftone; the closer you get, the less real the glimpse of intimacy becomes. You can't really ever come in, the best you can do is see the fraternal twin to my bed, bare and uncovered in the gallery, and imagine how the one in the image is different.

In his *Autoprogettazione*¹, Enzo Mari lays out a way for people with little to no experience in carpentry to make almost any piece of furniture they need from dimensional lumber, using only a handsaw, a hammer and nails. His idea is to democratize (or socialize?) access to making, to allow people to fill their lives with objects of their own making and avoid becoming designed themselves. As G.C. Argan puts it while contextualizing Mari's position:

“Mari...thinks that we live in the megalopolis of neo-capitalism. To survive he had to start making the tools with which to build himself a place to live in”.

This definition of making out of psychological need, or desire to fill a void resonates with me, as well as the directive of making for use. Mari repudiates the idea of furnishing a home with items that are ornamental to the point of losing

¹ From the text of *Autoprogettazione*: “It is not easy to translate into English the Italian word *autoprogettazione*. Literally it means auto = self and *progettazione* = design. But the term ‘self-design’ is misleading since the word ‘design’ to the general public now signifies a series of superficially decorative objects. By the word *autoprogettazione* Enzo Mari means an exercise to be carried out individually to improve one’s personal understanding of the sincerity behind the project... Therefore the end product, although usable, is only important because of its educational value”.



The two beds in various states of assembly. When seen next to each other, some of their differences are revealed.

the value of their original intended use.

Mari also goes on to eviscerate do-it-yourself culture, especially in America, calling hobbies “nothing more than a degrading of culture”. He is writing in the early 1970s, but I imagine his arguments would be even more vocal today, given the ever increasing popularity of DIY in America. On one hand I agree with him; there is something about attempting to imitate without fully understanding the source and intent of that which is being mimicked. On the other, Mari has spent so much time breaking down and challenging high design culture in Italy and Europe, only to turn around and place his work above that of the cultureless Americans (forgive my slightly snide tone). This feels similar to the cultural elevation in America of tiny homes, van life, and minimalistic living, and simultaneous renunciation of trailer parks, mobile homes, and doublewides. This type of gatekeeping does not serve to truly democratize anything, only to draw a distinction between culture and those not worthy of contributing to it.

However, I really do relate to Mari’s emphasis on the act of making; I appreciate his efforts to universalize access to crafting one’s own living space. I find more value in aestheticizing the work than Autoprogettazione prescribes. The look of a thing is, after all, what gives it a character.

Just for clarity, I didn’t make the mattress.

Spoon

I heard there used to be a spoon carving collective in Regis. Apparently it ended before I got to grad school. I would've liked to sit in sometime.

I put the tea kettle on in the kitchen while I write in the other room. I work for a few minutes with one ear on the sound of the flames agitating the water in the kettle, until almost imperceptibly the sounds shifts and I know the water has reached a simmer. I get up and prepare a cup of Earl Grey with milk.

Feeling wood grain under a knife blade is sort of like hearing the sound of the water change; it takes a while to sense the difference, but once you do, you'll never not notice. When you carve with the grain, it parts beautifully, cleanly. when you go against it, the wood splits and the blade skips and shudders. End grain needs to be pared away; you have to cut across it, so smaller chunks make it easier to handle. The greener¹ the wood the better. Sharp tools are essential.

Truth be told, I lack the patience for hand tools. I've gotten a lot better, though. I'm just always in such a hurry. I always feel like I don't quite have the right tool, or kind of wood, or this or that. But I'll keep dabbling. The more spoons I make the better I get, and the more patience I find.

My spoon is represented in the gallery by the block that the spoons were carved out of. Honestly, it wasn't the best wood for carving. It's been dry for a long time, for one, and had a lot of splitting and checking as well. But the board wasn't really usable for much else because of all the checking, so I squeezed two spoons out of the least knotty, most intact section. The spoon in my kitchen was carved from mostly heartwood, giving it a darker, redder, color, while the lighter colored one in the gallery is mostly sapwood.

¹ Green wood has a much higher moisture content than older, dried wood. This keeps the wood grain springy and flexible, and makes for easier carving, especially in more open grain woods, and in areas with changing grain patterns.

One of two spoons and carving blank.



Paella spoon I previously made for my mother.



Shirt



One of two shirts installed in the gallery

My mom knit a lot while I was growing up. Patiently, she worked the yarn back and forth, needles clicking. The stuff she made was mostly experiential, seeing what she could make and how, like cooking without a recipe. I remember a sweater made of squares, like a quilt. To a kid, it was so odd to watch something grow off of these two sticks in my mother's hands, like moss hanging down from a tree.

I remember the yarn store, soft squishy skeins in every color. Burying my face in the bins, sticking my hands deep into the warm bundles, hiding between the hanging layers of finished scarves and throws. I remember the Sheep and Wool festival, parking the car in a bumpy grass field, trudging through the barns filled with the odors of lanolin and wet straw, too tired to enjoy what I was experiencing, too young to focus on spending time doing something someone else enjoyed. My dad and I shared a desire to go home, I think, or maybe we were just hungry. My mom could've spent days in that barn though. I remember realizing sheep could be black or brown or grey, and not just fluffy and white like in picture books, not knowing I was forming memories.

I've never made any clothes before, and I wanted to pull a pattern for this shirt from an old t-shirt of mine that fits really well. I was going to use some fabric that had been starched up on the wall of our old apartment for the pattern. The place we used to live had lead paint that needed to be remediated, but due to the Covid 19 situation never was. We weren't allowed to repaint or touch up anything, so Anna used fabric starch to put a layer of muslin over the green walls. We took it with us when we moved, figuring it would make a good substrate for sewing patterns. The pattern I pulled didn't work so well, and I had a hard time lining up corresponding points on the sleeves and bodice, so I used an existing pattern and made a few tweaks.

I think I did ok stitching everything up; it isn't the prettiest shirt in the world, but I'll wear it, and it fits my body. I certainly learned a lot about how sewing patterns work, the difference between a serger and a sewing machine, and why you need reference points on your pieces, especially along curves. I feel like I've just opened the door to another incredible complex world that I know almost nothing about¹. I love that feeling when you're learning how to work with a new

¹ It's like this every time for me; I feel pretty confident about my woodworking skills for instance, but there are people who are absolute experts at just one corner of one skill, like wood turning. I know nothing about using a lathe. I still feel I have so much to learn about skills I'm already familiar with, so it's intimidating and exciting to try to begin to learn something new, like sewing.

material, and that sort of expansion of knowledge is exactly what I have been after with this project all along.

It's important to me to talk about making the things you want and need. And I don't think the focus needs to be on eschewing style, but rather about finding substance through understanding how to make something. So to go back to Enzo Mari disavowing hobbies, I would posit that a hobby instills plenty of learning. You might not become a full fledged carpenter making a DIY table, but you'll surely learn something about hammering a nail, wood grain, how furniture interacts with your body, dimensionality in domestic space, and probably any number of other things. Just like I learned a bit about making a shirt.

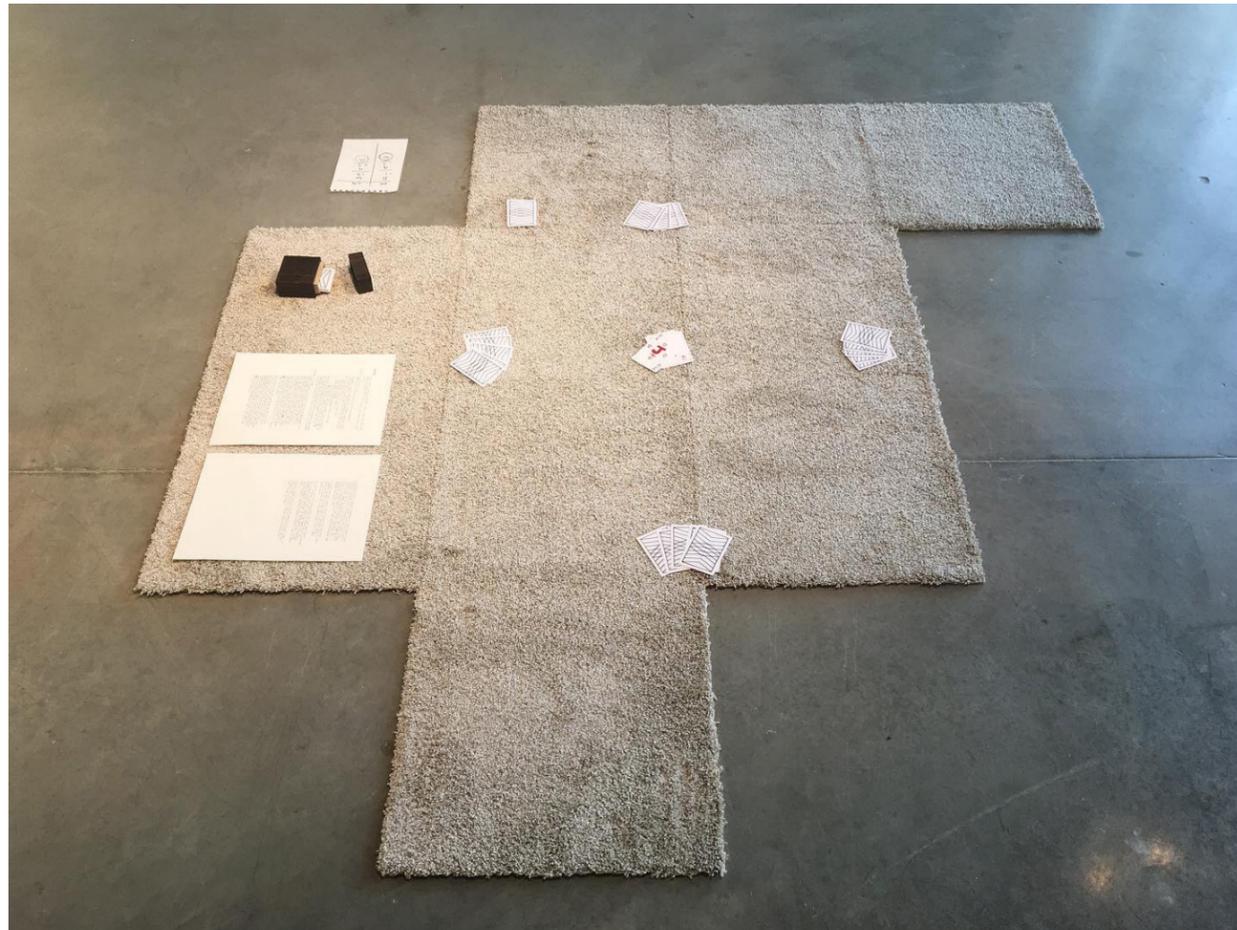
Tetsuya sent me a New York Times article in November about an artist who bought T shirt from Walmart, took it home and copied it exactly, and then placed the copy back into the stack at the store. The artist, Zoë Sheehan Saldaña, called this action shopdropping, sort of the opposite of shoplifting. She had a whole series of work based on a similar process¹. Her process was really trying to comment on hidden labor, and how the history of the things we buy exists whether we know about it or not.

¹ I'm using the past tense because the article was written in October 2005, in review of a show Sheehan Saldaña had at Real Art Ways in Hartford, CT. I actually had no idea how old the piece was until I went to write this bit. The work felt really contemporary and in line with the way I am thinking about making objects. Sheehan Saldaña's website is still active, but hasn't been updated since 2015. I'm left to wonder, is she still making work? Does she still consider herself an artist? Will I, in 10 years?

Pattern for shirt unfolded and laid out.



Playing Cards



Cards laid out in the gallery in the midst of a game, with rules included.

A deck of playing cards is more than an object. Not only is it made up of a collection of objects that all rely on each other to be useful, but the deck itself represents a limitless set of actions, allowing any number of players to construct any number of games based on the same 52 pieces. Gambling and skill based games have developed separately all over the world using various tokens; dice, cards, tiles, pegs, and marbles as an outlet for human creativity and boredom.

My dad grew up playing a game with his family around the kitchen table, in Essexville, Michigan. He's told me stories of his parents and grandparents arguing late into the night over cards after the kids had gone to bed¹. I've played with my cousins, aunts and uncles often and enjoyed myself immensely, although I always feel I've inserted myself into an endless game that the older generation has been playing for longer than I've been alive. I remember that my grandmother and my uncle Dan were always on the same team, that Dan and my uncle John always argued about who got to sit where at the table².

I remember the frustration of trying to learn what I thought was an incredibly complex card game as a kid, eventually getting the hang of it, and then later trying to teach my friends. I laughed at them when they didn't understand the rules, and they accused me of being a bad teacher. Eventually I succeeded in conveying the relevant information, and we played the game. Each time I try to teach it again, though, I wonder what little bits have been misinterpreted or added on through neglect or assumption or poor memory. I understand how my grandparents and great-grandparents had disputes about the rules. Passing on a card game is like a generational game of telephone, with each new player molding the rules slightly to fit their understanding. In researching the rules of the game to write this, I realized that my dad and my uncle John call the game different things³. This seems impossible given that they learned to play at the same table, and never play with anyone but family, but there you go. Each insists they have the name right of course.

The rules, to the best of my recollection, can be found on the next page.

¹ The game is supposedly French-Canadian in origin, mostly popular in the upper Midwest of the US and Ontario. If I remember correctly, my grandfather and my grandmother's parents played slightly different styles of the game and could never agree on exactly what was and was not allowed.

² Like in many card games, table position influences who can outbid who, who gets to deal when, etc. I think Dan liked to be to John's left so that he had an easier time leading the bet, but I could be misremembering.

³ Schmere and Smear, respectively.

SCHMERE

(also known as Smear, Schmier, High, Low, Jack and the Game, and sometimes Pitch)

Can be played by 3-10* players, but works best with 4-6

Deck and game structure:

Remove four-eight in all suits, as well as Jokers**.

Schmere is played by sets of partners sitting across from each other. 2 sets of partners is easiest. The goal of the game is to win the most of the four points in each hand. These are:

High (highest card of the trump suit)

Low (lowest card of trump)***

Jack (Jack of trump)

Game (most accumulated game points over the course of the hand)

Game points: Aces are worth 4 points towards Game, Kings 3, Queens 2, Jacks 1 and Tens 10.

Not all cards are dealt in each hand, so Two and Ace may not be low and high in a given hand, and the Jack of trump may not be dealt at all.

Each game point taken earns that partnership one point at the end of the hand. Games are played to 15 points.

Dealing and play:

Dealer shuffles and offers the cut to the player to their right. Each player is then dealt 6 cards. Betting proceeds, with the player to the left of the dealer going first. Bets can be for 2,3 or 4 tricks, with the highest betting player (pitcher) leading the hand and choosing the trump suit. The player who bets highest must win as many points as they bet, or else their team will go back by the same amount. A player can also “shoot the moon”, where they make a four bet and also try to win the game in one hand (meaning one could have 7 points and “shoot the moon” to get to 15 in one hand). If they do not get all 4 points, they go back 11 points.

The pitcher leads the beginning of the hand with a card of the trump suit. Each successive player has to play a card, following suit if they can. The player with the highest card of the suit that led the round wins the cards on the table (the trick), then leads the next trick with whatever card they choose. Again, the highest card of the leading suit wins the trick. Any player can always play a trump card, even if they can follow suit. The highest trump card in a round beats everything, even if the suit led was not trump****.

* Playing with three players involves a more complicated form of betting; each player is playing without a partner, and has to bet accordingly. The other two players end up on a team of sorts, playing to keep the pitcher from achieving their bet. Playing with 8 or 10 players is really pushing the game, and involves adding some of the four-eight cards back into the deck to increase the number of cards out.

** Some versions award extra points for the two Jokers, as well as the Jack of the suit that is the same color as the trump suit. In these versions, Jokers are worth 1 game point each.

*** There are two variants: “catch low” and “keep low”. In “catch low” the low of trump can be captured by a higher trump card, while in “keep low” the player who plays the low of trump gets it returned to them even if they do not win the trick. “Catch low” is harder and has higher variance (and is more fun).

**** In “catch low” it’s an especially good move to give up the lead and then cut back in with low of trump if you have it, preferably capturing some game along the way.

Stool

It's not often I feel I can't quite reach something. One of the benefits of being tall. Every once in a while though, something is a bit too high, or slightly precarious, and a little something to stand on would be nice. A step stool extends your range of motion. It is an object of convenience, something that aids your ability to reach hard to reach places. In my apartment, we have a little ladder that is good for reaching the ceiling, but its footprint is rather large. I wanted something that was a bit smaller, more portable, intended for kitchen cabinets or reaching the tops of windows.

Of all the things I've made for this project, a stepstool might be the most immediately understandable in terms of use value. An apron is nice to cover up your clothes, but not entirely necessary; a bedframe influences the height and position in a room at which you sleep, but the mattress is much more important to the actual sleeping. With a step stool, you need to get taller, you make a thing to stand on, and get taller. It's a simple equation.

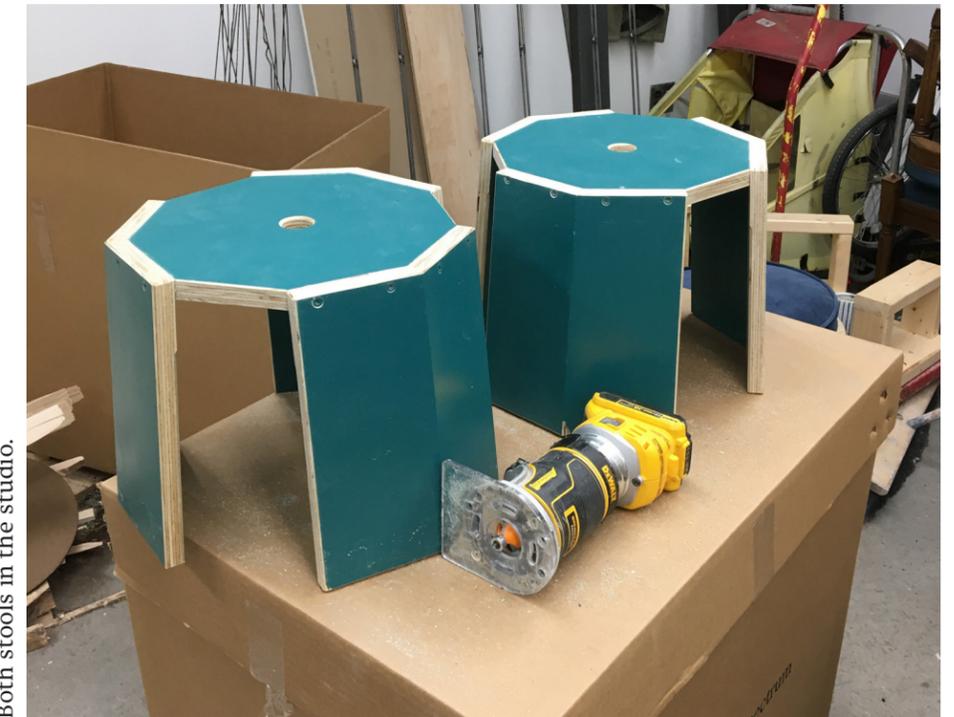
Abraham Cruzvillegas has written extensively about *autoconstrucción*¹, his own term that refers to the process of building what one needs for one's own life. He has created this definition specifically to reference the style and substance of house building in his childhood home of Ajusco, in the southern part of Mexico City. Cruzvillegas is very clear that *autoconstrucción* specifically applies to the process of using what is around you to create what you need. In his own words:

"The *autoconstrucción* concept comes from a building technique that is led by specific needs of a family and by the lack of funds to pay for constructing an entire house at once. People build their own homes slowly and sporadically, as they can, with limited money, with the collaboration of all family members and the solidarity of neighbors, relatives, and friends. Houses show the *autoconstrucción* process in their layers, through which it is possible to experience their transformations, modifications, cancellations, and destructions; they evolve according to changes in the lives of their residents.

Aesthetic decisions are intertwined with the ability of the builders to use anything available or at hand, depending on place, circumstance, or chance. The combinations of materials and hybrid construction strategies are very rich and diverse. *Autoconstrucción* is not a weekend hobby; it's not bricolage or DIY culture—it's a consequence of unfair wealth distribution. As opposed

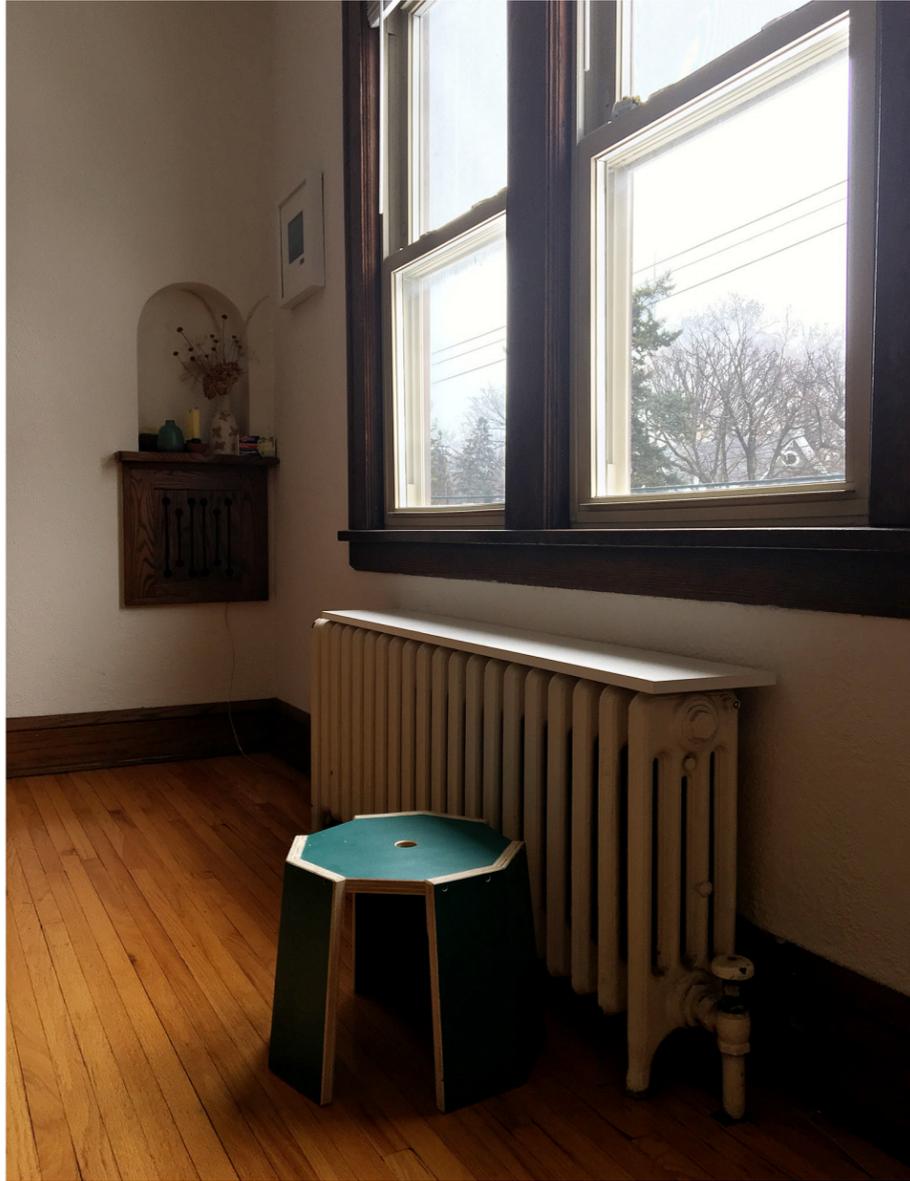
to massive building projects, it points to an autonomous and independent architecture that is far from any planning or draft: it's improvised."¹

This stepstool is not a consequence of unfair wealth distribution. Making two identical stools certainly isn't exactly improvised. I often feel like I have one foot in DIY culture. But, I still find Cruzvillegas conception of making a useful framework from which to start. The stepstools I have made do something specific for me, fit my body, my kitchen. His outline of *autoconstrucción* provides a useful context for the objects in *Cash and Carry*.



Both stools in the studio.

¹ Which translates to "self-building" in English.



Stool in my house. Most of the time, it serves as a step for the cats to get up on the radiator.

HOW TO MAKE A NONAGON:

Draw a circle with radius r .

Bisect the circle along the X and Y axis and find points A , P , Q , and R .

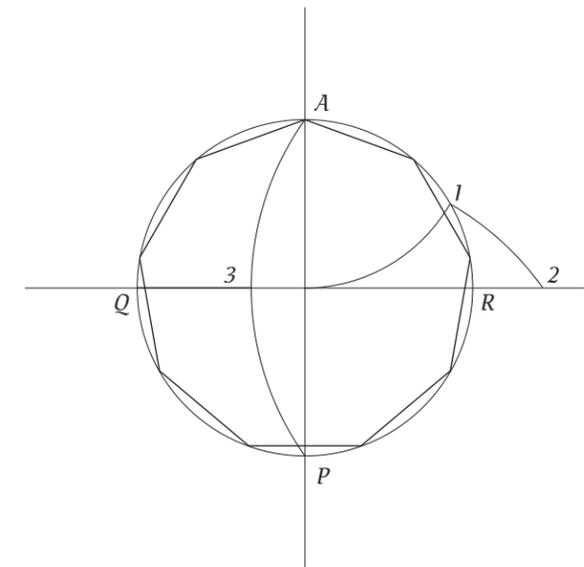
Scribe an arc from point A with radius r until it intersects the circle at point 1 .

Scribe an arc from point P with radius $P-1$ until it intersects the X axis at point 2 .

Scribe an arc from point 2 with radius $P-1$ until it intersects the circle at point A and point P , and call the intersection of the X axis point 3 .

Find the distance between point 3 and the circle along the X axis.

Scribe nine lines of this length along the circumference of the circle starting from point A , with each line originating and terminating at the edge of the circle, creating a nonagon.



Butter

Since this body of work is about learning and making, and I spend most of my "making" time in the kitchen, I felt I needed to include an edible object. I thought of baking bread, of making pickles, or some kind of jam, but in the end, I landed on butter.

Butter is simple. It is the accumulation of the fattiest bits of cream, which in turn is the richest part of cows milk. Butter is also versatile. You can put it on almost anything, sweet or savory. You can bake with it, or use it as an oil to cook with. But I'd never thought about making it, aside from reading some idea of farmers churning butter in a big wooden vessel.

A half gallon of heavy cream yielded 1.68 pounds of butter. A half gallon of cream weighs almost exactly 4 pounds, and I did have a bit of wastage, so approximately half of the original material (the fatty solids) becomes butter, and the other half becomes buttermilk.

I started with a large mason jar, half filled with cream, and shook it, using the air in the jar as a mechanism to beat the cream into whipped cream, and then break that fluffy mixture down into butter and buttermilk. It took a long time. In the end I used an immersion blender, and eventually broke the mixing attachment and ruined the motor. Perhaps I should have spent the time making a butter churn. But, I don't mind that I had to use an immersion blender. This project was not about doing everything the traditional way, or making everything by hand. The butter I buy from the store is certainly made in some massive stainless steel vat, with industrial motors churning away for precisely the right amount of time, with minimal wastage. That image isn't very interesting either, other than to stand in awe of the sheer scale of food production in the modern world. I just wanted to spend time figuring out more about how things in my life are made, in so far as I can approximate with the skills and tools at my disposal.

Gallery fridge and counter that correspond to the position of the same in the artist's kitchen.



Butter in the gallery fridge.



Acknowledgments

This list is not exhaustive. My intention is to try to credit people and things that have helped shaped my life as an artist and a maker (and a person). I wanted to paint a broad picture of how and where I have learned, at least in the last decade or so.

Obviously, different people have had different levels of impact and interaction. I don't want to rank the level of influence, but everyone on this list has made some mark on me, whether it was just a conversation that stuck with me, or it was teaching me how to drive a tractor. Not that many people will end up reading this book anyway, so this is also a note to my future self to appreciate all of you later in life.

Artists, designers, theorists and writers referenced:

Oscar Tuazon, *LIE* p. 12
Abraham Cruzvillegas, *Prime Matter: Abraham Cruzvillegas on "Autoconstrucción"* p. 32
Enzo Mari, *Autoprogettazione* p. 21
Zoë Sheehan Saldaña, p. 26
Bethan Huws, *Untitled (Life is more...)* p.46

People and places I've learned or drawn inspiration or knowledge from (tools, skills, thoughts, critiques, and other odds and ends):

Anna Van Voorhis
The Anarchist's Design Book by
Christopher Schwarz
Paul Linden
Jerry Romanov
finishing.com
@austinswearengin_
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Charlie Van Voorhis
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Leo Alonso
Monica Bonvicini
Gary Humphries

Patricia Straub
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@jakelikesonions
Marcus Young
David Shrigley
Shannon Collis
Frankie Yu
Rachel Lebo
Caitlin Skaalrud
Pedram Baldari
@unicorn.riot
Jesse Yuhasz

Among others.

Bethan Huws, *Untitled (Life is more...)*, 2012

