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DWELLING

by

Jill H. Derryberry

B.A. University of Montana 1998

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

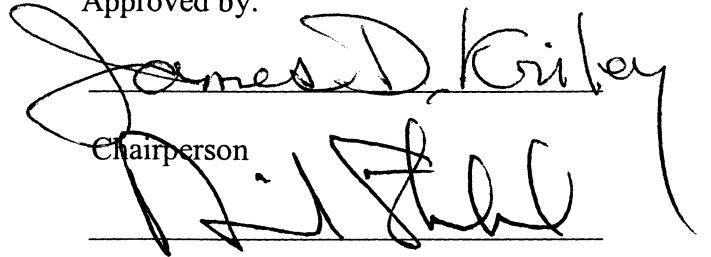
for the degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Montana

July 2005

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James D. Kirby", written over a horizontal line.

Chairperson

Dean, Graduate School

7-15-05

Date

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Dwelling

Chairperson: James Kriley 

‘Dwelling’ is a project that grew out of my experience in the Creative Pulse course “Sense of Place” and in my continued interest in pursuing different forms of artistic expression. Having never taken an art course, I sought to challenge myself creatively while actively exploring my surroundings and recognizing and representing their significance.

The objective of this project was to explore the duality of ‘dwelling’, both as a physical place and a mental/emotional act, recognizing the correlation between the objects in one’s home and what they imply and evoke within. In addition, this project was about exploring different artistic mediums and using them to effectively express myself. This project, thus, was an attempt to gain more awareness and appreciation of my home, as well as others’, and to provide myself with the opportunity for artistic challenges and growth. I wanted to create a body of work that not only expressed my existing sense of dwelling, but also contributed to it. The presence of past, present and future in dwelling allows for the opportunity to simultaneously ponder and proceed, draw from and contribute.

The creation of each of the works for my project was enlightening and enjoyable. I became more and more comfortable with myself as an artist and in my expression of ideas as well as images. I no longer doubt my creativity; I am confident and capable.

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‘Dwelling’: Definitions

dwelling (v.)

act of abiding or continuing for a time, in a place, state, or condition

continuing in existence, lasting, persisting, remaining after others are taken or removed

remaining as in a permanent residence

inhabiting

causing to abide in

pausing

dwelling (n.)

continued, habitual residence

Aspects of ‘Dwelling’

The idea of one’s home as a place not only of residence but of identity entertains vast possibility for exploration, both in thought and in representation. Homes present images, myths, stories, and symbols, both implied and inherent. These qualities provide subject matter for thought and reflection as well as artistic exploration and creation.

Upon moving into my first house, I furnished it entirely with others’ possessions. The result is a dwelling in every sense of the word. It is a physical residence; it is a sanctuary; it is a snapshot of the past; it is a pause as well as a procession; a past, present and future. My recognition of it as such, however, was once fairly casual, lacking conscious awareness of my latent associations. There are, then, three aspects of dwelling I now address: physical, mental/emotional, and artistic. The physical refers to the actual house and the material artifacts within it. The mental/emotional involves the personal associations and implications of the physical, and the artistic is derived from both the

physical and the mental/emotional, creating representations of both. The result of conceptualizing and expressing the physical and mental/emotional associations in a creative way brings out existing meaning as well as constructing new meaning, both drawing from and contributing to my environment; it enables one to explore the associations already attached to their surroundings in a different context and to create new associations.

Origin of 'Dwelling': Intent and Interest

In exploring the notion of 'dwelling', I intended to focus on my own home and its contents. I created a list of items I thought to be meaningful and interesting, both in their physicality and their significance to me and my life. I wanted to explore these items through various art forms, including composition, illuminated text, collage, painting and mixed media, creating different artist books to reflect each item and its meanings. Having limited experience with creative writing, and no experience in painting or mixed media, I sensed a liberating yet challenging opportunity to experiment in different forms of expression.

My interest in this artistic exploration of my environment was twofold: I wanted to expand my repertoire of expressive outlets and to come to a greater understanding and appreciation of my home and what makes it a home rather than a house. I have always felt a strong desire to be more artistic but have not ever taken the opportunity to explore my artistry. In addition, in exploring myself, my feelings, and my past, I have often found myself thinking of associated objects. I realize I feel an innate connection to my surroundings, relating memories, people and feelings to objects; however, I once lacked a clear sense of what those connections are and therefore lacked an appreciation for them and their true meaning to me.

Artistic Exploration

As the artistic portion of my project was the least comfortable for me and, therefore, the most challenging, I explored sketching, painting, and collage techniques. In addition, I started learning different forms of knitting, interested in textures and symbolic meanings created in a medium that carries such strong connotations of home and creation. Initial exploration in all of these areas took the form of research. I looked at an extensive amount of books and magazines compiling ideas of colors, textures, techniques, and forms I liked. In addition I paid conscious attention to my surroundings, analyzing my home and the things in it to understand the intention behind their presence. I sought to create an understanding of why my house feels like home. Then I began to experiment with each of the mediums I researched. I had no clear idea of my intent in any of these experiments, mainly establishing familiarity with different materials, how they worked, and how I might possibly want to use them. I was intimidated by the task of translating ideas into art, but this new language is also what I so wanted to learn. I was excited by the prospects of acquiring a new method of expression, in exploring the many conceptual possibilities each medium presented, much like those I find and enjoy in literature.

Sketching

Sketching was a useful tool in detailing my ideas in my journal as they came to me, but little else. Other than some use in altered page poetry and some outlining of general lines on canvases, I did very little sketching. I had anticipated needing to do more extensive sketching in painting and collage projects, only to find myself automatically moving to freeform.

Painting

I found I particularly liked painting, though it was also where I clearly lacked skill. I started off with a sketch book in which I played with different paints: Watercolor, acrylics, liquid acrylics, gouache, oils, as well as some pastels, crayons, and pencils. My earliest experiments were very concrete, attempted renderings of meaningful objects from my original list. I found them to be flat and disappointing, but still useful in providing the physical opportunity to paint. I was much more pleased with later, more abstract paintings. This move to abstraction was interesting to me given the physical, concrete aspect of my project. These later paintings also reflect my increased comfort with how different paints can be used and demonstrate use of layers and blending colors. In addition they show movement toward mixed media. These quick paintings allowed me to settle on what I was most interested in using for my project pieces. I prefer liquid acrylics for their color, texture and the ease with which they can be diluted, intensified and layered. They can be used as stains as well. In addition, I liked the use of watercolor and ink for the juxtaposition of soft, diffused color and bold lines. After completing a few paintings, I started to think back to my stained glass work and decided to try glass paint as well. I appreciate the translucent and transparent qualities of glass painting, particularly paired with other painting and writing.

Collage

Collage was the least challenging of the mediums, mainly because of all of the materials available and the endless possibilities. I quickly found anything and everything is a possible material, and there are several ways in which to use the materials. I enjoyed making Christmas cards for my friends and family as a means of experimenting with

layers. I also created books for people using different materials for different purposes, finding I prefer natural materials and color schemes. Collage was also the form I found the most ideas for in my research, therefore giving me more inspiration and ideas for experimentation.

Knitting

Knitting was also quick to learn, and an activity I found myself enjoying. My mother taught me to knit, and just that sharing reinforced the associations I have with this art. It evokes imagery of home, of comfort, of warmth and simplicity for me. I spent quite a bit of time knitting scarves for other people, becoming comfortable with different forms of knitting. I then experimented with different textures of yarn, and eventually played with other materials as well, working with knitting as part of mixed media. I was particularly drawn to the image of knitting as a homemaker's craft and in the symbolism of creating a woven fabric. These associations then led me to the connection to story and the act of weaving words and of unraveling stories.

Illuminated Text

My next focus in starting my project was to start writing, to get my ideas on paper and start exploring them. I began with taking two creative writing classes that allowed me to write outside of the scope of my project, without any clear direction or predisposition to topics. This was helpful in generating new techniques and avenues of expression. I particularly liked the activities involving art and visual prompts, as this felt the most useful in my project. I worked in creating characters from objects and exploring settings, details and memories as origins for stories and poetry. Following the creative writing classes, I found myself focusing on quite a bit of writing. While none of it was

extensive, the writing quickly became the foundation for pieces I started to conceive. While I initially thought this may push me into a more literal exploration than I wanted, I quickly found my written associations to open different artistic ideas. This is when the original list of intended subjects for the artist books, and the idea of artist books as a whole was altered to allow for the new ideas and associations I had after looking at my home in the context of art. I found I had started with one definition of 'dwelling' and now needed to add an artistic definition.

Artistic Definition of 'Dwelling'

While my original intent was to artistically explore a set of specific objects in my house, I found my ideas going in different directions. My initial inclination was to base the art on the physical objects. What I found was my emotions and memories became the basis instead. This led me into a much more abstract style of art, based on the associations rather than the physical objects. This was surprising to me, and led me to a deeper exploration of the idea of 'dwelling'. I had thought the physicality of my environment was going to provide the most artistic inspiration, when in actuality it was the mental and emotional I drew from. I became more interested in the ideas of textures and layers rather than renderings, exploring the connection between meanings and forms or techniques. It is the connection between the artistic possibilities and what I wanted to convey that most struck me, the notion that the use of materials could convey the many concepts of my ideas was exciting and challenging.

‘Dwelling’: The Project and Product

In completing the actual body of work for my project, my goal was not only to fully explore the concept of ‘dwelling’ but also to represent the concept and my associations with it using a number of different artistic mediums. It was important to me to cover the general meanings of the concept and then expand those into my own personal meanings, my own ideas, stories, and images. My challenge was to cover the concept through art, seeking to formulate my ideas in an unfamiliar form.

Painting

Painting became more and more comfortable for me as I continued to experiment with different paints, surfaces and techniques. I found it to be therapeutic and spontaneous, requiring much less planning than any of the other mediums in which I worked. I enjoyed working with liquid acrylics, manipulating the concentration of color and working with layering to create definition and depth. In addition, I appreciated the layering that painting requires, the idea that there are underlying parts of a painting that are not necessarily visible but which are necessary and important to the whole. In spite of my initial intimidation of putting the brush to canvas, I was pleasantly surprised by my ability once I let go of my reservations.

Sojourn (liquid and full body acrylics on canvas)

This painting was my first canvas, a true accomplishment for me in my fledgling artistic voyage (Appendix 1, pg. 18). My intent in this piece was to focus on projecting mood using color and texture. The piece to me reflects warmth as well as a sense of chaos, but is not hostile or unwelcoming. I see in it the possibilities of a journey, both real and imagined. This piece was an ironic start to a project

focusing on home, as it focuses instead on leaving home, on the possibilities outside of the comfort of home. I found, however, that this became a prominent notion as I continued my project. I think, in part, that having a sense of home allows you the comfort to look beyond it. This painting is a glimpse into that beyond. In sharing this piece with others, I was excited by the many responses I received. Some thought the piece was angry and dark. Others saw images within the painting. The fact that people responded at all was rewarding, and I was interested in the range of responses the piece received.

Beholden (liquid acrylics on masonite)

This painting started with an image of an eye, and the idea that the way I was looking at my surroundings was my own. Carrying my own interpretations and implicated visions acts as a filter through which I view the world (Appendix 1, pg. 19). The images of objects are not only physical but mental and emotional as well. And there is a sense of beauty and wonder at the thought of the many different ways in which an object can appear. There is also a sense of the power of imagery reflected in this piece, in the ability of images to remain, to dwell, to be held in our minds. The center eye has an etching of my father in the pupil, an image I feel I reflect not by having him in front of me, but by having him within me. And I feel his presence in the way I look at the world. And I see him in the world around me in spite of his absence. The two side eyes are without etchings but are highly reflective in their glossy finish, also a conscious choice. I also love the fact that these paintings appear differently depending on the light due to the many layers of colors they each have.

Reflection (liquid acrylics on canvas)

There is a certain sense of home I find in nature, and trees in particular convey strength and security as well as beauty and potential. I fondly remember climbing a large Mulberry tree in my backyard growing up, spending hours in the leaves, swinging from a rope attached to one of its large limbs and finding refuge on hot days. The image of the tree therefore brings an association of childhood freedom, of climbing those branches, of reaching for heights. In exploring the association I have between trees and home, I thought of roots and branches, of the ability of home to ground us and give us a place in which we can thrive and grow. The notion of grounding and of growth are truly reflections of one another. There can be no branches without the roots. And the roots hold no significance if not to support the growth above. In finishing this painting, I added text to complete the intention (Appendix 1, pg. 20).

Windows (glass paint and acrylics on glass and wood)

Using an actual piece from my house and drawing from both the physicality of that piece and the symbolism, I created a window using a variety of paints (Appendix 1, pg. 21). I am intrigued by old windows and by the many associations we have with windows. There is the possibility of looking out on and into the world through a pane of glass. I can sit in my house and look outside from the warmth and comfort of my home, viewing lives moving around me or standing still. And from the outside, I can look into my home or others' and see a world in a different sense, a world of things that reflect people and lives.

Collage and Mixed Media

In beginning my project, collage and mixed media were my primary interest. I was intrigued by all of the possibilities and had numerous ideas after completing my research. It was enjoyable to collect materials and to see how they could all be used. Though most of my collage projects began with a general plan, I appreciated the opportunities that presented themselves once I started to put things together. Adding little touches, whether they be text or texture, allowed me to feel a sense of spontaneity with this medium as well.

Dwelling (mixed paper media)

This book was a fairly sustained project for me (Appendix 2, pg. 22). I worked on the book in stages, first attending to representing the different definitions of ‘dwelling’, then progressing to images I associated with those definitions, and finally adding the writing portions to the overall artistic presentation. I was pleased with the combination of materials, and the way in which they represented the different intentions of this particular piece. The book contains old photographs of family members, symbolic images of a clock, and doors and windows through which other parts of the book are visible. In addition I included significant writing, both my own and others’, poetry I wrote for this project, and a letter written to me by my grandfather about my father. All parts of this book are significant, and I therefore feel this is a complete piece and contains a good representation of the many concepts of dwelling I considered.

Timeless (photography and liquid acrylics on canvas)

This piece was one of the more involved pieces I completed, incorporating several mediums and processes (Appendix 2, pg. 23). The aim was to capture timeless items from my home that carry significance both to me and to others. I chose a clock that resided on my grandparents' wall and now stands still on mine. There are collections of old books from a number of family members that represent timeless stories and my love for literature. An old camera portrays the idea of capturing images in time. My father's Gibson guitar is a warm memory I have of him, and the music also resonates within me. I wanted to represent these current items that have such a past and age them and then present them in a modern way again, thereby showing their timeless quality. The photographs are of items from my home I copied in black and white and transferred to canvas. I then tinted the canvases. The presentation of the canvases using binder clips and thumb tacks is simple and fresh, and the fabric background adds an element of color, line and texture.

Thoughts to Dwell Upon (paper and ink)

Though simple, this book grew from years of collecting quotes that have resonated within me and made me think (Appendix 2, pg. 24). It was wonderful to organize them and to put them together in a handmade book. I experimented with different papers and binding techniques in making this book, and have future plans to continue adding to it and accenting it with more metallic ink.

Appropriately, this project will continue to be a work in progress, and I will continue to dwell on what is already completed.

***Edge of Glass* (ink and watercolor pencil)**

Writing poetry from existing text is a fun exercise and opens different avenues of writing and artistic expression. This piece uses a page from a Reader's Digest book from which I chose specific words to create a poem (Appendix 2, pg. 25). Once the poem was written I illustrated the ideas and images using watercolor to allow the other words to show through while highlighting around the words of my poem. It is amazing to open yourself to the possibility of poetry already being written on a page, ready for you to find and free. It reminds me of Michelangelo's belief that he freed sculptures from the marble. The illumination, then, of the poetry only serves to complete the picture on the page that the poem outlines. The effect is a great blend of multiple texts and color.

***Home* (paper, ink, etc.)**

This altered book deals with shape, form, and poetry (Appendix 2, pg. 26). I took a book entitled *Home* and made it look like a house. I then used the existing text of the book to create my own text. I added wood and cut-outs to give the book depth and texture. This book was a housewarming gift, filled with stories about rooms around the house. I felt it was an appropriate choice, not just for its title, but for its contents and its meaning to me. The words on the pages I chose to use truly spoke to me and expressed sentiments I had in a way I would not have been able to voice otherwise. The use of windows and of silver ink demonstrates the idea of reflection: reflection in thought and reflection of one thing in another. A home reflects its resident. In making the book into a representation and expression of home, it took on new meaning and significance.

Weave (raffia, paper and ink)

This piece literally weaves a story (Appendix 2, pg. 27). Knitting was a very symbolic medium for me to work with. Just as stories weave themselves into ourselves and others, into our stories and others', so, too, does this piece weave. The story about a grandmother learning and teaching to knit as she listens to and tells stories is threaded through a body of knitting, two separate pieces creating one.

Unravel (raffia and ink)

This piece continues to explore the idea of weaving words (Appendix 2, pg. 28). There are a series of writings, stories I heard growing up and some of my own, on the raffia, penned in ink, that has been knit into a long book. In order to read the stories, one must unravel the strands. In addition, there is never an end to the story, as is represented by the presentation with the knitting needle, pen and ball of unwritten raffia. There is unlimited potential to continue the piece, to perpetually weave and knit, creating one tapestry.

Enlightened Dwellings

In creating my own personal definitions of 'dwelling', I began consciously interacting with my own physical dwelling and the items within it, paying attention to the reason for their presence in my home and the effects that presence had on me in terms of associations and meaning. The relationship between the physical dwelling and items and the associations and meanings they carry became the focus of my project, the focus of my artwork.

Through my completion of this project I discovered significance, both in my surroundings and in myself. The ability of our surroundings to evoke in us a sense of ourselves and others is powerful. Dwelling is at once material and personal. It was, therefore, an appropriate subject for artistic exploration. I found myself dwelling often, with many things to ponder through the course of my work. In addition, I found myself creating physical works using my hands and objects.

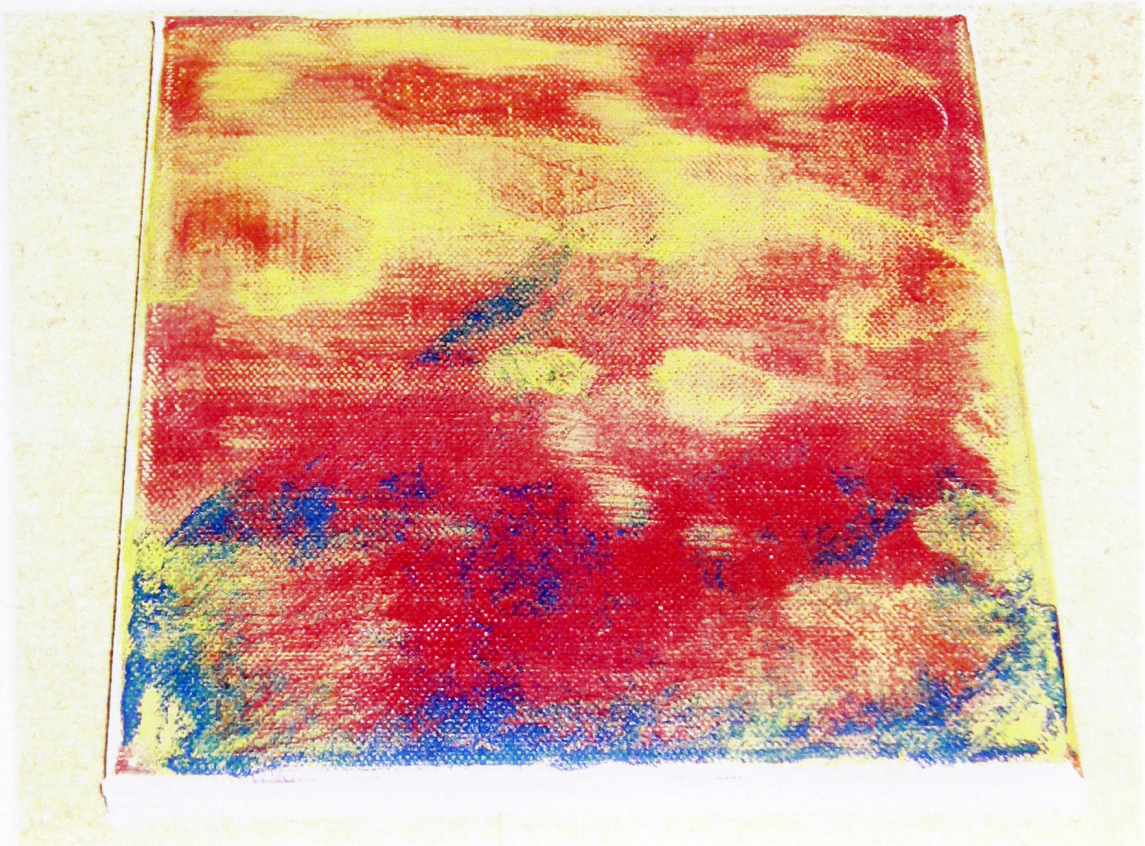
My initial intention was to create a series based on specific objects from my home. This is not the outcome. Instead I have a body of work that reflects a broader concept of dwelling, drawn from the concept itself as well as from within myself. Some pieces are abstract, some concrete, some specific and some general. All are dwellings in their own right. All are inspired and representational. And all were drawn from and contribute to my dwelling, in every sense of the word.

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Appendix 1: Painting

Sojourn



Beholden



Reflection

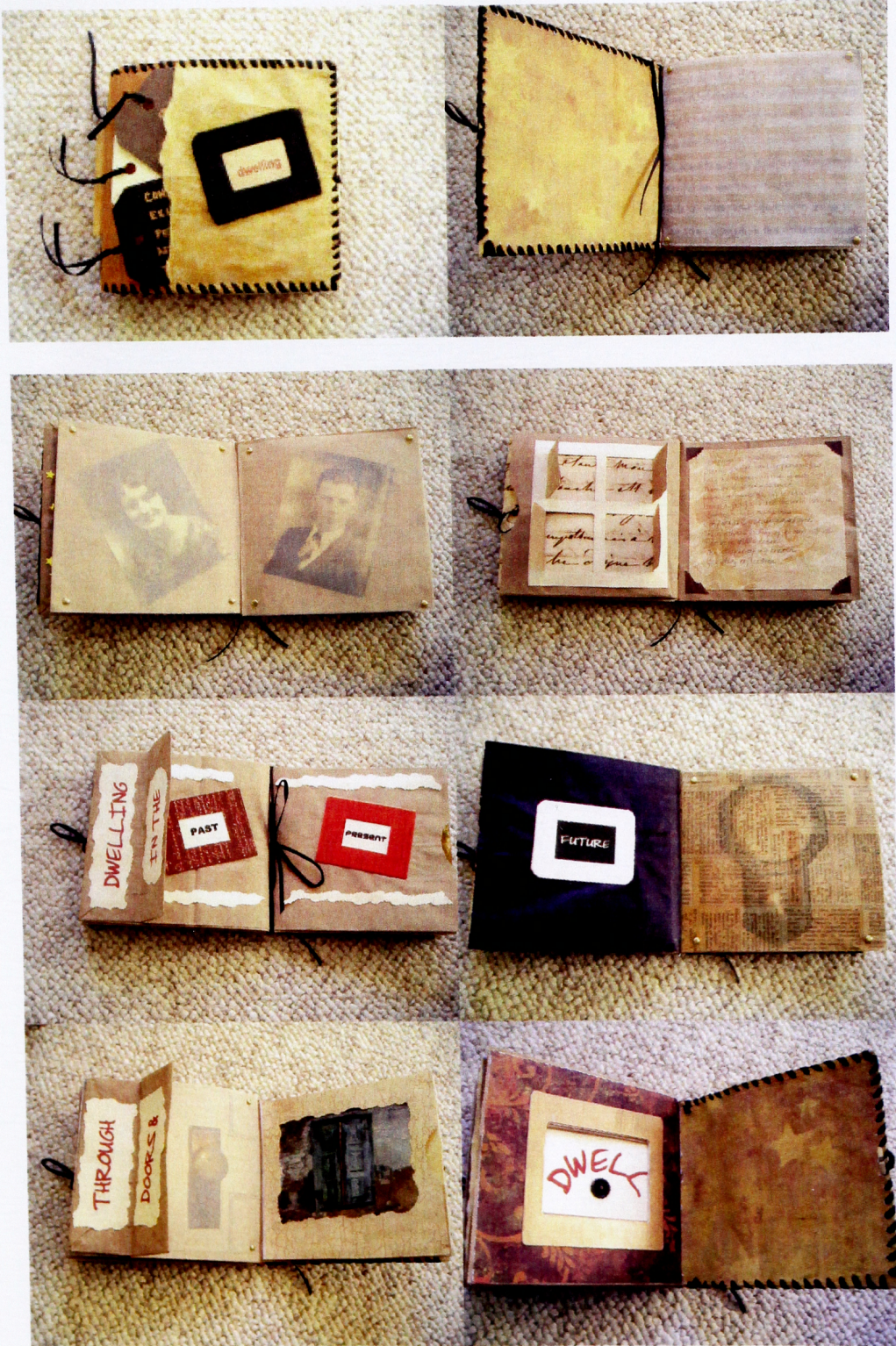


Windows



Appendix 2: Collage and Mixed Media

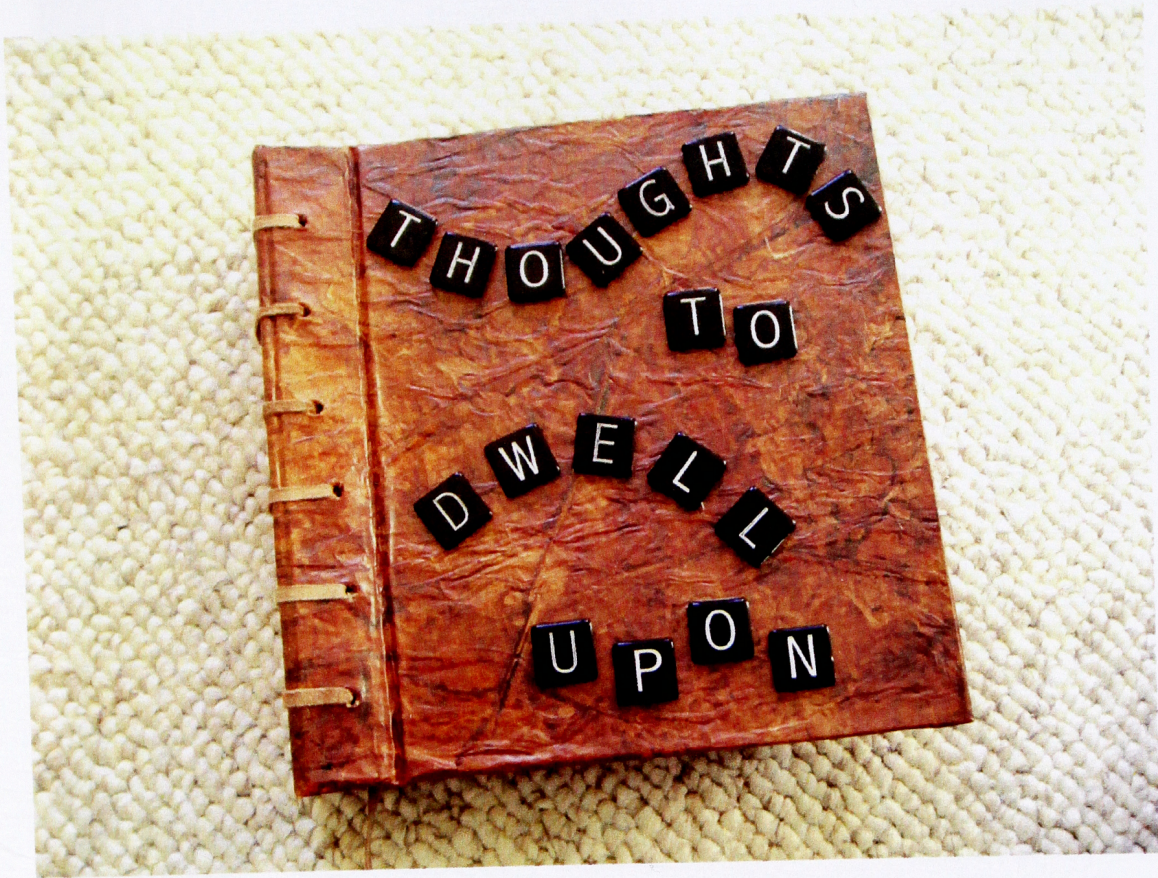
Dwelling



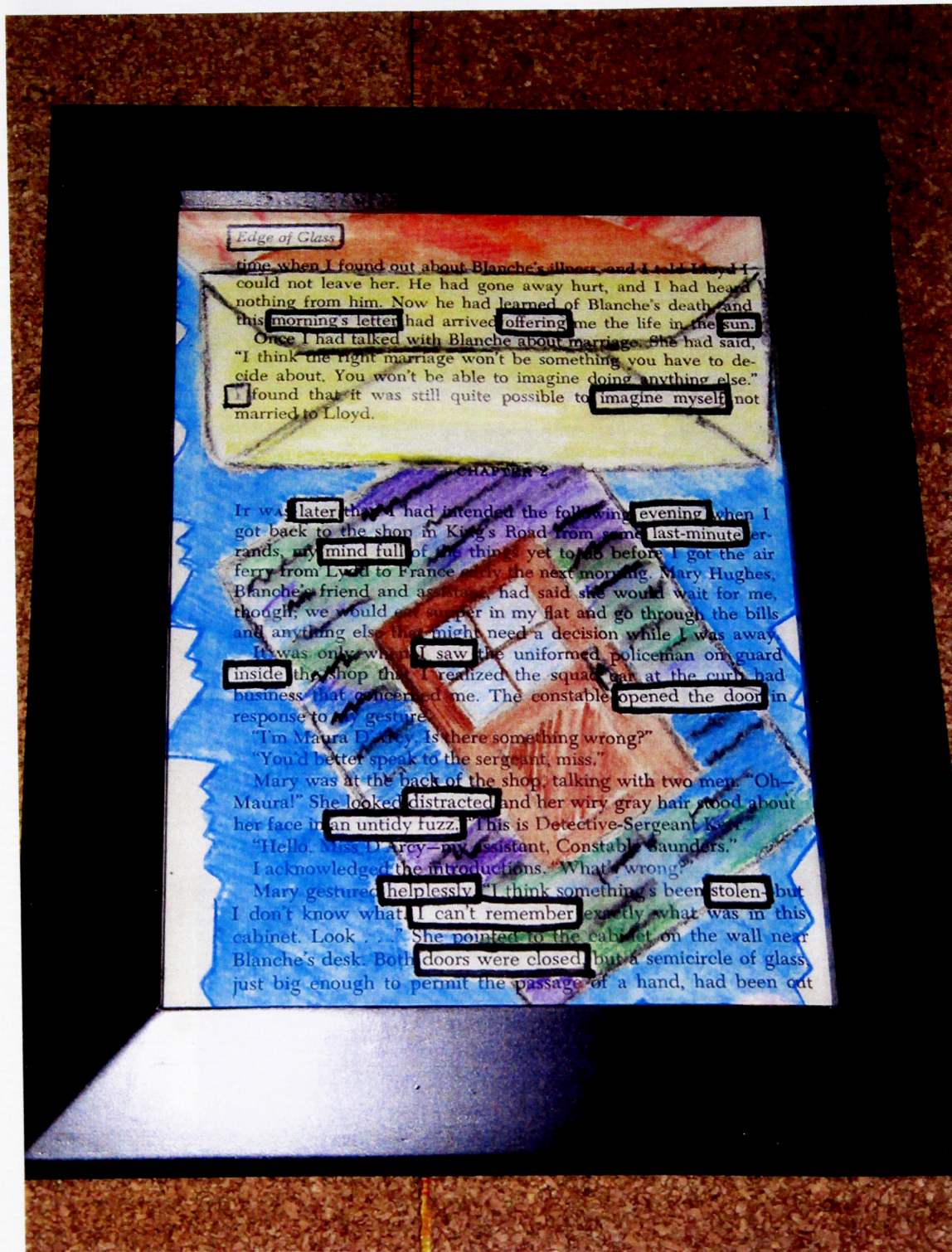
Timeless



Thoughts to Dwell Upon



ALWAYS IN LIFE AN IDEA STARTS SMALL, IT IS ONLY A SPRING IDEA, BUT THE VINES WILL COME AND THEY WILL TRY TO CHOKE YOUR IDEA SO IT CANNOT GROW AND IT WILL DIE, AND YOU WILL NEVER KNOW YOU HAD A BIG IDEA, AN IDEA SO BIG IT COULD HAVE GROWN THIRTY METERS THROUGH THE DARK CANOPY OF LEAVES AND TOUCHED THE FACE OF THE SKY... THE VINES ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE AFRAID OF ORIGINALITY, OF NEW THINKING. MOST PEOPLE YOU ENCOUNTER WILL BE VINES. WHEN YOU ARE A SOULIG PLANT THEY ARE VERY DANGEROUS.
-SCOTT BRAY



Edge of Glass

time when I found out about Blanche's illness, and I told Lloyd I could not leave her. He had gone away hurt, and I had heard nothing from him. Now he had learned of Blanche's death, and this morning's letter had arrived offering me the life in the sun.

Once I had talked with Blanche about marriage, she had said, "I think the right marriage won't be something you have to decide about. You won't be able to imagine doing anything else." I found that it was still quite possible to imagine myself not married to Lloyd.

CHAPTER 2

It was later that I had intended the following evening when I got back to the shop in King's Road from some last-minute errands, my mind full of the things yet to do before I got the air ferry from Lydd to France early the next morning. Mary Hughes, Blanche's friend and assistant, had said she would wait for me, though, we would eat supper in my flat and go through the bills and anything else that might need a decision while I was away.

It was only when I saw the uniformed policeman on guard inside the shop that I realized the squad car at the curb had business that concerned me. The constable opened the door in response to my gesture.

"I'm Maura D'Arcy. Is there something wrong?"

"You'd better speak to the sergeant, miss."

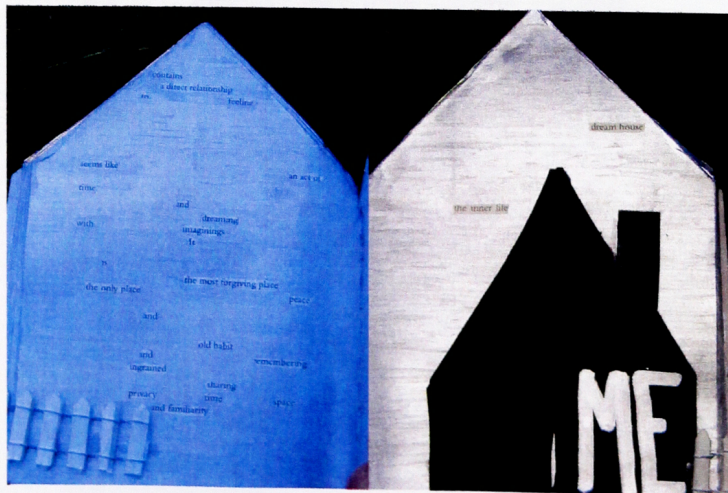
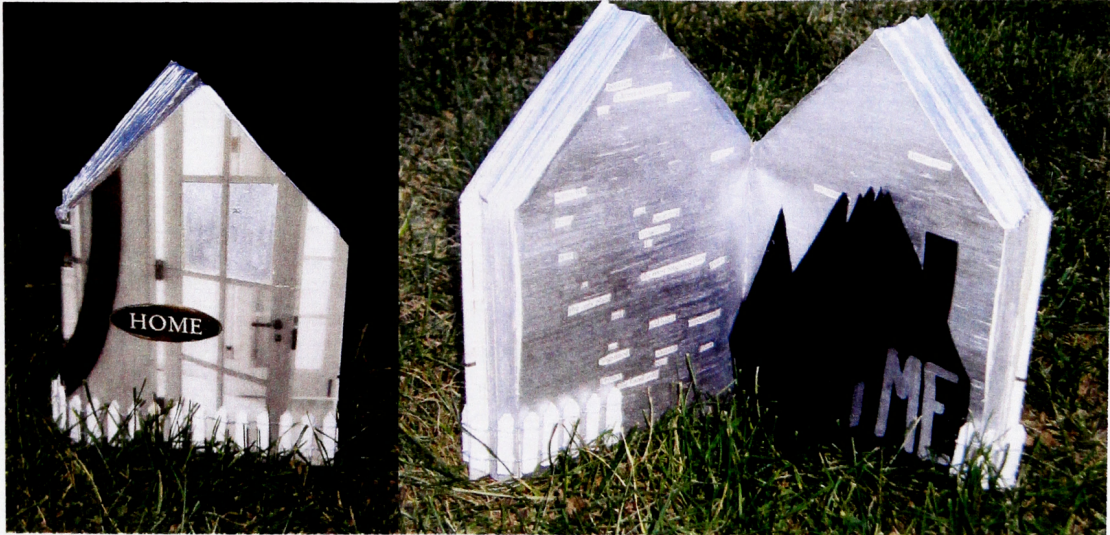
Mary was at the back of the shop, talking with two men. "Oh—Maura!" She looked distracted and her wiry gray hair stood about her face in an untidy fuzz. "This is Detective-Sergeant Keane."

"Hello, Miss D'Arcy—my assistant, Constable Saunders."

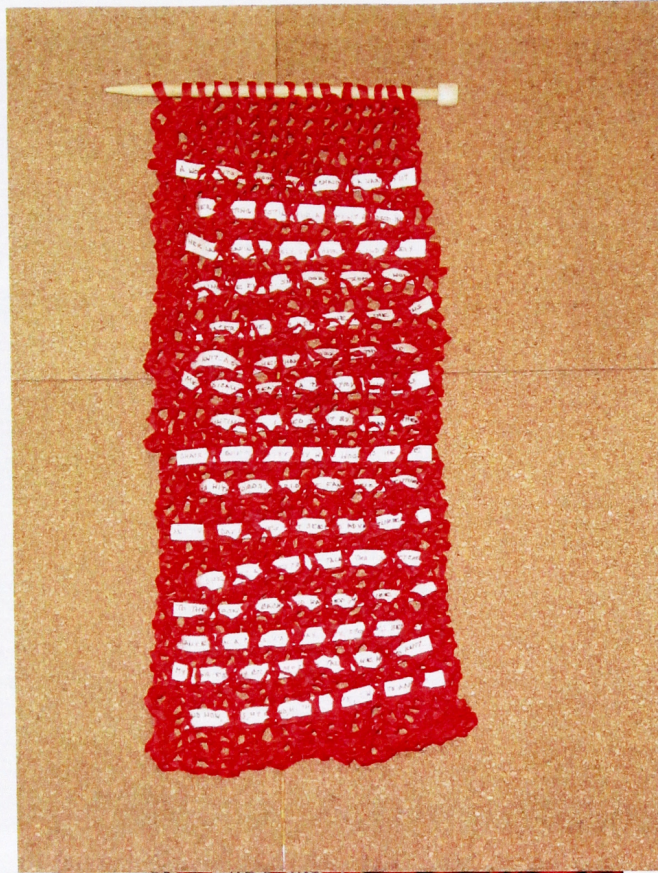
I acknowledged the introductions. "What's wrong?"

Mary gestured helplessly. "I think something's been stolen, but I don't know what. I can't remember exactly what was in this cabinet. Look . . ." She pointed to the cabinet on the wall near Blanche's desk. Both doors were closed, but a semicircle of glass, just big enough to permit the passage of a hand, had been out

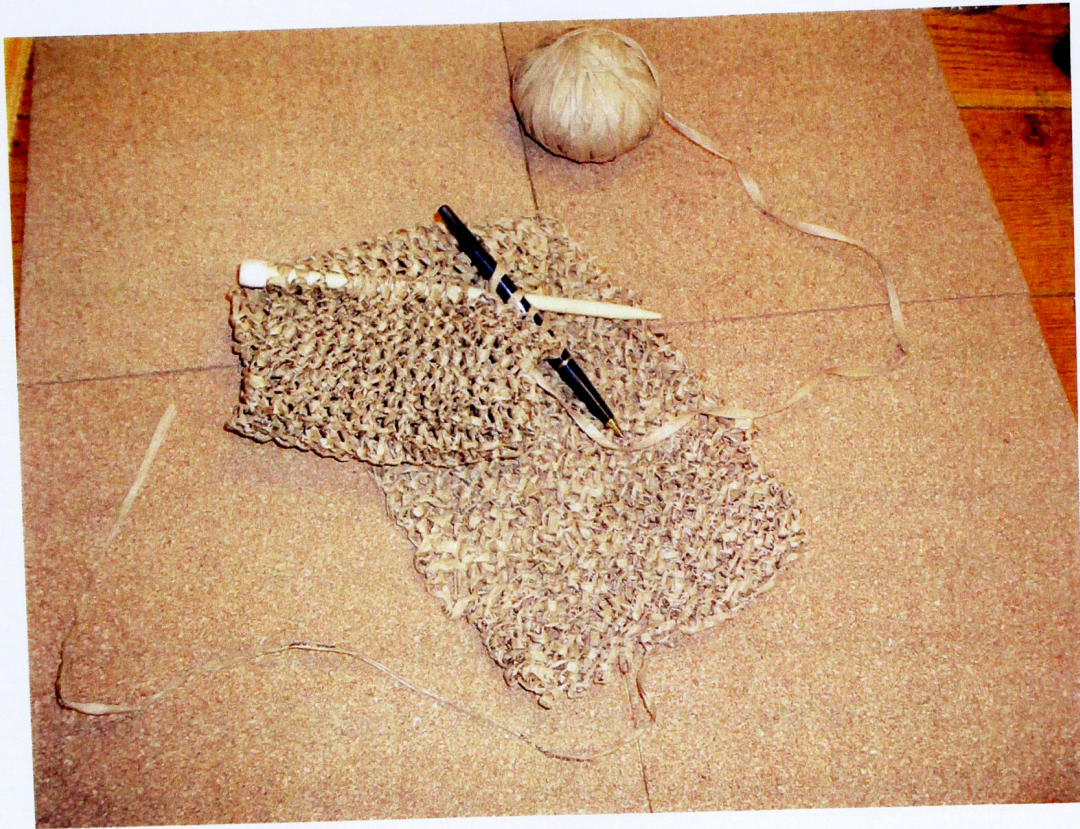
Home



Weave



Unravel



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