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On Taste and Nation

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DEDICATION

To

my family and friends

with gratitude

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

On Taste and Nation

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This dissertation explores the material, visual, and aesthetic dimensions of cultural consensus and distinction in emblematic domestic spaces, from the White House's chambers of respectability to the pleasures and perils of the modern Los Angeles bedroom, to the candy-colored architectural shell of the average New Jersey tract home, and, finally to the pedagogical and progressive labors that shape the televisual Cold War kitchen. From television, design, and architecture to video, pop and conceptual art, these case studies deliver determinations of taste shaped by nostalgia couched in the language of "tradition" as well as ironic and polemical commentary on the outcomes and objects of the accessible aesthetics, lifestyles, and origins of the cultural "middlebrow." This dissertation argues for the centrality of domestic taste in the forging of national belonging during the turbulent 1960s. Through an analysis of the sway of domestic taste in Cold War visual culture, its consumption, and reception across these case studies, this dissertation offers a new reading of the art of the sixties—often conceived of as delivering a liberal critique of society—as mired in anxieties around the nation's ever widening discourses of inclusion and identity. These works and projects face the radical futurity of the American 1960s and the expansion of social programming that sought to eradicate poverty and include minorities into the postwar dream of middle class life and materialize anxieties about the quality of life in the age of television and nuclear war and white middle class identity manifest in the confluence of debates over taste, national identity, tradition, and history.

INTRODUCTION

In 1959 at the opening of the American National Exhibition in Moscow, Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev famously sparred about the nature and quality of domestic life in what has been dubbed "The Kitchen Debate." This expansive exhibition was sought to demonstrate that "the United States, the world's largest capitalist country has, from the standpoint of distribution of wealth come closest to the ideal of prosperity for all in a classless society."[1] The fiction of classlessness espoused by Nixon correlates to the development of a vision of national identity premised upon the middle class American experience, represented by the postwar, single family home. The United States Information Agency describes the endeavor in its intra-governmental publication *Facts about the American Exhibition in Moscow*:

> This is an effort to project a realistic and credible image of America to the Soviets through the exhibits, displays, films, publications, fine arts, performing arts. The exhibition reflects how America lives, works, learns, produces, consumes, and plays: what kind of people Americans are and what they stand for; America's cultural values. In a sense this is a "corner of America" in the heart of Moscow. [2]

Questions around how to produce, derive, and portray the American norm while also underscoring the ideals of freedom and diversity guided the design and components of the exhibition. The show, which displayed innumerable consumer products including Pepsi-Cola and Betty Crocker, lipstick, the latest ovens and electric ranges along side twenty-three pieces of sculpture and 49 paintings, all produced by American artists, was chosen by a Presidentially approved committee of four specialists. [3] The tremendous energy devoted to the selection of

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[1] Remarks at the opening of The American Exhibition in Moscow, published in the New York Times, July 25, 1959.

[2] *Facts About the American Exhibition in Moscow,* United States Information Agency Papers, National Archives.

[3] The selection process was hotly contested in Congress within the context of Senator McCarthy's crusade against domestic communists. The political background of the participating artists was shown to be questionable within this newly conspiratorial political climate. Strong appeals from government funded arts organizations promoted the cause of free speech. President

works of art as well as the cakes, beverages, and chairs to be displayed along with the consistent arguments over what was, in fact, typical, worked to forge a vision of an enlightened, domestically-oriented average American middle class identity. At the same time, combining quotidian domestic objects with high art, the exhibition foreshadowed a developing conflict between the comfortable middle class pleasures of easy-bake cakes and ranch houses, the highbrow gravitas of the artistic avant-garde, and the historical authority of the elite American heirloom over matters of what constituted Americanness or the good life and how that might or might not relate to conceptions of good taste. For example, might the Skylark Charcoal Formica kitchen counter top be more representative of the nation's postwar character than Jackson Pollock's *Cathedral* of 1947? These two formally similar postwar artifacts both travelled to Moscow to manifest Americanness. Their aesthetic similarity and symbolic interchangeableness convey the scope and expressed intentions to elide high and low in the service of average Americanness at the American Exhibition in Moscow. These grayscale works joined historically weighted objects like Gilbert Stuart's portrait of George Washington in the production of an exceptional "corner of America" at midcentury. The elision of distinction produced an equivalence between domestic commodity and high art as both equally compelling and equivalently American foreshadows the Cold War cultural logic of the decade to come with which this dissertation contends.

In 1960 August Heckscher, public intellectual and consultant for the Kennedy administration, authored a government-funded report, "Goals for America," declaring that "mass culture was in a state of emergency." Heckscher and others, such as journalist Vance Packard,

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Eisenhower championed a liberal free speech position. Much of the writing around this issue sought to pry the works of art away from their makers, marshalling a depoliticized formalism as a tool of nationalism or national policy.

sociologist David Riesman, and economist Kenneth Galbraith, correlated postwar affluence with the emergence and proliferation of debased forms of mass culture. While Nixon championed the blurring of class identity through access to consumer goods as he famously sparred with Khrushchev, others cautioned against what they perceived as a creeping cultural homogeneity of a fundamentally mediocre nature. For critics of mass culture, the cultivation and exploration of taste became an issue of vital national interest with the coming of the sixties. Domesticity remained a contested domain in the 1960s in both art and television but it served less as way to sort out foreign policy and more so as a means to define and protect standards of taste against threat of cultural mediocrity. Pop, conceptual, minimalist, performance, and video artists polemically operated in this realm of cultural contestation, destabilizing the realm of pure aesthetic experience through the exploration of art's status as a commodity or an object in real time and space. These explorations both manifest and play with the permeability of cultural forms in the taste discourse of the sixties. By examining diverse episodes in the construction of midcentury taste, my dissertation explores conflicting understandings of cultural sophistication advanced by institutions and individuals during the 1960s as they relate to narratives of national belonging in the Cold War era.

Once an aesthetic standard was defined by an emergent media juggernaut comprised of television; lifestyle, literary, and shelter magazines; and institutions and objects of art, it generated anxieties about mass mediocrity within the broader context of Cold War struggles for American cultural and miltitary supremacy. From a close reading of Jacqueline Kennedy's televised tour of the White House in 1962 to Claes Oldenburg's *Bedroom Ensemble* of 1963, through Robert Smithson's and Dan Graham's late sixties suburban sojourns and, finally to Julia Child's public television program *The French Chef* considered in conversation with early video

art, I argue that the home persisted as a vital discursive site where the economic and cultural aspirations and anxieties of the sixties materially coincided. Each of these case studies critically examine emblematic domestic spaces bound up in battles between regional and national identity, suburban populism and urban elitism, and ultimately the parameters of good and bad taste.

My objects of study address the material, visual, and aesthetic dimensions of cultural homogeneity and distinction in the home, from the parlors of respectability to the bedrooms of modern debasement, to the candy-colored architectural shell of the average tract home as obsessively described on the magazine page, and, finally to the pedagogical and progressive labors embodied in the Cold War kitchen. These case studies all differently manifest and confront both reactionary or antimodern nostalgia couched in the language of "tradition" or "history" as well as an ironic, and sometimes dismissive, commentary on the accessible aesthetics, lifestyles, and origins of the cultural "middlebrow." Thinking and making at a remove from the official optimism of America's postwar identity, the practioners and characters under scrunity both probe and perpetuate the mythologies of American exceptionalism. I argue that an analysis of the trajectory of domestic taste in Cold War visual culture, generates new readings of the art of the sixties—often read by other art historians as delivering a liberal critique of society—and indicates the ways in which art and visual culture of the sixties were mired in intractable, gendered, and racialized anxieties around the nation's evolving discourses of inclusion.

The household operated as a yardstick for the definition of postwar American democracy and, as such, aspects of lifestyle and determinations of taste serve as points of access to discourses of national identity on an everyday scale. The case studies assembled here, across media, give flesh to the social forces—such as suburbanization, nuclear anxieties, or

consumerism—that contributed to the ascendance of concerns around taste. They offer an object-based mode for tracking the contradictions and vexations of sixties liberalism, national identity, citizenship as these were manifested in contemporaneous cultural forms and spaces. Together these episodes in domesticity trace the fissures in the quest for national distinction and collective taste as the sixties progressed. They anticipate the emergence of the lifestyle economy of the seventies, a conception of lifestyle that was less interested in national affiliation and characterized by an erosion of the collective mythologies of national taste and the decline of the cultural and economic structures of postwar affluence.

While each of my examples circulated to very different scales and sorts of American audiences, some purposefully large and others far more limited in scope, each project self-consciously considered its expected audience and worked to disrupt the expectations of medium, genre, or context. This deliberate manipulation of diverse cultural contexts—broadcast television, Manhattan gallery, magazine, and public television—demonstrates the ways in which a national conversation about taste diffusely permeated the very cultural boundareis with which it was concerned. In bringing together a multiplicity of forms, the complexity of so called mass culture and government policy comes into focus which in turn productively diminishes exceptonalist arguments that favor of art's inherent supriority as a critical practice.

The 1960s ushered in an expansion of social programming with the War on Poverty and the Great Society, both of which ambitiously sought to transform and enrich daily life for all Americans. These initiatives were imagined as a means through which great swaths of the nation might join the ranks of the middle class through economic inclusion and cultural enlightenment. As an aide in the Johnson Administration put it in 1964, the Great Society sought "full stomachs, yes, but a fuller life, too," suggesting that such enrichment could be realized by meeting both

material and more intangible cultural needs. This project probes debates about what this "fuller life" and "good taste" ought to look like.

In these meetings and conflations of the variable or exceptional with the national or average the material and discursive terrain of taste constitutes a vital site through which the mythological middle class subject negotiated citizenship, participation, and conceptions of self in relation to domestic consumption. While the vision of national taste displayed at the American Exhibition in Moscow espoused a singular national taste, this dissertation will explore the competing activities of individuals and institutions that sought to structure and critique purported nationally standards of cultural fluency and taste.

It is the contention of this dissertation that Cold War taste hinges on a particular confrontation between the elite exceptional and accessible average. Taste, then, works as means through which diverse cultural practices—such as historic restoration and television viewing—and artifacts—like Gilbert Stuart's portrait of George Washington or an Eames chair—can be accounted for and accessed within a shared field and logic. These two iconic American objects tell very different stories about the nation while still contributing to the same debate over taste in the sixties. Stuart's portrait, installed in 1962 in the East Room of the White House under Jacqueline Kennedy's guidance—for its part—bolstered the First Lady's restoration project with its authoritative connection to the founding of the nation while also staking a claim for the place of high art in the appointment of the official American home and in the definition of national identity. An Eames chair, while absent from the executive mansion, evokes contemporary American ingenuity, in its reapplication of wartime experiments with plywood to the production of comfortable, elegant, and accessible furnishing for the postwar nation, promoting a Americanness premised on modern domestic comfort. In this way notions of "national" taste

relate to intimate negotiations of belonging on the domestic scale. Questions around the relationship of democracy to aesthetic and cultural sophistication, within an increasingly national or "average" sense of domestic life and consumption, underscore the tensions between exceptionality and normativity.

Anxiety around how best to represent and maintain the United States' postwar dominance, symbolized by classless abundance bred by access to consumer goods and visions of the good life unfolding in the purposively "average" American suburbs, brought about the vigorous contestation of good taste at the dawn of the New Frontier. A media juggernaut comprised of the newly national domestic technology of television; lifestyle, literary, or shelter magazines; and institutions and objects of art participated in larger debates about the proper home—its external appearance, décor, and cuisine—and its relationship to conceptions of self in relation to nation. These case studies move chronologically through the sixties and connect with major policy events in the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations, from the promise of the New Frontier to the waning of the Great Society, as well as with broader intellectual discourses that attempt to account for new forms of quotidian living that emerge during an era of rapid social and cultural change.

Situating the Study

While there is a surfeit of art historical literature contending with the art of the American 1960s, scholars such as Pamela Lee and Cécile Whiting have made great strides in producing a more diverse field of inquiry into the stakes and contexts of contemporary art, one sensitive to context. Lee's 2004 book *Chronophobia* argues that the art of the sixties offers insight into pervasive cultural anxieties around time and technology. Whiting's book *A Taste for Pop* makes a case for the examination of the slippages between consumer culture and high art as a means

through which gendered notions of taste might be teased out. I am indebted to these scholars for enlivening the field, and further their efforts in my own contention with the material and media cultures of the 1960s and '70s within a field that gives equal emphasis to historical conditions, intentionality, and the objects themselves. My work will expand these scholarly pathways by analyzing popular culture, not just as context for the interpretation of art, but rather as an equally complex field that leads, follows, and informs contentions over national identity.

As such, I also seek to position my work within the context of cultural histories of the postwar era. Elaine Tyler May's book *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* explores the interactions between hegemonic processes of national identity formation and the realities of the everyday encounter in the domestic context with these national processes. In my work, I endeavor to connect this strong social history to a close analysis of domestic media and material cultures. Beatriz Colomina's work, *Domesticity at War,* deals with midcentury architecture and design and helped define a media literate mode of modern architectural history. While Colomina's research emphasizes the spaces of domestic culture in the 1950s, I wish to pursue this line of inquiry into the 1960s and consider tensions between dominant architectural or design discourses and regional iterations in order to contend with the central issues of taste and gender in the field of Cold War domesticity.

This dissertation will examine the role of American visual culture, particularly television, in the processes of nation building and citizenship through the category of taste. The groundbreaking work of Lynn Spigel, particularly her book *TV By Design: Modern Art and the Rise of Network Television,* in television studies intervenes in the gendered division that has sequestered histories of mass media and high art. This rich volume makes clear that histories of art and media histories are co-emergent. I suggest that not only are these histories co-emergent,

but that in the sixties these fields require the work of examining their entanglements. Similarly, *Viewers Like You?: How Public Television Failed the People* by Laurie Ouelette details the narratives of uplift and cultivation and tensions between elitism and localism that characterized the emergence of public television in the 1960s. I intend to extend the insights and arguments of Ouelette's incisive reading of public television to a consideration of the contemporaneous emergence of video art.

One of the aims of this dissertation is to trouble the received history of contemporary art as politically progressive through a deep and varied account of the visual culture of the American 1960s. The historiographic question that my dissertation asks is: what might be learned from subjecting the 1960s to a mode of inquiry associated with Americanist art history? The Americanist mode differs from the theoretical, Eurocentric, or, in some cases, formalist approach of much contemporary art history as it foregrounds historical and material interpretations of works of art as part of a larger category of media and material culture. How might a form of critical regionalism aid in the examination of art within the context of the production and contestation of a national taste or middlebrow imagination? What can be made of art history's own regional biases—its east coast origins and Europhilic tendencies, for example—through this inquiry? Recently, the work of Cécile Whiting, Aron Vinegar, Michael Leja, and Michael Golec best exemplify a historically rich account of American art and visual culture. Their inclusive approach to visual materials and commitment to history allows for the political contradictions and polemics surrounding works of art, their makers, and critics to play out without the incursion of a presentist or theoretical bias. These scholars productively move away from art history's monographic tendencies, favoring the production of nonhierarchical visual and material genealogies. I propose to adopt an Americanist approach in my engagement with the sixties and

in doing so, treat high art as a form of material culture, placing it in an equal exchange with the television, architecture, and design that populate my case studies. Acknowledging the current trend in taking the global or transnational study of contemporary and American art, I argue for the validity of this seemingly parochial approach given the focus of this study on the role of the arts and media in the context of both domesticity and domestic policy and offers a political economic lens through which these ways in which these formative projects and works explicate the contradictory machinations of national identity and belonging may be encountered.

Thus, this dissertation explores the question: what might the full integration of TV, art, and material culture give us in terms of more visually and materially diverse account of American art, media, and cultural history? In an era where the borders between high and low, good taste and bad taste were repeatedly being destroyed and defended, it is necessary to interrogate the processes that structure these boundaries and the conventions through which these processes have been interpreted. In order to accomplish this, I aim to combine art history's strong commitment to visual analysis and the critical and historical work of feminist cultural studies. In doing so, I take as my premise that popular culture and cultural history are not simply a context or backdrop for high art and that the objects and media of popular culture merit close visual analysis. Further, focusing on the home and issues of the domestic generally inverts what are ostensibly the hegemonic discourses of nation, citizen, and taste, through an examination of the everyday processes that produce and disrupt domestic ideologies.

In forging a historically minded approach to the material and media cultures of the sixties, I hope to resist the gravitational pull of the sixties as a nexus for scholarly activity that has too often been characterized by a presentitst nostalgia and knee jerk recapitulation of a comfortable liberal politics. Moving away from conceptions of good guys and bad guys that

deliver compensatory readings of the sixties, I will work to derive a deeper and more historically concrete and complex account of Cold War taste cultures and their relationship to national identity and belonging from the onset of the New Frontier to waning of the Great Society. Within this context, television and other cultural texts and artifacts will be shown to be touchstones for exposing the fissures in the hegemonic fabric as much as they manifest its essence.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1

On Valentine's Day 1962, Jacqueline Kennedy invited the TV-viewing nation into the White House for a prime time tour. The tour offered an intimate look inside Mrs. Kennedy's massive restoration project. The White House refurbishment dovetailed with the larger project of cultural programming mounted by the Kennedy administration, which transformed the White House into a showcase for the finest in American cabinetry as well as the visual, culinary, and performing arts. Mrs. Kennedy alluded to a drab and disappointing youthful visit to the White House as a defining inspiration structuring her revitalization project and voiced her surprise and dismay that so "little of the past" remained visible when she and the President moved in. She suggested that the space of the White House ought to bring everyday visitors into intimate contact with the history of the edifice and all those who dwelled there. At the same time, she made the case for excellence as the overarching principle behind her restoration as she endeavored to locate and possess authentic, period-appropriate furniture suited to the various rooms, dating from different eras in the White House's history. Striving to produce the ideal setting in which the presidency and cultural heritage of the nation would be presented, Mrs. Kennedy asserted during the tour: "We have such a great civilization, so many foreigners don't believe it."

In this chapter, I will engage in a close reading of Mrs. Kennedy's preparation for the program, the hour-long television special itself, and its reception within the context of discourses of citizenship, taste, and the history of display. Mrs. Kennedy's tour suggests that shared history of the nation might be made legible as a function of an enlightened domestic taste, merging historical and aesthetic considerations. I will also consider the ways in which Mrs. Kennedy negotiates her commitment to history and her clear and genuine affection for particular pieces of finery. I argue that the intersection of notions of taste, historicism, and expertise as manifest in the tour offers a new formulation of citizenship predicated on an aspirational form of domestic taste. The distribution of the particularly Kennedy-esque form of domesticity, design, and self-presentation through television afforded mass access to elite taste cultures and, in turn, worked to inspire the middlebrow imagination to aspire to a sort of safe cosmopolitanism. This formulation differs from the reproductive labor-based ideal of domesticity, such as cooking, cleaning, and child rearing, in as much as it emphasizes the development of taste.

Reckoning with and preserving the American past through the historical enchantment of taste renders the restoration project a combination of New Frontier futurity and an anxious historicism. The tour as media event further complicates the aspirational and historical temporalities it grapples with, as television's spatial and media existences undo easy understandings of division between public and private, regional and national, as well as domestic and governmental. While her emphasis on interior design as an issue of national importance dovetails with a growing consumer economy, her emphasis on the antiquarian contrasts with an acquisitive economy of planned obsolescence and fashion cycles of middlebrow taste. The tour can be seen as a confluence of New Frontier futurity, class and international aspirations, and historicism, as well a means to promote elite taste as appropriately American. With this

broadcast, the cultural battleground of the Cold War, the quest for cultivation, and finally, the horizons of the New Frontier entered the living rooms, and therefore the imaginations of a nation.

Chapter 2

This chapter turns from an examination of the ways in which east coast regionalism attains the status of properly American in Jacqueline Kennedy's tour to the west coast and the formulation of a peculiar modernist vernacular taste by New York-based artist Claes Oldenburg. Oldenburg's *Bedroom Ensemble,* which constitutes the core of this chapter, was fabricated in 1963 in one of the many small-scale machine shops that dot the landscape of West Los Angeles. The *Bedroom Ensemble* considers the culture of privacy and domesticity permeated by new industrial materials Oldenburg found to be indigenous to the Los Angeles lifestyle. The room was constructed for a show in Manhattan at the Sidney Janis Gallery as part of the 1964 show "Four Environments by Four New Realists." Oldenburg asserted in relation to the work: "Everything was made in Venice, California because I wanted to feel the West, and I came back with these enormous simple forms."

This desire to bring the feeling, affect, and look of the western United States, like bringing back news of the natives from some far-off land, reveals a notable geographical drift with regard to issues of taste and design. Oldenburg's role in triangulating and displaying coastal difference merits exploration within this broader discussion of regionalism and nationalism. The *Bedroom Ensemble*, then, seems to be a kind of poached pelt from Oldenburg's west coast safari. What is more, the unsettling vulgarity of the *Bedroom Ensemble* bolsters and lampoons a sense of New York's cultural superiority, positioning California as a distant, tasteless frontier.

This display of American vulgarity frustrates the aspirational efforts of Jacqueline Kennedy's efforts to uplift American taste and style to an echelon comparable to that of the continent, as well as reiterating operative conceptions of Southern California as cultural backwater. This chapter will argue that these tensions between the modernism's pretensions to universalism, the New Frontier's claim to a national highbrow expert antiquarianism, the resilience of vernacular or regional modernisms, and the purposeful confusion of art, design and domestic taste render the *Bedroom Ensemble* another ideal site for the expansion of the discussion of these facets of Cold War modernism and technocracy.

The *Bedroom* garnered quite a bit of media attention in both art and design circles, receiving write-ups in publications from *Arts Magazine* to *Industrial Design*. A study of the reception of *Bedroom Ensemble* will offer insight into contemporaneous tastes, biases, and conceptions of both domesticity and "high art" operative within the critical apparatus. In this way, I will problematize the regionally specific class and taste positionality from which Oldenburg works and from which artist and critic Donald Judd comfortably asserts that the *Bedroom Ensemble* is an "American modern and a thorough corruption of all it sources."[4] This inquiry will work to destabilize the objective, neutral or expert position of critics and tastemakers associated with the critical judgments and recommendations of both high art and domestic display.

Discourses of normativity, averageness, and belonging relate in interesting ways to the fantastic geometry and décor of the *Bedroom Ensemble*. The room's architectural and design unity has been mathematically squeezed in an effort to rationalize and make both legible and strange, the Cold War bedroom, and its constituent activities and relations. Even as Oldenburg's

[4] Judd, Donald *Donald Judd: The Complete Writings*, Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975:192.

room concedes to spatial rationalization, it challenges these discourses of normativity and good taste through its correlation of rationality, average-ness and estrangement, rather than belonging. Oldenburg channels an experience of particularly southern Californian "backwater," transposing it to an east coast locale in order to demonstrate the unsettling familiarity of its deviant taste culture. The bedroom is an investigation into the banality of "modernist" design as well as an invitation to consider the sexual mores and imaginaries of the early sixties. The *Bedroom Ensemble* offers insights and draws connections between discourses of sixties sexuality, normativity, regional taste, east coast exceptionalism, and the machinations of the art critical apparatus.

Chapter 3

As evidenced by Oldenburg's experiments in ubiquity, the exploration and interrogation of lifestyle rituals and the built and consumable environment characterizes a salient strain in artistic activity in 1960s America. I will focus on the 1966-67 article for *Arts Magazine* "Homes for America" by Dan Graham and Robert Smithson's articles, "The Crystal Land" and "A Tour of Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey" published in *Harper's Bazaar* and *Artforum* respectively. Moving from the interior spaces of domesticity, these musing on the facades of tract homes and the suburban surround consider another outcome of the standardization of domestic taste and material life. These projects involve a physical and psychic journey from ultra-urban Manhattan to the meadows of New Jersey. Suburbanization has been the constant undertow throughout this dissertation, threatening to render American taste mediocre through the comforts and pleasures of standardization. Graham and Smithson query the aesthetics, histories, and lifestyles that characterize the American suburbs.

In this chapter, I will excavate the political and intellectual conditions in which Graham's and Smithson's work emerged. The work of critic and architect Peter Blake and Lady Bird Johnson's beautification campaign draw attention to the problematic side effects of postwar development, setting the terms of debate for the latter half of the sixties. Historicizing 1960s leftist critiques of suburbia and the middlebrow imaginary will destabilize the easy sorts of presentist liberal interpretations of the "progressive" 1960s artist that characterize much of the art historical literature on Smithson and especially Graham. As evidenced by the Museum of Modern Art in New York's interest in postwar and prefabricated housing, suburban American community life became a sociological and aesthetic focus in the years following World War Two. Incorporating the work of architects, planners, and urban theorists who engaged seriously with vernacular architectural forms, such as Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi working out of the Yale School of Architecture, will offer a contrarian position to the condemnations made by critics like Blake.

Favoring the urban as the site where "culture" happens renders the suburbs another sort of cultural backwater in need of reform. Just as Oldenburg's *Bedroom Ensemble* lampooned West Coast taste for the benefit of a New York audience and Jacqueline Kennedy worked to instill a taste for a particularly patrician and east coast form of enlightenment, these works also contend with the vexations and development of national normative taste or average home, as a site in need of education or reform, in the case of the White House tour or a site to be made strange for the sake of critique, humor or satire in the case of Oldenburg, Graham, and Smithson. Through the correlation of the bad or bland taste that characterizes life in the suburbs and a kind of soulless and cultureless existence, these humanist critiques took careful aim at the suburbs as the encapsulation of the dangers of the dull expansion of middle-class comforts and conformity

within the context of the expanding Welfare State under the guidance of Lyndon Baines Johnson. At their heart these critiques circulated around a fear of a loss of distinction and exceptionality in terms of both taste and geography.

The ironic or humorous tone of Smithson's and Graham's prose merits consideration, as it disrupts the presentist liberal reading of these works with a satiric intonation. Further, these works attempt to make sense of or even indict the just-past 1950s within the context of the uncertain 60s. Suburbia was nothing new by the time these works emerged; artists like Graham and Smithson were, in fact, the products of these banal, featureless, and "tasteless" homesteads on the New Frontier. Like Oldenburg's take on the California bedroom, Graham and Smithson approach the tract home landscape with affection, disdain, and amusement. They interrogate the suburbs, the powerful symbol of a national, domestically scaled taste culture, and ultimately approach its banality with a fascinating and frustrating skepticism.

Chapter 4

Moving beyond the architectural exteriors of suburbia, another of the feared byproducts of suburbanization and the lifestyle it afforded was the potential homogenization of a tasteless, prefabricated dull food culture. Food preparation was the interior frontier in which an emergent gourmet food culture combated mediocrity on the dinner table. Returning to the relationship of television to the making of taste, this chapter will examine the consolidation of a late sixties gourmet food culture and the institutionalization of public television. Focusing on Julia Child's program *The French Chef* alongside the 1967 Public Broadcasting Act, this chapter looks at the relationship of taste to pedagogy in the context of debates around a newly nationalized mandate calling for high quality public television. In his speech announcing the Public Broadcasting Act, Lyndon Baines Johnson mobilized a gustatory metaphor, asserting that it "announces to the

world that our Nation wants more than just material wealth; our Nation wants more than a 'chicken in every pot.' We in America have an appetite for excellence, too." With this legislation, the corporation for public broadcasting was founded in an effort to continue to address the so-called problem of television at particularly vexed time in the aggregation of national consensus, identity, and purpose. Binaries of mass and high culture characterized arguments about the entropic effects of commercial television and the space apart from mass culture that public television would fill. The strong rhetoric of public interest and responsibility colored discussions around educational television's capacity to overcome class differences and regional disparity through cultivation and pedagogy. Tensions between elitism and progressivism characterize the debates around the development of a national "televisual curriculum" of sorts. Just as Jacqueline Kennedy worked to develop an enlightened, internationalist or Europhilic taste to combat the onset of a dull form of middlebrow taste, Child worked to uplift American food cultures from nationalized banality.

Through a close reading of episodes of the *French Chef* from the late sixties; emergent gourmet discourse in cookbooks, video art, and lifestyle magazines;, this chapter will consider pedagogical television and gourmet foodways as taste technologies. Looking at public television in conversation with video art, as a performative and sometimes pedagogical mode creates an inclusive field in which to consider gourmet food discourse as parochial instructional taste texts. While much has been written about Child's gourmet discourse, there is little scholarship that puts her television program in conversation with feminist video and performance art dealing with gourmet foodways in the late 1960s and 70s. This chapter will take seriously feminist and activist engagements with domesticity and food cultures as pedagogical artifacts alongside *The French Chef.*

Additionally, conflicts between the regional and the national, the elite and the middlebrow characterized the consolidation an "official" nationalized public television and *The French Chef* as an exceedingly popular show favoring a Francophile food culture that served as a prime exemplar in support of more nationalized public television programming. Of particular interest for the present project are the ways in which a particular Cold War food culture fit into the development of these aspirational domestic discourses traced throughout. Julia Child and other gourmets, such as Craig Claiborne, represent efforts to uplift and bring European standards to America and invest the labor of cooking with greater seriousness, thought, time, and effort. Considering the promotion of these taste discourses as a part of the larger narrative addressed in the previous chapters allows for the insertion of an account of reproductive labor alongside the aesthetic toils of taste.

Child's television program *The French Chef*, beginning in 1963 and continuing into the 1970s, intervened in a tidy, efficient, and disembodied field of labor and display offered in television sit-coms and advertising for domestic conveniences in print and in television. In direct contrast to these operative televisual texts on domesticity, Child's half hour show reinserted the labor and more explicitly the fallible, laboring body into the production of a gourmet, from-scratch meal. The nexus of entertainment and pedagogy achieved in *The French Chef,* discussed in contemporaneous trade literature, will be considered in relationship to debates around the utility of television as a technology of national enlightenment and taste making. It is this aggregation of cultural capital through a prescribed form of cultural fluency in food that video artists and activists such as Martha Rosler, Laura Cavestani Kronenburg, and Abbie Hoffman critiqued and lampooned in their video works in the seventies. Their work demonstrates the ubiquity of gourmet discourses as well as their class-based parochialism and ethnocentrism. The

introduction of French cooking to a television audience within the context of an emergent public broadcasting mandate, which promoted television's pedagogical purpose as a technique and technology of enlightenment, relates to the aspirational taste texts offered in Jacqueline Kennedy's White House tour. Emphasizing the televisual, policy, and food cultural contexts in which *The French Chef* emerged contributes to the larger narrative of a contentious, enlightened middlebrow taste culture traced throughout this dissertation, as food began to take a central position in upper and middle class socialization.

Taste Across Media

August Heckscher's report to the Kennedy administration asserted "the United States will be judged—and its place in history ultimately assessed—not alone by its military or economic power, but by the quality of its civilization."[5] Heckscher's liberal view of the role of the arts and taste in civic life is premised upon individual liberty, but as this dissertation demonstrates taste required guidance and administration to live up to the challenge of forging national identity for elites like Heckscher. Jacqueline Kennedy answered the call doubly with her restoration project, demonstrating elite taste in action in the service of saving national face and distributing this work into the problematic mass cultural morass of the ascendant medium of television. Oldenburg explores the aesthetic and affective challenges of mass-produced domestic taste run amuck. Smithson and Graham engage in a pseudo-ethnographic study of suburban architecture, disrupting and reproducing the pieties of the liberal critique of suburbia in the context of a growing critique of the aesthetics of postwar infrastructure and architecture. Child, Kronenburg,

[5] Blake, Casey Nelson *The Arts of Democracy: Art, Public Culture, and the State* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009: 202.

and Hoffman engage with the politics of taste and distinction as it plays out in the reproductive labor of cooking.

Bonding these diverse case studies are the ways in which taste operates as a way to affirm difference and distinction but in the context of the Cold War also called upon to unite and represent the nation. Cast against the backdrop of the ideological battle against communism abroad and more importantly inequality at home, national efforts to espouse the values of both the free market and individual freedom were internally vexed by the need to establish both cultural distinction and accessibility. Taste, thus has the capacity of to both unite and separate. Policing taste, according to Bourdieu, results in the renewed interest or investment in the culture associated with the common people, evidenced in the scrutiny and criticism of television and popular culture. In this regard, Bourdieu writes: "[Taste] generates a set of choices constituting life-style, which derive their meaning, i.e., their value from their position in a system of oppositions and correlations. It is a virtue made of necessity into virtue by inducing 'choices' which correspond to the condition of which it is the product."[6] During the sixties, the artist and policy maker shared an interest in and disdain for the middlebrow aspirations to good taste. Feelings of generational exceptionalism, endless newness, along with a sense of temporal and historical anxiety or superstructural lag characterize these inquiries into the material culture of the everyday and everywhere.

While the television under analysis in this dissertation aspired towards high cultural enlightenment and the utmost in quality, the art slouches towards mass cultural forms and works to shake off some of the trappings, pieties, and market forces structuring the sixties art world.

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[6] Bourdieu, Pierre *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste.* Trans. Richard Nice Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984: 175.

These divergent tendencies overlap in their negotiation of the murky terrain of taste. Taste—as this dissertation will demonstrate through an exploration of the material, visual, and aesthetic dimensions of cultural consensus and distinction in emblematic domestic spaces—works a means through which history might be made materially present, a way to enhance the nation's stature, a technique of knowledge production, and as a bellwether for the nation's character during a decade of contradiction and upheaval. Cold War taste, as Andrew Ross argues, operates as the "practical governor of cultural consumption" and "not only presupposes distinctive social categories; it also helps to create them."[7] Those who work to govern taste or to comment upon the parameters of its governance grapple with the decline of a centralized national culture and an increasingly negative view of conformity. As Ross points out, these contestations of cultural authority manifest a suspicion in the centralization of cultural value while also reflecting the unprecedented cultural power of intellectuals who supported a liberal pluralist vision of American popular culture. The premise of a new American consensus was guided on the one hand by elite intellectuals and structured on the other by the machinations of consumer capitalism. With the leveling of class distinctions as an avowed goal of the postwar welfare state, the maintenance of distinction through determinations of taste took on a new urgency. The battle between exceptionality and conformity scrambles class distinctions and destabilizes the traditional seats of cultural power. The individuals, projects, and institutions with which this dissertation contends respond to the exigencies of this new cultural constellation in a variety of ways— their tactics include and intermix the restorative, affirmative, condemnatory, dismissive, and jocular. Struggles for cultural power, at times paternalist and at others egalitarian, unite the case studies as a procedural guiding force or as a process in need of intervention or critique.

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[7] Ross, Andrew *No Respect :Intellectuals & Popular Culture* New York: Routledge, 1989: 59.

CHAPTER ONE
Historicism on the New Frontier: Making Taste in the Kennedy White House

A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy

On February 14, 1962, Jacqueline Kennedy invited the TV-viewing nation into the White House for a primetime tour of its interior. Begrudgingly produced by Perry Wolff, the head of the CBS's investigative documentary unit who would have rather been poking around North Vietnam than wandering the halls of the White House, the tour offered intimate access to the first lady as well as to the rooms and furniture, which had been subject to Kennedy's massive restoration project.[8] Broadcast on Valentine's Day on CBS and NBC, two of the three major networks, the tour reached 56 million viewers, making it the most watched television program in the history of the young medium.[9] The high ratings and active audience response to the tour also solidified the administration's belief in the power of television and assuaged Wolff's apprehensions about the success of the special. The tour showcased the First Lady's restoration project, a facet of the Kennedy administration's cultural program, intended to transform the

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[8] CBS during the early 1960s might be best characterized by liberal-minded think-pieces such as the heavy hitting documentary detailing the plight of American agricultural labor, *Harvest of Shame*, in 1960, hosted by Edward R. Murrow and aimed at inspiring political action on the part of the at-home viewer. Murrow would leave CBS in 1961 to join the Kennedy administration as head of the United States Information Agency (USIA). See Michael Curtin *Redeeming the Wasteland: Television Documentary and Cold War Politics* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995.

[9] In a March 20, 1962 "News from Nielson" press release sent to both CBS and the White House by the Broadcast Division of Nielson conservatively estimated that 28.3 million homes tuned in and used the figure of 2 viewers per home to arrive at the 56 million estimate. Interestingly, Nielson compares these figures to the number of tourists who entered the White House in the flesh, asserting that between 1946 and 1962 they numbered only 10 million. Such a comparison points to the excitement and enthusiasm surrounding television's capacity to reach such great numbers across such a vast nation and to some extent equates the TV tour to an actual visit to the executive mansion.

White House into a showcase for the finest in American cabinetry as well as the visual, culinary, and performing arts. The seriousness with which this project was conceived of and executed, the devoted energies of the elites and experts who comprised the Fine Arts Committee promoted matters of décor to an issue of national interest. The "homestead" of the New Frontier, embodied newly cosmopolitan and internationalist aspirations of the generationally distinct Kennedy administration as well as serving as a reliquary of sorts for episodes from the nation's history manifest through the tasteful arrangement of material culture.

The tour offers an exceptional and oftentimes surprising case study through which television's role in the cultural and social arenas—what we can call the theater of taste—of the Cold War might be explored. The televised life of the restoration project and its reception also contends with questions around the relationship of the collective historical record of the nation to the emergence and consolidation of the unwieldy medium in the early sixties as well as new conceptions of citizenship and national belonging. Television, in the case, makes the White House—its furnishings and history, this theater of taste— intimately present in the home, producing a site of connectivity through which the viewer- citizen conceived of national affiliation and involvement or belonging.[10] The excessive national symbolism of the White House is made intimate by showcasing, via television, the interior and the determinations of taste that render it meaningful and evocative. The domestic orientation of the tour and the domestic presence and scale of television are productively matched, inviting the viewer-citizen to attach the conceptions of nation to the first lady and her conception of domestic taste. Building on the assumption that television is not simply something people watch, this chapter argues, through an

[10] Broadcast technology has been theorized in media and television studies as a vital arena for the development of nationally scaled debate and dialogue. See Hilmes, Michelle *Only Connect: A Cultural History of Broadcasting in the United States* Boston: Wadsworth, 2013.

analysis of the tour, the restoration project, and their reception, that the tour makes claim for television as a civic technology for the forging of narratives of belonging, mediated through domestic material culture and space.

A combination walk through and voice over history lesson, the hour long special reveals the spaces of governance and living through the perspective of the nation's hostess, tastemaker, and resident historian. Striving to produce the ideal setting in which the presidency and cultural heritage of the nation would be presented for both visiting dignitaries or international tourists and television audiences at home and around the world, Mrs. Kennedy frames her endeavor around the righting of a longstanding wrong, stating: "We have such a great civilization, so many foreigners don't believe it." This worry about the lack of a coherent image of American civilization relates to the First Lady's impression that the White House lacked evidence of the past and suggests a preference for particular moments of American history. Early in the tour, the First Lady describes to a drab and disappointing visit during her childhood, to the White House as a defining inspiration structuring her revitalization project, making clear that she seeks to rectify this lackluster experience by rendering the White House's history spatially and materially legible. She voiced her surprise and dismay that so "little of the past" remained visible when she and the President moved in. She suggested that the space of the White House ought to bring everyday visitors into intimate contact with the history of the edifice and all those who had dwelt there.

Working against Charles Dickens's assessment of the White House as having the "uncomfortable air of having been built yesterday," the First Lady described her effort to imbue the house with its own history while retaining a lively and accessible tenor. Undoing the hasty alterations of the Roosevelt and Truman presidencies which favored contemporary styles or

structurally unsound solutions, Mrs. Kennedy commenced her quest for historical integrity across the entire White House, producing historically unified tableau and eschewing the department store furnishings in the family quarters. At the same time, she made the case for excellence as the overarching principle behind her restoration as she endeavored to locate and possess authentic, period-appropriate furniture suited to White House's various rooms.

The tour offers a meandering history of the nation made legible as a function of an enlightened domestic taste, merging historical and aesthetic considerations. The distribution of this new history and authenticity-oriented form of domesticity, design, and self-presentation through television afforded mass access to elite, east coast taste cultures and, in turn, worked to inspire the middlebrow televisual imagination to aspire to a sort of comfortable and patriotic cosmopolitanism. Within the context of sixties Cold War cultural discourses, the middlebrow was "required to be at once politically effective, morally responsible, and culturally respectable," and contributed to the calculated and internationally scaled efforts in distributing American culture to do ideological battle against communist forces threatening the newly aligned "free world."[11] Since its inception as a national broadcast technology, television was consistently a site of struggle between the cultivation of both domestic consumer desire and progressive era notion's of broadcast technology as a public good that ought to promote cultural uplift. While her emphasis on interior design as an issue of national importance dovetails with a growing consumer economy, Kennedy's emphasis on the singularity of the authentic antiquarian object contrasts with an acquisitive economy of planned obsolescence and cyclical middlebrow taste.

Using televised domestic taste as a venue in which to preserve history and to promote good taste represents a savvy and complex mobilization of both design and broadcast technology

[11] McCarthy, Anna *The Citizen Machine: Governing by Television in 1950s America* New York: New Press, 2010, 126.

to participate in the struggle for national cultural definition in the era of the New Frontier. The intersection of taste, historicism, and expertise offered by the curiously paced and nonlinear TV tour points to a formulation of citizenship and national belonging made manifest in an antiquarian form of domestic taste. Taste in this televisual context is not only the basis for aesthetic judgment, but as the tour manifests, conceived of as matrix for action and feeling and a way of knowing and organizing history through material culture.

As a television documentary, the program was also responsive to debates and apprehensions around the unknown impacts of newly ubiquitous information technology and the resulting sense of accelerated historical change in late modernity. Indeed, the cultivation of good taste and proper historical consciousness via the very technology accused by lawmakers and cultural commentators of potentially diminishing American cultural life makes the program a vital media event in mapping the interrelations between taste, history, and technology in the 1960s. Through an analysis of the deployments of antiquarian taste via television, this chapter tracks the similar use of design and television as media in the articulation of New Frontier America. This chapter argues that *A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy* promotes, via television, a domestic taste derived from historical authenticity, excellence, and emotive resonance. This innovative conception of taste, and the processes through which it is cultivated, worked to raise the cultural stature of the nation. Secondarily, through its savvy use of televisual modes of address the tour develops an intimate relationship between the First Lady and at-home viewers. With this broadcast, the cultural battleground of the Cold War, the quest for cultivation, and the unknown horizons of the New Frontier entered the living rooms and imaginations of a nation on an unprecedented scale.

Technocracy and Taste

In the establishing scene of Mrs. Kennedy's journey through the White House the audience encounters, through both framing and dialogue, an emphasis on process and transformation. After offering her personal voice-over narrative of the White House's history, which emphasizes structural and stylistic transformations over time, to begin the special, the First Lady appears, rounds a corner, and walks quickly down a minimal but well appointed and gleaming barrel vaulted hallway, dotted with ebony pier tables, paintings, chandeliers and marble busts-whose columnar pedestals raise them to a human scale. Her silent stroll is accompanied by a distinctly American classical score and a voiceover introduction, "Mrs. John F. Kennedy, the third youngest of the 29 wives to live in the White House." She turns and enters an almost comically cluttered wood-paneled basement room where her co-host Collingwood awaits her arrival. The visual contrast between the minimally, but elegantly appointed hallway and what Kennedy calls the "attic and cellar at once" offers a dramatic contrast, illustrating the centrality of material transformation to the tour's narrative logic. This storehouse and research space is filled with furniture, books, lamps, crockery, paintings, fabric, and clocks from all eras and in all states of disrepair. In this scene, the first lady offers insight into the antiquarian clutter, the raw materials of the project which envelops both her and the room. The curious framing of this opening segment, pitting corridor against storehouse, placing Collingwood off camera, and ensconcing Kennedy within her object world, trains the viewer to expect the contrast of clutter to design and to attach the first lady to the material culture of the White House.

The cluttered storehouse suggests to the viewer the expansive and ongoing nature of the research-based restoration project. As she stands stiffly among the mass of objects, Collingwood asks her to describe her basic plan, she suggests that she does not actually have one. She leaves

the restoration program open to growth in the future, seeking only to correct the perceived lack of history within the White House's walls rather than operate according to some grand design scheme. Her deference to history as the foundational impetus with the hope of imbuing the White House with the long duration of the American Experience through restoration and acquisition aids in solidifying an "objective" basis for Kennedy's project. Collingwood probes this question of subjective judgment as a potential governing force behind the restoration process, asking, "can you make these changes according to your own tastes and desires?" She responds with a detailed description of the bureaucratic processes of assessment and approval, stating "No, I have a committee which has museum experts, government people, and private citizens on it. Then everything we do is subject to approval by the fine arts committee." She goes on to make clear that the budget for the restoration is "really quite small" and that most objects are procured by private donation. Her description of process closes with a reference to the passage of law in September 1961, the Preservation of Museum Character Act that prohibits objects from being sold or thrown out from the White House, making clear the project's civic nature and underscoring the procedural logic that structures the restoration project.[12]

The restoration endeavor, as described by the First Lady, proposes a kind of technocracy of taste, by which I mean that she rationalizes taste-making through appeals to collaboration with experts and the quest for historical authenticity. Kennedy's description of the committee based process and denial of the influence of her subjective taste relates to what has been described by

[12] The law reads: " Articles of furniture, fixtures, and decorative objects of the White House, when declared by the President to be of historic or artistic interest, together with such similar articles, fixtures, and objects as are acquired by the White House in the future when similarly so declared, shall thereafter be considered to be inalienable and the property of the White House. Any such article, fixture, or object when not in use or on display in the White House shall be transferred by direction of the President as a loan to the Smithsonian Institution for its care, study, and storage or exhibition and such articles, fixtures, and objects shall be returned to the White House from the Smithsonian Institution on notice by the President."

Theodor Roszak, Jacques Ellul and others as the particular logic of technocracy operative across culture during the postwar era.[13] Roszak and Ellul describe this technocratic impulse as an all-consuming ethos committed to rationalization and, as Roszak puts it "works to knit together the anachronistic gaps and fissures of the industrial society." [14]Such logic emphasizes technique and aspires towards systematization, and insists upon due process and discussion.[15] The rhetoric introducing the tour enacts a partial transference of the private, often leisure- based project of home décor, in the case of the White House restoration, to the rationalizing and totalizing ethos of technocracy. [16]As evidenced in this opening scene with the First Lady, Mrs. Kennedy was always quick to point out that the project was not one of a redecoration but one of restoration, collection, and preservation based on scholarship. Under the auspices of scholarship and history, the choices made by the First Lady and her gang of experts and their collective, elite tastes ascend to objectivity. Taste, in this instance, is presented through an emotionally resonant historical narrative of interior design and as an expert driven practice from which practices and desires arise. The taming of personal taste or caprice, in terms of rhetoric, reflects devotion to the technocratic rigor that characterized Kennedy administration. For instance, at various points in the tour in her description of the particular placement of a piece of furniture or selection of a

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[13] See Ellul, Jacques *The Technological Society* New York: Vintage Books, 1964. Roszak, Theodor *The Making of A Counterculture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition* New York,: Anchor Books, 1969.
[14] Roszak, 5.
[15] In Gore Vidal's 1961 article for the Sunday Telegraph, he suggests that unlike Eisenhower's disdain for politics, Kennedy "regards politics as an honorable, perhaps inevitable, profession in a democracy." The belief in the institutions and process of politics and governance characterizes the Kennedy administration's particular deployment of technocratic rhetoric and methods. (Vidal, Gore "A New Power in the White House" *Sunday Telegraph* London, April 9, 1961 in Edmond Ions Ed. *The Politics of John F. Kennedy* New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1967.)
[16] The totalizing ethos of technocracy, for Roszak, determines the language and form of the late sixties countercultural critique. Indeed, the transformation or rejection of normative modes of domestic life, in terms of both family structure and interior design, constituted one front of the countercultural response.

particular type of wall treatment, Kennedy details the etching or historical document that determined the particular design choice, placing taste—at least rhetorically and for the purposes of the public existence of the restoration project—at the mercy of the limits of documentation. Kennedy's tour brings together the languages of technocracy and taste to assure, the proper exhibition of American history and material culture . The First Lady resuscitates domestic taste from frivolity and consumption through the mechanics of reform, history, and voluntarism coming in the form of participation of private citizens donating their heirlooms and as members of the committee.

The efforts to coax fashion in interior design to manifest historical accuracy required a particular constellation of experts. In addition to installing Lorraine Waxman Pearce as the first official White House curator, two prominent figures who advised the First Lady were Henry Du Pont of the Winterthur, an institute devoted to the American decorative arts, and French society decorator Stéphane Boudin. The bringing together of these two prominent figures in interior design represents the merging of an institutional form of Americanist cultural fluency with Du Pont and the internationalist elite cachet of Boudin, who was famous for having decorated the Shah and Empress of Iran's palace, represents divergent forms of experience, knowledge, and taste that served to bolster the First Lady's brain trust of experts.

The creation of the position of official White House curator and the appointment of a Winterthur graduate, Pearce, reflects Du Pont's desire to conceive of the project as a primarily academic, rather than stylistic one. Interestingly, Boudin was not an official member of the Fine Arts Committee for the White House overseeing the restoration and is not named in the April 24, 1961 press release first announcing the restoration. This redaction reflects the overall minimization of taste and aesthetic concerns, evident in the tour as well, as guiding principles

structuring the restoration project in favor of letting history guide the way. While press at the time suggested that Du Pont was unaware of Boudin's influence over the First Lady's décor decisions, Du Pont was acutely aware and critical of his sway, writing in a 1961 letter to Pearce, "I shudder to think what Mr. Boudin would do with American furniture."[17] In Boudin, Kennedy found a willing ally in the continued cultivation of her Francophilic taste preferences, to which this chapter will turn later. France is significant to both the collections and design of the White House and to the First Lady in particular. The first restoration of the White House, coming after the War of 1812 and spearheaded by President James Monroe, began a tradition of filling the house with finest in French material culture.

The integration of these divergent commitments suggests that through the sustained and perhaps unpleasant proximity a fine tuned formulation of expertise might emerge. This unlikely collaboration plays out in the tour in a number of interesting ways.[18] Together they worked to incorporate appropriately tasteful examples of American heritage furnishing, such as the Federal and Neoclassical American Empire styles, alongside European pieces, many of them collected during Monroe's presidency, pointing to the long history of American international cultural exchange. The Federal and Neoclassical styles would become the preferred styles for municipal buildings in Washington D.C., as these styles were associated with aesthetic restraint, which implied a distance for the aristocratic frivolity of the rococo. Kennedy's fondness for Monroe's French finery is tempered by her emphasis on the fact that American "craftsman are as good as the Europeans." She, time and again, makes reference to American analogs to iconic European styles and types of objects, such as Staffordshire China. The effort to coax partiality and personal

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[17] Abbot, James A. and Elaine M. Rice *Designing Camelot: The Kennedy White House Restoration* New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1998:34-35
[18] Abbot, James A. and Elaine M. Rice *Designing Camelot: The Kennedy White House Restoration* New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1998.

preference to fit into objective structures of expertise render taste a matter best left to committees of society antiquarians and art enthusiasts, chaired by the First Lady and arbiter of taste.[19] In this regard, domestic design and research, in the First Lady's hands, become tools of governance in as much as they promote and enhance the stature of the United States through the development of connections to the past appropriate to an internationalist New Frontier context.

In the cultivation of a tastefully appointed White House, accounts of national duty and devotion to historic preservation take center stage. Kennedy makes frequent mention of the important energies of various female citizens who have devoted themselves to the repatriation and collection of period appropriate furniture and paintings. During the tour, she makes direct reference several women in particular who donated particularly noteworthy objects or furnishings. This attentiveness to the participation of the Mrs. Millard Blackwells and Mrs. Burton Cohens of the nation emphasizes the ideal of the activist citizen that is so crucial to the Cold War American context as well as the liberal cultural aspirations of the New Frontier. One of a series of articles in the Washington Post detailing the ongoing restoration, describes this activist citizenry as an "uncanny nationwide network of informers who locate rare historic items and can be depended upon to signal when something choice is coming up for sale," interestingly equating the work of acquisition to private detective work or perhaps Cold War espionage.[20] Early in the tour, Kennedy makes direct eye contact with the camera and asserts, flatly that "all donors will be given credit in a booklet that everyone can see."

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[19]As the First Lady assembled her gang of experts, President Kennedy's military and political advisers were adopting similar workflows and organizational logics, which emphasized procedure and process. See Schwab, Orrin. *Defending the Free World: John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, and the Vietnam War, 1961-1965.*Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998.

[20] Chesire, Maxine "The Green Room Carpet Magically Comes and Goes" *Washington Post* September 12, 1962.

The formulation of citizenship or belonging cultivated in the tour promotes a conception of a participatory liberal citizen as the ideal patriot by calling out the energies and donations of citizen-activists, offering enticement in the form of prominent recognition and the satisfaction of becoming a permanent part of the heritage of the White House. The First Lady's ambitious enterprise to make the White House a more perfect symbol of a hopeful and internationally oriented America through her radical historicist, spatial practice relates to understandings of Cold War citizenship or belonging, The promise of national belonging is thus figured as the product of the energies and commitments of the activist citizen rather than something innate or given.

The expert editing and combination of close-ups, stills, and tracking shots contribute to the overall legibility of the project. The weaving together of historic photographs and etchings; grand, well-lit vistas of entire rooms shot from above; evocative close-ups of furniture, wall treatments, and paintings; alongside the consistent presence of the First Lady's engaging face gracefully orchestrates a reenactment of the restoration process. The close ups of the furniture further merged together the spaces of the White House with the spaces of reception in American homes. In a fall 1961 letter to Pamela Turnure, the First Lady's press secretary, from Producer Perry Wolff, he suggests that since the special is aimed at capturing the stately qualities of the refurbished White House then they must "guarantee that the aesthetic elements of the broadcast match the subject matter."[21] In a book written by Wolff after the tour aired, he suggests that the "basic problem was artistic, and could not be solved by a large outlay of cash, nor by an excessive amount of television equipment."[22] The skill and taste with which the special was lit,

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[21] Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Collection Pamela Turnure Files Box 23.
[22] Wolff, Perry *A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy* New York: Dell Publishing, 1962: 237.

framed, and recorded no doubt contributed greatly to the viewer's experience of the White House's spaces as well as the First Lady's methods, expertise, and accomplishments.

The TV Experience

In addition to foregrounding the role of experts and citizens in the execution of the restoration project, the tour as a televisual object engages the salient debates around the use and abuse of television in a liberal democracy. Discussions around the power and intimate domestic presence of television, as a new facet of everyday life, revolved around its role in elevating or collapsing standards of taste. On the one hand critics conceived of the media technology as an unwieldy entity capable of ensuring the fall of America into a nation characterized by a tyrannical mediocrity and, on the other hand, television could serve as means to disseminate "high" culture. To this effect, Newton Minow, the first chairman of the Federal Communication Commission, asserted in a 1961 speech to the National Broadcaster's Convention, "the power of instantaneous sight and sound is without precedent in mankind's history. This is an awesome power. It has limitless capabilities for good—and for evil."[23] And goes on to ask, "What will the people of other countries think of us when they see our Western bad men and good men punching each other in the jaw between the shooting?" [24] Minow's rhetoric figures television as both a powerful machine in need of careful regulation and as a venue through which the domestic and international communities might acces and assess the national character. Without intervention, Minow suggests, television might continue to be simply a "vast wasteland.[25]

As a site for the development of the domestic consumer economy television also emerges as a technology for the formulation of particular form of national representation and citizenship

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[23] Minow, Newton *Equal Time: The Private Broadcaster and The Public Interest*, New York: Athenuem, 1964: 63.
[24] Ibid., 61.
[25] Ibid., 52.

for the modern liberal state in the throes of the Cold War, as Anna McCarthy demonstrates in her account of fifties television. Progressive era understandings of broadcast media, which persist into the sixties, center on its capacity to offer wide access to enlightenment over the airwaves and television and radio as major venues in which national culture could be both made and distributed. McCarthy analyzes the nexus of governance and corporate voluntarism and the resulting "culturally edifying" television in the 1950s. Television's capacity for creating a site for the intimate contact between citizens and corporations or government renders it a technique through which new formulations of citizenship and participation are formed. The notion that television might be used as a "tool for the making of citizens," relates to Kennedy's reform and cultivation or enlightenment-oriented logic behind mounting and televising the restoration project.[26]

The tour as a public service thus takes up the mantel of television's social responsibility. Instead of tying the culturally rich program to a corporate sponsor to whom the audience might express their gratitude, the tour works to make accessible and intimate the First Lady, her project, and the White House itself. In the absence of a corporate sponsor, CBS stood to gain the most as the network responsible to the production and distribution of the telecast. The bringing together of the excessive symbolism of the White House and the challenge of controlling a new media further complicate the form and intentions of the tour. The perceived need for some kind of "cultural readjustment" in the postwar era in order to ward off the threat of mass culture "paving the way for totalitarianism," characterized the liberal thinking around the threat of television.[27] Minow recognized the great diversity of programming available on television's three networks and simply called for a more balanced schedule, one less beholden to ratings and

[26] McCarthy, 87.
[27] Ibid., 119.

commercial interests, suggesting the viewers could no subsist on a " steady diet of ice cream, school holidays, and no Sunday school," however popular that might be.[28] He goes on to state: "I like westerns too, but a steady diet for the whole country is obviously not in the public interest. We all know that people would more often prefer to be entertained than stimulated or informed. But your obligations are not satisfied if you look only to popularity as a test of what to broadcast. You are not only in show business; you are free to communicate ideas as well as relaxation."[29] Minow's emphasis the broadcaster's freedom to communicate ideas suggests that broadcasters need to not be shackled by corporate and commercial interests and pursue the noble calling of the public interest with greater vigor.

Further, Minnow's account of television envisions a kind of excessive liveness, enabling a presence in excess of its materiality and enhancing its perceived potency. The tour illustrates the difficulties in properly mobilizing this new medium as well, as Kennedy oscillates from addressing Collingwood and one or more the cameras. In addressing the camera, she is directly hailing the viewer-citizen and her declarations and directives take on an intimate valence as the spaces of home and White House are conjoined televisually. Television was mobilized to make the and sophisticated taste of the Kennedys accessible and redefine American citizenship and identity through the "space binding" effects of television, as Lynn Spigel and Victoria Johnson have argued.[30] Through its existence as a televisual artifact, the tour takes advantage of television's wide audience and its mode of address to promote a certain type of taste contends

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[28] Minow,
[29] Ibid.,
[30] Spigel, Lynn *TV By Design: Modern Art and the Rise of Network Television* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
Johnson, Victoria *Heartland TV: Prime Time Television and the Struggle for U.S. Identity* New York: NYU Press, 2008.

with the impact of television on the public historical record and television's emergent spatial-temporal logic.

Indeed, many of the 56 million viewers who tuned in were moved to send letters and telegrams to Kennedy; their tone suggest that of a thank you note sent to the hostess after having been someone's dinner guest. This collective manifestation of decorum and good manners offers insight into the reception of the tour. Time and again these expressions of appreciation reference Kennedy's "gracious hospitality" and express their gratitude for "the privilege of being your guest this evening."[31] Television seemingly personalized the experience so much that the letters apologize for their personal, intimate, or informal tone. Their authors explain how moved they were by the hour they spent with her in the White House. Numerous letters and press write-ups detail curious aspects of the televisual experience, stating, for example "your lovely enunciation clearly came over our San Antonio television set" or that Kennedy "made the television audience feel as though it were very welcome to come in and join the Kennedys by the fire, which is the supreme accomplishment of the hostess."[32]

Additionally, some letters and telegrams echo Minow's critique of television, for instance, Mrs. Robert Fortin writes:

> I imagine my little note will be last among the thousands of letters written to you. I did want to say 'thank you for a most interesting evening when we toured the White House with you on TV. My husband and I thoroughly enjoyed this 'TV special' and only wish we could have more evenings like it[…]All we ever get are Westerns, murders, and commonplace variety shows. Actually, I believe the networks would be amazed at the number of persons who would like something on a higher scale.[33]

Fortin's letter strikes a tone found in many of the positive responses and, interestingly, she and others imagine themselves in relation to a broader citizenry. In this case, she suggests

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[31] Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Collection Mary Gallagher Papers Box 2.
[32] Beahan, Jack "Short Change" *Washington Post* February 15, 1962.
[33] Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Collection Pamela Turnure Files Box 23.

membership in an enlightened demographic with whom she shares a desire for more high-minded television programming. Her assessment and sentiments pointing to new conceptions of group identity aggregated through television. Further, she uses the letter as a venue to assert her sophistication and to suggest that the television audience has been underestimated by the networks.

The letters attest to new forms of spatial and social experience afforded by television, as they convey the sensation or at least sentiment of having "been there" with the First Lady as she orchestrated the tour. The sense of having been transported from their homes is reiterated by many who praise the tour as "marvelous by giving less fortunate and under privileged people a change to see something they have never seen or could see because they could not come to Washington."[34] Such letter writers conceived of themselves as above the "the less fortunate" and try to create a sense of intimacy with the First Lady based on class, just as Fortin's letter's conveyed a sense of a group identity within the broader swath of TV viewers not taken seriously by network programmers. Both of these sensations of belonging, in both the spatial and social realms, come by virtue of the *participation* in a theater of taste and national pride through the television set in the living room. Indeed, Kennedy administration viewed the TV special as a way to gain the approval of the American public. [35]

The First Lady received a great deal of enthusiastic mail from children as well. Some of these letters were likely the product of a school assignment and were frequently accompanied by a drawing or collage depicting, the White House, the president, or First Lady. Some are brief and complementary. For instance Frank Fennama writes: "I enjoyed your program. It was exciting.

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[34] Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Collection Mary Gallagher Papers Box 2.
[35] Spigel, Lynn *TV by Design* : 35.

My dad was going to watch Maverick." [36] Others contain intricate fantasies about their own plans for their future tenures in the White House. For instance, Kennedy received a series of letters from a group of students assigned the open ended writing prompt: "When I am First Lady of the White House." Robin Singleton writes: "When I am First Lady in the White House I will talk to my committee about things like: a stable with 1000 horses and 1000 donkeys and 1000 ponies."[37] Singleton grasps the spirit of the committee-based process that Kennedy adopts and extrapolates her desires from there. Other children tap into the spirit of historical discovery conveyed by the TV special. Karen Coyle writes: "I would study little cracks in the White House to find all the little, big, and all sizes of secret trap doors to the past."[38] Still others, such as Liza Felder, suggest new organizational logics: "First of all, I would find a vacant room and I would put all the furniture of the past in it. I would make it the best room!"[39] These school assignments attest to the potential use of television in the development of a participatory viewer-citizen and as an educational tool. Indeed in a telegram, Mildred and Irvin Burke of Phoenix Arizona write to the First Lady and President, "please accept our tremendous vote of confidence as parents of four who are learning the reason why we are proud to be Americans."[40] Another telegram, from Sergeant Frederikson of South Dakota asserts that he believes that "more Americans have gained more knowledge on American history from your program than they have through graduation from universities."[41] These letters demonstrate the success of the program in appealing to child viewers deprived of their regularly scheduled programs that when asked, they can identify and

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[36] Wolff, Perry *A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy* New York: Dell Publishing, 1962: 250.
[37] Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Collection Pamela Turnure Files Box 23.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Collection Mary Gallagher Papers Box 2.
[41] Ibid.

participate in aspects of the logic that characterized the restoration project and the telecast as successful piece of educational programming.

Many viewers writing the First Lady envisioned their viewing of the tour, as part of a momentous event in American history. Some offer a theory about their proud place alongside their beloved First Lady in the making of history through television. For instance, in a telegram, Thomas Murphy thanks Kennedy for allowing him to "witness and become a part of great tradition involved with the White House."[42] Another telegram suggests "history will owe you a great debt of gratitude."[43] These telegrams and letters acknowledge the twofold nature of the historical work executed by the First Lady: the labors of the restoration project itself and the production of the television documentary. Contemporaneous understandings of television as offering a "a ringside seat to history" suggested that the new media produced a kind of instant historicization of the present.

To this point, in a brag booklet produced by CBS in July 1962, the proud network describes its pioneering role in the development of the young medium during an "unprecedented 7 days of television" that "viewed from any angle, it was the greatest sight-seeing trip in history."[44] The period in question spans Kennedy's CBS produced primetime tour to the network's extensive, multi-sited coverage of NASA's first human spaceflight to a tour of Indonesia with Bobby Kennedy. Through this publication CBS sought to demonstrates its "ability to make the most of television's unique genius for extending the dimensions of human experience regardless of when or where it takes place – in the past, present of future – whether

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[42] Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Collection Mary Gallagher Papers Box 2.
[43] Ibid.
[44] *It was an unprecedented 7 days of Television* New York: CBS July 1962. (no page numbers)

on earth or in the heavens."[45] The parallel deployment of the first American manned space mission and the First Lady's tasteful tour as touchstone TV events render them equal in terms of their historical weightiness thanks to their media existences. The temporal and spatial multiplicity suggested by both the network's mandate and the experience of viewers adequately motivated to share their experience of Kennedy's tour in telegrams and letters position television as a vital node through which history is both made and reported via the media event.

Eager to participate in the making of history through broadcast technology, the momentousness of the prime time tour prompted the major television networks to drop the typically male-oriented programming, typified by the supremely popular western, and broadcast for the first time a documentary explicitly oriented toward a female viewership. While primetime domestic situation comedies were certainly produced with a female viewership in mind, the documentary genre had yet to explicitly hail women viewers. In light of this imagined audience, Kennedy discusses the work of the restoration project, revealing the in-house upholstery shop, as well as rooms just at the start of restoration, referring to it as a veritable "hall of horrors." She also cites the financial missteps of previous first ladies. These appeals to thrift and suggestions of labor are balanced by her commitment to only accepting the best specimens. These narratives make intimate appeals to the at-home audience, scaling the project around familiar domestic quandaries, such as household budgets and chiding husbands. The incorporation of such details and narratives make intimate the First Lady and her labors and use familiar tropes and appeals, such as the truism that women's work is never finished, found in advertising for domestic consumer goods and sit-coms. As Fenamma's letter suggests, the adult male members of a viewing household were being kept from their typical programming choice that evening. By

[45] *It was an unprecedented 7 days of Television* New York: CBS July 1962. (no page numbers)

occupying the prime time slot and spatially conquering the living room via television spatiotemporal presence, Mrs. Kennedy, our female protagonist, inserts her tour into midst of the TV-viewing public's evening rituals, mitigating the threat of mediocre or average television through the distribution of a new American domesticity.

It is noteworthy that ABC opted out of broadcasting the program on the same night as CBS and NBC, instead broadcasting their regularly scheduled action-adventure programming and screening the special three days later. ABC, instead, aired its popular western program, *Maverick*. It was these conditions that programming such as the tour sought to rectify. ABC's refusal to participate in the Valentine's Day broadcast simultaneity established by the other two networks is notable in the era of the big three networks and at a time when the spatiotemporal conditions and cultural stakes of television were still very much up for grabs. In announcing themselves as the other thing on television that Valentine's Day evening, ABC's dissenting position that evening reiterates what was perceived by Minow and some letter writers, as the mediocre conditions of middlebrow entertainment and its problematic popularity and prevalence.

In addition to the 56 million Americans reported to have tuned in, the United States Information Agency distributed copies of the tour to strategic international locations, including India, Israel, Iran, Jordan, and Pakistan. The conditions of the screenings differed from country to country, from a private screening in the Shah's palace to 44 screenings of the special, reaching 44,000 people in Karachi. [46] The press response, as reported to the United States Information Agency was overwhelmingly positive, the Japanese consulate reported that the TV tour was most impressive and offered "an excellent presentation authentic Americans."[47] These international

[46] Memo from USIA. Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Collection 1.1.2 Pamela Turnure Files Box 34.
[47] Ibid.

screenings worked to enhance understandings of the United States as culturally and historically rich in the eyes of foreign powers.

Taxpayers and Finery

The framing and direction of the scene describing the East Room spatializes issues of a "national" culture and questions around the position of the government in its development and cultivation. In a brief voiceover accompanied by historic etchings and photographs, the First Lady traces the history of how the décor of this all-important White House space had transformed over the years. She refers to the way in which Mary Lincoln overspent on lush carpets during the Civil War. She notes artist's tendencies to exaggerate, in etchings depicting important diplomatic events, the East Room's scale with towering ceilings akin to the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. Grant's renovation of the ceiling in timber to create what was chidingly referred to as Greco-Mississippi riverboat style to the jungle of palms favored by Presidents McKinley and Arthur to the "simple and classic" Roosevelt modifications of 1902. In her East Room narration, restraint emerges as the favorable characteristics in the aesthetic transformation of this iconic social space and as a modern means to battle excess and clutter in design.

The scene shifts back to the East Room of the 1960s, a distant low angle camera captures Kennedy and Collingwood as they enter the stately hall, rendering the two of them diminutive in scale. Filming switches to a camera more proximate to Kennedy and Collingwood. Just as Kennedy finishes her loving description of the classicized patriotic grand piano designed by Theodor Roosevelt, Collingwood quickly drifts out of frame and he and the camera begin a collaborative interrogation. Collingwood confronts the First Lady on a policy point inquiring about her and her husband's "particular affinity" for artists, writers, musicians, poets, asking if

this affinity "is because you and your husband feel this way or because there is a particular relationship between the government and the arts?" As Collingwood's disembodied off-camera voice probes this relationship, the shot shift from a close-up to a wider angle and Kennedy begins to inexplicably stride away from the camera, the camera pursues, she glances over her shoulder while formulating a somewhat evasive answer. When asked to elucidate this relationship, with her back against Gilbert Stuart's iconic portrait of George Washington, she demurs and deflects using the language of meritocracy to describe her beliefs and actions. The camera stalks her as she is literally backed into the Stuart and she states in a diminutive and non-authoritative tone: "That's so complicated. I don't know. I just think that everything in the White House should be the best." Her physical and verbal evasion manifests the controversial nature of the Kennedy's particular form of cultural programming and the all-important relationship between the government and the arts. The question was a planned one and according to the five different versions of the script that passed between Kennedy and Wolff, the producer, the answer underwent numerous revisions and the earlier versions offered a more definitive endorsement of the role of the arts in liberal democracy. Camera movement, together with mise-en-scene enhances the curiously accusatory scene and further connects Kennedy to her world of things. This line of questioning also relates back to the technocratic decorum proposed at the tour's outset, as a transcendent conception of quality is offered as recourse to a declarative statement about the role of the arts in American life and governance. Rather than publically stake a claim for the importance of the arts or to explain her affinity for artists, the First Lady underscores the historical authenticity and excellence of the material culture of the White House, leaving the matter unresolved.

The inconclusive nature of the First Lady's answer was no doubt a calculated changed in the script. The press and the letter writing public persisted in criticizing the First Lady for, on the one hand, as one letter put it "acting like beatnik" in her intimate dealings with the creative set at White House events and on the other for her excessive conventionality in her historicist restoration endeavors.[48] In a piece for the July 1962 issue of *Esquire,* author Norman Mailer berates the First Lady for missing a choice opportunity to manifest her alliance to the contemporary artistic community, to challenge adherence to "the most slavish tastes in American life," and to educate herself and the nation on the difference between "the arts and the safe old crafts," suggesting that her deference to the "safe old crafts" is both lazy and dishonest.[49] Addressing her East Room deflection of Collingwood's query, Mailer called for the First Lady to "use your popularity to be difficult and intellectually dangerous," and to become America's muse.[50] He critiques her efforts to be a "proper First Lady," suggesting that these efforts are disingenuous to her own intelligence and to the nation's potential. By offering a conventional and elite version of the American artistic tradition, Mailer finds the First Lady and her artistic convictions to be divisive, writing, " because our tragedy is that as we diverge as countrymen further and further from one another, like a space ship broken apart in flight which now drifts mournfully in isolated orbits, satellites to each other, planets none, communication faint."[51] Mailer's polemical take on the First Lady's artistic commitments makes a case for America's capacity to handle more an even more sophisticated and varied version of national culture

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[48] 1962 Letter to Pamela Turnure, Jacqueline Kennedy Bouvier Onassis Papers, Pamela Turnure Files Box 34
[49] Mailer, Norman "An Evening with Jackie Kennedy" *Esquire* (July 1962): 61.
[50] Ibid., 59, 60.
[51] Ibid., 62

contrasts with the accusations of her beatnik tendencies. Such criticisms demonstrate the vital and contested nature of official or national taste and comportment.

Despite her stated dedication to the preservation of the White House as a metonym for the nation, the First Lady faced much criticism for her Francophilia as well as for the use of taxpayers money to fund a project of this nature before and after the television special.[52] Lynn Spigel writes that the First Lady's "brand of snooty Europhilia was, throughout the period […] was cause for popular mistrust."[53] The longstanding supremacy of French art and design in elite taste in general and among presidents in particular is well encapsulated in a set of tour notes from late 1961 where Pearce writes: "The silver was purchased by Jackson and is French of the very highest quality. It is very interesting that while Jackson was considered such an American 'backwoods radical', he followed the good old-fashioned precedent of buying French things."[54] Kennedy's affinity for French culture derives from both her adherence to the standards of American elite cultural fluency, but also thanks to time spent in France during college working towards a French major. After graduating, Kennedy was awarded the prestigious Prix de Paris editorship at *Vogue* magazine. Her winning essay described he desire to be the "art director of the twentieth century." She did not accept the editorship, but her avowed goal of art directing the twentieth century astutely summarizes her stylistic impact as First Lady.

In the midcentury imagination and popular media affection for all things French was often characterized as elite or un-American. To outrun such judgments, Kennedy secured an American clothing designer, Oleg Cassini, fluent in the French styles she favored and willing to

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[52] Spigel, Lynn *TV By Design: Modern Art and the Rise of Network Television* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008, 35.
[53] Ibid., 37.
[54] Memorandum to Mrs. John F. Kennedy from Mrs. John N. Pearce, December 14, 1961 Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Collection Pamela Turnure Files Box 131.

keep her extravagant spending a secret. [55] As evidenced by the opening question regarding the relative influence of her own taste on the restoration process and the subsequent query regarding the administration's stance on cultural programming, the TV tour was intended to allay such criticisms. The specifically elite, east coast taste culture, behavioral mores, and internationalist aspirations that characterize the Kennedy White House opens on to a consideration of projects of national identity and questions of representativeness in relation to regional and class based identities. Throughout the tour much is made of the problematic splendor of the White House. Mrs. Kennedy endeavored to make American citizens comfortable and proud of the elegance if not, extravagance of the White House; as the television special asserted in the introduction, the official residence of the President is the property of the nation. In her personal prologue she makes reference to the first of many "storms" over the White House in which Congressman Ogle attacked President Van Buren, asking: "will Americans support their chief servant in a palace as splendid as the Caesars[,]" demonstrating how the White House has been historically embroiled in the quest to develop a distinctly American and democratic aesthetic. The need distinguish the executive and his dwelling from European precedents, which carried with them problematic monarchical associations, took on both political and aesthetic imperatives as the conventions of national display evolved and transformed.

In addition to the laudatory letters praising the First Lady's performance and commendable dedication to the restoration project, another set of letters reflect the ongoing "storm" regarding the palatial executive mansion. The TV special was supposed to allay such critiques through its decorous demonstration of historical integrity and quality. These letters question the purchase of antique wallpaper to the tune of $12, 500. These protestations relate to a

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[55] Kaplan, Alice *Dreaming in French: The Paris Years of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, Susan Sontag, and Angela Davis* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012, 61.

long-standing suspicion of the government funding for the arts, considered to be luxury, and as such not worthy of American tax dollars. While the press leading up to the televised tour did much to add to the anticipation and viewership of the program, many of these articles offered some unflattering and controversial fiduciary details. A painstakingly typed February 1962 letter from Mrs. Marie Walkviak of Comanche, Texas:

> We don't care how you restoring the historic mansion. We're sick of paying high taxes for such tomfoolery as 127 year old wallpaper. The poor people of America can't stand much more of such high taxes. $12,500 would sure take care of a lot of sick and hungry people. Did you ever see a man cry because he hurt so bad, needed to retire and couldn't because there was no savings so he could retire. I don't see how you and Mr. President, if you want to see a pretty portrait look in the face of well fed and well person not a piece of high priced wallpaper. Mrs. President I was hoping you and the president would put a stop to such nonsense. I wish I had the money, I would come visit you, I could tell you a lot more. I am not a good writer as I just got to the 4th grade in school and had to quit to take care of brothers and sisters, mother was sick. P.S. I like you and the President, but I don't think you know what it is to be poor. [56]

This incisive and earnest critique shares the intimate tone of the complementary letters, as Walkviak disputes Kennedy's dedication to the White House with her staggering description of the regular struggles of the proverbial "other half." Letters such as this point to the class and regional parochialisms that structure the Kennedy's domestic enterprise. The First Lady's endeavor to secure consent for the restoration falls short, as viewer-citizens such as Walkviak, remain unconvinced of the necessity of the relationship between the government and the pursuit of a more perfect White House.

The sentiments expressed in this letter reflect a longstanding suspicion of government support of the arts, intellectual endeavors, and luxury in general. Such suspicions date back to the founding of the nation and relate to anxieties around the dangers of luxury and its perceived

[56] Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Collection Pamela Turnure Papers: Box 26.

association with decadence and moral decay.[57] Neil Harris, in his 1966 book, *The Artist in American Society,* probes the conflicts around the development of American taste and style. In the early years of our republic, art's affiliation with aristocratic tastes and lifestyles produced "the need to distinguish art from luxury."[58] Harris writes, " the political philosophy of the Revolutionary era and the dimensions of the luxury problem […] helped place the arts permanently on the intellectual defensive in American life."[59] Letters such as this point to this permanently compromised position of arts, which must be defended from accusations of frivolity in a way that massive defense spending on nuclear weapons development, for example, did not. Still, Walkviak went to the trouble of writing the First Lady to make her position known and frames her complaint as informational and corrective, seeking to mitigate the administration's ignorance regarding living in poverty. Further, this letter destabilizes a dominant self-congratulatory imaginary that figured the United States as the most prosperous nation in the world with the highest standard of living. In the early sixties books such as Michael Harrington's 1962 *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* spurred the so-called "discovery" of economic disparity. The First Lady's symbolic and material battle for design totality and historical distinction did not convince all citizens of the necessity of her project in a culturally and socially diverse nation still struggling with economic inequality in the years before Great Society programs inaugurated the "war on poverty."

Historical Taste, Now

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[57] Harris, Neil *The Artist in American Society: The Formative Years 1790-1860* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966: 37.
[58] Ibid., 37.
[59] Ibid., 53.

The TV tour evinces a desire for a united and consolidated citizenry despite America's cultural and economic diversity through the languages of taste and cultural fluency. Throughout the tour, Kennedy declares the classic or simple renovations to be of a timeless and peerless "quality," many of which took place under the "progressive" administration of Theodore Roosevelt. Kennedy links what she sees as successful past renovations, to which she makes little modification, to a particular historically transcendent, restrained quality. Conversely, the First Lady makes reference to more rustic periods in the life of the White House, characterized by pastoral scenes of grazing sheep on the lawn, a tangle of greenhouses, and an operative kitchen garden. Kennedy framed these instances as both distant and backwards and contrasts them with the fluid historicity of her zealous design initiative, which promoted both excellence and authenticity as its chief concerns. She described the experiences of old time frontiersmen at early American state dinners when they complained that the food was hardly fit to eat, suggesting that they would prefer a simple meal of fried meat and hominy. The First Lady's commentary suggests this lack of fluency with sophisticated eastern gustatory traditions speaks to the divided nation of generations past and that lingering divergences in taste cultures might be overcome through spectacles of national taste, such as her own. Narratives of collective cultivation and overcoming backwardness, both cultural and behavioral emerge throughout the tour. Backwardness is figured in terms of both design and taste, exemplified by an excess of decorative palms, darkness, or simply a taste for rustic stews.

The restoration relates to greater projects of national introspection, characteristic of the decades following World War Two. These projects of national introspection manifest in a diversity of forms, from social scientific surveys, such as the Kelly Longitudinal Study administered by psychologists and other social scientists annually throughout the 1950s,

determined to assess normative or American attitudes and expectations to a renewed interest in the American past, for example, on the part of re-enactors and antiques enthusiasts alike of as the centennial of the Civil War approached.[60] In particular, America's colonial past was imagined as a vital heritage in need of preservation and protection and as a symbolic tool in the Cold War ideological struggle. One such preservationist asserted "re-creating the life of a New England Village can be the most eloquent response to the strident falsehoods poisoning the air today." [61] At various periods in the history of American material culture there emerges a revivalist impulse. These impulses, this shift towards colonial revivalism might be best understood not as a time-bound phenomena nor simply an aesthetic, but rather as Kenneth Ames puts it," a network of communications and linkages that reaches deep into American experience and behavior."[62] The cultivation of a vision and sense of the past through the tasteful arrangement of décor, under the auspices of historical accuracy or authenticity, reflects more about the present in which it is arranged than the past it evokes. Ames importantly notes that in the American context "colonial" operates as a "code word for anti- or non-Victorian, anti- or nonmodern [sic]."[63] The colonial revival's rejection of both the Victorian and modern objects as nonviable in terms of their capacity to emit adequate or appropriate historical or patriotic resonance is quite evident in the First Lady's tour.

Still, Kennedy's take on the colonial revival bears the imprint of modern taste, evidenced, for example, in her rejection of the so-called "Mississippi Riverboat" style and the proclivity of

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[60] See Igo. Sarah *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007. May, Elaine Tyler *Homeward Bound American Families in the Cold War Era.* New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1988.
[61] Conforti, Joseph *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001: 312.
[62] Ames, Kenneth *The Colonial Revival in America* New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1985, 5.
[63] Ibid., 12.

past presidents toward palms. Indeed, in an earlier version of the script, Kennedy states: "there are good pieces in every style of furniture because there were people of taste in every era. But the Victorian era was difficult – there were many styles competing with each other Machine made products were fantastic in design, and were in competition with extremist cabinet-makers. Victorian is sometimes called the 'reign of terror' in design."[64] Her condemnation of the scattered Victorian era reflects a modern disinclination toward its ornate, decorative woodwork and affinity towards clutter and the partial nature of her quest for a tasteful historicism. An Associated Press review suggests: "President Theodore Roosevelt emerged as a hero for his 1902 restoration of the White House and elimination of Victorian clutter." [65] The inflection of Kennedy's present day taste on the restoration renders the restoration interestingly partial and reveals the peculiarities of early sixties modern taste and the cultivation of an appropriate historical and aesthetic past for the New Frontier context.

A 1961 assessment by the Smithsonian of the "opportunity and problem" of a White House restoration, the institute suggests that the line might be drawn at the 1910s or 1920s, to allow the "judgment of history and taste" to run its course, the implication being that furnishings dating from the teens and twenties and beyond had not been sufficiently vetted to determine their lasting quality. [66] In a preliminary letter from producer Perry Wolff to Pamela Turnure, Kennedy's press secretary, suggests that the TV tour could capture the executive mansion at a crucial moment, "the White House isn't ever going to be finished. I don't suppose any future inhabitant will put Andrew Jackson's cheese in the front hall, but some future Administration is sure to move a reproduction Eames chair and Formica and rayon table into the dining room.

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[64] Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Collection Pamela Turnure Papers:
Box 26.
[65] Associated Press review, February 15, 1962.
[66] Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Collection Mary Gallagher Papers: Box 1.

Let's do it while it's at its best!"[67] The, perhaps jocular, suggestion that some future administration might see American modernism of the fifties and sixties as meriting preservation, restoration, and display points to the tidal pull of contemporary tastes and the accelerated sense to historical change they indicate. Historical hindsight tell us that Wolff's predictions about future transformations to White House did not come to pass, attesting to the lasting impact of Kennedy's efforts, the conventions and standards of excellence she developed persist. Wolff's suggestion that they capture the White House at its best reflects a self-conscious sense of exceptionalism, in as much as Wolff perceived the present moment to be remarkable and worth capturing. His letter also evinces a belief in the archival capacities of television to fix this superior phase forever in the historical record, before the present—the Eames chair and Formica table—becomes history. He later suggests, "though our primary and immediate purpose is to show the White House today to the American people today, our ultimate goal is to make a document of record."[68]

Questions over what constituted "American style" and how it might manifest the American way of life and history took on an intensely patriotic cadence in the context of the 1950s Cold War. This period of colonial interest might be best encapsulated by the establishment of Colonial Williamsburg by the Eisenhower administration as a site for "bourgeois rituals and political ceremonies."[69] As Richard Handler and Eric Gable point out in their ethnography, *New History in an Old Museum,* Colonial Williamsburg, in the 1950s and early 60s worked to preserve and present the American a genteel, upscale lifestyles of Virginia's colonial elite as well

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[67] Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Collection Pamela Turnure Papers:
Box 26.
[68] Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Collection Pamela Turnure Papers:
Box 26.
[69] Wallace, Michael "Visiting the Past: History Museums in the United States" *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public* Philadelphia: Temple Univesity Press, 1986: 153.

as promote, in the official guidebook, "the integrity of the individual, responsible leadership, self-government, individual liberties, and opportunity."[70] In the 1960s the preservationist and patriotic attitudes that characterize the colonial revival were challenged by urbanization and modernization. Urban renewal, continued suburbanization, and highway development brought about the destruction of historic neighborhoods and the transformation of the American countryside. Indeed in the early years of the Kennedy administration, Congressed slated Lafayette Square, an area immediately adjacent to the White Housed dotted with early nineteenth century row houses and a stately park adorned with equestrian sculptures, to be razed. Were it not for the First Lady's intervention in 1962, a group of modern skyscrapers would have filled the historic park.[71]Kennedy's successful lobbying effort marked a major accomplishment in the historical preservationist movement of the early 1960s. Almost simultaneously, urbanist and activist Jane Jacobs struggled for the preservation of Greenwich Village in Manhattan in the face of expressway and university development. While different in scope and tone, the appeals of both Jacobs and Kennedy assert that the built environment offered a sense of social and historical connectedness.

Alongside these preservationist, a high-minded exceptionalism cohered as the conceptual core of the New Frontier's internationalist and interplanetary aspirations. Offering urgent recourse to the "soft" pursuits of materialism and domestic comfort, President Kennedy's speeches railed against mediocrity and prevailed on the nation for dedication and action. For its part, the tour reckons with a prideful the American past through design, conjoining the New Frontier's impassioned futurity and exceptionalism with historicism. While this distinctively

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[70] Gable, Eric and Handler, Richard *New History in an Old Museum: Creating the past at Colonial Williamsburg* Durham: Duke University Press, 1997: 64.
[71] These plans date back to 1901 and were reinvigorated under the Eisenhower administration.

historical project is certainly an interesting anomaly in what was such a future oriented administration, the First Lady, in some ways, adopts the language of both technocracy and the desire to outrun the ordinary. This kind of formulation moves acquisition, collecting, and the making of taste away from leisure or pleasure and gives these judgments and activities a moral imperative.

The Melodramatic Vista

In addition to these narratives of aspiration and good taste, the tour exuded solemnity, drawing emotive resonance from the spaces and objects under scrutiny. Kennedy's historicist approach to the restoration and her disdain for previous renovations that relied on contemporary styles and lacked an interest in preservation relates to emergent postwar anxieties about history and memory in the age of television and nuclear war. The First Lady works to make the spontaneous development of the White House deliberate via the preservation of material culture as a signifier of "ways of life," conceived in this context of as a way of making and fixing history. Questions around what constituted "history" or historical consciousness in the early sixties merit exploration within this context. Many of the cultural texts of the fifties worked in some ways to disabuse the nation of thrift through participation in consumer narratives of affluence in order to produce a radical distance from the devastation of both the depression and World War Two. Entering the sixties, the perception among the east coast liberal elite writing in popular press books and magazines, was that this sort of unthinking affluence would render the United States decadent and amoral, prompting an "orgy of self-flagellation" and a renewed

devotion to the cultivation of the "public interest."[72] Eschewing the "short range vista," and the supposition that affluence must be the "relentless enemy of understanding," Kennedy lingers on and emphasizes the difficult history of the presidency and the White House, from its burning in 1814 by the British to the Mrs. Lincoln's emotional and financial difficulties and the deaths of her son and husband.[73]

This renewed dedication to the public interest and the seriousness with which these energies were directed in the White House's corridors and chambers contrasts greatly with accounts of the Eisenhower administration's relationship to their temporary abode. In a series of interviews conducted with Kennedy in 1964, she speaks of Mamie Eisenhower's reluctance to show the First Lady-to-be around what Eisenhower referred as "my house," Eisenhower's proprietary right over the executive dwelling continued after the Kennedy administration had moved in.[74] Upon arriving to the White House Kennedy and her husband noticed that the floors and doors of the Oval office and private presidential offices were riddled with tiny holes. Kennedy wondered if there might be a termite problem, but upon speaking with J. Bernard West, chief White House usher from 1957-1969, learned that President Eisenhower conducted much of his executive business wearing his golf cleats.[75] This perceived emphasis on private interest and ownership and the literal trampling of history with the trappings of leisure stands in stark contrast to the reverential and urgent desire to promote public historical understanding through

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[72] Matusow, Allen J. *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* New York: Harpers & Row, Publishers 1984: 12.
[73] Chase, Richard *The Democratic Vista* New York: Doubleday & Company: 1958, ix. Galbraith, John Kenneth *The Affluent Society* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969, 1.
[74] *Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy, Interviews with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. 1964.* New York: Hyperion, 2011: 132.
[75] Ibid., 134.

the museological approach to the preservation of the White House on the part of the Kennedy administration.

The subdued and sometimes elegiac tone of the tour is well encapsulated by a segment depicting the impact of the presidency on Lincoln's health and youth. The First Lady narrates a montage of presidential photographs as his administration progressed, stating, "here is what the White House did to President Lincoln, here is how he changed." She ends the montage with a picture of Lincoln taken one week before his assassination. This montage follows a brief story about the office seekers and visitors that plagued Lincoln and is followed by a visit to the Lincoln room where The First Lady and her husband lived during their first days at the White House. It was Truman that created this bedroom "shrine" to Lincoln. Kennedy informs us that it was the former cabinet room, where he signed the emancipation proclamation and goes on to tell us that Andrew Johnson decided to cease using Lincoln's cabinet room because he felt it was bad luck, given the assassination. The difficulties of the Lincolns populate much of the tour, often in seemingly superfluous ways—for instance, in a scene orienting both co-host and viewers with the location of rooms relative to the façade of the White House, Kennedy mentions that after the death of her son Willie Mrs. Lincoln "consulted with mediums and prevailed on her husband to attend one séance" in the Red Room. The Lincoln-philia that characterizes the tour coalesces with narratives of collective struggle and sacrifice in the name of liberal progress mobilized in President Kennedy's New Frontier rhetoric.

An editorial published in New York Times the week of the broadcast echoes this semi-occult spirit, "the President's House, as it used to be called, contains not merely furnishings, not merely pictures, but the nation's undying memories. Other ghosts walk this Presidential mansion,

some of them men and some of them dreams."[76] Lincoln is notably emphasized throughout the tour, pointing to the contemporaneous interest in the Civil War in light of its centennial. Kennedy does not present Lincoln as the great emancipator, which would have related to the mounting pressures of the Civil Rights movement during the early sixties, she instead presents Lincoln as the tragic figure. This emphasis on the tragic and harried President presiding over times of extraordinary turmoil suggests the burden of the challenges facing the nation, both old and new, and now borne by Kennedys. The First Lady's takes on the liberal charge to resist the complacency brought on by being comfortable by taking the TV viewing public into the triumphs and challenges—past and present—faced by the White House and the nation.

In an earlier draft of the tour script, Kennedy mused: "When I first came here, I wondered, how are we going to live as a family in this enormous place? I would sit in the Lincoln room. It was the one room in the house with a link to the past. It gave me great comfort. To touch something I knew he touched was a real link with him."[77] The particular sorts of object-oriented stories the first lady tells in the TV tour and her emphasis on the difficulties along the path of the American experience offers a peculiar revisionist history. Kennedy is said to have harbored a disdain for American history due to its lack of female protagonists, suggesting that European courtly diaries offered more substance and appeal. The President, too, in his brief appearance at the end of the tour, suggests that American History in his experience was simply a dull avalanche of dates, without human interest, a limitation that he sees his wife's restoration as working to correct, suggesting the process might "bring us more intimately in contact with all the men who lived here" through the display and use of Grant's table, Lincoln's bed, and Monroe's gold set. The capacity for objects and spaces, as figured by the Kennedys, to serve as

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[76] "The House of American Memories" *New York Times* February 16, 1962.
[77] Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Collection: Pamela Turnure Papers, Box 26.

historical reminders, conduits to past persons and to the historical past generally, and to persist into an uncertain future renders the White House's material culture interestingly anachronistic. As Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood argue in their book, *Anachronic Renaissance,* the cultural artifact or relic within the context of the restoration project, is "more than the sum of its own origin myths" and, thus, has multiple layers of authorship as it transforms from functional object to a differently functional relic.[78] Thus, the testimony offered by material culture equally reveals maker, owner, context of fabrication, current significance, and imagined future in which it endures.

This preference for or belief in the superiority of courtly diaries or simply the history of quotidian life in getting a sense of a historical period posits a kind of proto-revisionism that is quite evident in the peculiar highlights of the tour as well. The nonlinear, object-based history crafted by the first lady prompts mindfulness of the material world not just for the sake of understanding momentous episodes in American history, but also to promote attentiveness to extra-material properties of both space and furniture and the memories they contain. In preparing for life in the White House and her duties as First Lady, she asserted that she found the diary of Duc de Saint-Simon relating the intricacies of royal life at Versailles to be most instructive.[79] While this affinity for the affairs of the court could be read as an interest in "gossip" or "frivolity," an orientation to the inner workings of the spaces of governmental power and domestic life enacts a radical revision to official histories. Mrs. Kennedy resuscitates traditionally diminished women's spaces, temporality, things, and their constituent stories as carriers for a revised national history. Departing from the grand timeline of great men in

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[78] Nagel, Alexander and Christopher S. Wood *Anachronic Renaissance* New York: Zone Books, 2010, 18.

[79] Kennedy, Caroline "Introduction" *Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy, Interviews with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. 1964.* New York: Hyperion, 2011: xii.

American History, the imaginative, object-oriented narratives that populate the tour entrap the nation's history into the mechanics of domestic taste and interior design.

Through the tour, the First Lady offered recourse to the lack of women's stories in the history of the United States through the self-conscious construction of a historicist, object oriented melodrama of taste, one that augments and abuts the history of the great men of governance. In this way, Mrs. Kennedy's tour works according to the logic of the juxtapolitical, as delineated by Lauren Berlant. In Berlant's construction, the juxtapolitical offers a feminine realist-sentimentality that "thrives in proximity to the political, rendering the political sphere an affective space."[80] The First Lady's emphasis on the emotional work of making taste and domestic life in the White House cultivates an amenable space for the affective dimensions of New Frontier technocracy. By forging what Berlant describes as an "intimate public," which carries with it a sense of what she describes as "vernacular belonging," Kennedy, through television and her object-inflected historical melodrama of taste, collapses distinctions between the physical space of the executive mansion and the American living room, through an emotive form of domestic taste.[81] The letters discussed previously attest to the successful forging of an intimate public comprised of viewer-citizens. The form of patriotism proposed by Kennedy's endeavor is described in a telegram from Harry Karrass of Brooklyn, NY as a "wonderful alternative to the maniacal pseudo-patriotism of the Birchites."[82] Karrass expresses an interesting preference for the juxtapolitical form of patriotism of Kennedy's domestic taste to the witch-hunting, anti-communism of the John Birch Society, which he deems to be impure in its patriotic spirit. In the case of Kennedy's tour, a sense of intimate national belonging is figured through

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[80] Berlant, Lauren *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* Durham: Duke University Press, 2008: 10.
[81] Ibid., 10.
[82] Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Collection: Mary Gallagher Papers, Box 2.

belongings subjected to the mechanics of taste. Further, taste in this case encompasses not only excellence and authenticity but also memory, history, and emotion.

Using the domestic, often gendered female technology of television to distribute these alternative histories renders the stories all the more unwieldy, forcing the simultaneous consideration of materialities in and of media. That is to say, that materiality of the medium of television and its physical presence in the American home affords the intimate encounter with the material culture of the White House. Kennedy ensures remembrance through the creation of a televisual document and works to arrest the transformation or modernization of White House through episodic preservation and restoration, transforming the house into a museum of appropriate stylistic epochs. The objects and the human actors—the First Lady in particular—that populate the tour, thanks to their collective, flattened presence on the television screen, share ontological affinities. The tour's theater of taste is decidedly object oriented and emotionally resonant, figuring national belonging within a modality associated with women's culture and sentimental narratives. The overwhelming histories exuding from the various spaces and pieces of furniture do, however, dovetail with narratives about the struggle against darkness both cultural and militaristic that populate President Kennedy's speeches.[83] While the distinctly historicist approach to the White House restoration project contrasts in some ways with the expansive language of progress, futurity, and modernity espoused by the Kennedy administration, the problem of history in the context of a Cold War nuclear standoff and the unknown shape of the new frontier of 1960s lent projects of national introspection and identity a new sense of urgency and gravity.

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[83] For instance in President Kennedy's speech accepting his party's nomination he stated, "We are not here to curse the darkness, but to light the candle that can guide us through that darkness to a safe and sane future. As Winston Churchill said on taking office some twenty years ago: if we open a quarrel between the present and the past, we shall be in danger of losing the future."

The tour proposes to mitigate anxieties about history, time, and memory in the age of television and nuclear war through the tasteful creation of a patriotic, antiquarian object world. The First Lady seems to place things and their aesthetic and historic qualities at the center of a theory of citizenship and being. The lively histories and origins of these objects overwhelm the First Lady. The three cameras involved in filming more often than not focused on Mrs. Kennedy and her world of things, placing Collingwood off-camera. Her body is curiously fragmented and at times conjoined with décor. Her disembodied and oddly echoing voice works in the service of these objects and their disconcerting histories. The First Lady and her objects bring into proximity the melodramatic and technocratic imaginations reveal the emotional histrionics of technocracy. These imaginative modes both attempt to reform wrongs both past and present through a combination of optimism, anxiety, struggle, and hubris. Through the convergence of the feminine realm of domestic décor and the expert-driven methods of technocracy, the cultish devotion to the management of space and its meaning in technocratic late modernity finds its domestic antiquarian companion in the First Lady's project.

Conclusion

The promise of a newly restored White House as a site for the preservation of the nation's difficult history promotes design and art to the upper echelons of importance within the cultural program of the New Frontier. Television, as an instrument of governance and taste-making within the Kennedy's New Frontier, enabled the fostering of a conception of a national cultural project within the intimate space of the home. The formation, cultivation, and elevation of American cultural identity based on the acquisition of appropriate taste involves the production of a new kind of national identity and citizenship, one that the primacy of an elite eastern

seaboard sense of cultural fluency. Thinking through the role of the historicism and a commitment to the antiquarian within the political rhetoric of the New Frontier provides nuance to conceptions of the relative utility of history for the prospective future. The struggle against an uncultured mass or the specter of debased middlebrow is waged in the tour through the arts of collecting and preservation. These acts of colleting and perseveration are hardly neutral and are rather bound up in relations of past and present, and liberal-minded parochialisms. Indeed, the backlash to the strikingly parochial vision of taste and expertise already circulating in response to the Kennedy administration is both evidenced and addressed in the tour's tone, as it works to redeem a dedication to elite culture through a moralizing theater of taste and citizenship. This chapter has tracked the parallel use of television and design as media for the articulation of New Frontier America, producing the union of the technological and the decorative arts. Technocratic design works as means of encouraging liberal citizenship and participation as well as way of establishing a new American relationship in national official culture. This recruitment of design as a means of creating the New Frontier citizen and a new American history is echoed in efforts to tame the potential televisual threat in the interest of educational, edifying media premised upon East-coast, cosmopolitan taste. The struggle against an uncultured mass or the specter of debased middlebrow is waged in the TV tour through the arts of collecting, preservation. Their tasteful deployment circulates alternative histories of the nation told through and with domestic space and material culture.

CHAPTER TWO
Los Angeles and A Certain America

Introduction

In a retrospective interview, Claes Oldenburg details his first visit to California. Employed as a travelling secretary for a group of Swedish businessmen, Oldenburg came west all the way to Los Angeles in 1947. On this trip, Oldenburg booked a motel on the coast a bit north of Malibu for the flock of Scandanavian impresarios. This particular motel boasted animal themed rooms with matching wall treatment, upholstery, and linens, in manner akin to the infamously kitsch Madonna Inn, a bit further north in San Luis Obispo. His employers did not appreciate their forced encounter with this slice of vernacular Californian modernism and subsequently fired Oldenburg for this tasteless misstep, so the story goes. [84]The encounter between the pack of Swedish businessmen and the kitsch of the newly emergent, modern architectural category of the motel stages conflicts between elite and vernacular modernist tastes that Oldenburg would make the fodder of his subsequent work as an American Pop artist.

Oldenburg recalled this first sojourn to the Golden State as a genesis for his work, *The Bedroom Ensemble*, designed and fabricated in Los Angeles in 1963 and installed in early 1964 at the Sidney Janis Gallery in Manhattan. This story of European disdain for American vulgarity would have bolstered the aspirational efforts of Jacqueline Kennedy's desire to uplift American taste and style on the domestic and world stage to an echelon comparable to that of the continent. What is more, the negative reaction to Californian kitsch modernism reiterates conceptions of Southern California as cultural backwater or tasteless American outpost.

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[84] Interview with Claes Oldenburg at the National Gallery of Canada Oldenburg, Claes. "Claes Oldenburg Interview New York." Interview by Brydon Smith. Videorecording, December 5, 1998. R5 B5 S5. NGC Library and Archives fonds Audiovisual Material.

Oldenburg's *Bedroom Ensemble* muses on the "problem" posed by California and Los Angeles to those aspiring that the nation that mighte cohoere around good taste. Oldenburg's suite of provocative faux furniture offers a means through which these questions of décor and taste as a forum in for the development of respectable national identity and aesthetic might be probed further. Oldenburg's work and the Californian environment he seeks to document and represent produces static within Kennedy's nationalist televisual taste spectacle. The artist underscoes a coastal vernacular that structures a divergent conception of American taste and modernity. While the First Lady's CBS produced tour figured national belonging through a constellation of American heritage decor, Oldenburg calls upon furniture and interior design, of a consumable but debased modernist style, to manifest American identity . The dwelling place and site of origin for a mass-produced domestic moderism is frequently sited in postwar Los Angeles in the form of both the architectural avant garde and ranch style modernism. This chapter will consider how the *Bedroom Ensemble*'s vernacular modernism might be coded as particularly Southern Californian. The suite of furniture works to characterize contemporaneous conceptions of LA, its lifestyle, art, and design as they relate to efforts in defining national history and character via taste. I argue that the *Bedoom Ensemble* works to arrest a particular moment in a homegrown American moderism, indigenous to Los Angeles, and explores the pleasures and perils of postwar design. Oldenburg's ensemble participates in the critical discourse around the perceived potential and inherent vice of both Los Angeles and modern design as potential signifiers for the nation's moral health.

The *Bedroom* garnered quite a bit of media attention in both art and design circles, receiving write-ups in publications from *Arts Magazine* to *Industrial Design*. A study of the reception of *Bedroom Ensemble* offers insight into contemporaneous tastes, biases, and

conceptions of both domesticity and "high art" operative within the critical apparatus of art and design. I examine the regionally specific class and taste positionality with which Oldenburg's Bedroom Ensemble resonates and recognized by artist and critic Donald Judd who comfortably asserts that the *Bedroom Ensemble* is an "American modern and a thorough corruption of all it sources."[85] The operative question thus becomes, what happens when the Californian modern comes to represent the American modern, supplanting, perhaps the revivalist impulses of the Kennedy restoration? What are the gendered implications of such a transposition? Considering the ways in which national character was mapped on Mrs. Kennedy's arrangement of heirlooms, what might the incursion of Californian modernism into a national discussion on taste indicate about the cultural and aesthetic integrity of the nation? This chapter will work to destabilize the objective, neutral or expert position of critics and tastemakers associated with the critical judgments and recommendations of both high art and domestic display through an account of conceptions of California and its modernity that undergird the reception of Oldenburg' provocative work and its reception.

I situate the *Bedroom Ensemble* within contemporaneous attempts to assess and characterize Los Angeles, such as Esther McCoy's formative criticism enumerating the contours of Californian modernism, Reyner Banham's irreverent architectural commentary, alongside popular press coverage of the Golden State at midcentury in nationally distributed, eastern seaboard produced publications such as *Life* and *Vogue*. These literatures will flesh out conceptions of the southland among cultural critics and within the popular press that inflect the conditions of reception of Oldenburg's work. While Los Angeles served as the site of genesis and fabrication of the *Bedroom Ensemble,* New York remains the site of first reception. I

[85] Judd, Donald *Judd: The Complete Writings*, Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975:192.

conceive of these bodies of literature as regionally specific critical practices that , in some cases, envision themselves as establishing or defining a national identity. This chapter further probes the questions of who gets to speak for a national standard or identity. Tracing the dynamics of power that structure the relationship of taste to nation, what follows is an exploration of the networks of regional and national knowledge that informs a inclusive reading of a single room.

The model room offers a vision of a historical past through domestic display sometimes within the context of a museum. Within the context of the midcentury department store or magazine advertisement, the model room worked to shape the taste and desire of the consumer through the presentation of a fashionable ideal, sometimes modernist, sometimes historicist or a hybrid of the two. Oldenburg's room interestingly flirts with both of these potentials, the commodity ideal and historical display, of the model room. As such, the *Bedroom Ensemble* makes for a logical but perhaps unexpected follow up to Kennedy's adventures in historical interior design. Her spatial practice endeavored to preseve historial moments in time and taste for the sake of the modern prensent, just as Oldenburg sought to capture particular modernist sensibility in order to grapple with or understand an uncertain present. In the original installation at Sidney Janis, the *Ensemble* was situated behind a velvet rope, evoking the conventions of installation associated with the historical period room.

The tradition of the model or period room in the fine arts context is a longstanding, but not an uncontraversal, one. For example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art's in New York's collection and installtion of period rooms began in the early 1900s. At midcenury, it was not uncommon for art museums to collaborate with department stores in developing displays of modern home furnishings. Exhibitions such as the Museum of Modern Art, New York's 1950 *Good Design*, which displayed over 250 of the "most progressive" products, were evisioned by

their organizers as a kind of buying guide for the savvy and stylish consumer. [86] Walking through the rooms, the museum visitor would encounter objects vetted by curators and approved for their design. A 1950 press release describes the criteria, "design intended for present-day life, in regard to usefulness, to production methods and materials and to the progressive taste of the day."[87] *Good Design* offered New York musueum visitors a chance to encounter, among a myriad of commodities, some of the finest examples of California design in the prestigious halls of MoMA. The exhibition, designed by California-based, creative couple Ray and Charles Eames, included their design work alongside objects by Eero Saarinen and less well known names responsible for soon to be ubiquitious products such as Henry Wright's vertical blinds.

Such exhibitions aruged for the progressive potential of modern design to level the lifestyle playing field and to "rid the United States not just of kitschy, poor reproduction furniture, but also of commercially reprehensible, styled-to-sell products in the streamlined deco mold."[88] In 1950 MoMA, in collaboration with the magazine *Women's Home Companion*,commisioned Los Angeles architect and outspoken progressive Gregory Ain to construct a freestanding exhibition home on display in the museum's garden. Ain had gained noteriety in 1940, having received a Guggenheim to research low cost housing solutions. The display home in the garden was to "demonstrate that modern architectural design is possible in the speculatively built house, which is the kind lived in by most American families."[89] Ain's

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[86] Museum of Modern Art January 1950 Press Release *Good Design.* (no page numbers).
[87] Ibid. Interestingly, the exhibition organizers conducted a poll asking visitors to vote for the best commodity on display. The Eames' did not break into the top ten. Henry Wright's vertical blinds were the clear favorite.
[88] Lawrence, Sidney "Declaration of Function: Documents from the Museum of Modern Art's Design Crusade, 1933-1950" *Design Issues*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring, 1985): 67.
[89] MoMA Press Release May 1905, 1.

1950 home in MoMA's backyard projects the potential of modern architecture to efficiently and pleasantly house the average American.

Oldenburg's design specimen did not feature furniture that could be purchased, but rather offered an alloy of a regionally specific historical modernism filtered through the consumer present for the benefit of an art world audience. Ain and Oldenburg both provocatively plopped down a Southern California modern into a Manahattan modern art context. Ain firmly believed in the power of modern architecture to shape human life for the better, while Oldenburg, working over a decade later, considers the erosion of such a promise. Oldenburg explores the potential side effects of the unchecked spread of California modernism, suggesting that the results of Ain's speculation for an accessible modern home might be a cheap or debased rather than progressive modernism.

Conceptions of the West Coast at Midcentury

"California is America, only more so." – Wallace Stegner

Jacqueline Kennedy's televised vision of historical furnishings selected according to rigorous criteria aspired to establish a standard of taste and aspired to cosmopolitan greatness. Her well-heeled, historically minded efforts worked to recover domestic space and taste from narratives of ease, affluence, leisure, or frivolity. The White House tour and restoration espoused a sense of national belonging predicated on participation in this partisan, historical taste. Kennedy's sense of American taste in interior design preferred the authentic and proven objects to achieve a historical reconciliation with the radical futurity of the New Frontier. Staking out a claim for American identity and creating a venue for national belonging through

the language of taste is, in this case, dependent on historical authenticity and emotional resonance. Turning to examples of furniture from the historical past in the northeast situated American domestic taste within networks of European exchange as the proving ground for America's cultural worth. As noted in the introduction and chapter one, the need to recover domestic taste from its exclusive association with postwar consumerism developed, through the First Lady's restoration project and tour, a kind of counter modernity that mitigated the dangers of "unthinking affluence." The threat of affluence related to the acquisitive impulses of cyclical middlebrow taste that reinvented traditional domestic aesthetics, while preserving the dynamics of gender and power of the mythical postwar family. The futuristic materials and aesthetics of postwar design contradict Kennedy's promotion of a domesticity rife with historical and emotional remainders. Further, the aspirational and resonant nature of the restoration program depends on antiquarian singularity of the décor. The rigorous alternative form of domestic taste cultivated by Kennedy's tour produced a sense of belonging appropriate to both fit the self-consciously exceptionalist and temper the futurist New Frontier. This chapter considers understandings and representations of the designed spaces of this acquisitive postwar domesticity, and the looming threat of mediocre homogeneity radiating from the "dusty collection of suburbs" known as Los Angeles.

Throughout the immediate postwar era and into the fifties and sixties, California represented a final frontier and fulfillment of a new American modernity. This modernity consisted of a combination of leisure, pleasure, and domesticity. This new domesticity formulated consumer citizenship as the crucial vector in national belonging. Importantly, a cycle of ceaseless reinvention and radical rejection of traditional forms of elite taste characterized the rhetoric around this new Californian modernity. Contemporary, often east coast based, critics,

such as Lewis Mumford, situated the emergence of a newly articulated *and* deplorable conception of the so-called good life squarely in Los Angeles. Mumford intoned in his 1961 book, *The City in History,* "the absurd belief that space and rapid locomotion are the chief ingredients of a good life has been fostered by the agents of mass suburbia. The *reductio ad absurdum* of this myth is, notoriously, Los Angeles."[90] Mumford goes on to link the rise of suburbia to the development of a hyper-privatized existence "untouched by the human spirit." [91] Mumford takes aim at Los Angeles's focus on automobility and the increased privatization of domestic life as dangerous precedents for the future of the American city.

Echoing Mumford's sentiments in her 1961 tract *The Death and Life of Great American Cities,* Jane Jacobs envisioned L.A. as a nightmarish future as one of the "cities at an earlier stage of the erosion process."[92] Jacobs and Mumford represent an elite, liberal east coast position on what cities ought to look like and L.A. defied their model, presaging and assuring the "great" city's decline. Southern California and Los Angeles were thus imagined as both a regressive future and active agent in the transformation of the consumer economy and the corollary emergence of a newly accessible and widespread taste culture. Los Angeles as the preeminent site for the production of popular media, such as film and television was envisioned in the early 1960s by many as the "perfect realization of the popular."[93] The association of Los Angeles with popular media and the visions of domestic taste it offered figured the diffuse metropolis as a lowbrow and decidedly vulgar sprawl. While urban theorists wrung their hands about Angeleno

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[90] Mumford, Lewis *The City in History,* 509.
[91] Ibid., 512.
[92] Jacobs, Jane *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* New York: Vintage Books, 1961:351.
[93] Whiting, Cecile *Pop LA: Art and the City in the 1960s* Berkeley: University of California Press: 2006: 6.

style urban and domestic life, the modern California lifestyle became a fixation, and mobilized and detailed in popular midcentury media.

In many ways, the Californian lifestyle entered into the national imagination as a rebellious child, a place envisioned as both distant and deviant. In an October 19, 1959 issue of *Life* magazine, the nationally syndicated and lushly illustrated publication staged a confrontation between "Squaresville" and "Beatsville," an encounter between the "two extremes of present day US life," represented by Hutchinson, Kansas and Venice, California.[94] The confrontation was dreamed up by three restless teens from Hutchinson who invited bohemian impresario and Venice denizen, Lawrence Lipton, author of *The Holy Barbarians*—the 1959 book detailing the "moral and social attitudes of the most controversial group in America today," to shake up their sleepy town. Lipton's book and articles such as these worked to put the nation's far coast and its lifestyle possibilities into a national imaginary and makes a virtue of its remote and exotic appeal. The teens learned that Lipton had accepted their "prankish" invitation and quickly rescinded their offer. *Life* caught wind of the exchange and stepped in and staged the cross cultural exchanged in the typographic space through photographs pitting the "far-out freedom of Beatsville" against the "homey pleasures of Squaresville."[95] The two-page spread that follows juxtaposes scenes of domestic life in Middle America and on the far coast. These photographs depict, on the one hand, the nuclear family, arranged neatly in a large and comfortably appointed living and gathered around the TV set in a scene befitting a Magnavox advertisement. Squatting atop a small table, the Venice pad features large abstract canvases or casually scattered about a room furnished with several mattresses on the floor, complete with a topless male visitor. The Californian family's indifference to the proper function of the furniture and modes of sociality

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[94] "Squaresville U.S.A. vs. Beatsville " *Life* September 21, 1959: 31
[95] Ibid.

associated with normative domesticity is correlated to a lack of taste. This vision of domesticity in Venice evidences, according to *Life,* "no interest in physical surroundings."[96] The patriarch of the Venice clan, states, "the continuity of a small town is static. It consists of seeing one's own life relived by your children. I would enjoy its serenity, but I am called to the frontier of so-called civilization, as bizarre as it is."[97] His attitude reflects the appeal of California as a frontier for the elaboration of new ways of living, unfettered by tradition. Designers and marketers seized upon the vision of a nonconformist Californian lifestyle and melded its informal and free spirited nature with the cookie cutter consumerism of Squaresville with to produce a new kind of postwar modernism.

The west coast operated as a lifestyle frontier, an imagined space upon which the postwar nation, in particular its advertisers and cultural producers, projected dreams for new affluent lifestyles. For example, *The Beverly Hillbillies,* the most popular television program of the early 1960s, staged an encounter between divergent forms of Americanness; an Appalachian moral fortitude is pitted against the moneyed superficiality of Los Angeles. The CBS produced program, which alongside other sixties shows such as *Green Acres* and *Petticoat Junction*, presented American-ness as wholesome, white, and folksy. For its part, *The Beverly Hillbillies* staged an encounter between urban and rural, the society elite and the temporally and geographically displaced country bumpkin. Offering recourse to the predictably dull suburban family sit-coms of the fifties, the *Hillbillies* survived the sixties, airing from 1962 to 1971.

In a feature article in the *Saturday Evening Post*, prolific journalist and critic, Richard Warren Lewis quipped that the program showed that "FCC Chairman Newton Minow's

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[96] Ibid., 33.
[97] Ibid.

wasteland was really a cornfield."[98] He goes on to state "some 36,000,000 votaries of the TV tube were feeding weekly on a canned succotash made up of the adventures of a rube family that strikes it rich and moves to the majestic lawns of Beverly Hills."[99] Lewis links the *Beverly Hillbillies* to the polemical television threat identified in by Minow in 1962 and mitigated by the First Lady's CBS produced White House tour. Lewis geographically links the Clampetts' corny lowbrow humor with the cornfields of the Midwest and mobilizes, just as Minow did in 1962, a gustatory metaphor to describe television viewing as a kind of food consumption. Lewis's article pejoratively describes the *Beverly Hillbillies* as a canned form of televisual nourishment and was interestingly neighbored in the *Saturday Evening Post* by a Campbell's soup advertisement extolling the virtues of the fresh and scientifically ideal ingredients that comprise their convenient and predictably quality canned soups. Indeed, as Lewis reports, critics lacerated the program. Producers responded to the critical censure by arguing that entertainment is best designed for " the people," pitting critic against populace. Lewis, thus, argues for the self-conscious genesis of the *Beverly Hillbillies*" as "deliberately concocted for mass tastelessness."[100] *Hillbillies* producer Paul Henning saw his viewing public as "gullible" and their televisual confection as "pure escape, fun, and release from tension" while also conveying the sense that "any heart from the show should come from the characters, not from any manufactured characters or speeches."[101] Henning, thus, attests to the bedrock "heart" of the characters, specifically the non-Californian Clampletts, in spite of the perception of the show as

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[98] Lewis, Richard Warren "The Golden Hillbillies" *The Saturday Evening Post* February 2, 1963: 30.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Paul Henning quoted in "The Golden Hillbillies" *The Saturday Evening Post* February 2, 1963: 34.

tasteless. This "heart" stems from the perceived resilience and appeal of an authentic and timeless Americanness linked to a certain geography and set of experiences and positions.

By figuring difference in terms of geography and locating the foundations of an authentic American identity in the rural poor, the *Beverly Hillbillies* configures its Beverly Hills setting as seemingly sophisticated but oftentimes unscrupulous un-American enclave. The program utilized a Californian elite to work through national nostalgia for a largely rural past and a sense of historical anxiety within the context of the acquisitive present. David Lubin argues in his book, *Shooting Kennedy,* that the program made a virtue of a "resurgent vein of populism" and an increasing wariness of authoritarian conformity as the sixties dawned.[102] The Clampetts' ascendancy to the upper crust reiterates the moral fortitude of the rural American in the face of the superficial, gaudy, and materialistic values and aesthetics of their haughty neighbors. The Clampetts' way of life, a product of their previous state of economic exclusion, and morality are figured as both geographically and temporally other to the vapidity of the palms and persons of their new Beverly Hills home. In addition to working through a sense of having lost rural America, *The Beverly Hillbillies* imagines California as a geography of affluence and a site of rapid and dramatic class ascendance. Within the context of Johnson's vision of a more evenly affluent American future, *The Beverly Hillbillies* interestingly stages the conflicts of taste and comportment involved with sudden class mobility through regional and aesthetic difference.

As Lubin suggests, the Clampetts satirically restage, in the program's credit sequence, the trauma of the Dust Bowl exodus to California of the 1930s. [103] The disenfranchised poor described in Michael Harrington's *Other America* were front and center on *The Beverly*

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[102] Lubin, David M. *Shooting Kennedy: JFK and the Culture of Images* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003:157.
[103] Ibid., 153.

Hillbillies and through the Clampetts' radical class transcendence, accomplished through luck alone, drew attention to the "acute poverty beneath the nation's conspicuous prosperity."[104] The encounter between Appalachia and Los Angeles is one of geographic, socioeconomic, and temporal disjuncture. The Clampetts' poverty rendered them morally and technologically out of step with sixties America. Communications scholar Horace Newcomb describes the delicate ideological balancing act *The Beverly Hillbillies* enacts as taking on the one hand a conscious cultural imperialism evident in the "timeless," at times childlike rusticity of the Clampetts and on the other a critique of contemporary culture. The program, by its narrative structure argues," 'we' [the viewers] are the ones with the deficient value structure." [105] Newcomb goes on to assert that the Clampetts' encounter with Los Angeles underscores the understanding that "truly American values" seem to have "disappeared in the sleazy world of California." [106] Further, the program visually restages this conflict as the Clampetts continue to don their rustic and anachronistic garb.

Just as the First Lady's tour sought to make a claim for a kind of fundamental Americanness in something other than modern glittering commodity culture, *The Beverly Hillbillies* hints at a fracturing of whiteness as the promise of postwar affluence is shown to be uneven and potentially rife with shifting moralities. The February 2, 1963 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post* imagines the Clampett clan in Grant Wood's *American Gothic*. This transposition destabilizes the Appalachian specificity of the Clampetts, transplanting them to Wood's Iowa 1930 homestead, working to render the TV family assertively and generally American. Wood's own anachronistic work imagines the original rural pair as "tintypes from my old family album,"

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[104] Ibid., 161.
[105] Newcomb, Horace "Appalachia on T.V.: Region as Symbol in American Popular Culture" *Appalachian Journal* Vol. 7, No. 1/2, (Autumn-Winter 1979-80): 160.
[106] Ibid.

figuring the morose pair as late nineteenth century farmers.[107] These temporal and geographic displacements across both Gothics flatten regional identity and work towards the consolidation of forms of national identity that link class and geography to produce nostalgic, compensatory embodiments of a perceived loss of or instability in valuable forms of American life. To this effect, in advance of the *Hillbillies* debut, program producers distributed "tintype-styled" photographs of the Clampetts and encouraged the actors to "slant the conversation toward the credibility of the show and the basic integrity of the roles they played."[108] The thirties and sixties, periods of economic transformation, internal migration, and attendant shifts in cultural and national identity, were marked by these depictions of compensatory and "reassuring" images of "timeless," rural, and white Americanness.[109] Lubin concludes, "The Clampetts riding into Beverly Hills offered millions of Americans the fantasy of possessing phenomenal wealth while remaining firmly rooted in traditional, down-home vales."[110] Lewis's *Saturday Evening Post* article featured another humorous restaging of canonical American imagery, situating Granny Clampett in the pose of John McNeil Whistler's radically unsentimental 1871 depiction of his mother. The *Saturday Evening Post's* restaging duplicates poses and garb while radically amending the austere environs. Granny finds herself accompanied by a garishly appointed hallway, complete with faux American Imperial style hall table, extravagant floral arrangement, gold leaf mirror, and a hint of the entryway's grand staircase. This transposition, staged in the

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[107] *Art Institute Essential Guide* Chicago: Art Institute, 2013: 156.
[108] Lewis, Richard Warren "The Golden Hillbillies" *The Saturday Evening Post* February 2, 1963: 34.
[109] Victoria Johnson explores televisual depictions of America's so-called Midwestern heartland, arguing that such depiction efface the real diversity of the Midwestern experience in favor of a reassuringly white, rural, centrist, and straight images that work as national objects of both ridicule and reassurance. See Johnson, Victoria *Heartland TV: Prime Time Television and the Struggle for National Identity* New York: NYU Press, 2008.
[110] Lubin, 62.

grand and garish halls of the imagined Beverly Hills mansion, questions the commensurability of Americanness and luxury, the very conflict that the First Lady's tour sought to resolve. One of the program's press agents attributed the program's overnight success to the fact that "there's an awful lot of identification in America with old clothes and old things."[111] The *Beverly Hillbillies,* it seems, made a virtue of the conflict between an anachronistic vision of American culture and an affluent Californian future. Using California as the site of this rags-to-riches narrative echoes Jacobs and Mumford in terms of envisioning Los Angeles as a space where the future happens first and where the nation's true moral quality might be tested.

This attentiveness to and visibility of southern California across media represents anxieties around the shape of American future. Time and again California is curiously figured as both cultural backwater while at the same time incubator for the future shape of the nation's economy, lifestyle, and built environment. The perceived incommensurate quality of California's traditional forms of elite culture and taste and its rapid economic and population growth provoke the kind of liberal handwringing, on the part of critics like Mumford and Jacobs is also evident in Newton Minow's vast wasteland speech which grappled with the power and challenge of television. Indeed, California, like television, rhetorically offered unwelcomed reminders of a quintessentially American vulgarity and consumerism as fodder for elite liberal cultural critics and populist formulations of the rural bedrock of American identity.[112] CBS's most popular offerings of the early sixties, the *Beverly Hillbillies* and Kennedy's White House tour reveal an internally conflicted and rhetorically complicated cultural front. The question remained: could, and in what ways, might television and California, Los Angeles in particular, be representative of

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[111] Lewis, 33.
[112] Lubin relates the upswing in interest in folk, country, and western music in the early sixties as part of a larger populist cultural front that produced a hospitable climate for the success of the *Beverly Hillbillies* (Lubin, 157).

the nation within a Cold War cultural configuration. President Lyndon Baines Johnson, after assuming power after the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963, redoubled efforts aimed at enriching the everyday lives of Americans through alleviation of poverty and through a commitment to institutions of art and education.

President Johnson paid a visit to Southern California to dedicate the University of California, Irvine in June of 1964. The new university was located on one of the only remaining tracts of ranchland, harkening back to Southern California's rustic agricultural beginnings. It would replace the rolling grassland that for decades played host to cattle and orange groves with architect and planner William Pereira's California Brutalist campus core. These forms flatten and erase a pastoral past with the architectural and technocratic language of progressive modernism and sixties liberalism as manifest in the inclusive aspirations of the public land grant university. The new university at Irvine thus serves as an excellent encapsulation of the utopian aspirations of a Californian as an imagined future for the whole of the nation moving forward from its rural agrarian past towards a modern future. Johnson noted in his address: "I have been in California for less than 30 hours and I already know why you are number one in the nation in so many fields. Your leaders have vision and your people have the vigor that put California on the top. There is a sense of urgency in California that translates good words into good deeds. I have come to California to ask you to throw off your doubts about America."[113] Johnson addressed a nation wracked with anxieties about its future shape and identity in light of uneven and unequal experiences of postwar affluence and the decline and realignment of the industrial city during the mid-1960s. For Johnson, California seemed a realm of possibility, where theory becomes

[113] Johnson, Lyndon Baines, Address to Dedicate University of California, Irvine, June 20, 1964. *The American Presidency Project.* Online.

practice and words become action. The Golden State, Johnson observes leads by example and foretells the future shape of the nation. In this brief speech he argued on two fronts: one that California is in fact a place of rigorous action and that success on this distant shore of the nation aids in putting to rest uncertainty over the character of the United States, the wealthiest nation in the world still beset by inequality.

Johnson, more so than the cosmopolitan internationalism of his predecessor, looked inward for indicators of cultural and national worth and would usher in a decade of civil rights and social programming in an effort to create an inclusive modern America. Johnson declared California as a bellwether for the progress of the nation. The futuristic promise of modern California would find ubiquitous expression not as an inclusive, racially integrated social utopia as Johnson may have wished, but rather as a lifestyle commodity and as a symbol of a universally accessible form of affluent life. Theorist of the American West, Wallace Stegner asserted that California was best understood as "America, only more so."[114] Stegner coined this phrase as a bold declaration in the late 1950s, that California was not only contributing to national culture, but was "national culture at its most energetic end." [115]Stegner's bold pronouncement was in part a cautionary note, suggesting that the principles governing development in California, characterized by both hedonism and innovation, might result in a dire overextension. Marketers would capitalize on the ecstatic promise of the coastal frontier and its lifestyle to package a mobile vision of California modernism.

California Modernisms

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[114] Stegner, Wallace *The West as Living Space* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1986:34.
[115] Ibid.

Alongside the beat generation's allegedly wholesale rejection of normative domesticity figured by *Life* in the 1959 Venice "pad" and the garish neoclassical mansion there emerged a consumable vision of a relaxed, leisure-oriented modern, middle class California design predicated on the shared values of individual expression and a rejection of tradition. [116] In addition to these visions of the Venice beat household and encounters between the untoward upper crust and the Beverly Hillbillies, a palatable and wholesome vision of newly accessible middle class suburban life in midcentury Southern California gained traction. The promise of the free standing, suburban single family home and gentle living productively merged with traces of the casual nonconformity of the Venice pad to present via the ever-powerful shelter magazine. These circulated visions of an idealized lily white, affluent but casual domestic life in modern suburban California worked to familiarize an anxious nation with the promise of the ranch house and pool awaiting them on the nation's western shore.

The introductory article of *Life*'s 1962 issue devoted to California suggests that, "unencumbered by rigid tradition and egged on by the newcomers to the state, California architects have let their imagination's loose in fresh uninhibited designs."[117] Midcentury shelter magazines such as *Interiors* or *House & Garden* distributed visions of life in California as a product of this delightful design aesthetic predicated on what design historian Pat Kirkham refers to as a "softening "of modernist aesthetic through elaborate staging.[118] It is such depictions of the modern interior "in context," part of an effort to shape taste and to forge a legible "official" modern style of Californian genesis as well as the contentious battle over L.A.'s modernist

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[116] Kaplan, Wendy and Staci Steinberger "The Dissemination of California Design 1945-1965" *Living in a Modern Way: California Design 1930-1965* Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011:
[117] "California Spectacle" *Life* October 19, 1962: 17.
[118] See, Kirkham, Pat *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995.

credibility, that, I argue, Oldenburg's *Ensemble* both cites and amends. The manifold process of representing, disseminating, and critiquing California modernism unfolded as a war of words and images, commercial, critical, and otherwise, offering competing interpretations and understandings of the far coast's modernity.

National familiarity with the architecture that would afford California lifestyles occurred in a slow and piecemeal process. Californian modernist architecture, exemplified by the work of Richard Neutra and Rudolf Schindler, caught the attention of eastern critics and curators. Despite inclusion of some major Californian works in the major taste and canon making exhibitions staged by the Museum of Modern Art in New York, curators Phillip Johnson and Henry Russell-Hitchcock would strategically minimize the social and lifestyle affordances of, for example Neutra's work, in favor of a celebration of the hard-edged rationality of a structure's aesthetic. The masculinist terms of engagement with midcentury modernity on the part of MoMA's espousal of the so-called International Style sought to expel the "softer side" of Californian lifestyle modernity that the shelter magazine market sought to embrace and promote as a consumable American modernism. This partial reception of California modernism speaks to the pieties of architectural history and criticism in the first half of the twentieth century and hint at the ways in which Los Angeles and its built environment escaped total or contextual comprehension.

Eminent architectural critic, historian, and practitioner Esther McCoy mused on the lack of respect afforded to the built environment of Los Angeles:

> There are sixty or so varieties of palms, but the word generally summons up such spectacular skyline trees as the California and Mexican fan palms and the Canary Island date palm. Any one of the three is an acceptable symbol for indolence. The opposite is the pine or fir, symbol of industry, self-reliance, free will, and discipline. If you substitute Los Angeles for palm tree, you have a summary of what pineland thinks of palmland. For instance: The palm tree can be moved with almost no root ball and survive. This readily

> translates into the following: The palm tree (i.e. Los Angeles) is shallow rooted, constantly on the move, shifty, shiftless with no sense of place. You can load palm trees on a truck like telephone poles, the root structure so mutilated that nothing can bring them back. But prop them against a wall, wire them to hooks, and they will spring to life.[119]

McCoy goes on to suggest that the thing that the palm, or Los Angeles, lacks is the "respect and approval of human beings."[120] Her enumeration of the judgments wielded by "pineland" at "palmland" are useful in describing the critical terrain around the architectural, cultural, design, and art criticism of the Californian scene. McCoy identifies a sense of placeless-ness that breeds both resilience and shallowness. The notion that L.A.'s modernism might carelessly or spontaneously spring up anywhere bespeaks the fears of an encroaching ubiquity of all things Angeleno.

McCoy herself was a transplant from the Midwest, moving to Santa Monica in 1938. After working as a draftsperson for Douglas Aircraft during the war years and later in the architecture office of Rudolf Schindler, she cultivated a writing practice devoted to carving out a West Coast genesis for American Modernism.[121] Her 1960 book, *Five California Architects,* represents a radical intervention into architectural history. She details the unrecognized contribution of Charles and Henry Greene in innovating the bungalow, the modernist houses of Irving Gill and Rudolph Schindler, Arts and Crafts designs by Bernard Maybeck. John Entenza, editor and publisher of the important west coast publication *Arts and Architecture*, introduced the aims of the McCoy's book as a critical revival of a largely forgotten or at least minimized moment in progressive modernist architecture. Entenza wrote: "These men, these five, half-remembered, occasionally honored, have now become, each in a separate way, an acknowledged

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[119] McCoy, Esther "Palms" *Piecing Together Los Angeles: An Esther McCoy Reader* Valencia: East of Borneo, 2012: 225
[120] Ibid., 227.
[121] Morgan, Susan "Writing Home" *Piecing Together Los Angeles: An Esther McCoy Reader* Valencia: East of Borneo, 2012: 13.

source, a kind of headwater…none of them are far enough in the past to have completely acquired the easy acceptance of the footnote."[122] He goes on to argue that McCoy's work operates as a necessary corrective that establishes the "great influence" and "enormous fertility of western American architecture."[123] He closes by stating that this school of architecture "will continue to enrich, infuriate, and enliven both the professional and nonprofessional world of building. This creative continuity is certainly not to be accomplished without wide differences of opinion, but it is doubtful that nay other American region in our time has so quickly developed such an invigorating architectural idiom."[124] Entenza evokes the mixed reception of this architectural past and its contemporary legacy and impact as well as reiterating the perceived rapidity with which a Californian idiom developed.

This volume recovered and established an historical foundation upon which a history of American Modernist architecture as distinctly Californian might be built. Thus, McCoy argues for the regionally specific as both exemplar and genesis of modern American architecture. In recovering the radical experiments of the first half of the twentieth century, McCoy underscores the progressive legacies of architects working on impressive but domestically scaled projects on America's far coast. It was precisely the domestic scale, compared to the rise of the skyscraper in Chicago and New York, in addition to geographic distance from ostensible centers of knowledge and culture that contributed to the relative obscurity of this vitally productive period in modernism. McCoy's postfacto effort to recover Los Angeles's architectural modernism and its progressive legacies for the modernism of the present points to the belatedness of mainstream

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[122] Entenza, John "Forward" *Five California Architects* Santa Barbara: Praeger Publication, 1975: vi.
[123] Ibid., vii.
[124] Ibid. , vii.

and architecturally-inclined America's reception of the L.A.'s art and culture. The single family home, but not necessarily the modernist, case study house, however, would become a vital symbol in the marketing of the Los Angeles as a center for the leisurely pleasures of the private, domestic sphere as well as an evocative for normative postwar life.

McCoy's work catalyzed a series of publications dealing with L.A. architecture, past and present. In 1965, for instance, David Gebhard and Robert Winter produced a comprehensive, architectural guidebook to the Southland published by the then newly founded Los Angeles County Museum of Art. They praise McCoy's "one woman crusade" for "awareness of Southern California's architectural heritage."[125] The book is chiefly comprised of maps and photographs to guide the ambitious architecture buff from point to point. They do however offer a cheerful, if not slightly cynical, introduction detailing the lifestyle appeal of Southern California, which they see as best characterized as a kind of celebratory materialism. The authors likewise identify the freestanding, single-family home as the site where the best and worst of this architecture may be encountered. A contrast is drawn between the architectural avant-garde of the thirties – Neutra, Schindler – and the more current, widely accepted forms such as ranch house style tract housing. California is, thus, positioned, for better or for worse in the opinion of Gebhard and Winter, as the site for the projection of American ideals and aspirations and its architecture and as such merits attention. Equal parts advanced, eccentric, and eclectic, the authors describe the architecture of mid 1960s Southern California as a kind of commodity, sometimes efficient, but most of the time gaudy. Adopting a flippant tone, Gebhard and Winter take no pains to hide their disdain for the contemporary architectural forms for their seemingly

[125] Gebhard, David and Robert Winter *A Guide to Architecture in Southern California* Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1965: 5.

compliant relationship to mass culture. As such, their guide remains largely historical and contends with the monumental or significant works of named architects.

The undercurrent of disdain for Californian culture, present in Gebhard and Winter's volume and enumerated in McCoy's incisive palm prose, relates to conceptions of the nation's geographic hierarchies of cultural value articulated in Kennedy's White House restoration. Speculating on the emergence of a truly American architectural style, McCoy asserted in a 1987 interview with Joseph Giovannini that Chicago birthed an American modernism that would only later truly take hold in California. She goes on to state, "since the East had always looked to Europe more than inward, or to the West, they did not really believe that anything was happening here."[126] The European orientation in the quest for national standing and identity is quite apparent in the First Lady's tour. Of course, Los Angeles bears the strong imprint of its Spanish Colonial past, but this is not the desired European tradition of English or French cultural heritage. Midcentury discourse condemning or critiquing Los Angeles has significant racial implications. The urban model from which L.A. deviates, as described by Mumford and Jacobs, favors Old World criteria. Further, the aggressive whiteness of popular commercial imagery of Los Angeles sought to mitigate the perceived foreignness of the far coast. The deep colonial past of Los Angeles, dating back to its founding in 1781, lent the city no credibility within the version of American history offered by both the First Lady and the architectural canon. The power of external, specifically northern European, Old World standards for the determination of aesthetic, and by association national worth, value and sophistication of American forms structured Kennedy's design power play and begins to make sense of the problem that coding a Californian modernity as distinctly American might pose within the cultural and ideological Cold War.

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[126] Esther McCoy, Oral History Tape 5 Side 2, Archives of American Art.

British architectural critic and historian, Reyner Banham, begins his seminal 1971 book *Los Angeles: Architecture of the Four Ecologies* by asserting that Los Angeles is "instant architecture and instant townscape."[127] Also indebted to the valiant efforts of McCoy, who Banham refers to as the "mother of us all", Banham's book still mulls over the shortcomings of Los Angeles, even as it endeavors to take the place seriously. The volume is founded on the principle of localism, suggesting, "one can most properly begin by learning the local language; and the local language of design, architecture, and urbanism is the language of movement."[128] He goes on to write: "The splendors and miseries of Los Angeles, the graces and grotesqueries, appear to me as unrepeatable as they are unprecedented. I share neither the optimism of those who see Los Angeles as the prototype for all future cities, not the gloom of those who see it as the harbinger of universal urban doom."[129] Banham, even as he offers a historical view of development, echoes McCoy's formulation envisioning a Los Angeles that sprang forth in an instant, unfettered by history or tradition, producing an idiosyncratic civic oddity. In an essay in *Architectural Design*, aimed at a British audience, Banham opens by explicitly naming the driving impulse behind the development of Los Angeles as distinctly non-utopian, but rather "straight forward capitalist exploitation of land and built structures."[130]

As Anthony Vidler points out in his introduction a new edition of the *Four Ecologies*, the book also sought to disabuse architectural historians of their modernist pieties that fetishized single structures and authors at the expense of a more inclusive, "ecological" approach to the

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[127] Banham, Reyner *Los Angeles: Architecture of the 4 Ecologies* New York: Penguin Books, 1971: 21.
[128] Ibid., 23.
[129] Ibid., 24.
[130] Banham, Reyner "L.A.: The Structure Behind the Scene" *Architectural Design* vol 41 (April 1971): 227.

urban whole and its inhabitants.[131] Banham, thus, relates the lack of historical consciousness or traditional hang-ups to the unfettered progress of capitalist exploitation. Banham, however, works to take this style-less and commercial architectural phenomenon on its own terms, a tendency in later 1960s architectural criticism to be explored in depth in chapter 3, arguing in favor of L.A.'s fundamental or even exceptional American-ness. Banham gave voice to the work of nameless architects and engineers whose work actually shapes everyday experiences with modernity.

Peter Plagens, writing for *Artforum* in 1971, took issue with the perceived boosterism of Banham,

> Los Angeles once had to defend itself against snotty Eastern culture critics, English novelists, and middlebrow gossip columnists like Herb Caen, who from Provincetown-on-the-Thyroid, condescendingly refers to 'that flat city down south.' The implication was always that Los Angeles, the world's most spacious city was in a Culture-and-Sophistication League with Dubuque, Rochester, and Provo, that it was basically "bush" and that by luck or by golly it possessed none of the brittle, knowing sophistication derived from real big city problems…. In fact LA succeeded so extraordinarily that now it finds itself plagued by a different observer: the chic debunker of anti-LA mythology […] who finds that LA is really a groovy place in spite of its evils and often because of them, if you know how to look at it right.[132]

Plagens, a native Angeleno, sees Banham endorsement as a kind of trendy acquiescence to the spiritual and environmental ruin of Los Angeles on the part of the "quick buck juggernaut."[133] Plagens importantly notes that Banham's analysis is the product of a nostalgic outsider, who wishes the city to retain its curiously outdated "modernistic" and fantastic built environment. Plagens suggests that while Banham takes LA on its own terms, he neglects the vital aspects of context and approves the commercialization and stripping down of progressive modernism. Such a debate while dating from ten years after the production of our object of interest is vital in

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[131] Vidler. Anthony "Introduction" *Los Angeles: Architecture of the 4 Ecologies* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000: xlvi.
[132] Plagens, Peter "Los Angeles: The Ecology of Evil" *Artforum* (December 1972): 76.
[133] Ibid., 76.

grappling with the contradictory readings of L.A.'s built environment as indicative of the morality and politics of place. . The ecological linkages developed by Banham insist on a correlation between identity, lifestyle and built environment. Banham and Oldenburg as outsiders, Plagens might argue, delight in the oddities and infelicities that beset and frustrate the average Angeleno. Banham's efforts at the dawn of the seventies to understand Los Angeles prove the power of the region in international debates about architecture, design, and identity.

The highly successful marketing and sale of a Californian modernity in the decades prior to Banham's intervention worked to repackaged the progressive modernism detailed by McCoy and others as a new domesticity premised on modern leisure. The desirability of modern design and architecture was often augmented in advertising and photography by decorative or textural patterning and houseplants. The volume and quality of photographs depicting the modern Californian interior, exemplified by the work of photographer Julius Shulman, conveyed the sense that this was a "state where modern interiors are the norm."[134] Initiatives such as the *Arts and Architecture* sponsored Case Study House program, which ran from 1945 to 1966, envisioned Los Angeles as a testing ground for the latest in accessible modern architecture and design. McCoy writes that the Case Study program intended to keep architecture from falling back into an "eclectic rut" as World War Two came to a close and building and production restrictions were lifted.[135] The program worked to "provide a forum for talented architects, and it was reasoned that their work would be best served by showing it in context with furniture, floor coverings, textiles, flatware, pots and pans, and even napery."[136]

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[134] Kaplan, Wendy and Staci Steinberger, 306.
[135] McCoy, Esther *Piecing Together Los Angeles: An Esther McCoy Reader* Valencia: East of Borneo, 2012: 172.
[136] Ibid., 172.

Simultaneous to the birth of the Case Study House Program, *House Beautiful* and *Good Housekeeping* commissioned the innovator of the ranch-style tract home, Cliff May, to produce a series of model homes. [137] McCoy and Evelyn Hitchcock write in their 1983 *California Ranch House* exhibition catalog, this "style insinuated itself into the twentieth century single family dwellings in cities and suburbs in Southern California, subsequently spreading to other parts of the United States."[138] The ranch style home proved extremely popular for both its adaptability and its romantic Western symbolism. Against the backdrop of a nation obsessed with the Western genre in television and film, the ranch style home offered an image of the frontier, transposed to suburban Connecticut, Phoenix, or New Jersey. [139] More than that, as environmental historian Carolyn Merchant argues, the ranch style house offers a kind of American "recovery myth," allowing for a return to an imagined pre-modern garden, to re-experience the opening of the frontier.[140] This correlation of suburban development, the spread of Californian architectural style, and the encounter with the material frontier of upward mobility will be explored in greater depth in chapter three.

It was the ranch, vaguely redolent with the myths of the Californian frontier that would come to dominate decades of sprawling suburban development to come rather than the soaring hillside experiments elaborated in the pages of *Arts and Architecture*. Lawrence Culver asserts that the "ranch house offered leisure as a way of life, crucial to the happiness of the American

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[137] Faragher, John Mack "Bungalow and Ranch House: The Architectural Backwash of. California." *Western Historical Quarterly* 32 (2001): 169.
[138] McCoy, Esther and Evelyn Hitchcock "The Ranch House": 11, Archives of American Art, Esther McCoy Papers, Exhibition Catalogs, Box 19, Folder 13.
[139] Allen, Barbara " The Ranch Style House in America: A cultural and Environmental Discourse" *Journal of Architectural Education* Vol. 49 No. 3 (February 1996): 163.
[140] Ibid., 163.

family."[141] A Californian structure thus came to embody a new American domesticity, one premised on leisure and ease. The utopian modernism of the Case Study program proved to be a mismatch for the American scene as the sixties progressed .The interior styling of the elite Case Study Project homes and inherently mobile photography of image makers like Shulman disseminated images of the informal design principles and leisurely lifestyles that would come to be enveloped by advertisers of suburban developments and middlebrow across the nation. The Case Study program would prove to be a major enterprise in taste making and would exert its greatest influence in terms of interior design rather than architecture. The appearance of the modern homes produced as part of the program deviated from expectations around domestic housing. It would, in the end, be the more historicist ranch house style modernism that would truly take hold architecturally.

Framing the Modern

In order to render the architectural experiments of postwar Los Angeles more accessible and appealing for a wider audience, photographers and production designers strove to produce an ideal tableau to augment the appeal of new modern styles. For instance, Shulman employed a portable garden that worked to visually severs this modest home from its connection to an urban infrastructure, as telephone pole gives way to foliate overhang. Such photographic framing supports McCoy's description of the spontaneously occurring nature of Los Angeles's built environment, as the infelicities of infrastructure disappear. The viewer is in some ways rendered an intimate and perhaps intrusive witness to the modern, peering through the dramatically foreshortened foliage. Shulman's virtuosic botanical mediations work to ensconce the modern

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[141] Culver, Lawrence *Frontiers of Leisure: Southern California and the Shaping of Modern America* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010: 232.

home in a selectively pastoral embrace. This kind of botanical framing recurs throughout Shulman's tenure as the most prolific and sensitive photographer of modernist architecture in Southern California. Shulman's contrivances echo McCoy's assessment of L.A.'s modernism as reminiscent of a "marriage of Walden Pond and Douglas Aircraft.[142] The romance of the retreat to nature conjoins in these images with the mythical machine that won the Second World War and assured postwar plenty. Further, the inclusion of foliage lends the homes a false maturity, allowing the gleaming boxes to appear to have settled into their sites.

Shulman's iconic 1960 photograph of Pierre Koenig's Stahl House, a product of the Case Study program, features several potted plants and a partial view of a capacious lounge chair in the foreground. Several of these seemingly domesticated plants spill over their ceramic vessels growing towards to the abyss below the improbably perched home, either that or the cliff side vegetation has gone feral and crept onto the patio to threaten its potted cousin. This darkened spatial void gives way to the orderly expanse of the lighted grid of Los Angeles below. Two well dressed women roost within the celestial, glassed cage. Their ghostly presence, afloat above the distant city and the viewer's position as intruder peering into their glassy realm, renders the home at once both monumental and desirable and as well as immaterial and precarious. These women do not quite inhabit but rather witness and leverage this momentary architectural spectacle. Their figures are just as crucial to the legibility of this scene of outdoor-indoor urban-non-urban living as the potted plants that flank the viewer's encounter with the image. It is this cinematic and voyeuristic form of architectural photography that characterized much of the imagery that disseminated a vision of modern Los Angeles.

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[142] McCoy, Esther "West Coast Architects" *Arts and Architecture* August 1965.

McCoy brilliantly lampoons such architectural photography and the impact of an "education" in modern taste in an essay for the *New Yorker* titled, "The Important House." Her essay from the immediate postwar years takes aim at the postwar boom in modern architecture in Los Angeles and satirizes the experiences of a wealthy LA couple in their new," important," and modern home. As they set about preparing their home to be photographed, McCoy sets the anxious scene, as the lady of the house frets about her waylaid couch, "her husband came through a sliding glass door from the paved terrace and walked across the pale flax carpeting as if he were stepping over eggs."[143] McCoy captures the couple's vanity and anxiety about their "important" home and describes their modernist indoctrination, as the husband quips: "before we built the house, I never knew one lamp from another."[144] With her husband dispatched to his Saturday golf game, our protagonist readies the home for the arrival of a photographer, proudly displaying the heirloom silver her aunt had given her as a housewarming gift. The architect and photographer arrive with their arms full of pilfered tree branches, potted plants, and trimmed ivy to Scotch tape to the barren exterior walls of the new construction, again emphasizing the centrality of the botanical frame. As the modern impresarios prepare to photograph the living room, they express the need for a bowl to complete the composition; our homeowner offers her antique, claw footed silver sugar bowl. It is roundly rejected in favor of a simple earthenware bowl. Our protagonist's sentimental attachment to and emotive resonance of the heirloom bowl has been destabilized by the "importance" of their modern Los Angeles home. "Now, she began to look critically at the claw feet of the sugar bowl. They seemed, somehow, deformed."[145] The

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[143] McCoy, Esther "The Important House" *Piecing Together Los Angeles: An Esther McCoy Reader* Valencia: East of Borneo, 2012: 216
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid., 220.

radical erasure of both the tastes or traces of the homeowners presence, whose very home and subjectivity are refashioned in an anonymous modern style.

McCoy's rehearsed this comical California narrative, for the benefit of the *New Yorker*'s elite, or at least aspirational, audience. At midcentury, the *New Yorker* was on the rise as *the* sophisticated American publication. If *Life* depicted the American scene through lush celebratory photo spreads, the *New Yorker,* in its distinctive literary style, "acknowledge[d] both the ideal of a triumphant America united in affluent consensus and the troubling dilemma of a less-than-perfect democracy."[146]As Ann Munson suggests, the *New Yorker* not only" represent[ed] a world that existed, it suggested possibilities for a world that might be."[147] Echoing the expanding readership of the publication, McCoy's piece foreshadows the spread and eventual trickling down of modern design from the realms of the elite domesticity to become broadly accessible and ubiquitous, as evidenced in Banahm's later rhapsodic description of L.A.'s playful, modern built environment. "The Important House" also questions the correlation of affluence and cultural sophistication as the homeowners come across as eager status seekers without an adequate understanding of modern taste. Still, the architect and the photographer do not come out unscathed as their desire to evacuate all evidence of human use and emotion manifests a certain modernist hubris. McCoy's savvy skewering of the Angeleno quest for a new sort of cultural capital also enacts a critique of the pieties and pretensions of modernism and their remoteness from lived reality. Describing a mode of interior decorating unconcerned with history, use, or human presence, McCoy's essay predicts the conditions that in some ways prompt Kennedy's

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[146] Corey, Mary F. *The World Through a Monocle: The New Yorker at Midcentury* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999: x-xi.
[147] Munson, Ann Sobiech "Lewis Mumford's Lever House" *Writing Design: Words and Objects* ed. Grace Lees-Maffie. London: Berg, 2012: 123.

historical intervention and development of an emotive form of official taste as well as the eventual "importance" of L.A. modernism.

In a 1960 editorial for the *Los Angeles Times* McCoy again takes up the matter of the "important house." In it the owner of one of these "important" homes bemoans life in his glass cage: "It gave me a nervous breakdown. I'd wake up in the morning and outside the glass wall would be twenty architecture students from Helsinki focusing cameras on the house. We got so we couldn't eat on the terrace. Some art historian would walk through the hedge and sit down at the table and start asking questions."[148] This sense of historical and aesthetic surveillance and policing of the modern environment are framed as a nuisance of sorts. The historicization and documentation of the important, modern home calls upon the homeowner to render their living spaces legible according to the dictums of an imagined lifestyle and value system that trumps the heirloom and favors a botanical and decorative theatricality, as opposed to evidence of human habituation and use. Further, such stagings conflate domestic and artistic tastes and spaces as the merge into an artful commodity image. The *Bedroom Ensemble* engages these literary and photographic representations of the modern interior and grapples with these ideas of human use and theatrical staging.

In a 1960 letter to Esther McCoy, author and native Angeleno, Ray Bradbury humorously skewers the modernist interior. He recalls an evening spent at a modern L.A. home:

> It reminded me of the drunk tank at Lincoln Heights Jail. It could be hosed out easily, that was about all that seemed functionally adequate about it. Living areas to me do not mean cement or linoleum floors. Probably personal bias. I like them in playrooms, kitchens, dining rooms, where "hosing off" can be expected, but there is something cold and rebuffing to the spirit in linoleum or cement in the living areas. This was the essence of the cold and rebuffing aura in [the house]. Also, the furniture, and I do not exaggerate, was made to fall out of. Not once, but several times in one evening and the next day,

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[148] McCoy, Esther "Wanted Architect (Preferably a Dead One)" *Piecing Together Los Angeles: An Esther McCoy Reader* Valencia: East of Borneo, 2012: 242.

> perfectly sober people fell out of some of the chairs, which in their anxiety to resemble spiders with more than a few legs missing, wound up being incredibly off-balance.[149]

Bradbury's narrative of the comical non-functionality of modern design questions the promotion of aesthetic taste over comfort, warmth, or function. Oldenburg would capitalize on that mismatch of taste and function as he elaborated his own take on the modern Californian interior. Bradbury like McCoy and Banham seeks to shift the discourse around modern architecture and design away from the academy and towards an appreciation of the lived experience of the modern. McCoy, Bradbury, Banham, Plagens, and Oldenburg see both humor and depravity among the pieties and ecstatic promises of modernism. As McCoy demonstrates, California's built environment was already modern in the thirties. The debates over the significance and impact of postwar California modernism center on the ways in which the often discredited, distant, potentially hedonistic—or at least leisure-seeking region would radically alter the course American development and identity. The rise of the ranch house, after all came at the expense of the Cape Cod, that bastion of colonial thrift and purity. Los Angeles, then, was already past its authentically modern moment when Oldenburg encountered the city's curious late modernism.

L.A. Arts and Oldenburg's Venice Sojourn

The attitudinal tendencies expressed in the literature grappling with California's growing cultural power are echoed in assessments of the relative quality of the Los Angeles art scene. Well-established New York art critic and curator Henry Geldzahler, in a 1964 article for *Vogue,* "The Second City of Art," argues that Los Angeles has, "despite its inevitable growing pains…staked out a place for itself on the current art scene."[150] Geldzahler's generously

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[149] Letter dated May 3, 1960 from Ray Bradbury published in *Piecing Together Los Angeles: An Esther McCoy Reader* Valencia: East of Borneo, 2012: 232.
[150] Geldzahler, Henry "The Second City of Art" *Vogue* September 15, 1964: 62

patronizing article writes against those that would suggest "Los Angeles was obviously vulgar and lacking in style," and concedes that in order to truly assess the contemporary art scene a visit to LA is "becoming a necessity."[151] Geldzahler's report from the field produces a radical distance even as it makes a case for L.A.s newfound worth. Again, *Vogue*, a national publication like *Life,* envisions a non-Californian audience speculating about the distant shores of California. The October 1962 issue of *Life* discussed previously features short, splashy photographic profiles of a few Los Angeles artists. Many of these artists are transplants, who, as one of them quips in the short feature have been "infected" by the California way of life. [152] The artists included, all male, are depicted, not toiling in their studios, but rather with the masculine, and to a certain extent Anglo middle class trappings of a leisurely west coast lifestyle. From golf and motorcycles to skin diving and surfing, these artists embody the infectious nature of the leisurely lifestyle. These staged photographs suture together a consideration of art-making with performance of lifestyle. The paintings witness and augment the California lifestyle and purposively embody a tone that is worlds away, with exception of an emphasis on masculine bravado, from *Life* magazine's 1949 depictions of the brooding and workman-like Jackson Pollock.

As Cecile Whiting argues in her book, *Pop L.A.*, certain segments of L.A. art world "regarded the bid of Los Angeles for cultural ascendance as a form of regionalism that nevertheless avoided the pitfalls of provincialism."[153] The *Life* spread echoes this formulation, in as much as the L.A. art world proudly asserted its Angeleno quality at the same time it relied on staid networks of cultural power, made visually manifest through *Life*'s emphasis on male artists'

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[151] Ibid., 62, 64.
[152] "Artists Take to the Place: Wide Open and Way Out" *Life* (October 19, 1962): 83.
[153] Whiting, 10.

work in the culturally acceptable post-painterly abstract style. Whiting also notes that propensity of visiting and migrant artists to make as the core of their work a meditation on the promise of L.A.'s boosters that perhaps drew them out there in the first place. By the early sixties, as Serge Guilbault argues, L.A.'s local bohemian art scene was superseded by a commercial gallery scene and a taste for the city's new definition which emphasized "cleanliness, modernity, transparency, and plasticity."[154] Guibault's polemical descriptors importantly suggest the merging of the aesthetics and commercial viability of L.A.'s modern architecture and design with avant-garde art.

The infectious quality of the leisurely Southern California lifestyle and the easy going quality of the emergent, early sixties L.A. art world as depicted in these artists' portrait is echoed by gallerist and 3M heiress Virginia Dwan as she recalls: "it was a playful period.[155] While much has been made of the Ferus Gallery's prominent role in the display and promotion of New York artists, particularly those working in a Pop idiom, Dwan's Westwood gallery and the patronage of Dwan herself were instrumental in developing the Manhattan to Los Angeles art circuit. Further, as Whiting has argued, the Ferus Gallery "portrayed a new type of creator: young, handsome, heterosexual, and inspired by a hedonistic California lifestyle."[156] In its promotional materials, Ferus echoed the casual and masculine tone of *Life* magazine's artist profiles. As Jessica Dawson has pointed out, Dwan's role in the development of the L.A. art scene and in defining the taste and art market of the early sixties has been historically minimized.[157]

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[154] Guilbault, Serge "The Anti-Square Merry-Go-Round Show: Action and Politics in Los Angeles" *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art 1945-1980* :65.
[155] Drohojowska-Philp, Hunter *Rebels in Paradise: The Los Angeles Art Scene and the 1960s* New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2011: 109.
[156] Whiting, 71.
[157] Dawson, Jessica "Whatever happened to Virginia Dwan?" *X-tra* Vol 14. No. 2 (Winter 2011).

My Country 'Tis of Thee, a little discussed show staged at Dwan in the late fall of 1962 and on the heels of Andy Warhol's solo show at Ferus, gathered together a diverse group of artists and works to stake a claim for a "new American painting," as the catalog essay by Gerald Nordland suggests. As Whiting, Dawson and numerous others have pointed out, 1962 marked the official entrée of Pop art into the L.A. art scene. Typically, the shows mounted by Ferus dominate this narrative. Spanning two generations of artists working in pop, neo-dada, and assemblage idioms, *My Country 'Tis of Thee* brought together Tom Wesselman, James Rosenquist, Andy Warhol, Larry Rivers, Robert Rauschenberg, Marisol, Roy Lichtenstein, Ed Kienholz, Jasper Johns, Robert Indiana, Charles Frazier, John Chamberlain, and Oldenburg. Dwan envisioned the diverse group that comprised the show in conversation with the French New Realists, such as Arman, Niki de St. Phalle, and Yves Klein whom she had previously exhibited. This lineage echoes the approach of the Sidney Janis Gallery, where Oldenburg would exhibit his *Bedroom Ensemble* in 1964. Janis and Dwan both envisioned an expansive formulation of genre and importantly imagined Pop art as a transatlantic phenomena and staged diverse group shows alongside significant monographic exhibitions.

This ambitious group show, while mortgaged on the cachet of New York artists, contains an interesting and perhaps semi-ironic nationalist theme and represents Oldenburg's first foray into Los Angeles as an artist rather than an attaché. Further, Nordland's essay suggests that these artists are after "associations that may run deeper" than abstract ennui of abstract expressionism and fixate on a collective American-ness. [158] Nordland argues that these artists are "new patriots" expressing a sophisticated grasp on their material surround. Striking a tone reminiscent of Allan Kaprow's 1959 essay "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," he suggests that this generation of

[158] Norland, Gerald *My Country Tis of Thee* Dwan Gallery, November 1962: not paginated.

artists "are able to see formal values in beer can emblems, in the fractured marvels of the cropped photograph, the innumerable flashes of billboards, TV, pin-ball machines, comic strips, and supermarket stands of endless and standardized NUPRODUCTS [sic]."[159] Dwan would later state that these artists began to embrace that "which had been considered…déclassé and…not intellectual before…. Suddenly, there's this embracing of the very things which one was supposed to consider beneath them."[160] The correlation of this new orientation towards a debased American material culture radically and self-consciously reevaluates the hierarchies of good taste, just as the modern architecture impresarios eschewed heirloom silver in favor of the mass-produced vessel. The exhibition, *My Country 'Tis of Thee*, the patriotic song that borrows its tune from *God Save the Queen*, makes the case that the true stuff of American-ness lies not in the colonial heirloom or existential brooding but in the comic book, coffee cup, movie star, or beer can.

These works and this show were unmistakably concerned with an assessment of American material culture and worked to cultivate a new way of seeing, interpreting, and representing the American scene. As if to usher in or oversee a new conception of taste, Marisol's 1962 sculpture *The Kennedys*, a life size depiction of the nation's first family rendered in stiff wooden relief, stood to greet visitors to Dwan's Westwood space. (Figure X) Marisol transforms the first family into monumental furnishings, in a way. The blunt forms materializing schematic likenesses of First Lady, President, and their two small children might be seen as totemic gatekeepers. These rectangular masses of wood stood erect directly in front of Oldenburg's contribution to this curious show, the humble painted plaster 1962 work, *Cup of Coffee*. The ubiquitous form of cup and saucer, installed low to the ground on a miniature plinth,

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[159] Ibid.
[160] Virginia Dwan interview, March 27, 1984, tape 3: 11.

is of the any-old-diner quality. Henry Seldis, the so-called deadly critic writing for the *Los Angeles Times* would dismiss Dwan's exhibition and New Realism generally as simply humorous or cynical.[161] Dawson argues that "the exhibition palette and themes suggested patriotism's intersection with consumption," the very correlation the First Lady worked to unravel through her emphasis on the singular heirloom as the signifier of Americanness.[162]

Despite the mixed reception of the show and its relative historical obscurity, the gallery and Dwan herself as a gallerist and tastemaker were able to operate outside of market constraints and had a significant impact on the careers of Oldenburg and others. Dwan would later sponsor Oldenburg's sojourn to Los Angeles. Oldenburg and his then wife and collaborator Patty Mucha settled in to a "pink cement block" on the Venice canals early in 1963.[163] In L.A., Oldenburg was drawn to the same fantastic facets of the built environment that would later strike Banham as quintessentially Angeleno. Oldenburg's assesses his time in the western metropolis in 1966:

> L.A. is many things and many things to many people. To me it is the paradise of industrialism. L.A. has the atmosphere (my selected part of it) of the consumer, of the home, the elegant neat result, like the frankfurter in its non-remembered distance from the slaughterhouse.[164]

This paradise of the tidy finished, domestic products would provide fodder for Oldenburg's 1963 solo show at Dwan as well as for his *Bedroom Ensemble* to be installed at Sidney Janis Gallery in early 1964.

Into the Bedroom

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[161] Bedford, Jennifer Wufflson "More Light Less Heat: The Intersection of Henry Seldis's Art Criticism and the Career of Henry Moore in America" *Sculpture Journal,* Vol. 17.2 (2008): 89.
[162] Dawson.
[163] Drohojowska-Philp, 109.
[164] *Claes Oldenburg: An Anthology* Washington, D.C. and New York: National Gallery of Art and Solomon Guggenheim Museusm, 1996: 174.

Oldenburg had the *Bedroom Ensemble* fabricated in 1963 in one of the many small-scale machine shops that dot the landscape of West Los Angeles at the tail end of his short stint living and working in Venice, California. Marking a transition from the cottage industrial process—which relied on the sewing labor Mucha— the artist had favored previously, the *Bedroom Ensemble* considers the culture of privacy and domesticity permeated by new industrial materials Oldenburg found to be indigenous to the Los Angeles lifestyle. This shift in process also reflects the fetishization of the end product from the vantage point of the consumer that Oldenburg experienced in his Venice environs. The room was constructed for a show in Manhattan at the Sidney Janis Gallery as part of the 1964 show "Four Environments by Four New Realists," a show that also included work by George Segal, Jim Dine, and James Rosenquist. The Four Environment's show and Oldenburg's contribution in particular garnered quite a bit of media attention. Tracking the reception of the *Ensemble* opens this discussion to a broader consideration of the work's formal, material, and literary allusions in the moment of its first display. The network of references and interpretations that critics offered to describe their encounter with Oldenburg's procovative suite elaborates the contours of a rich intellectual and taste culture and conversation into which this work entered.

The Sidney Janis gallery took a strong interest in Oldenburg's work and exhibited it extensively throughout the 1960s, mostly under the moniker New Realism, rather than pop, just as it had been marked at Dwan. The Janis Gallery also boasted strengths in their display of nonwestern art, ranging from the South Pacific to the Precolumbian. Installation shots from such shows reveal an approach to the gallery interior not disimilar from the ways in which modernist interior described earlier in this chapter would be photographed and advertised. The incorporation of potted plants and sleek plinths again blur determinations of domestic and artistic

taste within the space of both gallery and home. In an interview with critic John Coplands, Oldenburg suggests that his installation was inspired by the "vaultlike presence of the Janis Gallery's front rooms." He goes on to assert: "they reminded me of an apartment—that strange gray carpet and those little gray rooms—a Central Park West apartment." [165] Oldenburg's conflation of the Sidney Janis Gallery with a modern Manhattan flat renders his insertion of a Californian vulgarity all the more powerful as he equates domestic space with that of the gallery.

Oldenburg asserted in relation to the work: "Everything was made in Venice, California because I wanted to feel the West, and I came back with these enormous simple forms. A different type of thing—it didn't look right at all in New York."[166] Not only were the forms that Oldenburg derived from his time in L.A. out of place in Manhattan, the artist describes his own sense of dislocation upon returning to Manhattan. In a 1968 conversation with curator and critic Barbara Rose, Oldenburg describes his transition: "When I came back from Los Angeles, I couldn't live in the city, I had to live in New Jersey for a while, in a motel, to make my way back."[167] Oldenburg's dramatization of the cultural and spatial gulf between New York and Los Angeles restages a fish out of water scenario. He returned to Jane Jacob's Manhattan and its old world spatial regime and perhaps to his old body of work, which as Joshua Shannon has argued grappled with the vestiges of the "old New York." Shannon suggests that the 1960 sculptural streetscapes grapple with urban renewal and represent "a cogitation on the changing shape of New York City."[168] He argues that *The Street,* comprised, as it was of crudely painted cardboard constructions "allows us to recognize the ways in which the debate over the city was

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[165] Coplands, John "The Artist Speaks" *Art in America* (March and April 1969): 71.
[166] Oral History Interview with Claes Oldenburg, February 16, 1965, Archives of American Art.
[167] Claes Oldenburg in Conversation with Barbara Rose December 12, 1968, Disc 4, Getty Research Institute.
[168] Shannon, Joshua *The Disappearance of Objects :New York Art and the Rise of the Postmodern City* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009: 16.

fundamentally a debate over the degree of abstraction desirable in everyday life." [169] Oldenburg seeks to bring the Los Angeles frankfurter, the abstraction of the abattoir in direct contact with the slaughterhouse, New York. Oldenburg's difficulty in transitioning back into urban Manhattan after his stay in his "pink cement block" and his utilization of a motel to make ease his culture shock reveals his sense of the extreme cultural gulf between the two cities. The transitional motel, a symbol of the postwar popularization of modern architecture and design, also structured much of the critical reception to the work.

Geldzahler's article and the grumblings of Jacobs and Mumford establish New York as the operative baseline for ideal cities and art worlds. As Shannon argues and Jacobs documented, New York was on the verge of a major shift in the early 1960s, one that was characterized by the encroachment of a Californian modernism on Manhattan's old world logic. 1955's *Rebel without a Cause* and 1961's *West Side Story* submit popular renderings of the gulf between the cultural worlds of the New York and Los Angeles. Not dissimilar in terms of the narratives, the two tales of damaged teenaged psychology climax in a knife fight. The Jets and the Sharks stage their rumble literally in the bowels of the city, beneath the newly developed freeways of master builder Robert Moses renewing New York. The opening prologue of *West Side Story*, as Samuel Zipp, has sensitively observed in his book *Manhattan Projects* presents a tangle of nineteenth century tenements, narrow alleys, and asphalt playgrounds. Filmed on location on the lower west side, the cat and mouse antics of the teenaged rivals pause briefly on a towering pile of rubble, bringing into view a soaring modernist apartment building. [170] This

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[169] Ibid.
[170] Zipp, Samuel *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewl in Cold War New York* Oxford: Oxford Unversity Press, 2010.

confrontation of historic "slum" and modernist "solution" conveys the transformed and ever transforming nature of the Cold War New York that Oldenburg inhabited.

Depicting teen angst on the far coast, *Rebel without a Cause,* for its part, stages its somewhat anti-climactic, but precipitous battle high above the city, sharing an altitude with the women perched in Pierre Koenig's celestial cage, at the Griffith Park Observatory. Under clear blue skies, the white middle class suburban youth enter into an uninspired scrap high above Los Angeles. The film suggests that their ennui stems from their forced participation in the tenets of all American suburban life, rather than the narrative of disenfranchisement from economic plenty and delinquency relayed in *West Side Story*. *Rebel*'s teenagers operate at a radical remove from the city and are constricted by their proximity to trappings of postwar affluence. Los Angeles, for its fortunate citizens, buffers one against the violence and jostling of urban life and offers radical privatization and confinement and, as *Rebel* and Oldenburg's *Bedroom* both suggest, captivity and atomization are not without their consequences.

Oldenburg's desire to bring the feeling, affect, and look of the western United States, like bringing back news of the natives from some far off land, reveals a notable geographical drift with regard to issues of taste and design. Bringing the sensations of Angeleno domestic cofinement and infrastructural detachment as evident in *Rebel without a Case* to the decaying, but freewheeling ruins of the renewing city in *West Side Story*, Oldenburg works to render the contrast between the coasts and offers a coy comment on this invasive species of modernism. Oldenburg's role in triangulating and displaying coastal difference is a radically understudied aspect of the piece. The Bedroom Ensemble, then, seems to be a kind of poached pelt from Oldenburg's west coast safari. What is more, the unsettling vulgarity of the *Bedroom Ensemble* bolsters a sense of New York's cultural superiority, positioning California as a distant, tasteless

frontier. Oldenburg's contribution to the show, that as the artist puts it simply didn't look right in New York, meditates on the taste parameters of nation, gallery, and interior.

The *Bedroom Ensemble* also toys with expectations around furnishing, in that the fiction of modern furniture as being suited to fit the human body has been foreclosed. Recalling the room of comically uninhabitable modernism that so vexed and amused Bradbury, Oldenburg produces a room that is both familiar and alienating. The bedroom is thoroughly, by virtue of its repellent, vinyl-chic materiality and skewed perspectival geometry, evacuated of human presence. The legibility of domestic images, in the case of both Shulman and Oldenburg and innumerable midcentury advertisements, stems from spatial coherence, a sort of caricature of planar organization taken to its most recognizable and schematic extreme. The forms of Oldenburg's room are unresponsive and non-organic, aggressive corners protrude. The ensemble amounts to a literal transference of a ubiquitous two-dimensional convention to three dimensions where it loses its organizational thrust and optical logic – and rather results in disorientation, underscoring the commonness of this sort of spatial alienation. This spatial alienation and evacuation of human presence recalls the gerrymandering of the "important house" in McCoy's article. Alienation or estrangement is the end result of the Bedroom's fantastic and results from efforts to rationalize, modernize, or to make legible the bedroom in Cold War America. The roped off space of the *Bedroom Ensemble* underscores this sort of disjuncture between the model room and its application in everyday life.

Engaging with the language of minimalism, positioned at the time as the "serious" polar opposite of Pop's playfulness, Oldenburg quipped that the *Bedroom* with its irrational geometry "could have been called composition for rhomboids, columns and disks."[171] The large oblique

[171] *Oldenburg: An Anthology* Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1995: 204.

forms that comprise the room push the modern interior to its pure geometric, minimal forms, while the textures, materials, and surfaces exude a maximal almost prurient vulgarity. The combination of the geometry of minimalism and the materials of home and fashion problematizes the gendered conceptions of Pop and Minimalism. Are not the crystalline surfaces of Donald Judd's objects of the same moment just as luxurious and evocotive of the domestic commodity? Indeed, as Rosalind Krauss quipped: "Judd's plastic tinged with dayglow bespoke the hip patios of California"[172] As Krauss muses on the origins of and quest to legitimize so-called minimalism, she finds the patio to be more pertinent than the Constructivists in accounting for Judd's pruriently colorful forms. From the sheen of the leather to the aquatic surfaces of the formica to the implausibly fluffy faux fur rug, the *Bedroom* offended and titilated its critics with its maximal materialism.

Oldenburg writes of the *Ensemble*: "Hard surfaces predominate. Texture becomes photographed texture in the surface of Formica. Nothing real or human. A landscape like that on the cover of old geometry books…the bedroom as rational tomb."[173] This delight in the artificial – of both materials and spatial configuration – highlights the potentially extreme capacities of perspectival organization and new industrial materials. The blue Formica of the *Ensemble*'s dresser arrests and entraps organic aqueous elements into its plastic surfaces while the faux animal hides evince no relationship with their authentic cousins that stalk the African countryside. These inorganic materials that adorn and give texture and shape to the room's rational linearity present the inverse of the botanical found in Shulman's photographs and detailed in McCoy's narrative of the "important" home. In this instance these inorganic

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[172] Krauss, Rosalind "Sculpture in the Expanded Field" *October* Vol. 8 (Spring 1979): 32.
[173] *Claes Oldenburg: Anthology*: New York: Guggenheim Museum/National Gallery of Art, 1995: 204.

decorative augmentation underscore rather than deflect or deflate the potential inhumanity or excessive newness of the modernist interior, making its hard edges harder, while also suggesting that brute geometry is not immune to the machinations of poor taste.

In her review of the Four Environments show for *Arts and Architecture*, Dore Ashton—the east coast correspondent for the Los Angeles based magazine—connected Oldenburg's fixation on poor taste with a lack of moral fiber or fortitude. She writes: "This roomful of vulgarity by Oldenburg does characterize the desolate, hopelessly characterless environment of a certain America, an America which Nabokov interprets in *Lolita.*"[174] Ashton provocatively links the taste culture depicted by Oldenburg with the landscape of furtive sexual deviance. Ashton ultimately dismisses Oldenburg's work as nothing but a one-liner. However, her invocation of Vladimir Nabokov's controversial but celebrated novel of 1959 interestingly links aesthetics or taste with a lack of virtue. Her accusation that Oldenburg depicts this "certain America" establishes a moral geography of class difference manifest in the *Bedroom Ensemble*'s spectacle of bad taste. Vulgarity, in this reading, is not simply a matter of decoration but reflective of a deeper and more troubling problem in American culture. According to this logic, deviance from an approved modernist austerity or respectful historicism indicates an untrustworthy shiftlessness. Just as McCoy associated indolence with the palm tree and strength of character with the noble fir, so too does Ashton link a Californian bad taste with moral depravity.

Nabokov's book certainly associates bad taste with deviance as it details the sexual obsessions of its middle aged narrator, Humbert Humbert, as he endeavors to consummate his insatiable desire for the preteen daughter of his landlady and later wife, Lolita Haze. Undergirding and giving depth and specificity to the erotic content of Nabokov's satiric novel is

[174] Ashton, Dore "Four Environments" *Arts and Architecture* (February 1964): 9.

a fine grain attention to the spaces and material culture of this lopsided and perverse obsession. Before laying eyes on Lolita, Humbert tours the home of her mother:

> But there was no question of settling there. I could not be happy in that type of household, with bedraggled magazines on every chair and a kind of horrible hybridization between the comedy of so-called "functional modern furniture" and the tragedy of decrepit rockers and rickety lamp tables with dead lamps.[175]

The tastelessness of the Haze household so abhorrent to Humbert at first glance fades rapidly upon meeting Lolita. This home is described as mired in a failed attempt to adhere to the "up to date," "modern" tastes of today. In its tragicomic incompleteness, Nabokov, like Oldenburg, hones in on the widespread and anxious desire to participate in so-called "functional modern taste." Humbert lets prurient desire overshadow his dismissal of the place on aesthetic grounds, correlating acquiescence to bad taste to indulgence in illicit desire.

Humbert, a European outsider, freely enumerates his opinions and judgments of American mores and tastes throughout the novel, ultimately relishing in the non-aristocratic anonymity that life in the allegedly homogeneous United States affords. The *Bedroom Ensemble,* too, traffics in this anonymity, as Ashton asserts in her assessment: "We all know this room: it is the anonymous motel room, a swanky vulgar idea of luxe."[176] Ashton calls upon our collective familiarity of "this room" to flesh out her reference to this representation of the America of *Lolita.* French filmmaker Francois Truffaut once quipped that he "liked American motel rooms because one gets not *a* room but *the* room."[177] Truffaut's irreverent comment speaks to the uniformity and egalitarian promise of motel rooms, each room is *the* room. The American motel room figures importantly later on in Nabokov's work when Humbert and Lolita float, rudderless from town to town. Humbert declares: "To any other type of tourist accommodation I soon grew

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[175] Nabokov, Vladimir *Lolita* New York: Berkeley Publishing Corporation, 1977: 37
[176] Ashton, 9.
[177] Filler, Martin "Rooms without People: Notes on the Development of the Model Room" *Design Quarterly* No. 109. Rooms (1979): 13.

to prefer the Functional Motel—clean, neat, safe nooks, ideal places for sleep, argument, reconciliation, insatiable illicit love."[178] This preference for the hygienic "functional motel" stems from the desire achieves absolute anonymity and intimacy. Acquiescing to the vulgarity of American taste, for Humbert, affords his enjoyment of private sexual pleasure.

A midcentury study of the tastes and preferences of American travelers completed by The American Hotel Association states: "too many Americans – and especially women – hesitate about going to hotels because it is strange and different world…They are afraid of not knowing the right thing to do, the way to act, how to tip, what to say, and what not to say."[179] This study reveals that hotels were associated with highbrow luxury as opposed to the more accessible modest motel. Fear of social protocol put off many female customers. In the case of Humbert Humbert, the motel room's blank slate allows for its mute architecture and design to be transformed into a private landscape of desire. The motel allows for the traveler to remain transient and maintain an unfixed identity to some degree – bags still in the trunk enabling the boarder to have, as the 1955 *Motels* volume of Reinhold's Progressive Architecture series puts it, "the car ready for a quick and early get-away in the morning."[180] As a liminal space, the motel room extends the space of the car, which at midcentury, was envisioned as expanding the perceived privacy of the home. In Humbert's estimation, the motel room was an ideal home away from home and offered the opportunity for sexual pursuit. The motel anonymously hosts

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[178] Ibid., 133.
[179] Baker Geoffrey and Bruno Funaro *Motels* New York: Progressive Architecture Library, Rienhold Publishing Corporation, 1955: 6. The study goes on the state: "most of the 66% of men and 72% of women who never ventured through hotel doors this year are awed by their customs. They have same feeling as would the average American suddenly thrust into the palace at some court function of a king. (6)."
[180] Baker Geoffrey and Bruno Funaro *Motels* New York: Progressive Architecture Library, Rienhold Publishing Corporation, 1955: 6.

this debased and incomplete vision of both domesticity and family unit as a strictly sexualized relation.

Even in *Progressive Architecture's* positive account of the progressive and the libratory potentials of the ubiquity of modern design manifest in the motel room, the proposition verges on criminality. The quick get away rings true with Humbert's positive reading of the motel room and with Oldenburg's own take on the trickledown modernist interior, roped off like a crime scene. In Vivian Sobchack's provocative reading of the postwar American film noir the motel emerges as crucial narrative space, along side the diner, lounge, and car. Sobchack asserts that these spaces operated as transitional zones in terms of both narrative and nation. These were the spaces along the way towards the mythical American golden age of postwar affluence; spaces to linger for those who do not, by choice or by circumstances conform. The motel in the noir cycle is a space of temporary dwelling, illicit sex, betrayal, and murder. Sobchack refers to this temporality as "lounge time," a chronotopic form that operates in opposition to the normative trapping so domestic life. Sobchack cites Phyllis Detrichson and Walter Neff's furtive supermarket rendezvous in *Double Indemnity*, "pushing a shopping cart, wearing dark glasses and planning with murder of her husband over canned goods."[181] Significantly, Billy Wilder's 1944 film unfolded its story of infidelity, larceny, and murder in Los Angeles, depicting the dark underbelly of the city's sunshine leisure.

These dark, burlesque filmic representations of the domestic mock the trappings of middle class life, from the supermarket to the motel to the modern diner. Similarly, Humbert's appropriates the motel for the unfolding of his perverse coupling with Lolita, ostensibly a symbol

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[181] Vivian Sobchack "Lounge Time: Postwar Crises and the Chronotope of the Film Noir" *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory* (Berkeley: Unviersity of California Press, 1998), 161.

of the emergence of newly mobile, affluent, and leisurely middle class. "Between 1945 and 1955, the years generally […] acknowledged to bracket film noir's most significant period of production and reception themes such as the impossible return to a highly mythologized 'home front,' attempts to 'settle down,' and the desire for 'stability,' 'security,' and 'loyalty' […] resonate and mark to an extraordinary degree the lived sense of insecurity, instability and social incoherence Americans experienced during the transitional period that began after the war."[182] Oldenburg's appropriation of the modern interior, coded for some as a motel, is another perversion of a particular moment of normative modern domesticity. Thus, the specificity of the "motel modernism" offered by the *Bedroom Ensemble* and perceived by its critics sits at the odd interstices between modernist discourses of access and universality and debates around good and bad taste and by association morality and depravity. Sobchack argues that noir "historicizes in the most concrete manner the moment when the idyllic and "timeless" identity and security of the patriarchical American "home" was held hostage to a domestic future beyond its imagination."[183] As such, the *Bedroom* presents an investigation into the banality of "modernist" design as well as an invitation, by its very nature as a deviant representation of the most intimate of rooms and operative conceptions of motel modernism, to consider the sexual mores and imaginaries of the early sixties.

Oldenburg's period room not only imagines what becomes of art in its extreme proximity to commodity decoration it also proposes an end result of the anxious desire to distribute the modernist style in order to elevate taste. The bedroom offers a vision of an extreme domesticity, one that squeezes art to its maximal commodity status and recalls an earlier chapter in America's domestic obsession. The bedroom also embodies a perverse but not unprecedented version of the

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[182] Ibid., 131.
[183] Ibid.,167.

domestic bomb shelter. Infamous newlyweds Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Minnison of Miami spent their two-week honeymoon sealed in 22-ton steel bomb shelter, emerged in 1959 from their self-imposed subterranean nuptial prison mussed but ebullient and smiling. The atomic couple, a nuclear Adam and Eve participated in a display of domestic and sexual fortitude with national security implications. 1964's *Dr. Strangelove* provocatively linked the imminent threat of nuclear war, the need for shelter, and male sexuality. The film opens with George C. Scott's hawkish General Buck Turgidson and his bikini clad secretary in a stark, windowless bedroom of their own. At the film's conclusion, the titular doctor suggests that their only option now is for a select number of men to head underground, also suggesting that each man be "provided" multiple women in order to repopulate the earth after the nuclear fallout clears. Oldenburg's apocalyptic room riffs on such emphatic display of sexuality and confinement in relation to the militarization of the home front, through its creation of a sexually charged, highly contained space, bunker-like, without natural light.

The Bedroom contains two provocative signifiers of taste and sex in the early 1960s: woman's a leopard skin jacket and black leather pocket book. Just as Shulman's composed, cinematic photographs of the LA modern interior and McCoy's tale of the falsified "lived in" look of the "important home," Oldenburg plants these elements so as to suggest human presence. The impresarios in McCoy's story of the "Important Home" succeeded in evacuating an authentic human presence and replacing it with a hyper-designed signifier of life or presence, so to does the stiff leopard skin garment lays improbably erect on its zebra striped settee. In incorporating the leopard skin coat, Oldenburg's room evokes in the context of the present study not just any human's presence but rather the most famous and fashionable woman to publically sport the leopard skin coat, none other than Jacqueline Kennedy. While the First Lady promoted

the decorous and historicist interior design in the halls of the executive mansion, her personal style and fashion sense reflected the cutting edge in contemporary upper crust fashion. While Kennedy may have endeavored to disseminate her taste for American heritage with her 1962 tour, her fashion and coiffure would influence women's style across the nation throughout the sixties.

The adoption of Kennedy's trademark look by other women would later be lampooned in Bob Dylan's 1966 song "Leopard Skin Pillbox Hat." Dylan's song from the post-folk *Blonde on Blonde* album satirizes the continued salience of the passé pillbox hat among the wannabe fashionistas of America. Dylan and Oldenburg take hold of and represent down market iterations of the luxury version of the leopard skin. They muse on "misguided" attempts on the part of the uninitiated to participate in modern tastes and styles. Kennedy's affinity for the work of French fashion designer Coco Chanel aroused criticism for its couture prices and styling and the supposition that taxpayers dollars were furnishing the First Lady's closet with opulent and foreign finery. Thus, the First Lady herself would often wear American-made replicas of French fashion, designed by Oleg Cassini. Chanel, for her part, envisioned fashion as "the final refuge of all that is human, all that is personal, and that can never be imitated." [184] She would accuse fellow designer Christian Dior of treating women "like armchairs," rendering them furniture rather than agents in their own adornment. Likewise, Oldenburg's overly starched leopard garment is not unlike another furnishing.

The reference to the First Lady's taste within the Oldenburg's vulgar environs darkly announces the death of taste, marked perhaps with the untimely end of the Kennedy presidency.

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[184] Coco Chanel quoted in David Lubin *Shooting Kennedy: JFK and the Culture of Images* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 119.

The room is roped off like a crime against good taste Anne Ferrebee's astute review for the trade journal *Industrial Design* of the Four Environments show senses this necrotic mood:

> Taking a poke at our plastic wonderland, Claes Oldenburg at the Janis Gallery makes the deadliest statement yet on modern design. His medium is not a painting but an environment; the visitor peers into a roped off room just as he would at Williamsburg or at Mount Vernon. But instead of discovering 18th Century life, he discovers the world's last motel room. What Oldenburg presents is a Hollywood bedroom with a fake zebra skin settee on which rests a fake leopard skin coat and fake patent leather handbag. On the walls are machine-perfect Jackson Pollocks and, near them, packages and a round tin mirror which ape style clichés of the '30's. Biggest item in the room is a huge double bed, its spread a death black, tight-fitting cross between auto upholstery and a shroud. Turned down sheets and pillow cases are white oil cloth. So repellingly artificial are these materials, yet so realistic the scene, that one expects momentarily to see an oil-cloth skinned couple to enter the room. [185]

Ferrebee locates the room geographically and historically, in Hollywood and sees the work as offering a degraded take on L.A.'s first avant-garde architectural heyday in the forgotten and undervalued thirties. Her conflation the motel room and Hollywood bedroom reveals the author's disdain for L.A.'s modernism. Likewise, she offers a comment on the contemporary "plastic wonderland" that revived and revised the modernism of the thirties for the postwar scene. Ferrebee's assessment meditates on the cycles of innovation and obsolescence, suggesting that Oldenburg's work offers a kind of retromodernism. As Sara Doris has recently written, Roy Lichtenstein's suite of works beginning in the mid-1960s invoke and ironize art deco, an early form of popular modernism. [186] Both Oldenburg and McCoy look to the 1930s in their assessments of and prognostications for a Californian modernism. McCoy looked to shape the future of modern home design in the postwar era with the design legacies of through her recovery of America's earlier modernism while Oldenburg works of historicize the present built environment exposing its promiscuous references and allusions. Doris draws out the cultural

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[185] Ferrebee, Anne "On the Move" *Industrial Design* (February 1964): 63

[186] Doris, Sara "Roy Lichtenstein's Retromodernism" *American Art,* Vol. 28. No. 2 (Summer 2014): 88.

currency of the "retro" in postwar design. Interest in this passé modernism manifested in highly self-conscious ways. This interest in deco era is evident across movements in the art of the sixties. For instance Frank Stella's a1959 work, *The Marriage of Reason and Squalor*, the tightly spaced, uniform bands of black enamel paint and raw canvas remainder recall the black and gold elevator doors of Art Deco skyscrapers. The "retrocutlure" of the sixties evinces in some ways an inability to grapple directly with the modernism of the sixties, echoing the more extreme historicism of Jacqueline Kennedy's White House restoration.

Oldenburg's engagement with various historical modernisms muses on its current application in mass produced design. The "machine-perfect Pollocks" foreclose the gravity and potency of Jackson Pollock's works, which were to have served as a more perfect symbol of the cultural supremacy of American democracy. Oldenburg points out the ways in which abstract expressionism served as elite decoration in the forties and fifties by adorning his vulgar sixties pad with pseudo-Pollocks. Oldenburg, by roping off the *Ensemble,* works to a debased moment in taste, a taste that is the end result of a trickle down modernism, as Ferebee's review suggests. While CBS produced a tour to document the White House while it was at its best, Oldenburg's room endeavors to capture the inverse: American taste at its Californian worst and wrapped in its oil cloth death shroud.

America in early 1964 was a radically different place than it was in 1962. The assassination of President Kennedy in November of 1963 dramatically marked the end of the brief but mythic Kennedy administration. Oldenburg's room, in its necrotic vulgarity, then, serves as a forecast for the shape of American taste to come: it will come California and it will be bad. The *Ensemble* arrests time and taste through its adoption of the form of the period room to produce a legible tableau. In its own way, Oldenburg's work adopts a nostalgic and memorial

function. This rational tomb, as Oldenburg called it, to the progressive modernisms of the thirties and the postwar moment brings into relief what critics read as the irrational vulgarity of a mass produced Californian modernity. The notion that a Californian taste has become ubiquitous, overwrought, and excessively vulgar aids in an assessment of the successful dissemination of allegedly progressive postwar modernism. On the one hand, Oldenburg redraws regional taste boundaries, articulating the exceptionalist gulf between Manhattan and Los Angeles. Enabling the migration of this room from Los Angeles to the elite art spaces of New York, Oldenburg illustrates the ways in which a Californian domestic taste has become a national style, meriting recognition and close inspection. As the First Lady's efforts suggest and Oldenburg and his critics reiterate, taste is a powerful and too often unseen force that structures the nation's moral and historical landscape. Kennedy and Oldenburg make visible the unseen effects of taste on the material surround and in turn the impact on the built environment on the moral and social wellbeing of nation and citizen.

To this effect, a particularly astute assessment of the peculiarities of the formation of conventional design and decoration comes from a 1964 review of Roy Lichtenstein's work written by artist and critic Donald Judd:

> Lots of people hang up pictures of sunsets, the sea, noble buildings or other supposedly admirable subjects. These things are thought laudable, agreeable, without much thought. No one pays much attention to them; probably no one is enthusiastic about one; there isn't anything there to dislike. They are pleasant, bland, and empty. A lot of visible things are like this: most modern commercial buildings, new Colonial stores, lobbies, most houses, most furniture, most clothing, sheet aluminum and plastic with leather texture, the Formica like wood, the cute and modern patterns inside jets and drugstores. Who has decided that aluminum should be textured like leather? Not Alcoa, who make it; to them there is just a demand. It's not likely any of the buyers think much about it. The stuff just exists, not objectionably to many people, slightly agreeable to many. [187]

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[187] Judd, Donald "In the Galleries, December 1964" *Donald Judd: Complete Writings 1956-1975* Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2005: 146

Judd's analysis of the tacit activities of producers and consumers to render the alienating and artificial surfaces of design underscores the constant reiteration of these conventions. In Judd's writing on the *Bedroom Ensemble*, he argues that the forms are "grossly geometric and inanely simple" and importantly "pretty familiar."[188] Expanding his critique, Judd asserts " there's little real modern furniture and none of it recent," arguing for the belated, in as much as the modern was "born" in the thirties and is already passé in its later twentieth century iteration, *and* debased nature of American mid-century modernism. [189] California's peculiar modernism operates as an avatar for the condemnation of the woes of both design and moral fortitude. An affluent mid-century nation took hold of modernism and bent it to its perverse will. The *Bedroom Ensemble,* in its effort to make excessively visible, to the point of vulgarity, the alien nature of the familiar spaces and surfaces of a trickle down modernism enacts a radical distancing from the potential pleasures of such "debased" modernisms. Not dissimilar from the ways in which CBS utilized the people and built environment of Beverly Hills as a convenient foil for the articulation of an authentic Americanness on *The Beverly Hillbillies,* Oldenburg and his critics associated this "bad modern" with his experiences with and their conceptions of the geographically and culturally "other" region of Southern California. Dan Graham and Robert Smithson unearth a more proximate taste foil for their Manhattan mores in their explorations of the foreign terrain of the New Jersey suburbs.

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[188] Judd, Donald (Claes Oldenburg, 1966) " *Donald Judd: Complete Writings 1956-1975* Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2005:192.
[189] Ibid., 192.

CHAPTER THREE

Art and Infrastructure: The Suburbs as Elsewhere

Introduction

The Bedroom Ensemble satirized an American modernism indigenous to the nation's far coast, provocatively linking Los Angeles modern to the moral and aesthetic depravity of a certain America By the mid 1960s, consciousness around the ways in which the American taste, national identity, and landscape bears the imprint of suburbanization governed debates around domestic and environmental policy. In a speech at the University of Michigan given in the spring of 1964, president Lyndon Baines Johnson articulated the ambitious vision of his Great Society programming. Johnson turned American energies inward, toward affairs decidedly less concerned with outward impressions of the nation as a paternalistic, cosmopolitan center of culture, "A few years ago we were greatly concerned about the Ugly American. Today we must act to prevent an ugly America." Referencing the book and film, *The Ugly American*, which offered a satirical critique of American interventions in Southeast Asia and the "loud and ostentatious" comportment with which they were executed, Johnson asks the nation to look for "ugliness" within its own borders. Johnson's administration conceived of ugliness broadly, encompassing urban blight, structural racism, and the degradation of the natural environment. Hindsight imbues this turn of phrase with tragic irony, as it would be U.S. ongoing entanglements in Vietnam—established in the mid-1950s—that would precipitate the passage Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in August of 1964 which enabled the Johnson to act with broad discretion in containing threat of a communist Vietnam and eventually contributed to the diminishing of funds and consensus in support of the Johnson administration's platform.

That hopeful spring of 1964, Johnson asked "Will you join in the battle to build the Great Society, to prove that our material progress is only the foundation on which we build a richer life of mind and spirit?" [190]Throughout this speech Johnson correlated the health of the nation's spirit to the preservation of its landscapes and natural splendor, "For once the battle is lost, once our natural splendor is destroyed, it can never be recaptured. And once man can no longer walk with beauty or wonder at nature his spirit will wither and his sustenance be wasted."[191] It is this emphasis on the environment both built and natural with which this chapter contends. I seek to link the nascent environmentalism espoused by Lady Bird Johnson's commitment to and successful passage of the Highway Beautification Act to the emergence of an infrastructural and architectural consciousness on the part of artists, architects, and urbanists in the mid to late 1960s.

Conceptions of the beautiful and the ugly, I argue inform discussions of the past, present and future of the American landscape in the late sixties. Theorists, artists, and policy makers, such as Lady Bird Johnson, Peter Blake, Dan Graham, Denise Scott Brown, Robert Smithson, Tony Smith, and numerous others, in the mid-1960s worked to catch up with the aesthetic impact of postwar infrastructure development and its incursion into the American landscape. These interrogations were necessarily embroiled in debates around taste. Conceiving of the impact of suburbanization in terms of architectural taste, constituent lifestyles, and the effect of these co-emergent cultural facets on the American landscape, artists Graham and Smithson engaged in a kind of self- ethnography of the present and their milieu. While these endeavors differ in tone and outcome, I argue they share a preoccupation with Cold War American taste—its objects,

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[190] Johnson, Lyndon Baines "Remarks at the University of Michigan" May 22, 1964. *The American Presidency Project.* Online.
[191] Ibid.

edifices, and incidental structures and habits. The historical specificity of the forms and experiences that such works engage has sometimes been minimized in favor of an art-bound theoretical relevance of so-called conceptual art. In expanding the criteria against which we interpret the work, we see how artists engaged with a large-scale debate about the state of the American landscape, built environment, and by association the moral core of the nation being waged on television, in print, on display, and in the halls of governance.

As the spirit of First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy's taste-making efforts of the early 1960s indicated, the perception that the nation had developed an uneven, ahistorical, unthinking, and destructive form of affluence coalesced, not just in the form of countercultural critique of the mid to late 1960s, but in popular media, high art, architectural theory, and official government policy as well. Contemporaneous television sitcoms reflected the generalized anxieties around postwar American life in increasingly evaluative ways, echoing the ethnographic tone struck by Smithson and Graham. The shared preoccupation—present across television, policy, art, and criticism—with the pretensions and promises of suburbia which this dissertation has traced throughout persisted as discussions and representations of its limitations and drawbacks accumulated in the later sixties.

The postwar suburban experience owed its pervasive presence to exclusionary practices embedded in the pathways of class mobility. Margot Canaday's groundbreaking work, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship,* uncovers the ways in which the simultaneous expansion and contraction of citizenship in the postwar era orients around narratives of access to higher education, home ownership, and procreation. Canaday focuses on the G.I. Bill's explicit prohibition of gays and lesbians from the postwar economic and social benefits the policy afforded. Destabilizing positive narratives of the emergence of the postwar welfare state and

ballooning middle class, Canaday examines the experiences of GIs whose "undesirable" conduct and discharge barred them from participation. The uneven application of the G.I. Bill makes clear that the aspirational narratives of access to a middle class hetero-normative lifestyle were not simply happenstance. Rather, the G.I. Bill worked to produce a certain norm through active exclusion and thus postwar conceptions of social citizenship were mortgaged on planned forms of exclusion and inequality.[192] Further, the cooperation of the Federal Housing Authority and private suburban development companies, such as the Levitt Brothers in New Jersey, systematically produced racially segregated communities.

While the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1968 Fair Housing Act prohibited discrimination in theory, in practice the power of private real estate interests proved difficult to constrain. Investment in whiteness as a category of preference, as George Lipsitz argues, bears directly on the function of the naturalized institution of property.[193] The work of Lipsitz and Canaday aid in marking what exactly it means to be preoccupied with the problem of suburbia from the standpoint of those included in its limited embrace. By stressing the linkage of American whiteness and heteronormativity to the institution of suburbia I suggest that art and popular culture concerned with suburbia had a distinct racial politics. Such work, particularly the conceptual art upon which this chapter focuses, necessarily grapples with identity politics but is more often than not discussed in generalized terms.

Suburbanization and a growing middle class provoked an identity crisis experienced by the white liberal elite who saw their power and influence over matters of taste and national identity diminish in the face of the middle class's consumer power. If the experiences of the

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[192] Canaday, Margot *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
[193] Lipsitz, George. *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.

white middle class were perceived as aesthetically, environmentally, and socially diminished but still possessed great cultural and economic power, then the suburban scene merited great attention. The suburbs thus became a site for liberal critics, artists, and cultural producers where widespread anxieties about the American identity and the category of whiteness were explored. As Dianne Harris points out in her book *Little White Houses*, representations of suburban homes across media "continuously and reflexively created, re-created, and reinforced midcentury notions about racial, ethnic, and class identities—specifically, the rightness of associating white identities with homeownership and citizenship."[194] Harris goes on to argue that suburban homes became "poignant ciphers for whiteness, affluence, belonging, and a sense of permanent belonging."[195] Despite the structural limitations of the social programming of the postwar era, the middle class did in fact expand to encompass more, mostly white Americans than ever before, producing a loss of traditional class distinction. The growing cultural power of the middle class rendered the suburbs a convenient and symbolically rich scapegoat for the maligned form of middlebrow culture so abhorred by elite critics.

Critiques of the suburbs that rebuke its lack of culture or aesthetic deprivation rather than its exclusionary racial covenants expressed uneasiness with the growth of a middle class perceived as uninterested in elite liberal cultural commitments. The expansion and redefinition of the taste and trappings of the middle class identity proved, as this dissertation has argued, worrisome to the liberal elite. The so-called postwar era was in fact beleaguered by persistent and intractable military entanglements, the affluence that promised to enrich the nation proved to be radically uneven, the widespread circulation of suburban architecture—in print, on television,

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[194] Harris, Dianne *Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013:1.
[195] Ibid.

and in the sprawl itself—was viewed by some as producing a numbing homogeneity as well as environmental ruin. Much of the cultural criticism from the late 1950s and early 1960s cautioned against the onset of a shallow, unenlightened, and insular consumer culture. Novels of the early sixties, like Richard Yates's *Revolutionary Road* or John Updike's *Rabbit, Run,* offered narratives of dissatisfaction and isolation unfolding in the postwar suburbs and emphasized beleaguered male protagonists. The gendered quality of many of these critiques was palpable. As scholars such as Andrew Ross and Andreas Huyssen argue, mass culture and its consumers and suburban milieu were, from the standpoint of elite critics, feminized and viewed as a dangerous contagion.[196]As Elaine Tyler May points out in her book *Homeward Bound,* the child-centric, consumer oriented put the domestic sphere during the 1950s at the center of a powerful new cultural formation focused on the ideal of a female homemaker. [197]

The growing concern expressed by cultural critics, artists, and policy makers over the impact of suburbanization on the landscape and the stifling form of sociality that consumer culture and suburbia came to embody two connected strands of thought in the mid to late 1960s. I would argue that these nodes are indeed linked by a shared reliance on the category of taste to express these critiques. The American landscape became newly enlivened as a taste object, due to its perceived deterioration on the part of the Johnson Administration and artists alike. Likewise, the conventionality of the ways of life associated with suburbia came into question on television, in art, and in public discourse. The so-called suburban twilight zone was now 20 years old; its slapdash construction and social mores seemed to verge on obsolescence for those graced

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[196] See Ross, Andrew *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* New York: Routledge, 1989. Huyssen, Andreas "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other" *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986: 44-62.
[197] May, Elaine Tyler *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* New York: Basic Books, 1999: 162.

with a choice to participate in the suburban spatial and social revolution. The suburban landscape and its constituent lifestyles, of course represented only one, privileged facet of the American experience. The ceaseless circulation of images of suburbia in the decades following the Second World War produced powerful myths about American life. As evidenced by shifts in representation in the television of the later 1960s and Great Society public policy that acknowledged the intractable inequalities that plagued the nation, the collateral environmental impact, stifling and exclusionary social practices, and limited scope of the suburban promise became a central preoccupation.

Artists Robert Smithson and Dan Graham muse on the materiality and curious historicity of the designed monotony of the New Jersey suburbs and surrounding landscape within the context of print culture and discourse around the promise and problem of suburbanization. Smithson and Graham, both New Jersey natives, were born the late thirties and thus straddle two generations and in some ways embody both the anxieties of the so-called establishment and the rebellion of youth. Just as television of the sixties worked to subvert its own logic without sacrificing its institutional functionality, Smithson and Graham mobilize the magazine page to both challenge and reiterate the exceptionality of American suburbia. In this chapter I will delineate and detail the terms of the debate over the impact of suburbanization on the American landscape as it plays out in conceptual art, policy debates, and architectural theory.

In the context of the art of the late 1960s, conceptual art has been interpreted as engaging in the aesthetics and practices of administration, bureaucracy, and white-collar labor more generally, eschewing the emphasis on the art object in favor of idea and process. The politics of displacing traditional forms and sites of artistic making and conceptions of authorship needs to be adequately historicized, raced, gendered, and classed. Arguments in support of

conceptual art's so-called randomness of aesthetic form, lack of overt politics, or purported dematerialization erase the specificity of its chief authors and historical context in which their practices emerged. As Julia Bryan-Wilson argues in her book *Art Workers* the art of the mid to late 1960s underscored its relationship to labor, however ambivalently. [198] Benjamin Buchloh, in his field creating 1990 essay in *October*, "Conceptual Art 1962—1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," asserts that such art and mimics late capitalism's ability to erase "all residues of representation and style, of individuality and skill."[199] Buchloh's assertion that conceptual artists effectively effaced their own identity participates in the incessant reproduction of male whiteness as an unmarked category. The luxury of allegedly removing one's subjectivity while still gaining access to the cultural institutions central to artistic success and notoriety was enjoyed by a specifically white male demographic. I argue that the allegedly minimized subject positions of conceptual artists need to not only be marked as both white and male, but also merit full exploration within their socio-economic milieu in order to denaturalize whiteness as the de facto identity to which art and media conform to or deviate from. Through this exploration, I offer a reading of these works that acknowledges the broad and ambivalent quality of late sixties liberalism and the complex understandings of the perceived impact of affluence on the built environment and its relationship to social life.

I argue that Dan Graham's 1967 article "Homes for America" and Robert Smithson's articles of 1966 "The Crystal Land" and "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic" not only participate in ongoing art world debates about skill, authorship, and site, they also engage in broader contestations of taste in relation to domestic architecture and the environment in the late

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[198] Byran-Wilson, Julia *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009: 11.
[199] Buchloh, Benjamin *October*, Vol. 55 (Winter, 1990): 143.

1960s. Thus, I examine Dan Graham's and Robert Smithson's magazine articles of the late 1960s musing on the materiality and geologic historicity of the designed monotony of the New Jersey suburbs and surrounding landscape within the context of print culture and discourse around the promise and problem of suburbanization. The condemnatory and polemical writings of architect Peter Blake in his 1964 work *God's Own Junkyard* will be considered alongside Lady Bird Johnson's efforts in the mid and late sixties in support of conservation and preservation of the glories of the American landscape and natural resources. The attention to the aesthetic and environmental impact of infrastructure found expression in conceptual and land art of this era. Architects Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi began to articulate their plea to critically and seriously engage with everyday modernism before deeming such architecture a sign of a very near apocalypse and calling for its destruction. Scott Brown and Venturi, alongside Graham and Smithson, stretch and reform the bounds of architectural taste in ambivalent and overlapping ways. This chapter will connect these previously disparate but contemporaneous and interconnected discourses. The television, art, and architectural discourse of the late 1960s under consideration here grapple with the condition of the nation when, as Blake puts, it "the affluent nation has finally gone berserk!" [200]

Lady Bird's Own Junk Yard

As a working architect, former curator of architecture and design at MoMA, and later editor-in-chief of Architectural Forum, Peter Blake wrote his 1964 tract, *God's Own Junkyard*, from the elite institutions of high modernism. While the position from which Blake asserts that United States has gone off the rails represents the architect's high modernist sensibility, it also

[200] Blake, Peter *God's Own Junkyard: The Planned Deterioration of the American Landscape* New York: Holt and Reinhardt, 1964: 23.

carries with it an anti-capitalist form of utopian modernist thought that interestingly shares strong affinities with the ways in which Lady Bird Johnson began to articulate her theory of the value of the American landscape. Lady Bird Johnson's legacy legislation on beautification expands Jacqueline Kennedy's notion of taste in the decorative arts to include architecture, the American landscape and, by extension, the democratic principles that form the bedrock of a just society. Blake opens his invective by identifying suburbanization as the ultimate example of turning "this beautiful inheritance (the American landscape) into the biggest slum on the face of the earth."[201] The richly illustrated volume aims to draw the stark contrasts of unadulterated topography juxtaposed with images conveying the "interminable wastelands dotted with millions of monotonous little lots and crisscrossed by highways lined with billboards, jazzed up diners, used car lots, drive-in movies, beflagged gas stations, and garish motels."[202] Blake's book utilizes montage techniques and offers purposively provocative juxtapositions of photographs of trailer parks, tract homes, billboards, or tangles of power lines alongside images of undisturbed alpine ridges, rolling agrarian hills, or the starkly beautiful desert floor. Cecile Whiting has argued that the photographs further Blake's argument that "the magnificence of nature has been reduced to the level of banality, the cheap, mass produced stuff of modern life."[203] In terms of graphic design, Blake's book keeps text and image separate and offers the photographs augmented only by ironic extolments of man's reverence for nature, the foresight possessed by American imagination, or the power of masterly architecture to capture the spirit of an age.

That Blake feels, for the most part, that these photographs need no exegesis reveals an assumption that his readers share his taste and will also perceive the allegedly inherent ugliness

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[201] Ibid., 8.
[202] Ibid., 8.
[203] Whiting, Cecile "The Sublime and the Banal in Postwar Photography of the American West" *American Art* Vol. 27, No.2 (Summer 2013): 53.

of the contemporary American scene. This assumption carries with it a distinct class and geographic bias as well as a powerful belief in the direct influence of aesthetics on the social conditions, as we also saw reflected in criticism of Oldenburg's *Bedroom Ensemble*. He writes, "The physical form of suburbia is not simply an aesthetic issue fabricated to exercise the conscious of a few architects; it is a social and political issue that has considerable bearing on the future of American democracy, for during the 1980s, 100 million Americans will be living in Suburbia."[204] Significantly, Blake calls attention to the Californian genesis for much of the most egregious examples of the suburban aesthetic. Again the Golden State is positioned as a precursor and scapegoat for the current decline of the American scene. Blake lauds the towns of a bygone era while also condemning the misguided interpretation of the "sentimental assumptions, fostered by the early agrarians that everybody should live in their own house on a small lot," that informed and produced the suburban present.[205] Like Jacqueline Kennedy's affinity for an American taste derived from the American past, Blake's chapter "Townscape" pairs an image of Thomas Jefferson's neoclassical University of Virginia campus with a photo of Canal Street in contemporary New Orleans in order to demonstrate the case for a "timeless" urbanism. He laments, "Jefferson called his campus "an expression of the American mind;" New Orleans' Canal Street, and all the other dreary Canal Streets that defile America today have not been called "expressions of the American mind" by any but this nation's mortal enemies."[206] Blake's anxious polemic is, in fact, premised on the fact that the contemporary built environment has been taken by citizens and foreign onlookers alike to reflect an American sensibility. This

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[204] Blake, 21.
[205] Blake,18.
[206] Ibid., 33.

interpretation carries with it a condemnation of the creation of an amorphous middle class and with it an equally formless taste culture.

In a reading of the American home directly counter to the one offered by Nixon in 1959 in Moscow, Blake sees suburbanization and its symbolic, spatial, and aesthetic formlessness as a direct threat to the health of democracy rather than a marker of both its promise and fruition. The perceived loss of communal identity stemmed, according to Blake, from the loss of the symbols of liberal democracy in the architecture of the everyday in suburban America. Such a conclusion seems to turn a blind eye to the powerful social movements coalescing in cities and suburbs alike on both ends of the political spectrum. As Lisa McGirr's book *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* argues, it was the labors of the "kitchen-table" activists in suburban Orange County that reinvigorated the American right from the ground up by the end of the 1960s. After Johnson defeated Barry Goldwater in a landslide, the grassroots and mainstream political right shed much of its paranoid and apocalyptic rhetoric and gained steam as a viable national political movement. [207] Conservative coalition building occurred within the alleged aesthetic wasteland of the suburbs. Likewise, cities witnessed large-scale political mobilization in support of Civil Rights. The lunch counter sit-ins in Birmingham in the Spring of 1963 and elsewhere make a compelling case for the symbolic capital of these architectural spaces as spaces of social significance that are so readily dismissed as debased and banal in Blake's critique of vernacular commercial architecture. The democratic promise of the architectural form of diner or lunch counter and the form of consumer citizenship these spaces afford are taken for granted and dismissed by Blake from a white privileged standpoint. Blake asserts that affluent, Great Society America has failed its citizens, not because of radically uneven access to its institutions and

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[207] McGirr, Lisa *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

promises, but because it betrayed those who were lucky enough to access its ranch homes, diners, and subdivisions through aesthetic ruin. He writes, "We walk or drive through [the American city] each day; this where we work, shop, and are also born, exist and die. What manner of people is being reared in these infernal wastelands?"[208] This account presupposes a universal experience of urban space. Likewise, Blake's dismissal of suburbia as an apolitical spatial form reflects an elite liberal bias.

In its articulation of a modernist critique of the American built environment *God's Own Junkyard* is symptomatic white liberal identity crisis reflected elsewhere in cultural criticism, television, and literature. I position Blake's architectural criticism within this broader field of mid to late 1960s discourse about the postwar built and social environment in order to suffuse this discussion of architectural taste with the biases and limitations of liberal critique in the sixties. The liberal white identity crisis of the sixties is palpable in Blake's closing argument as he positions the nation on the brink of a great taste precipice that threatens the well-being of nation and citizen:

> [T]he affluent society has many blessings[,] but it also contains the seeds of vandalism: for the first time in the history of mankind we have completer and unrestricted freedom of aesthetic choice. Where any citizen is permitted a choice between degrading ugliness and beauty, the state has no right to step in and restrain the uglifier. No citizen is forced to look at pop art, or to listen to alleged music compositions comprising of the simultaneously broadcast tape recordings of the mating calls of dromedaries or watch prurient movies. He has a choice. But in America no citizen has a chance to see anything but hideousness—all around him, day in and day out. We have more art schools than ever before and more art appreciation courses, but how can a child in Gary, Indiana, say, be taught to use his eyes with discrimination, taste, and intelligence?

Blake attributes the tasteless surroundings of American citizens to the intellectual elite who have failed to lead the nation; it has have not lead by example. He argues that it is the diffusion of

[208] Blake, 33.

aesthetic choice to the masses that produces the current quagmire and that the insularity of the elite liberal critique reneges their responsibility to uplift the nation's aesthetic discourse. He suggests that the taste making process has also been sullied by monetization, which prioritizes novelty rather than true creative acts. In closing, he hurls one last barb, asserting that the "mess that is man-made America is merely a caricature of the mess that is art in America."[209] Blake alluded to this degraded art world when he equated Pop art with alleged music compositions comprised of animal noises and prurient movies. He holds to a utopian avant-garde, albeit elite, model for the role of the arts in society and is troubled by what he perceives as a nonproductive feedback loop. This entropic relationship between man-made American and art and America described by Blake envisions a nation stymied and without reverence for the past or vision for the future.

Blake's invective extends beyond architecture and expands to encompass the sullying of the natural environment. The overdevelopment of the nation's natural spaces, the incursion of commercial infrastructure into all corners of the American landscape is for Blake, "much more than a blow against beauty […]in destroying our landscape we are destroying the future civilization in America." [210] In the following pages, the photographic spreads juxtapose aerial shots depict, as Whiting puts it, "the magnificence of nature […] reduced to the level of banality, the cheap mass-produced stuff of modern life."[211] Thus, the American landscape and its use becomes an object lesson in taste, as a full spread image of a lakeside trailer park adjoins a photo of virgin timberlands and a half page image of a modern hotel pool mirrors a rustic lakeside retreat. Blake's abhorrence for the physical and aesthetic pollution of the totality of the American

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[209] Blake, 142.
[210] Blake, 69.
[211] Whiting, 53.

landscape very much reflects contemporaneous ecological photography and criticism. As James Nisbet's book *Ecologies, Environments, and Energy Systems of the 1960s and 1970s* points out the conceptualization of a environment as a "unified living fabric" came to prominent circulation in Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring*. [212] This ecological conscious formation of the early 1960s found its visual analog with books with an explicitly conservationist aim, such as 1960's Nancy Newhall and Ansel Adams book *This American Earth* published by the Sierra Club. Derived from a 1955 exhibition, Newhall and Adams promote vigilance in face of environmental decay and circulated a suite of Adams' awe-inspiring photographs in support of the Sierra Club's conservation efforts. Whiting describes the insertion of William A. Garnett's aerial photographs depicting the construction of suburban Lakewood, California midway through the book. Further, the book's publication pushed public discourse in support of 1964's Wilderness Act, passed by Lyndon Baines Johnson.[213]

Blake's book promoted the ecological conversation beyond the preservation of the nation's wild lands and his high modernist architectural proclivities to the aesthetic and environmental challenges presented by postwar development. His chapters, "Roadscape," "Carscape," and "Skyscape" delve into infrastructural aesthetics. He declares that most highways are "hideous scars across the face of this nation" and bemoans the collateral building projects that accompany the full-scale development of America's car culture. [214] Of the cluttered American skyline, Blake asserts: "where men once decorated their rooftops with gilded finials, we decorate ours with tar-papered watertanks, pipes, smoke stacks, vents, aerials, and

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[212] Nisbet, James *Ecologies, Environments, and Energy Systems of the 1960s and 1970s* Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014: 26.
[213] Whiting, 45.
[214] Blake, 109.

illuminated billboards."[215] For Blake aesthetic and environmental decay were inextricably linked phenomena in postwar America. This attentiveness to the impact of infrastructure and the interconnectedness of environmental and aesthetic ruin found expression in the policy and rhetoric of the Johnson Administration.

Lady Bird Johnson, picking up where Jacqueline Kennedy left off, expanded the role of the first lady to directly lobby for the environmental and ecological aspirations of the Great Society. While Kennedy worked to elevate taste and by association the cultural standing of the nation through her renovation of the White House, Johnson's commitment to beautification was decidedly expansive in its scope. Utilizing taste-derived concepts and categories such as beauty and beautification, Johnson engaged the American landscape—both natural and manmade—as a taste object. Johnson identified her travel across the nation via automobile as a genesis point for her environmental consciousness. In her 1985 oral history Johnson asserts: "those [trips] in cars I liked a lot better than on planes, because I like to see and absorb the picturesque-ness and the splendor of this country. That is when I began to say, golly, have we got to look at all those junkyards?"[216] She and the president travelled back to their native Texas and fundamentally changed the geographical imaginary of the presidency. With this shift away from an aristocratic east coast coterie of places and people, the Johnsons brought about a newly expansive conception of the nation and its citizens. Lady Bird Johnson's engagement with the nation on the ground level via train and car differs drastically from that of Jacqueline Kennedy. Take these photos, Jacqueline Kennedy pictured on Air Force One, feet elevated, reading Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and the other of Lady Bird Johnson aboard the Lady Bird Special during a 1964 whistle

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[215] Ibid., 127.
[216] Gillette, Michael L. *Lady Bird Johnson: An Oral History* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012: 358.

stop tour of the American South in support of the just passed Civil Rights Act. Johnson sought to rally support for the legislation among white southerners, like herself. She asserted "I knew the Civil Rights Act was right and I didn't mind saying so, but I also loved the South and didn't want it used as the whipping boy of the Democratic party."[217] Johnson travelled to forgotten corners of the rural south, places that many Northern democrats would reject as strongholds of prejudice.

Lady Bird Johnson's engagement with the American landscape turned this physical space into a ripe political symbol around which to rally support for the sweeping scope of the Great Society. Using beautification as her nexus for the Johnson Administration's domestic policy, Lady Bird acknowledged, "prissy word though it may be, became the business of the politician, the businessman, the newspaper editor, and not just the ladies over a cup of tea."[218] In demarcating exactly what was meant by beautification, she wrote in her diary on January 27, 1965:

> Getting on the subject of beautification is like picking up a tangled skein of wool, all the threads are interwoven -- recreation and pollution and mental health, and the crime rate, and rapid transit, and highway beautification, and the war on poverty, and parks -- national, state and local. It is hard to hitch the conversation into one straight line, because everything leads to something else.[219]

Johnson elaborates a socially and ecologically scaled interpretation of the aesthetic challenges that faced postwar America. While beautification implies a judgment of taste, the First Lady's expansive logic correlates aesthetic improvement of a whole suite of issues crucial to the domestic policy of the Great Society. Johnson began her beautification campaign by focusing on the beautification of Washington D.C., from the development of parks and flower groves near the National Mall to the improvement of the capital's slums.

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[217] Ibid.,123.
[218] Gilette, 357-8.
[219] Johnson, Lady Bird *A White House Diary* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007: 234.

A 1965 television special produced by ABC News Special Projects, *A Visit to Washington with Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson on Behalf of a More Beautiful America,* aired on Thanksgiving Day and worked to rally the nation to action on local beautification projects. During the hour long special, the First Lady authoritatively narrates a day in the life of the nation's capital. Like Blake, she hones in on the neoclassical vision of early America as a timeless symbol of "spaciousness and freedom," stating that the importance of Mount Vernon is as "an example of the tastes and preferences of the our founding fathers." Rather than focusing on the triumphs of the nation's past, Lady Bird identifies the social and environmental challenges facing the District of Columbia. The pollution of the Potomac River serves as her chief environmental exemplar. Johnson interestingly frames its befouled status in terms of taste asserting that it has been many a year since "the sturgeons of Captain John Smith's memory" travelled up the Potomac to spawn for they "are a choosy fish." Not content to grapple only with environmental and ecological issues, the First Lady turns her gaze to the shameful urban blight of the slums and calls for radical solutions that ought to the product of both planning and taste, pointing to Southwest Washington as an example of a successful revitalization that resulted in a neighborhood "lived in by all income groups and all races." She tempers her dedication to beautification by asserting that "no monument or green park can compensate for a childhood in the slums." She closes the program with a call to action, stating "anyone can plant a flower," knowing full well that "these plantings are a total solution but they are a vital first step." She muses, wondering if the "men who conquered the earth can learn to preserve it," and finally ends by asking "what will we leave to those that come after?" Both Johnson and Blake wondered about the future ruins of postwar development and self-consciously mused on the aesthetic and

social legacies of postwar America. They work to mitigate the national identity crisis brought on by the relentless and uneven development of the Cold War nation state.

Taste, for both Johnson and Kennedy, is a matter of preserving a sense of historical unity and peacefulness for future generations to perceive something of the national spirit and identity. Johnson pushes the categories of taste and beauty to encompass a myriad of social conditions and environmental consequences. Lady Bird Johnson's journey through the capital, like Jacqueline Kennedy's White House tour just 3 years prior, combines on location shots, historical photographs and prints to convey its narrative of American triumph over social problems through policy and energy of engaged citizens. Johnson's narrative however expands beyond the interior domestic sphere and subjects Washington's peripheral and neglected spaces to analysis and critique. The desire for orderly and beautiful urban landscape delineated by Lady Bird presents another frontier of taste in Cold War America. Kennedy's and Johnson's television tours demarcate the shifting concerns surrounding Cold War taste as the sixties progressed. While determinations of taste persist as ways of defining national character, the politics of aesthetics takes on new dimensions under Lady Bird's auspices that seek to elaborate the connections between taste and social and environmental conditions in evermore concrete and expansive ways. Taste in the mid to late 1960s remains a powerful category and process with which to contend with anxieties about the nation's past, present, and future, but with the added weight of mitigating the social and environmental consequences of postwar affluence.

The Highway Beautification Act of 1965 was the culmination of a whole suite of legislation that brought environmental issues into the national spotlight. The mid to late 1960s, under the guidance of the First Lady and Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall, saw the passage of the Clean Air and Water Acts, Wilderness Act, the expansion of the National Parks, and the

foundation of numerous other environmental programs. In an oral history conducted in 1969, Udall pointed to Carson's *Silent Spring* as a formative text in terms of his conceptualization of the impacts of strip mining or industrial agricultural on the American landscape and broader ecology.[220] With the Highway Beautification Act the aesthetics of infrastructure are incorporated into a broader environmental consciousness. The billboards, junkyards, and litter that befouled the nation's roadways were imagined to give way to native landscaping and wildflowers as well as recreational space. In a speech by President Johnson inaugurating the Highway Beautification Act, he frames the "beauty of our land" as a sadly neglected part of America's national heritage. [221] Echoing the sentiments of Jacqueline Kennedy efforts to uplift the benighted traditions of American woodworking and silver collecting, the Johnsons work to remind Americans of a past moment in order to make this evocative heritage available for future Americans to experience and enjoy, and they utilized television to rally support for their cause. Johnson like Kennedy expresses a concern over the limitations of postwar modernity to inspire and uplift:

> There is a part of America which was here long before we arrived, and will be here, if we preserve it, long after we depart: the forests and the flowers, the open prairies and the slope of the hills, the tall mountains, the granite, the limestone, the caliche, the unmarked trails, the winding little streams--well, this is the America that no amount of science or skill can ever recreate or actually ever duplicate.[222]

While President Johnson here expresses a more preservationist approach to environmentalism, both the Johnsons and Blake speculate on the timelessness of America's natural beauty in contrast to the nagging and pervasive residue of the postwar economic juggernaut—its suburbs, roads, power lines, pollution, rubbish, and billboards. Lady Bird's contention that beautification

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[220] Transcript, Stewart L. Udall Oral History Interview II, 5/19/69, by Joe B. Frantz, Internet Copy, LBJ Library.
[221] "President Lyndon B. Johnson's Remarks at the Signing of the Highway Beautification Act of 1965 October 22, 1965" *American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau* New York: Literary Classics, 2008: 396.
[222] Ibid.

was “just one thread in the whole warp and weave of the tapestry” imagines a powerful relationship between a tasteful American surround and the quality of national life. The relationship between environmentalism and problem of Cold War taste comes into focus as the social and ecological problems are correlated to aesthetic judgments on the part of theorists and lawmakers.

Art and Infrastructure

The documentation and interrogation of the flatlands of suburban America, infrastructural forms, quotidian ritual, and the built and consumable environment characterizes a strain in not only in architectural criticism and public policy but also artistic activity emergent in the art world of the sixties and seventies. This shared tendency connects formerly disparate movements, such as minimalism, pop, conceptual, and video art and makes a case for a historically specific shared conception of the intertwined nature of aesthetics and social life. The differing scales and interpretations of the relationship between aesthetics and social life are, in essence, determinations of taste. Embedding these canonical works into their taste context exposes new pathways of interpretation that expose the ways in which so-called conceptual art, in particular, offered much more than a critique of contemporaneous artistic practice. Conceptual practice in the late sixties participates in and destabilizes liberal hand wringing about the moral and ecological implications of the degradation of the environment both built and natural. An anecdote shared in 1966 by sculptor, Tony Smith, encapsulates this particular artistic methodology:

> When I was teaching at Cooper Union in the first year or two of the '50s, someone told me how I could get on to the unfinished New Jersey Turnpike. I took three students and drove from somewhere in the Meadows to New Brunswick. It was a dark night and there were no lights or shoulder markers, lines, railings or anything at all except the dark

> pavement moving through the landscape of the flats, rimmed by hills in the distance, but punctuated by stacks, towers, fumes and colored lights. This drive was a revealing experience. The road and much of the landscape was artificial, and yet it couldn't be called a work of art. On the other hand, it did something for me that art had never done. At first I didn't know what it was, but its effect was to liberate me from many of the views I had had about art. It seemed that there had been a reality there which had not had any expression in art.[223]

It is crucial to note that this apocryphal story was published in *Artforum*, a hugely influential publication founded in 1962, on two occasions.[224] This tension between ephemerality of the experience and its mobility and materiality as a piece of writing in a magazine is of central importance to this artistic tendency. While Smith's story emerged in an interview, the active use of the printed page and publication apparatus as site for generative documentation and instantiation of artistic activity became a reasonable artistic strategy in the 1960s in light of, among other things, the power of the art critical apparatus over the identification and judgment of discreet art objects. The printed page offered artists and critics, as we saw with Blake's polemic, alike a legitimate space in which to participate in this widespread conversation about the postwar landscape.

The peripheral and mundane areas, structures, and activities of midcentury America came to be harnessed by artists in a variety of published text and image combinations. Ed Ruscha's books of the early 1960s collect frontal views of everyday architectural forms into printed, non-narrative collections such as *Some Los Angeles Apartments* (1962) and *26 Gasoline Stations* (1963). These paperback sized publications bind together a typological sampling of ubiquitous, decidedly nondescript architectural forms. Allison Knowles also utilized the book

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[223] Wagstaff, Samuel "Talking with Tony Smith" *Art Forum* 5 no. 4 (December 1966): 19.
[224] In addition to Wagstaff's article, Smith's anecdote was republished within Michael Fried's 1967 essay "Art and Objecthood," which was a sweeping condemnation of minimalism's literalist tendencies. This essay has been reproduced innumerable times extending the life of Smith's nocturnal drive incalculably. See Fried, Michael *Art and Objecthood* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

format as another venue to disseminate the "scores" of her Fluxus performances. Knowles's *Journal of the Identical Lunch* (1971) gathers written and visual accounts and evidence of various participants' experience eating the same lunch at the same time and place everyday. Probing the eating habits of the white-collar worker at the urban diner, Knowles's book subjects tuna on toast and the lunchtime social and spatial networks in the diner to repetitive and meditative examination. Likewise, John Baldassari's suite of Photostat paintings produced from 1966-1968 mimic the printed page with their black and white text and image juxtaposition as they document ordinary Southern Californian views of intersections, laundry mats, and housing. Photographers such as Robert Adams, Stephen Shore, and others refocused landscape photography and, as Whiting puts it, "complicated the apparent dichotomy between sublime wilderness and banal modernity."[225] These diverse projects engage in the national debate around the state of the built environment, landscape, morality, habits, and social life.

Arts publications and art criticism during the sixties engaged issues of urbanism. For instance, artist and critic Donald Judd's "Kansas City Report" of 1963 moves freely from a description of the contents of the Nelson Atkins Museum to an examination of the buildings and structure of Kansas City itself. No special formatting or documentary images of Kansas City populate this text, lending Judd's commentary on Kansas City the same authority and tone as those sections dealing with art. The less than two columns of text that describe the structural and aesthetic facets of Kansas City are surrounded by Judd's account of the Atkins collection and images of several paintings and sculptures from the collection. The physical proximity of art criticism to a consideration of the potentially positive outcomes of awning regulation and curious topography of white limestone in Judd's article represents an astute manipulation of the review

[225] Whiting, 47.

to make a larger point about the disjointed relationship between the art in the museum and the living arts beyond its walls.[226] He muses on the utilitarian forms of the mill and the grain elevator, suggesting that they are "alive, are interesting, far more than they merit maybe, perhaps as much as great art."[227] The care with which Judd describes, for example the shopping malls and overall lateral pattern of growth that characterizes Kansas City, does not decry the city's architecture or infrastructure, but rather calls attention to the aesthetics of planning that render the city pleasant. Through his economical prose, Judd argues the taste practices and proclivities of the present moment open commercial architecture and everyday objects to scrutiny. Echoing Smith's encounter on the turnpike, Judd asserts, "something has come from a lot of stuff that wasn't supposed to be art, such as girders and concrete." [228] Merging an engagement with the infrastructural and the artistic relates to the rhetoric of both Johnson and Blake as they attenuate their interpretations and critiques of the nation's fringes and interstitial spaces. Judd, Smith, and Ruscha examine the vernacular built environment from an ecumenical position, which diverges from the condemnations offered by Blake or the beautification sought by Johnson. Rather than lamenting its ugliness, these artists cull inspiration from the postwar consumer and industrial environment, creating works that do not work to transcend the aesthetics of the everyday. The formative quality of these encounters with America's liminal forms and places for artist, architect, and lawmaker represent the expansion of the aesthetic concerns of Cold War taste and its national implications to new realms.

Smith's late night drive revels in a new kind of, soon to be ubiquitious, aesthetic experience of highway travel designed to fly over vast tracts of land, connecting certain areas

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[226] Judd, Donald "Kansas City Report" *Arts Magazine* (December 1963): 26-27.
[227] Judd, 1043-104.
[228] Judd,104.

and bypassing others. The infrastructural forms that so vex Blake serve as an evocative point of almost sublime inspiration for Smith. For Smith, his experience on the turnpike indicated the powerful impact of these new forms of infrastructure on his aesthetic proclivities. While, he does not comment on the significance of such building projects in Cold War America, Smith's experience is a byproduct of suburbanization. The construction of the New Jersey Turnpike and other major highway development projects of the 1950s cut directly through residential, typically impoverished or minority populated, areas. The federally subsidized highway system masterminded by Robert Moses made possible the development of the far reaches of the region into middle and working class bedroom communities. In his book *Manhattan Projects* Samuel Zipp deftly articulates the partial nature of these redevelopment schemes, pointing out that white ethnics "enjoyed federal subsidies for whites only homeownership" in the outer boroughs and suburbs, while inner city non-white residents "made up the majority of those who were displaced by slum clearance."[229] When examining the art of infrastructure it is vital to note that infrastructure is never politically mute or neutral. Just as the strategic redevelopment underway in New York under the auspices of urban renewal favored the interests of a white middle class, the development of the New Jersey turnpike moved directly through a residential area in Elizabeth, New Jersey, displacing the largely working class, minority population in order to complete the turnpike and dramatically dividing the industrial town. Artistic engagement with Cold War infrastructure, whether it is Ruscha's photographs of gas stations on his journey from Los Angeles to Oklahoma or Smith's late night turnpike encounter, was premised on a privileged, white subject position. The potential criticality of such engagements is directly linked to an artist's ability to access and participate in the institutions of Cold War America. These

[229] Zipp, Samuel *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010: 27.

works more often than not toe the murky line between affirmation and critique, though have often been interpreted along the lines of the liberal critique typified by Blake.

Fleshing out the complexities of mid to late sixties liberalism makes clear that the dynamics of critique and dissent were internally conflicted and contradictory. Howard Brick asserts: "in the 1960s, confidence in the promise of modernization coexisted with a distinctly antimodern criticism of contemporary life."[230] Brick describes a pervasive historical pessimism undergirding the reformist hopes for radical social change. The First Lady's tour of Washington reflects this contradictory position as she espouses the optimistic language of the Great Society, while also expressing her anxiety about the forward march of Cold War development. Brick suggests that the fundamental contradiction between "new social forms of experience and the power of capitalist wealth" was radically minimized by much of liberal critique that produced the belief in the commensurability of capitalism and an equitable distribution of resources.[231] The turnpike experiences that Smith described as indelibly new reflects the continuation of historic inequalities couched in a new aesthetic. Blake, Johnson, Judd, and Smith articulate the tensions within, experiences of, and disagreements about postwar infrastructure projects and suburbanization. Johnson links the aesthetic deterioration of the American landscape with persistent social issues that plagued the nation and envisioned beautification as part a vital part of the Great Society's all encompassing social programming that relied on citizen engagement and participation. Blake, on the other hand, blames the America's junkyard status on the failures of the American elite to guide the nation's taste. Smith perceives the newness of postwar American infrastructure and, like Judd, makes the case that art cannot but acknowledge and respond to this

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[230] Brick, Howard *Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture in the 1960s* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998: 64.
[231] Ibid., 22.

new surround which is itself a progressive aesthetic form. These divergent responses to the aesthetics of the built environment sixties map the varied terrain of liberal critique in the mid to late 1960s. Land, performance, pop, and conceptual artists contributed to sixties discourse on social and material life in equally self conscious and contradictory ways.

The Nation's Elsewheres: New Jersey

The impulse to document and probe the exceptional structures, spaces, and experiences of Cold War America is contrary to the economic logic of planned obsolescence. This desire to capture relates in ambivalent ways to the widespread critiques of postwar architecture's shoddiness and banality and the impact of infrastructural development. Recent scholarship has examined the attraction of New Jersey as a site of artistic and intellectual inquiry during the Cold War. Kelly Baum's 2104 exhibition and book, *New Jersey as Non-Site,* considers the state as "both site and muse" and considers the contradictions between the region's status as a "place-bound site and a de-located nonsite," for artists working in the region during the 1960s and 70s.[232] In her book, *Robert Smithson: Learning from New Jersey and Elsewhere*, Ann Reynolds examines Smithson's engagement with the Garden State as a "set of opportunities for viewing New York" and that the landscapes with which he engaged were "forgotten, abandoned, and marginalized."[233] While there is a certain truth to the arguments of Reynolds and Baum, I wish to underscore the ways in which Smithson's site selection reflects a larger nationally scaled engagement with liminal spaces. I am most interested in recovering the specificity of artistic engagements with New Jersey as they relate to contemporaneous discourse on architecture,

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[232] Baum, Kelly *New Jersey as Non-Site* Princeton: Princeton University Art Museum, 2013: 11.
[233] Reynolds, Ann *Robert Smithson: Learning from New Jersey and Elsewhere* Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003: 79.

infrastructure, and suburbia. Further, the race and class positionalities from which this engagement radiates merit further exploration. Further, an art historical engagements with Smithson's texts evacuates his texts of their humor and often neglects popular cultural corollaries in favor of a philosophical engagement with his writing practice.

In their magazine articles, Robert Smithson and Dan Graham survey the designed monotony of the tract home and its surroundings, Graham, musing on suburbanization's capacity to render American taste mediocre through the comforts and pleasures of standardization and Smithson, considering the historicity of the suburbs as a built environment. Smithson's and Graham's publications in periodicals such as *Arts Magazine* and *Harpers' Bazaar* participate in the sixties fixation with the suburban home in the glossy magazine as well as contributing to discussions of the problem and promise of suburban sprawl and "ordinary" architecture and infrastructure. Not dissimilar from the ways in which CBS utilized the people and built environment of Beverly Hills as a convenient foil for the articulation of an authentic Americanness on *The Beverly Hillbillies,* Oldenburg and his critics associated this "bad modern" with his experiences with and conceptions of the geographically and culturally "other" region of Southern California. Graham and Smithson unearth a more proximate taste foil for their Manhattan mores in their explorations of the foreign terrain of the New Jersey suburbs.

While the city of New York in the sixties offered a kind of laboratory of urban renewal suburban born artists, Smithson and Graham would time and again retreat to suburban New Jersey to generate new work that contended with issues of urbanism, infrastructure, and development. Perceptions of New Jersey as a cultural backwater rife with "artificial landscapes without cultural precedents" rendered the region a both dismal and fascinating site of national

interest. [234] Graham and Smithson were both born and raised in the Garden State. Unlike, Oldenburg's journey to exotic Los Angeles, theirs' was a return to the familiar terrain of childhood. The suburban landscape that they took as their destination and subject had transformed radically since the close of the Second World War. Rather than conceptualizing their interest in New Jersey as just a way out of the increasingly saturated and speculative New York art market, I argue that suburban New Jersey offered a means through which Graham and Smithson negotiated their relationship with their suburban past, the parameters of suburban of present, and the prospects of a suburban future. Thus, their work participates in the larger national conversation about the impact of the rise of suburbia on the American landscape and the ways in which the spread of the suburbs transformed a nation's sense of itself.

Two of Smithson's articles, "The Crystal Land" (1966) and "A Tour of Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey" (1967) published in *Harper's Bazaar* and *Artforum* respectively, relate a journey from Manhattan to the suburban sprawl of nearby New Jersey. Mobilizing geological language in "The Crystal Land", Smithson seeks out and estranges the ordinary particularities of the postwar built environment. The short article published in the highbrow women's fashion magazine recalls a rock collecting trip to the quarries of New Jersey with artists Nancy Holt, Julie Finch, and Donald Judd.

Harper's Bazaar, America's first fashion magazine founded in 1867, positioned itself as "sophisticated, elegant, provocative[…]a style resource for women who are first to buy the best, from casual to couture."[235] Explicitly aimed at an upper to middle class female readership, *Harper's Bazaar* of the mid to late 1960s was laden with striking fashion editorials and equally compelling advertisements for Howard Johnson, Buick, and Bergdorf Goodman. New York

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[234] Baum, 13.
[235] *Harper's Bazaar* Publisher's Imprint 1966.

based *Harper's* also offered coverage of the avant-garde theater scene at Judson Memorial Church; published social criticism—like April 1966's "A Drugged Nation" contending with the prevalence of valium prescriptions in the American suburbs—and presented excerpts of previously untranslated works by Chekhov, Kafka, Pirandello, and Turgenev. The pages of *Harper's* existed as a visually stunning elixir of the highbrow and highly commercial. The inclusion of Smithson's curious document within the gendered context of an explicitly taste-making institution necessarily inflects interpretations of "The Crystal Land."

"The Crystal Land" spanned two pages in the May 1966 issue of *Harper's* and neighbored advertisements for Kotex tampons and Aziza eye shadow. The subsequent reprinting of the article in anthologies erases its printed context completely and secondary literature on the essay emphasizes the article as simply a piece of writing, neglecting the essay's physical existence in the pages of *Harper's.* Passages contending with the suburban landscape interestingly shared proximity with advertisements for the institutions of suburbia such as Howard Johnson or the Safari Motel, as well as the directly adjacent ads for Kotex and Aziza, all of which presume a female reader. The presence of *Harper's* on the suburban coffee tables makes the inclusion of Smithson's pseudo travelogue documenting a trip into New Jersey all the more conflicted:

> The terrain is flat and loaded with "middle income" housing developments with names like Royal Gardens Estates, Rolling Knolls Farm, Valley View Acres, Split-level Manor, Babbling Brook Ranch-Estates, Colonial Vista Homes—on and on they go, forming tiny boxlike arrangements. Most of the homes are painted white, but many are painted petal pink, frosted mint, buttercup, fudge, rose beige, antique green, Cape Cod brown, lilac, and so on. The highways crisscross through the towns and become man-made geological networks of concrete. In fact, the entire landscape has a mineral presence. From the shiny chrome diners to glass windows of shopping centers, a sense of the crystalline prevails. [236]

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[236] Smithson, Robert "The Crystal Land" " *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* Berkeley: University of California, 1996: 8.

For Smithson, the suburban landscape and its constituent architectural forms presented a veritable "junk heap of history."[237] He transposes the banality and familiarity of the Cold War built environment into a language of radical historical—in fact geologic, distance, denying its newness and endowing it with a prehistoric mineral presence instead. Conceiving of New Jersey as a "crystal land," reveals what Jennifer Roberts has referred to as Smithson's preoccupation with history in a period so conscious of its radical presentism and futurity. This preoccupation with conceiving of the immediate past in the determinist, apolitical language of geology as a means through which to perceive its presence in the built environment relates to the broader discourse on taste in the sixties. In placing the suburban surround into a fictionalized geological past, rather than a sociopolitical present, the Smithson endows the postwar landscape with an inevitability that effaces the conditions under which these architectural and infrastructural forms emerged. Smithson goes on to write crystalline minerals develop in a downward pattern, "making a fibrous structure, which is very apparent when the ice is rotten." [238] Roberts suggests that Smithson's evocation of the crystalline reflects his sense of the exhaustion of history.[239] Reading the postwar built environment as a harbinger of the end of history, where architecture and town planning are indistinct from naturally occurring rocks and minerals, Smithson echoes Smith's conception of the turnpike and its vistas as "artificial landscapes without cultural precedent." For Smithson, Cold War taste lies elementally beyond historical time.

Conceiving of the article in the theater of taste presented by *Harper's* renders Smithson's attempt to articulate the suburbs and their trappings as geologically rather than culturally derived all the more fraught The distinctly feminine space of the magazine was itself

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[237] Cummings, Paul *Artists in their Own Words* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979: 231.
[238] Smithson, 8.
[239] Roberts, 59.

concerned with the development of a more tasteful present and future, laying bear the interconnectedness of suburbia to the consumer economy. Smithson's use of a geologic timescale and language interestingly offers a masculine frame through which to observe the suburban phenomena, offering recourse to the perception that suburban life has feminized American ways of life and taste. His employment of the language of natural history and the distant vantage point from which he observes the suburban encrustation reflects his self-conscious desire to extricate an artistic subjectivity independent of his own participation in the trappings of suburban life.

Taste in the sixties, as the previous chapters have explored, operated as a way to engage and interpret the position of the present in relationship to speculative futures and nostalgic pasts. Imbuing the immediate past with the patina of deep geological history endows Smithson's suburban subjects with a gravitas and exceptionalism, by placing their forms in a place beyond the point at which history exhausted itself, and echoes the shared preoccupation with the present, past, and future of a suburban America. The production of this distance correlates to ways in which *Harper's* and its advertisers envisioned themselves as above the middle-income fray, with critical and judgment distance comes a more sophisticated taste. Howard Johnson's advertisements in *Harper's,* for instance, endeavor to position the diner-motel brand on par with the taste echelon of Halston or Bergdorf Goodman. For Smithson conceiving of the taste making practices that produce communities such as "Colonial Vista" or colors like "rose beige" within the rubric of natural, geologic endows taste processes with a naturally occurring authority and removes them from the signals of contemporary social and economic conditions which surround the article in print and structured the built environment under consideration.

Smithson's prose makes no acknowledgment of his relationship to New Jersey and works hard to keep the landscape at arm's length. His mobilization of a geological language to describe the endless parade of candy-colored subdivisions reflects the incessant drive to defamiliarize and satirize the institutions of Cold War America. To endow these slapdash architectural and infrastructural forms with a mineral quality both naturalizes and estranges their existence from everyday reality. Smithson's authorial vantage point of the car and description of the suburban landscape reiterates the privileged vantage point of Smith's nocturnal drive. Just as the supernatural sitcoms of the same moment reiterate and skew conceptions of suburban life in an inherently if not incessantly self-conscious fashion, Smithson's approach to the so-called crystal land reflexively filters disaffection with suburbia through a language of natural, rather than social, history. He closes his article by describing the journey home:

> On the way back to Manhattan, we drove along the New Jersey Meadows or more accurately, the Jersey swamps—a good location for a movie about life on Mars. It even has a network of canals that are choked by acres of tall reeds. Radio towers are scattered throughout this bleak place. Drive-ins, motels, and gas stations exist along the highway and behind them are smoldering garbage dumps. South toward Newark and Bayonne, the smoke stacks of heavy industry add to the general air pollution. [240]

Echoing Blake's laundry list of woes in his description of this apocalyptic New Jersey landscape, Smithson equates New Jersey to the back lot for a film depicting life on Mars. He hones in on the very same aspects of the Cold War American landscape that Blake and Johnson identify as problematic. The extraterrestrial and natural historic frames used by Smithson works to render the landscape "other." The article departs from New Jersey and in all likelihood returns there in the pages of *Harper's*. The project of self-critique or satire of the perceived shortcomings of material life in the sixties was not solely the provenance a New York art world, but rather a prevalent attitudinal mode on television and a welcomed presence in the popular press.

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[240] Smithson, 9.

A distinctly dystopian view of the legacies of the immediate postwar era took several different televisual forms. As Lynn Spigel has argued, "television would construct for itself a new generic form founded on the merger between the troubled paradise of 1950s domesticity and the newfound ideals of the American future." [241] Programs such as *Bewitched* (1964-1972, ABC)*, The Addams Family* (1964-1966, ABC), *The Munsters*(1966-64), or *I Dream of Jeannie* (1965-1970, NBC) presented a kind of fantastic sitcom, which Spigel argues, subverted and defamiliarized the norms of domesticity. The incorporation of supernatural characters and phenomena worked to reflect shifting perceptions of suburbia and American consumer culture and offered a nuanced take on the customs and spaces of postwar life.

In particular Endora, the imperious and immortal witch mother-in-law on *Bewitched*, and her protagonist daughter Samantha served go through entire text and focus on verb tense of each verb as ethnographers of the ways of the middle class suburbanite. In her unprompted and often times unwelcomed visits to her daughter Samantha, who had renounced her supernatural powers in order to attain conjugal bliss with her ad man husband, she questioned the practices and mores of Samantha's newly restrained environment. In the second episode of the first season of *Bewitched,* "Which Witch is Which?, " Endora appears just as Samantha is heading out to shop for bargains at the local department store. Endora expresses disdain as Samantha hurries out to the door for "dollar days," Samantha cheerfully suggests "bargain hunting is a real joy for mortal women," to which Endora intones, "the poor dears." She reluctantly joins Samantha and critiques her conservative taste in clothing and servile participation in the consumer madness of "dollar days." Samantha parrots the housewife truism that if one hunts hard enough for bargains now, it means one can really splurge at a later date. The folly of the harried scene at the

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[241] Spigel, Lynn *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs* Durham: Duke University Press, 2001: 108.

department store is enhanced by the outsider status of Endora and Samantha who both knowingly echo the growing and ever more widespread discontent expressed by pundits, artists, writers, and housewives about postwar affluence and consumer culture. Spigel also points out the ways in which shows like *Bewitched* offer a parodic critique of male acquiescence and unquestioning conformity to the "bureaucratic dictates" of their corporate and domestic identity, thus pointing out male complicity with the state of American domestic life.[242] ABC programs such as *Bewitched, Dark Shadows,* or *Batman* that ironically toyed with bad taste, kitsch, and camp aesthetics as means through which subversive content might circulate became a staple of the network. Spigel writes, "Even if the sitcom form defused the these tensions with safe resolutions, the genre denied absolute closure, coming back each week to remind viewers that they too might being living in a suburban twilight zone."[243] This conflation of the conventional, agreed upon norm of white middle class suburban life with a mysterious nether region, produces a rich vision of estranged normativity unfolding in the American suburbs.

Born in 1938, Smithson was a member of the first generation raised on TV, coming of age as these satiric programs appeared on the television landscape. In her book, *The Groove Tube: Sixties Television and the Youth Rebellion,* Aniko Bodrokhozy describes how the self-conscious formation of this technology related to forms of generational distinction. She challenges interpretations of television as simply a tool of conformity and relays the internally and self-consciously conflicted nature of the medium. For the disaffected youth of the late 1960s, childhood memories of the television of the 1950s,"served as a powerful explanatory mechanism

[242] Ibid., 130.
[243] Ibid., 135.

for their profound alienation from and revolt against the dominant social order."[244] Making sense of the ways in which television and its viewers operates as a site of "ideological breakdown and reconfiguration" allows for the maximum complexity of both popular culture and supposedly oppositional creative endeavors of the late sixties. Smithson's play with the temporality of suburbia shares a conceptual lens with the supernatural sitcom as they both endeavored to comment on suburbia from an exterior vantage point.

In "The Monuments of Passaic," published one year later in *Artforum,* Smithson returns to New Jersey, this time alone and by bus. Structurally mimicking the romantic travelogue format, Smithson recounts a day's wander through Passaic, New Jersey. Rejected by *Bazaar* due to its loping, elliptical structure, "Monuments" appeared in the major taste making publication of the art world.[245] No longer surrounded by ads for Kotex and eye shadow, "Monuments" shared space with ads for gallery shows, neutering its potential critical charge by sequestering its content to an art context. Less concerned with domestic or commercial architecture during this Garden State sojourn, Smithson focuses his words and camera on the so-called monuments of Passaic. Infrastructural forms such as bridges, pipes, derricks, and sundry construction equipment are sardonically deemed monuments as Smithson traverses and shoots anticlimactic photographs the town where he was born. This "unimaginative suburb," as Smithson categorizes it, is rendered all the more dull through his prose. This "soporofic blandness," as Jennifer Roberts calls it, is, she argues, indigenous to the suburbs themselves and points to their

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[244] Bodrokhozy, Aniko *The Groove Tube: Sixties Television and the Youth Rebellion* Durham: Duke University Press, 2001: 31.

[245] See Smithson, correspondence with Robert Kotlowitz, microfilm reel 3833, frame no. 1092, AAA. In this letter, Kotlowitz, editor-in-chief of Harper's Magazine, stated his inability "to make a firm commitment" on publishing "Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey" because the piece was too "elliptical in style." Graziani, Ron "Robert Smithson's Picturable Situation: Blasted Landscapes from the 1960s" *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Spring, 1994).

purposeful lack of historicity. [246] The infrastructural details featured in the article all posit an indifferent relationship to past and future, they are, for Smithson, "ruins in reverse."[247] He goes on to argue that the suburbs exist "without a rational past and without the big events of history," they are simply "what passes for a future. "[248] Roberts argues that through participating in this elimination Smithson grapples with and perhaps embraces the present stagnation offered by the Passaic "zero panorama."

Smithson is far from alone in his assessment of the fundamental mediocrity of the built environment of the late 1960s and its sense of ahistorical drift. His acquiescence and appreciation of spontaneous pseudo-monumental quality of the suburbs reiterates their de facto, natural status. His engagement with this landscape offers a tonally and generationally distinct rejoinder to the liberal critique of bad taste and the so-called suburban twilight zone while also participating in what Lynn Spigel describes as the "white domination of physical and imaginary geographies" of Cold War America. [249] Smithson offers the lethargic "monuments" as a mode of humorous critique. His critique stems from the standpoint of privilege and belies the extremity of the unevenness of the experiences of Cold War suburban and infrastructural development. The car lots, diners, freeways, and subdivisions that populate Smithson's seminal articles had been called upon already in the fifties and earlier sixties to serve as monuments to the promise of an affluent Cold War America. Positing Passaic as a place without meaning, Smithson ironically begs the question of suburbia's capacity to represent an eternal Americanness.

In placing Smithson's work on a continuum with the criticism of Peter Blake, policies of the Johnson administration and the self-ironizing sit-coms of the late 1960s, I do not wish

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[246] Roberts, 64.
[247] Smithson, 72.
[248] Ibid., 72.
[249] Spigel, "Outer Space and Inner Cities" 145.

diminish the the artist's enterprise. Rather I seek to demonstrate the ways in which Smithson's critical undertaking was a shared one. I also wish to underscore the humor in Smithson's pronouncements, which in no way derails their critical edge. Smithson articulates the essay's cheeky posture in a blurb written after the article's publication: "What can you find in Passaic that you cannot find in Paris, London, or Rome? Find out for yourself. Discover if you dare the breathtaking Passaic River and the eternal monuments on its enchanted banks." [250] When read as a potentially comic document sending up both the suburbs and their critics, the article becomes less "soporific" and more entertaining. In this regard, "Monuments of Passaic," in its faux romantic travelogue mode mirrors the absurdist ethnographic tone of the supernatural sitcom. In a 1972 interview with Paul Cummings, Smithson described his engagement with New Jersey as a series of "archeological trips into the recent past."[251] Granting Smithson a degree of playfulness destabilizes the theoretical readings of his essays and troubles a straightforward avant-garde or liberal reading of his intervention into the murky territory of suburban critique. Smithson joins a chorus of voices from the First Lady to Peter Blake in offering a take on the problem of suburbia, unlike Blake and Johnson, the artist does not acknowledge his position and attendant responsibility in the development of the postwar build environment and in fact takes pains to distance himself from involvement through irony and the language of natural history.

Dan Graham's 1966-67 article "Homes for America" was published in *Arts Magazine* and was one part of an extensive photographic project undertaken by the artist in New Jersey. While Smithson's photographs of Passaic captured infrastructural forms and construction zones, Graham's color photographs, first exhibited in projection as 35 millimeter slides at Finch College in New York, focus on the domestic architecture of suburban New Jersey. Graham, also a New

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[250] Roberts, 60.
[251] Cummings, 233.

Jersey native, traveled from his New York home to document his ancestral land. Ostensibly capturing the tract homes indigenous to New Jersey, the photographs capture the space between these homogenous architectural forms. According to Graham he intended to capture the particular color and light to a heavily polluted New Jersey sunset, "pollution mixed with sunset."[252] The photographs capture the front and rear facades of suburban New Jersey homes. Their brown, turquoise, and red forms are set against a washed out gray-yellow sky. Graham attentiveness to the play of sky, light, and architectural form in these photographs accentuate the barren quality of the environment surrounding these rows of semi-identical homes. The domestic dwelling units and the expanse of smoggy sky dwarf the youthful trees. Graham's emphasis on the effects of pollution on these subdivisions so close to the railroad, highway, and other industrial activities raises the issue of environmentalism and beautification; aesthetic and environmental concerns become inextricably linked in Graham's photographs. Just as Smithson wryly notes the so-called "pipe monument" dumping its contents into the Passaic River, Graham's photographs document the atmospheric conditions of late suburbia. Linking a deadpan vista of the repetitive forms of the suburban dwelling with the polluted air reconstitutes the connection between the built and ecological environments drawn by Lady Bird Johnson.

After exhibiting the photographs, Graham was approached by Susan Brockman, assistant editor at *Arts Magazine,* who wanted to publish the photographs. Graham asserts that he would have preferred a magazine like *Esquire* or *Harper's Bazaar,* which not only enjoyed wider circulation, but also provided a broader, non-arts context of reception. Graham asserted that he "realized my real interest was *Esquire* magazine, which had the best writers, also had color features of the sterility of the suburbs, with kind of boring formalistic photographers who

[252] Interview with Dan Graham at MoMA November 15, 2011

go and show the sterility of the suburbs."[253] Graham did not get his wish nor did any of his photographs end up getting published in *Arts Magazine*. Rather, the scant four columns of text appeared undifferentiated from the neighboring articles and featured a Walker Evans photograph in lieu of Graham's photographs of contemporary suburbia. Evans, as the most well known documentary photographer of the thirties had a tremendous impact on many photographers working in the sixties. Evans was employed by the Farm Security Administration during the New Deal era and was charged with documenting the impact of federal policy on rural America and more generally capture the American scene. During the sixties, Evans worked for *Fortune Magazine* producing lush editorial photo spreads, familiarizing a new generation with his work as photographer and journalist. The Evans photograph published in *Arts Magazine* with Graham's article depicts Boston row houses from the 1930s, emphasizing their repetitive, uniform appearance. The photo is juxtaposed against an architectural schematic depicting a typical ranch-style home, reiterating the contrast suggested in the article's subtitle: "Early 20th Century Possessable Houses to the Quasi-Discreet Cell of '66." These editorial choices embed the article firmly in the social field of the magazine.

More often than not later, lithograph versions "Homes For America" serve as the starting point for the secondary literature on Graham's work. Wallace Brannen and Robert Rogers, both master printers who worked with visiting artists at the Nova Scotia Collage, produced a lithograph incorporating Graham's photographs alongside the previously published text, in 1971.[254] This version of "Homes for America" is the most often reproduced in secondary

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[253] Ibid.

[254] This project at NSCAD comes a few years after the school had established itself as a staging ground for conceptual art activities and production. Lucy Lippard gave a lecture on information as art in 1969. Other artists such as Vito Acconci, John Baldessari, and Sol Lewitt also produced

literature on Graham. The work is typically dated 1966-67, the date of the text's original publication and is not identified as an artist's print or lithograph. Typically, no medium or dimensions are indicated, allowing the lithograph to pose as a reproduction of the published article. In this way, the social context of the publication is displaced in favor of a more complete interpretive object.[255] In emphasizing the site of original publication, I aim to reestablish the editorial, institutional, and literary contexts in which artists like Graham and Smithson participated and created some of their most celebrated work.

Graham utilizes an expository, sociological tone, opening the article with a passage that echoes the observations of Blake, Mumford, and others but lacks their moral judgment: "Large-scale tract housing developments constitute the new city. They are located everywhere. They are not particularly bound to existing communities; they fail to develop either regional characteristics or separate identity."[256] He goes on to describe in painstaking detail the ways in which suburban developments stymie both aesthetic variety and choice, asserting near the close of the essay that suburban homes were "not built to satisfy individual needs or tastes."[257] Echoing much of the typical criticisms of suburbanization—the homogenization of the built environment—Graham adopts an absurdly dry tone to enumerate the confines of the suburban environ and defers judgment or solution. The matter of fact, informative tone of the article contrasts deeply with Smithson's diversionary wit. In adopting such a tone, Graham tacitly

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lithographs in NSCAD's print shop. Graham was given a solo show at NSCAD's Anna Leonowens Gallery in 1971.

[255] For example: Alberro, Alberto " Reductivism in Reverse" *Tracing Cultures: Art History, Criticism, and Critical Fiction* New York: Whitney Museum, 1994. Mariño, Melanie "Disposable Matter: Photoconceptual Magazine Works of the 1960s" *The Last Picture Show* Minneapolis: Walker Arts Center: 2003. Buchloh, Benjamin "Moments of History in the Work of Dan Graham" *Dan Graham: Articles* Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 1978. Reeves, Charles "T.V. Eye: Dan Graham's *Homes for America" Parachute* No. 50-56 (December 1988-89).

[256] Graham, Dan "Homes for America" *Arts Magazine* (December 1966-January 1967): 22.

[257] Ibid.

acknowledges the redundancy of his article in describing what had been so heavily fretted over, documented, and condemned in liberal critique. Frequently interpreted as a straight forward addition to this body of critical literature, "Home for America," according to scholars, "duplicates the everyday rhythm of enforced consumption," "mines the unrecognized postwar Housing tracts he found in New Jersey" and "mimes the grim dynamic of depletion, offering a spectacle of the deep banality of everyday existence," and displays the "misery of industrial housing."[258] Such interpretations are dependent on a selective reading of the "Homes for America" project, and neglect to address the conditions of publication and the contradictions between the full suite of photographs and Graham's text, and do not allow for humor to exist. Graham lampoons the dire critiques of suburbia by mimicking their tone. His approach differs from Smithson's in his masterful and humorous duplication of the tone of critics like Blake. While the work is situated on a continuum with the critiques analyzed throughout this chapter, Graham satirizes the critique and questions the liberalism of such humanist critiques. In order to produce the good or progressive artists we want from the 1960s, the complexity of liberal or leftist political commitments in Cold War America are minimized in favor of a vision of an "avant-garde" artist.

In a 1999 interview Graham questions the comfortable terrain of liberal critique asserting:

> It is a mistake to see Homes for America as sociological critique. It's actually a critique of the worst sociologists who were writing then in American magazines. In those days *Esquire* was publishing sociological investigations like David Riesman's "The Lonely Crowd" using photographs in the Walker Evans mode, photographs showing lower-middle class suburban clapboard houses, but usually in a negative, humanist standpoint. I

[258] Mariño, Melanie "Disposable Matter: Photoconceptual Magazine Works of the 1960s" *The Last Picture Show* Minneapolis: Walker Arts Center: 2003: 199-200. Anaststas, Rhea "Minimal Difference" *Dan Graham: Beyond* Buchloh, Benjamin "Moments in History in the Work of Dan Graham": 7.

> wanted to take the same components and empty them of their pejorative expressionist connotations. [259]

Men's magazines, exemplified by *Esquire,* published essays critical of perceived feminization of American culture in the wake of suburbanization, "echoing concerns expressed by David Riesman, Margaret Mead, Alfred Kinsey, and host of prominent commentators that American women had become too dominant, had pushed their husbands too far, and 'demasculinized' them."[260] In a 1960 interview with Riesman, titled "The Loneliest Man in a Lonely Crowd," Riesman rehearsed his the arguments of his 1950 book and offered advice to men living "in a world with tired blood."[261] Smithson, for his part, in some ways echoes this need to masculinize the suburbs in his own interpretation. Articulating a metacritical thrust to the "Homes for America" article, Graham endeavored disrupt easy politics of suburban critique. Considering for a moment the larger suite of photographs that constitute the project, we find photographs depicting rows of tract homes against the clouded New Jersey sky alongside photos of homeowners installing a rock flowerbed or adults and children socializing at a local carhop. The variety of depictions within the larger body of work support Graham's more conflicted, metacritical tack, as the so-called "misery of industrial housing" is tempered with the incursion of human presence. Graham asserts that the project is actually "a celebration of Italian American petit bourgeois" and intended as a "joke," on those who might interpret the work as yet another instance of handwringing liberal invective.[262] In declaring the Homes for America project as both a celebration of the Italian American petit bourgeois and a joke, Graham implicitly points out the class bias inherent in declaring the lower middle class suburban way of life miserable or without

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[259] "Interview with Mike Metz" *Two Way Mirror Power: Selected Writings by Dan Graham* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999:
[260] Dippel, John V. H. *War and Sex: A brief History of Men's Urge for Battle* Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2010:251
[261] "The Loneliest Man in a Lonely Crowd" *Esquire* (March 1960): 77.
[262] Oral History Dan Graham, 9.

aesthetic flair while also positioning himself apart from that which he "celebrates" and "jokes" about. Using the magazine as a venue, Graham takes advantage of his article's presence within what Brigit Pelzer refers to as the "apparatus of validation […] exposing and thereby undoing the frames of reference."[263] She goes on to argue that Graham "took the view that artistic work offered no socio-political solutions, but could pinpoint the artifice of ideological representation, how artifice is made, where and how the illusions is made."[264] In this case it was the literary and political context of the highbrow late sixties publication that Graham sought to expose. In this way, the taste culture produced in these printed contexts serve as the chief target of Graham's project. While it is difficult to track the contemporaneous reception of the article as it was received as a scant few columns of text, Graham's fixation on resolving the interpretive quandary of "Homes for America" illustrates the need to liberal critiques of suburbia and to consider the classed, raced, and gendered assumptions that structure its intellectual topography.

Conceiving of the fixation of artists and critics on the suburbs as a reaction to the perceived impoverishment of white experience and male stature in the late modernism of the Great Society makes clear that the murky territory of liberal critique may not deliver an inherently progressive politics aligned with Lady Bird Johnson's more expansive consideration of the social and aesthetic conditions of the inner city and beyond. Graham and Smithson both disrupt and perpetuate this anxiety around white identity and experience, like the satiric supernatural sitcoms of the same era, in relation to suburban life and elaborate their interventions in the political minefield of the highbrow magazine. Linking sociological and aesthetic criticisms of the suburbs to both taste and environmental discourses, these artists participate in a rich, contradictory, and ongoing debate in late sixties America. A sort of deadpan ambivalence

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[263] Pelzer, Brigit "Double Intersections" 38.
[264] Ibid., 40.

stemming from thick description emerges from Graham's article, Smith's nocturnal trip on the turnpike, Knowles's quotidian lunch, Ruscha's head-on architectural photography, and Smithson's encounter with suburban geology.

Ambivalence and Critique

Herbert Gans's 1967 book *The Levittowners* examines the mores and social conditions of another New York suburb. His ambivalence around the condemnatory invective that so structured interpretations of contemporary suburban life prompted his ethnographic study. Sociological in methodology, Gans rehearses the central criticisms of suburbia in order to test out the reality of the so-called suburban myth through an in depth study of Levittown, New York. The suburban myth according to Gans, echoes the concerns we have been tracing: "the suburbs were breeding a new set of Americans, as mass produced as the houses they lived in…Suburbanites were incapable of real friendships; they were bored and lonely…individualism was dying, suburbanites were miserable, and the fault lay with the homogeneous suburban landscape and its population."[265] Gans describes the criticisms of literary and social critics as well, such as John Keats's *The Crack in the Picture Window* and Richard Gordon's *Split-Level Trap*, who saw the suburbs as "intellectually debilitating, culturally oppressive, and politically dangerous, breeding bland mass men without respect for arts and democracy. They were joined by architects and city planners who accused the suburbs and their builders of ruining the countryside, strangling the cities, causing urban sprawl, and threatening to make America one vast Los Angeles by the end of the century."[266] Gans observes that an acceptance of the basic inaccuracies of the suburban myth have structured urban planning in potentially destructive

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[265] Gans, Herbert, *The Levittowners:Ways of Life and Politics in New Suburban Communities* New York: Columbia University Press, 1982: xxviii.
[266] Gans, xxviii.

ways. Gans questions very possibility of the aesthetics, architecture, and planning of suburbia to produce a single way of quality of life. Gans concludes by observing that:

> the community may displease the professional city planner and the intellectual defender of cosmopolitan culture, but perhaps more than any other type of community, Levittown permits most of its residents to be what they want to be—to center their lives around the house and the family, to be among neighbors they can trust, to find friends to share leisure hours, and to participate in organizations that provide sociability and the opportunity to be of service to others.[267]

Like the visual conflict posed by Graham's juxtaposition of photographs of residents of the maligned New Jersey suburbs engaged in improvement projects against the intransigent, repetitive tract home facades in his Homes for America slides, Gans offers recourse to the condemnation of suburban life but not a wholesale endorsement of the status quo. For Gans and Graham suggesting that life carries on in these condemned spaces offers conclusion enough. This position challenges determinist arguments, which center on a belief in the power of aesthetics and the built environment to structure life experience.

Forestalling judgment was in and of itself a radical act within the context of the vitriol around the decline of America thanks to suburbanization. Denise Scott Brown's 1969 article, "On Pop Art, Permissiveness, and Planning" calls for an accepting and open-ended approach to understanding the already existing material world. She, too, chides critics of suburbia, writing that it has been "shown how Levittown, hated by architects and berated by the upper classes is much of what its occupants want, and that architectural diatribes on […] the immorality of sprawl won't make it go away."[268] Scott Brown calls for a form of planning, building and experiencing that begins with acceptance of the existent world rather than a wholesale rejection or erasure. She cites Gans and artists such as Ruscha as role models in the forging of a new

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[267] Ganz, 412-413.
[268] Brown, Denise Scott "On Pop Art, Permissiveness, and Planning" *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* vol. 35 (May 1969): 185.

methodology. Scott Brown calls for builders and planners to "develop a respectful understand of [society's] cultural objects and a loving strategy for their development to suit the felt needs and way of life of its people. This is a socially responsible activity[.]" [269] In this spirit in the fall of 1968 Scott Brown would lead a group of Yale architecture students to embark on a full-scale study of Las Vegas. In the preface to *Learning from Las Vegas,* the book reporting the results of their findings that she co-authored with collaborators Robert Venturi, and Steven Izenour, Scott Brown argues that architects and critics are ill-equipped to adequately and fairly grapple with new types of urban forms. Responding to critiques of the book's supposed endorsement of the crassly commercial, sprawling urbanism of Las Vegas, Scott Brown suggests that the study asks the reader to "reassess the role of symbolism in architecture, and, in the process, to learn a new receptivity to the tastes and values of other people and a new modesty in our designs and in our perception of our role as architects in society."[270] Scott Brown's call for a new receptivity shares some affinity to Lady Bird Johnson's ecologically scaled engagement with the impact of Cold War infrastructure as well as her critique of the hubris of the "conquerors" of the American scene. While Johnson's recommendations stem from firsthand observation and a healthy skepticism of unchecked progress, the abstract dictates of beauty structure her response.

Graham and Smithson deploy photography and writing to inhabit this receptive mode and also offer what Scott Brown calls a "new vision of the imminent world around us."[271] In their work on *Learning from Las Vegas,* Michael Golec and Aron Vinegar argue that the fundamental shift in thinking offered by Scott Brown and her colleagues is premised on the acceptance that "it is not the evanescence and lubricity of objects that is unhandsome but our

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[269] Ibid., 186.
[270] Scott Brown, Denise "Preface to the Revised Edition" *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972: ix.
[271] Scott Brown, "On Pop Art, Permissiveness, and Planning," 186.

grasping at them." [272] To forgo grasping or condemnation in favor of receptivity and responsiveness lets texts and human artifice retain their complex and lived material densities. *Bewitched* and *The Munsters* underscore the mundane and fantastic nature of suburban life. So too do Smithson's prehistoric rambles and Graham's thick description. The tyranny of good taste lurks in these determinations about the promises and pretensions of suburban life. The suburban middle class way of life and corollary taste culture, inaccessible to those structurally excluded from participation, garnered more than its fair share of attention due to its excessive symbolic function as a bellwether for the health of the nation. Smithson and Graham participate in the perpetuation of the suburban fixation, which is necessarily a fixation on the changing nature of white middle class experience. This marks so-called conceptual art as an art concerned with particular identity and experience.

[272] Golec, Michael and Aron Vinegar "Introduction: Instruction as Provocation" *Relearning from Las Vegas* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008: 1.1

CHAPTER FOUR

Worthy Pleasure: TV, Video Art, and Cooking

Introduction

Echoing the critics encountered in chapter three and expanding the scope of his critique of sixties America, Lewis Mumford details what he sees as the degradation of every day life in suburban America: "a multitude of uniform houses, lined up inflexibly, at uniform distances, on uniform roads, in a treeless communal waste, inhabited by people of the same class, the same income, the same age, witnessing the same television performances, eating the same tasteless prefabricated foods, from the same freezers, conforming in every outward and inward respect to a common mold."[273] Mumford's fine-grain polemic links the homogenization of the built environment to what he imagines as the degeneration of American food culture. Food preparation was the interior frontier in which an emergent gourmet food culture combated mediocrity on the dinner table. Mumford's early sixties rebuke of the impact of suburbanization on the food habits of the middle class reflects the ongoing anxiety about homogenization and downward pull of indistinct affluence.

The aesthetic dimension of these prefabricated foods and the freezers from which they emerged provided fodder for photographers coming to prominence in the late sixties and early seventies such as Stephen Shore and William Eggelston. Eggleston's *Troubled Waters* portfolio, begun in 1972, surveyed the American South and offered Mumford an illustration of the average American freezer. The pastel hued packaging the brown Kroger Beef Pie, pink ice cream, baby blue Frosty Farms Tasty Taters haphazardly pile up in the frost-lined freezer that fills the photographic frame. The frozen relics that line the recesses of the freezer connote none of the

[273] Mumford, Lewis *The City in History,* 486.

ebullient promises of the convenience food revolution of the immediate postwar era. Their cheery packaging encased in the frosty cavern of the freezer appears forgotten and passed its prime.

Likewise, Shore's *American Surfaces* series, a collection of 174 commercially processed Kodacolor prints, captured the repellent and ubiquitous spaces, meals, objects, and practices of the early years of the presidency of Richard M. Nixon. Shore's deadpan use of flash and innovative application of color in art photography hones in on the decay of the postwar consumer economy. *New York, New York September-October 1972* presents an unflattering, overhead view of an uneaten television dinner. The tin tray's rigid geometry holds modest portions of mashed potatoes, sickly green peas, ruby red cranberries, and iridescent, gravy encased expanses of poultry. The heat-and serve, mass-produced meal sits on the unused burners of the gas range; two domestic commodities concerned with the transformation of domestic food preparation after the Second World War illogically share space. Shore's quasi-ethnographic emphasis recalls in some ways Oldenburg's focus on a debased or trickle-down modernity we saw with 1963's *Bedroom Ensemble*. *American Surfaces* comes almost ten years later and carries forward from the conceptual photography of Dan Graham's *Homes for America* in its anti-aesthetic approach to the postwar environment. A 1972 review in the village voice referred to Shore's work as capturing "contemporary Americana."[274] Capturing "contemporary Americana," Shore focused on moments of temporal compression evidence in the material culture of Americana, producing a passé, perhaps nostalgic, consideration of the banal, disposable trappings of late modern American life, capturing its meals and spaces at their most withered.

[274] Coleman, A.D. "American Yawn, Irish Wail" *The Village Voice* October 5, 1972.

In addition to the homogenization of American foodways so feared by Mumford ,though appreciated by many consumers, the sixties also witnessed the emergence of a revived form of gourmet food culture, emerging in response to the explosion of convenience food. Simultaneous to the development of convenient frozen and canned foods, a host of elites consumers and chefs worked to revive and reinterpret the nineteenth century practices of French cuisine. As David Strauss argues, twentieth century gourmet culture in the United States was "a borrowed institution" and "quite naturally offended those mainstream Americans who preferred to live by utilitarian values."[275] Henry Luce, publisher of *Gourmet Magazine*, asserted, "The art of eating can be preserved only by practicing […] it is not the least of the individual liberties worth cultivating and fighting to hold in a world threatened with regimentation."[276] Luce importantly refers to the art of eating, not the art of cooking, indicating the intention of enticing a male audience with tails of gustatory experience. With the foundation of *Gourmet* in 1941 and the efforts of *New York Times* food writer Craig Claiborne, interest in the pleasures of gourmet food grew in popularity. Claiborne and his collaborator chef Pierre Franey published recipes, reviews, and visions of a refined highbrow form of French cooking in the *Times* as well as in nationally distributed cookbooks that proved quite popular, but at Strauss points out the cook book did not always transform the reader into a home chef.

The gourmet movement received a big boost from the Kennedy administration when the First Lade hired French chef, Rene Verdon to serve as the White House's official chef in 1961. Julia Child's formative compendium *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* also debuted in 1961. The highbrow, continental period of the Kennedy administration brought chef Verdon great

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[275] Strauss, David *Setting the Table for Julia: Gourmet Dining in America 1934-1961* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2003: 3.
[276] Ibid., 150.

renown and his food captivated a nation eager for the cultural capital that participation in a gourmet culture offered. Verdon stayed on as chef after President Kennedy's assassination, but not for long, for "the Kennedys had asked for quenelles de brochet and mousse of sole with lobster. The Johnsons wanted barbecue, spoonbread, and chili."[277] In 1965, the Johnsons hired a food consultant to cut costs with the addition of frozen and canned vegetables, and after a row over a dish featuring garbanzo beans, which Verdon refused to cook, the chef resigned. An editorial in the *Washington Post* mused, "The resignation that truly signals the end of the Kennedy era is that of Chef Rene Verdon."[278] As the Johnson's pulled tight the purse strings and inflected the nation's executive cuisine with American regionalism, there was a sense of a complete eclipse of the taste culture of Camelot.

However, beginning in 1963, one of the gourmet movement's up and coming new prophets found a new venue with the airing of the first episode of Julia Child's Boston produced program, *The French Chef.* With both her cookbook and her television program Child radically transformed gourmet food culture, television cookery, and conceptions of educational television. This chapter will explore the ways in which Child both popularized and feminized gourmet food culture and revised conceptions of cooking as art rather than chore. I focus on *The French Chef* in the late sixties and early seventies, rather than its first appearance, in order to examine challenges to the persistence of its model of good taste in the post-Kennedy moment and its position in the last days of the Great Society's efforts to enrich daily life through the reform of television. In what ways does Child's intervention transcend a certain form of passé

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[277] Brown, Emma "Rene Verdon, White House Chef for Kennedys, dies at 86" *Washington Post* February 11, 2011.
[278] Ibid.

Francophilia? How does the inherently pedagogical nature of her enterprise conceive of television two decades after its invention?

Her television program would be seized upon by those working to recuperate commercial television—more often than not coded as feminine pop cultural swill—through the institutionalization and nationalization of public television. Returning to the question of how television could participate in the making of taste, this chapter will examine the consolidation of a late sixties gourmet food culture and the institutionalization of public television. Focusing on Julia Child's program *The French Chef* alongside the 1967 Public Broadcasting Act, this chapter looks at the relationship of taste to pedagogy in the context of debates around a newly nationalized mandate calling for high quality public television. In his speech announcing the Public Broadcasting Act, Lyndon Baines Johnson invoked a gustatory metaphor, asserting that it "announces to the world that our Nation wants more than just material wealth; our Nation wants more than a 'chicken in every pot.' We in America have an appetite for excellence, too."[279] With this legislation, the corporation for public broadcasting was founded in an effort to continue to address the so-called problem of television, echoing the efforts of CBS detailed in chapter one, at a particularly vexed time in the aggregation of national consensus, identity, and purpose. Johnson goes on to articulate a subtle critique of affluence, stating, "While we work every day to produce new goods and to create new wealth, we want most of all to enrich man's spirit."[280] In some ways Johnson revived the rhetoric of Newton Minow's early sixties invective calling for the reform of commercial television but added a distinctly domestic rather than internationalist motivation. Rather than reiterating Minow's concern over what sense of America outsiders might

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[279] Johnson, Lyndon Baines "Remarks Upon Signing the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967."November 7, 1967.
[280] Ibid

cull by watching a TV western, Johnson asserted, "So today we rededicate a part of the airwaves—which belong to all the people—and we dedicate them for the enlightenment of all the people."[281]

Through a close reading of episodes of the *French Chef* in the context of the late sixties; emergent gourmet discourse in cookbooks, video art, and lifestyle magazines; this chapter will consider pedagogical television and gourmet foodways as taste technologies. While much has been written about Child's gourmet discourse, there is little scholarship that puts her television program in conversation with feminist video and performance art dealing with gourmet foodways in the late 1960s and 70s. This chapter will take seriously feminist engagements with and other critiques of domesticity and gourmet food cultures as pedagogical artifacts alongside *The French Chef.* While *The French Chef* remained fully embedded within Cold War domesticity, Child disrupted an efficient vision of domesticity through physicality, humor, generosity, intimacy, and empowerment and her ambivalent relationship to consumer culture. The nexus of entertainment and pedagogy achieved in *The French Chef,* discussed in contemporaneous trade literature, will be considered in relationship to debates around the utility of television as a technology of national enlightenment and taste making.

The French Chef represent efforts to uplift and bring European standards to America and invest the labor of cooking with greater seriousness, thought, time, and effort. Considering the promotion of these taste discourses as a part of the larger narrative addressed in the previous chapters allows for the insertion of an account of reproductive labor alongside the aesthetic toils of taste. Forms of frictionless display of domestic competency promised by canned foods or the latest ovens, or enacted in the family sit-com worked in tandem to produce a domestic myth

[281] Ibid.

focused on a confined but productive female body. Child's television program *The French Chef*, beginning in 1963 and continuing into the 1970s, intervened in a tidy, efficient, and disembodied field of labor and display offered in television sit-coms and advertising for domestic conveniences in print and in television. Child's comedic physicality, recalling in some ways Lucille Ball's disruptive domestic comedy, served to Americanize French cooking and make it less threatening and more accessible.

The introduction of French cooking to a television audience within the context of an emergent public broadcasting mandate, which promoted television's pedagogical purpose as a technique and technology of enlightenment, reflects and amends the aspirational taste texts offered in Jacqueline Kennedy's White House tour. Emphasizing the televisual, policy, and food cultural contexts in which *The French Chef* emerged contributes to the larger narrative of a contentious, enlightened middlebrow taste culture traced throughout this dissertation, as food began to take a central position in middle class socialization.

It is this aggregation of cultural capital through a prescribed form of cultural fluency in food that video artists and activists such as Martha Rosler and Laura Kronenberg Cavestani critiqued and lampooned in their video works in the seventies. Rosler and Cavestani demonstrate the ubiquity of gourmet discourses as well as their class-based parochialism and ethnocentrism. *A Budding Gourmet,* Rosler's first—but rather understudied—video work produced while she was a student at University of California, San Diego in 1974, explores the anxieties around cultural imperialism and gendered divisions of labor in the context of a new kind of gourmet food culture. I put this work in conversation with Rosler's celebrated video of the following year, *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, which has suffered no dearth of interpretation. In 1973 Laura Kronenberg Cavestani artist-activist member of the video art collective the Videofreex,

collaborated with Abbie Hoffman to create *Abbie Hoffman Making Gefilte Fish*, produced with the support of the Television Lab, which drew funding from New York State Council on the Arts at WNET, a New York City public television station. In putting these works into a broader discussion of taste, television, and domestic labor, I aim to enrich interpretations of video art that emphasize its immediacy and perceived narcissism with a thorough account of media and social contexts that inform the choice of medium and content. [282] By judiciously writing television back into the narrative of video art as something more than a foil or object of ridicule, I negotiate the problematic gendered binary of the mass cultural feminine object of television pitted against the masculine avant-garde intervention and propose a more fluid relationship between the two media and their politics.

This chapter will explore the interlocking concerns of gourmet taste and public television by first articulating the complex politics of food, domesticity, and feminism of the late sixties and seventies. Then, an account of the policy and cultural rhetoric around the foundation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting will situate this chapter's central objects in a changing televisual field. With this background in mind, I will then offer an analysis of *The French Chef* within this public television and food political context as well as in relation to other televisual representations of cooking. This chapter will close with an analysis of the works Cavestani and Rosler and the visions of late modern domesticity, taste cultures, and dissent they offer. In doing so I argue that taste operates as the vector through which the maligned and sometimes despised act of cooking and the "bad object" of television might be transformed into a worthy art form. Further, video art's dismissal of the aesthetic mandates of the art world's taste culture produces a

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[282] See Krauss, Rosalind "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism" October, Vol. 1. (Spring, 1976), pp. 50-64.

new set of criteria through which so-called advanced art might be produced and judged. Within the field of video artists such as Rosler and collectives such as the Videofreex pushed the medium to not only espouse an internal critique of the art world but also, more primarily, to engage a broader media politics. Video was, according to Rosler, both provisional and cheap and, importantly "created a community, it resided within a community, and it moved to many other communities, creating a new discontinuous imagined community."[283] Rosler's sentiments echo the spirit of the architects of the vision of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting who wished for something more from television and worked to imagine what TV might look like unencumbered by the constraints of sponsorship and advertising. The shared interest pedagogical and political potential of televisual media coalesce around a revaluation of the everyday activity of cooking.

Domesticity, Food, and The End of the Great Society

Shore's focus on food commodities and the changing rituals of dining sheds light on the ways in which food operated as another politicized facet of Americanness in the context of the changing cultural climate of the late 1960s and early 1970s. From 1966 to 1968, the Johnson administration passed a suite of legislation, including the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act, the Wholesome Poultry and Meat Act. These laws worked to regulate the increasingly industrialized American food market and responded to growing consumer activism movement percolating across the nation. As Lizbeth Cohen has demonstrated in her book, *Consumer Republic,* the culture of consumerism did not solely breed slavish dedication to the consumptive altar, but contributed to the development of a broad-based mass political movement concerned with the

[283] Rosler, Martha *California Video Art: Artists and Histories* Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008: 10.

food economy. [284] In 1966, democratic Senator Frank Moss of Utah asserted: "There is a quiet revolt in this country. It is a revolt of people who are not violent, but who are angry—at incredibly shrinking packages and expanding prices and preposterous advertising. We in congress and they in the administration ignore this revolt at our peril."[285]

Women powered the growing consumer movement at the grassroots and leadership level. President Johnson appointed Esther Peterson, who had served in the Kennedy administration as the assistant secretary of labor and pushed through the Equal Pay Act of 1963, as the first specialist in consumer affairs. Peterson, a long time labor and women's rights activist, focused attention on transparency in food labeling in terms of both price per unit and nutritional value. [286] From Marin County California to North Jersey, a series of spontaneous protests in the fall of 1966 placed women at the forefront of a politicized consumer rights movement. The Madera Tribune reported that almost 200 Marin County housewives, whose organization called itself Residents Against Grocery Store Expenses or RAGE, gathered to join "nationwide protests against sales gimmicks which they feel cause a rise in food prices at supermarkets."[287] The assertive tone and coordinated efforts of these boycotts and protests found support in the Johnson Administration. This movement reflected the political significance of supermarkets as spaces in which, as Tracey Deutsch puts it, "the discourses that marked postwar liberalism and gender relations were reified, enforced and linked."[288] The food economy and supermarket, thus,

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[284] Cohen, Lizbeth *Consumer Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Post War America* New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2008: 363.
[285] Ibid., 367.
[286] Molotsky, Irvin "Esther Peterson Dies at 91; Worked to Help Consumers" *New York Times* December 22, 1997.
[287] "Marin County Housewives Join Protest" *Madera Tribune* November 4, 1966.
[288] Deutsch, Tracey *Building a Housewife's Paradise: Gender, Politics, and American Grocery Stores in the Twentieth Century* :184.

became a site of women's public authority within the context of the powerful rubric of postwar consumer citizenship.

The urban uprisings of the late 1960s in response to intractable racial injustice sometimes resulted in looting targeted retail spaces and supermarkets in particular. Although at the time they were often portrayed as "looting" in the mainstream press, subsequent scholars have pointed to the ways in which such acts highlighted the proposition that consumerism formed the root of American citizenship and belonging. Cohen argues that looting served as "way of avenging exploitative treatment and satisfying pent up desires for basic consumer goods promised but not delivered by a supposedly prosperous postwar America."[289] Deutsch details the press coverage of the 1968 insurrection in Chicago following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.; she argues that "food and grocery stores were a particular catalyst for fury—and their destruction became a kind of symbol of the social disorder of the insurrection."[290] In generalizing the symbolism of the supermarket, Deutsch points out, the inescapable symbolism of consumer citizenship as connotative of Americanness emerges unscathed. In acknowledging the space of the diner counter, as explored in chapter three, and the supermarket as sites of political significance, the buying, cooking, and consuming of food cannot but be seen as inherently political activities within the confines of a Cold War ideological landscape.

The promise of postwar affluence, social reform, and the fundamental transformation of daily life offered by Johnson's Great Society began to fade in the face of rising inflation and persistent racial and gender inequality, discrimination despite the passage of numerous landmark pieces of legislation, and the tidal pull of the Vietnam War in terms of both the allocation of federal resources and the uneven burden of the draft's impact on the poor and racial minorities.

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[289] Cohen, 373.
[290] Deutsch, 214.

In reflecting on his presidency, Johnson asserted, "I knew from the start that if I left the women I love—the Great Society—in order to fight that bitch of a war, then I would lose everything. All my programs, all my dreams."[291] By 1968, three years after the escalation of the conflict in Vietnam and the end of the Johnson Administration, a litany of Great Society legislation had been passed, but lacked the economic and infrastructural investment to fulfill the totality of its expansive promise. Adam Yarmolinsky, a key architect of Great Society programs wrote in 1968 that the vast gap between the so-called American dream and realities of late sixties America, as gap "further aggravated by the crisis of race." [292] He continues: "The very idea of creating a Great Society is therefore lost in a kind miasma of worry, doubt, and fear about the future of American society."[293] Yarmolinsky cites Vietnam as far too demanding both in terms of economic resources and the attention of its leaders and argues, "while the U.S. commitment in Vietnam remains conspicuously open-ended, all other prospects are severely limited." [294] Indeed, as Rainbow Push Coalition leader and lifelong civil rights activist Reverend Jesse Jackson put it retrospectively, "Johnson's war on poverty was lost in the jungles of Vietnam. Tired of war, cynical about lies, weary of upheaval, Americans were said to suffer 'compassion fatigue.'"[295]

The Janus faced nature of these Cold War entanglements drove home the relationship between the domestic consumer and military economies as well as the issues plaguing the functionality of social welfare programs. Artist Martha Rosler, making her *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* (1967-1972) at a moment when the Cold War got hot, mobilized

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[291] Updergrove, Mark *Indomitable Will: LBJ In the Presidency* New York: Skyhorse Publishers, 2012: 8.
[292] Yarmolinsky, Adam "The Great Society: Another American Dream" *The World Today* Vol. 24, No. 5 (May 1968): 208.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Jackson, Jesse "LBJ's War on Poverty Still Only Partially Won" *Chicago Sun Times* June 10, 2013.

domestic imagery, and emphasized this interdependence of domestic and militaristic forms of advanced capitalism. In addition to this economic interconnectedness, Rosler's works evinced an ideological equation between the domestic and the militaristic materialized through physical proximity of images of war and home. She took seriously and assertively linked the multiple theaters of the Cold War.

Magazines such as *House Beautiful* continually portrayed the household as a site of effortless female labor in their advertisements for the newest domestic technologies and lavish color photographic spreads depicting immaculate interior design schemes. Rosler seizes upon the manicured, rational spaces and surfaces depicted in magazines such as *House Beautiful* or *Lady's Home Journal,* calling attention to their function in the continued representation of regressive gender roles. On each broadsheet, these images of reproductive labor and the domestic consumer economy share space with images of the Vietnam War, exaggerating and calling attention to the ways in which many Americans the conflict at home on television. I wish to keep in mind this bringing together of the soft power of the domestic consumer economy and the military as it adds specificity to the politicized nature of reproductive labor and food at the end of the sixties and beginning of the seventies.

The images of domestic space and labor that provided fodder for Rosler's political leaflets began to appear dated as their enforcement of gender roles and divisions of labor came under scrutiny. In step with the broadening of conceptions of power to encompass institutional, familial, and social relations, the women's liberation movement articulated the mantra that the personal is political. The complex terrain of sixties feminist and women's liberation movements offered contesting strategies and interpretations of gender identity and sexual difference. Conceptions of reproductive labor and cooking in particular constituted hotly contested issues.

The publication of Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique*, a foundational text in the development of second wave feminism, documented the dissatisfaction of middle class white women with the resulting confinement stemming from postwar gender and class roles. Friedan explored what she termed "the problem that has no name" and noted in her introduction that the ways in which women experience their disaffection takes the form of an everyday scale oppression in the form of a staid routine. Her interviewees identify what I would call technologies and architectures of confinement as shorthand for the broader "chains that bind her in her trap and chains of her own mind and spirit. They are chains made up of mistaken ideas and misinterpreted facts, of incomplete truths and unreal choices. They are not easily seen and not easily shaken off." [296] Friedan identifies the currency of peanut butter sandwiches, dishes, and roast chickens that punctuate what sixties psychologist Lois Hoffman called the "emptiness of housekeeping in the age of convenience," as tangible symbols for women to express the way they perceive the structural limits of gender. [297] As Friedan and her white middle class peers railed against their "modern plate-glass-and-broadloom ranch house" cages in the mid-sixties, in a push for gender equality, the late sixties saw the growth of essentialist forms of feminism characterized by an emphasis on a fundamental form of womanhood. Another formulation emphasized the socially constructed nature of gender and more broadly questioned capitalist patriarchy on a systemic level that interrogated, rather than putting forth a stable or universal form of womanhood.

The art and initiatives of the sixties explored in this dissertation concerned themselves with a distinctly feminine taste culture, transposing these concerns to the masculine realm of the so-called avant-garde art world and, in the case of Jacqueline Kennedy, the world political stage.

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[296] Friedan, Betty *The Feminine Mystique* New York: W.W.Norton & Company, Inc. 1963: 31.
[297] Hoffman, Lois *The Employed Mother in America* Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963: 39.

The dissemination of feminine culture, concerns, and objects into non-domestic contexts carries with it a suite of internally conflicted intentions, some of which have been explored in earlier chapters. The domestic transpositions, executed by women, explored in this chapter work to remake or reframe domestic and gourmet taste discourses more explicitly for women. Seizing upon the most intimate and fundamental of the domestic arts, Child, Cavestani, and Rosler interrogate the potential of cooking to represent American identity in late capitalism. The increasingly splintered political backdrop and the politicized emphasis on food are critical for our examination of the persistence of a determinations of taste that structured discussions around public television and the parallel transformation of gourmet culture from male conceptual pursuit to an embodied female activity in the late sixties. The discourse around Great Society legislation appropriately attuned itself to contemporaneous struggles for equality in terms of both race and gender while also grappling with questions of cultural enlightenment reminiscent of a more distant New Frontier sensibility.

Public Television as Cultural Corrective

The continued attention to the interlocking problems of taste and television reflect a persistent devotion to cultural enlightenment as a liberal democratic ideal. Strong rhetoric of public interest and responsibility colored discussions around educational television's capacity to overcome class differences and regional disparity through cultivation and pedagogy. As Laurie Ouellette argues, the architects of public television viewed it as both a "corrective cultural supplement" to guard against the creeping mediocrity of the middle class and as a means through which the Great Society's war on poverty might also gain ground in establishing a more

equitable nation.[298] Tensions between elitism and progressivism characterize the debates around the development of a national "televisual curriculum" of sorts. A 1970 article by Julius Duscha calling for continued and greater support of the public broadcasting argued that "public broadcasting could be a yardstick against which to measure the performance of American television just as almost 40 years ago the Tennessee Valley Authority was conceived of as a yardstick for private power companies."[299] Duscha pushed for a radical inversion of the interests that historically structured television's developments, arguing for federally funded—rather than commercial television to lead the field in terms of quality and innovation.

President Johnson, in his remarks upon passing the Public Broadcasting Act, reiterated the strong belief in the revolutionary power of television which produced the need for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to "direct that power toward the great and not the trivial purposes."[300] In an effort to build an institution that would be, as Johnson put it, "long on enlightened leadership," the 1967 Carnegie Corporation constituted a commission of experts to imagine and develop a direction for the newly funded and founded corporation for public broadcasting. In a preface endorsing the objectives of the commission, Johnson frames the need for educational television in the terms of a pluralist vision of Cold War politics:

> From our beginnings as a nation we have recognized that our security depends on the enlightenment of our people, that our freedom depends on the communication of many ideas through many channels. I believe that educational television has an important future in the United States and throughout the world. [301]

Johnson's rhetoric further complicates the idea of public television as a cultural corrective by inflecting its mandate with national security. Reinvigorating the cultural front of the Cold War,

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[298] Ouellette, 25.
[299] Duscha, Julius "Public TV: Why still a stepchild?" *Columbia Journalism Review* November 1, 1971: 14.
[300] Johnson, Lyndon Baines Remarks Upon Signing the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967. November 7, 1967
[301] Ibid.

public television was charged with producing media that not only kept citizens appraised of public affairs but also cultivated good taste with programming that people actually wanted to watch. Public television embodied tensions between democratic progress and cultural exclusivity and, as Ouellette argues, the problems presented by constructions of cultural distinction derived from deeply gendered and partisan determinations of quality. At the end of the sixties, public television proposed that the "solution to cultural malaise" was to "restore liberal pluralism."[302]

While these arguments in support of federally funded public television in some ways recalls Minow's critiques of network television, they differ in their direct identification of the excessive influence of advertising and the correlated issue of ratings on the content that persists. The top-down form of cultural enlightenment and creative freedom proposed by the institutionalization of public television aspired to a degree of autonomy from the strictures of capitalism. In the Carnegie Commission report, the authors assert that public television "includes all that is of human interest and importance which is not at the moment appropriate or available for support by advertising." [303] For commission members, diversity constituted the bedrock of the healthy institution. While the committee was mostly comprised of elite, white university presidents, governors, and television producers, members also included author Ralph Ellison, concert pianist Rudolf Serkin, and former secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, Oveta Culp Hobby. With Ellison and Serkin lending high cultural credibility to the gathering of administrators, the commission aspired to technocratic totality in its constellation of expertise and knowledge. Their utopian hopes envisioned a public television that would be "free to experiment" and "sponsor research centers where persons of high talent can engage in

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[302] Ouellette, 18.
[303] *A Report of the for Action Carnegie Commission on Educational Television*, New York: Bantam Books, 1967: 3.

experimentation."[304] As they conclude their report, which served as the basis of the act that Johnson would sign into law, they hoped that public television would "deepen a sense of community in local life" and "help us see America whole, in all its diversity."[305] In order for their desires for public television to "be a mirror of the American style," the commission underscored the need to mine new sources for and conceptions of talent.[306]

Interestingly echoing the contrarian stance articulated by Rosler in relation to the power of video art to extend its reach beyond object-based art commodities, these powerbrokers and cultural producers wanted public television to be radically different from commercial television and be unencumbered by its conventions. For Rosler, the lateral move toward video and performance art removed the aesthetic insulation and market concerns that an art world taste culture produced that she saw as limiting art's political efficacy. For Rosler and the architects of public television it was crucial to create not only new forms but also new criteria with which to judge these forms. Rosler asserted retrospectively that artists working at the end of the sixties were "seeking to greater autonomy from art world gatekeepers, those controlling monetary value and cultural value alike." [307] As we will see, there was a period in which public television shared an iconoclastic impulse with the early practitioners of video art.

The sense of disappointment with the sort of television the corporate funded networks produced correlates to the critiques of the affluent Cold War American consumer economy offered its citizens this dissertation has traced throughout. By defining public television "against a negative assessment popular television," as Ouellette demonstrates, pundits and critics blamed the mass audience for the perpetuation of the wasteland of game shows, westerns, and sitcoms.

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[304] Ibid., 7.
[305] Ibid, 92.
[306] Ibid, 93.
[307] Rosler, Martha "Notes from the Field: Materiality" *Art Bulletin* (March 2013): 11.

[308] Public television emerged out of what Ouellette describes as an "ambivalent view of the people, for its reform logic hinged on their presumed failure as cultural arbiters."[309] Ouellette importantly points out the tensions between the "enlightenment from above" and the premise of publicness. I would also add that the tacit critique of capital as the determining force in the production of television content was importantly balanced against the continued paternalist belief in elite expertise. While the Carnegie report espoused the desire for both diversity and excellence, when the Public Broadcasting System began broadcasting in 1969 and 1970 responses were decidedly mixed. Recalling the anger over the use of tax dollars on White House finery, critics objected to PBS as "caviar television" or as an "ingenious system of taxing the poor to furnish the rich."[310] Conceptions of audience bear the mark of class based assumptions around the programming that the technocratic apparatus of PBS might offer and who might actually watch. Ideals of class transcendence so crucial to the Great Society imaginary were importantly premised upon the transformative power of cultural access that failed in some ways to gain political and public traction. Suspicions around government-funded and derived culture persisted as the questions over what constituted "worthy pleasure" colored discussions over what kinds of programming merited federal approval and funding.

While public television defined itself against the commercial television environment in the late sixties and earlier seventies, prime time network television also experienced a dramatic reorientation during this period. With the cancellation of *The Munsters* and *The Addams Family* thinning the onslaught of absurdist supernatural family sitcoms, the network pendulum swing back towards realism. Departing from the staid sitcom format whose conventional formats often

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[308] Ouelette, 25.
[309] Ibid.
[310] Ouelette 57-58.

insulated comedic family drama from contemporaneous politics and the fanciful take on the contemporary offered by witches and ghouls, the 1970-71 television season came to known as the "the season of social relevance."[311] With *M*A*S*H, All in the Family,* and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show,* CBS staked a claim for topical and political relevance and moved away the hayseeds and witches who had occupied much of the primetime real estate in preceding television seasons. Aniko Bodroghkozy argues in her book *The Groove Tube* that the success of a program such as *All in the Family* was premised on the values of aggressive topicality and flamboyantly controversial subject matter as well as the program's openness in terms how an audience might read it. [312] Producing a non-didactic, comedic space in which the poles of the era's schizoid politics coexist in the same narrative space, *All in the Family*—for example—problematizes arguments around public television as the oasis in the wasteland of irrelevant TV fluff upon which its existence was premised. Bodroghkozy argues that *All in the Family's* producer Norman Lear "domesticated the painful, unresolved social and generational conflict of the period," without succumbing to the tidy end-of-episode resolution.[313] The knee-jerk, oppositional definition of public television as the necessary cultural corrective to the "mediocre" of "homogenous" fare offered by commercial television relies on staid cultural hierarchies. However, as Jane Feuer points out in her work on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, these newly "relevant" programs also self-consciously worked to set themselves apart as the guilt-free, quality oasis from "ordinary" television where the educated could engage in "worthy pleasure."[314]

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[311] Bodroghkozy, Aniko *Groove Tube: Sixties Television and the Youth Rebellion* Durham: Duke Univeristy Press, 2001: 227.
[312] Ibid., 229.
[313] Ibid., 231
[314] Feuer, Jane *MTM: Quality Television* London: BFI Publications, 1983: 56.

In 1968 a conference of the National Association of Educational Broadcasters followed up the Carnegie Commissions efforts and Johnson's passage of the 1967 Public Broadcasting Act. The Washington Post reported that "even much of the public has started to accept the notion that broadcasting can be used from something beyond light diversion and manufactured dreams"[315] The article continues, tracing the conference's efforts at producing a diverse programming with panels such as *Soul: Does Public Broadcasting Have it?*.[316] While the author suggests that the answer was unlikely to be in the affirmative, the first few, so-called golden years of public television from 1967 to 1972 funded and featured diverse, challenging and sometimes subversive programming. It was during this period that the TV Lab was founded at WNET in New York, which provided funding for Laura Kronenberg Cavestani's work with Abbie Hoffman and that Julia Child's program came to be carried by over 85 stations across the nation. *The French Chef* came to be a kind of poster child for the potential viability of public television during this rocky period of transition given its prime time slot and relative popularity.

Prior to the foundation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and the Public Broadcast System, WNET in New York was the flagship station of a well- established network of educational television stations (NET). From 1967-1969, NET coexisted with the CPB, but with the foundation of PBS 1969 there emerged competing models and institutions in the production of public television. Tensions between the two networks grew with Richard M. Nixon taking office in 1969 as the institutions established by Johnson's Great Society became imperiled. NET had made a name for itself by producing challenging public affairs programming. A 1970 article "Public TV Why Still the Stepchild," calls out a few exceptional nationally broadcast programs notable for their both their quality and relevance. Citing a long

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[315] Laurent, Lawrence "Broadcasters Gather Here" *Washington Post* November 19, 1968: B6.
[316] Ibid.

format interview with Black Panther co-founder Bobby Seale, a documentary titled *Banks and the Poor,* and a program about the Vietnam War called "Who Invited Us?" among others, the article argues that NET contributed significantly to the televisual landscape by nationally distributing these hard hitting programs. [317] Whereas, newly founded PBS problematically shifted away from such hard-hitting public affairs programming. This shift resulted in part from fears over losing federal funding with notoriously media averse Nixon now holding the purse strings. With Vice President Spiro Agnew declaring in 1969 that public television lay in the hands of "a closed fraternity of privileged men," with an "Eastern liberal" perspective, the administration sought to tighten its control over programming.[318] The Nixon administration worked with the assumption that the independence of PBS and CPB would produce anti-administration, muckraking public affairs programming and thus threatened to cut federal funding unless public television acquiesced to the White House's vision for it. Indeed, PBS was founded under Nixon in order to wrest power away from NET as the helm of public television production.

Already in 1970, the utopian fanfare and hopes for a viable, diverse, and federally funded public television system began to fade and found critics on all ends of the political spectrum. Arthur L. Singer of the Carnegie Corporation, who would revisit the Carnegie Commission's report in an effort to revive its intentions, complained that:

> The present system is not pluralist; it is dominated by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Public Broadcasting Service, and the Ford Foundation. What goes on the air on the system, as distinct from purely local productions is what these institutions approve. The local manager is a petitioner and not an originator. Making his plea for

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[317] Duscha, 11.
[318] Day, James *The Vanishing Vision: The Inside Story of Public Television* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995: 213.

> support, he must think not in terms of his own public but in terms of the faceless mask known as the national audience.[319]

Singer's critique underscores the tensions between the local and national, expressing a concern about the lack of specificity and relevance that the production of nationalized programming entails. He sees PBS as mired in the same problematic desire to placate the "faceless mask known as the national audience" as commercial television. Nixon and Agnew seized upon this sort of a critique as well, decrying the centralization of public television production in New York and Washington D.C. to quell what they deemed deeply problematic federally funded "controversial points of view."[320] PBS president Hartford Gunn worked to block the national broadcast of NET's *Banks and the Poor* for fear it would further jeopardize the institution's tenuous existence. *Banks and the Poor* explored the exploitation of low income Americans by major New York banks and concluded with a roll call of congress members who maintained positive relations with these financial institutions. The program's broadcast did indeed inspire the deep and destructive ire of the Nixon White House.

As the Nixon White House plotted to defund and seize control of public television, the medium enjoyed its most creative, prolific and subversive moment. Among the most ambitious and unconventional programs produced during this period was the weekly variety program *The Great American Dream Machine.* Aired from 1971 to 1972, produced by WNET in New York, and funded by the Ford Foundation and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting; the program combined biting political satire, slapstick comedy, high concept performance, and animated segments. Navigating the tricky political terrain of the early seventies, the show's east coast liberal creators at times embodied the middle class "know it all" attitude and worked with the

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[319] Duscha, 12.
[320] Day, 219.

assumption that its audience was "white, educated, and materially comfortable."[321] *The Great American Dream Machine* frequently worked to articulate a complex and oftentimes internally conflicted take on the persistence of consumer culture as a signifier of the American Dream. Offering, on the one hand, satiric send ups of the creature comforts of American commodity capitalism, Marshall Efron offered a "better living" segment during which he might offer a cooking demonstration of a packaged, frozen Lemon Cream Pie, adding innumerable dashes of powdered chemicals to achieve that "factory fresh, factory approved" taste. And on the other, producing segments such as Studs Terkel's non-satiric barroom conversations with blue-collar Chicagoans, for whom the comforts of affluence so ridiculed by the elite left persisted as a yet unreached desire. As Ouellette points out, Terkel's segment was "out of place on *Dream Machine* and awkwardly handled by PBS publicity, which framed the ordinary citizens as exotic specimens."[322] Cancelled in 1972 in the wake of Nixon's redistribution of federal dollars to local PBS affiliates across the nation, such programs spoke to both the openness and experimentation of this fecund period as well as demonstrating the strain on a very concept of a nationalized televisual taste culture. [323]

Representing a curtailing of nationally broadcasted public affairs and experimental programming, the rise in localism produced by Nixon's move to limit the power of centralized sites of production dramatically shifted the public television landscape. Programs such as *The French Chef* or the BBC import, *The Forsythe Saga* survived the shift as their politics appeared innocuous to the paranoid Nixon administration while they also affirmed an older, perhaps less

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[321] Ouelette, 201.
[322] Ibid., 202.
[323] For an in depth account of the development of local public television programming in the wake of Nixon's change in funding allocation, see Ouelette, Laurie "Radicalizing Middle America" *Viewers Like You?* 203-215.

radical form of high culture based upon Europhilic tendencies. The narrowing of the scope of nationalized programming redoubled a commitment to a perception of the audience for public television as white, middle class, education, and culturally aspirational. Nixon's 1972 veto of a bill to continue funding as usual for public television carried forward a conservative, "authoritarian-populist" dismantling of public television into a commercialized and to a certain extent depoliticized televisual form, as corporate sponsorship and member pledge drives were harnessed to fill the gap left by the evacuation of federal funding.

These complex, overlapping and contradictory efforts to ascertain what counts as "worthy pleasure" in the televisual context parallel the desire to revalue the practice of cooking as well. Television and cooking represent undeniable facets of domestic life and as such they were both interpellated into larger political and cultural debates around taste. Gendered binaries of mass and high culture characterized arguments about the entropic effects of commercial television and the potentially uplifting possibilities of public television. Likewise the feminine labor of food preparation was subject to corporate-technocratic directives preaching both convenience and care. Food scholar Erica Endirjonas suggests that postwar women were told to "buy processed foods but cook from scratch; be creative but follow directions; accommodate all family members preferences but streamline the food purchase and preparation process."[324] The gourmet movement sought to redeem cooking from its feminized state as a strictly commodity-based practice through the incursion of male expertise and taste which valorized cooking as an artistic practice. As we will see later, Julia Child intervened in this field to redeem cooking along similar

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[324] Endrijonas, Erica "Processed Foods from Scratch: Cooking for a Family in the 1950s" *Kitchen Culture in America: Popular Representations of Food, Gender, and Race* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001: 163.

discursive lines but *for* women; she argued that cooking and eating from scratch were indeed worthy pleasures to be enjoyed by the female home cook.

From Shorthand to Art: Cooking for the Camera Before the French Chef

Prior to Child, the heat-and-serve conveniences of postwar foodways found their televisual counterpart in the suburban sitcoms of the fifties and sixties, where the labor and potential pleasures of cooking were distinctly minimized. Television studies scholar, Mary Beth Haralovich embeds televisual forms into a larger network of commercial interests, asserting: "[i]n the 1950s, a historically specific social subjectivity of the middle class homemaker was engaged by suburban housing, the consumer product industry, market research, and the lifestyle represented in popular "growing family" sit-coms such as *Father Knows Best* and *Leave it to Beaver*."[325] These various televisual and industrial forms and activities moved towards consolidating a set of domestic texts and competencies. Haralovich describes the ways in which the suburban sit-coms, such as *Leave it to Beaver*, present their matriarchs as "well-positioned within the constraints of domestic activity and the promises of the consumer product industry."[326] Programs like *Leave it to Beaver* or *The Donna Reed Show* began broadcasting in the mid to late 1950s and persisted into the mid 1960s. In other words, these TV homes presented a "realist" picture of comfortably middle class access to domestic technology and time saving foodstuffs and depicted the cleanly fruits of domestic labor without a sense of great effort or physicality.

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[325] Haralovich, Mary Beth "Sit-coms and Suburbs: Positioning the 1950s Homemaker" *Private Screenings: Television and the Female Consumer.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992: 111.
[326] Ibid., 137.

These programs' sparkling matriarchs were not depicted toiling. Rather their small gestures, costume changes, and utterances operated as televisual shorthand for domestic labor. The timesaving promise of domestic technology depicted within the sit-com, not to mention *on* the television *in* the viewer's home, provides a consumer framework for this abstract form of televisual labor shorthand. This shorthand for domestic labor on television is manifest in such gestures as the removal of an apron, the coif of a hairdo, or the folding of linens. These programs deliver the female body as the attractive site of productive but not strenuous labor. Haralovich asserts that these programs and the vast networks of market research interpellated a female subjectivity exclusive to the home, "linking her identity as a shopper and consumer to class attributes, the base of the consumer economy was broadened, and her deepest emotions and insecurities were tapped and transferred to consumer product design."[327] This production of consumerist subjectivity speaks to the dual thrusts of containment and display, peripherality and extreme scrutiny, as the intended viewer encounters the technologies, gestures, appearances, and products that seem to comprise the normative domestic sphere or lifestyle text.

While such sitcoms do invariably offer visions of a productive, well dressed, and attractive matriarch, these programs do grapple with questions over the cultural value of domestic labor. For instance, during season two of *The Donna Reed Show* in an episode called "Just a Housewife," an irritatingly condescending radio host interviews women shopping at a grocery store. Reed points out to her friend the shame with which women pronounce that they are "just a housewife." Throughout the episode Reed's family contests the limitations of the term housewife, the lack of opportunities afforded women, and how American society is changing no thanks to the upwardly mobile men who have benefited from the invisible labor of women

[327] Ibid., 137

throughout history. Still dressed implausibly in heels and a stunning dress as she puts away the vacuum, Reed is taunted by a seemingly enchanted vacuum cleaner chanting the mocking refrain of "housewife, housewife."

Taking to the radio airwaves and demanding that the host reconsider his patronizing tone, Reed provokes a momentary revolution in which all the women in her fictional town praise her as an emancipator who has commanded the respect of men for their domestic labor. In typically sit-com style, the narrative resolves without a radical destabilization of gender roles as the final shot shows the family having a laugh at the expense of another radio show guest who identifies herself as just a housewife. Still, the program opened up the space for discussion of the cultural and political value of the American housewife and focused on the importance of identity and self-identity as crucial to feminine self-respect, personal growth and worth.

Aired in 1960, three years before Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* hit bookstores, Reed's 30 minute sitcom introduced the idea of a radical revaluation of housewives as an all-in-one diplomats, mules, philosophers, and nurses. Indeed, recent research by Stephanie Coontz and others on the Feminine Mystique suggests that women's magazines were filled with articles speaking to the homemaker's dissatisfaction well before Friedan's book was published. [328] Likewise, *I Love Lucy* continually questioned gender roles as each episode pitted Lucy against the monotony of home life and, in turn, her husband. Though for each foray into a new venture—acting or factory work—Lucy would fail and placing her back into her role as wife and homemaker. The show called attention to Lucy's dissatisfaction while also, ultimately, resolving into normative domestic life at episode's end.

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[328] See Coontz, Stephanie *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s* New York: Basic Books, 2012.

The industrial and managerial grip on food production and consumption, like developments in technology and architecture, reflected the adaptation of wartime production techniques and energies towards domestic concerns. Laura Shapiro details this process as also involving a migration of choice from the consumer to the food industry in her book *Something from the Oven: Reinventing Dinner in the 1950s*. Shapiro's account relates to larger demographic shifts evidenced in the move away from intergenerational household and towards suburban diaspora that necessitated the production of new "traditions" couched in progressivist techno-utopian language.[329] This top-down mobilization of wartime industrial food products and processes to the sphere of domestic consumption also illustrates the ways in which the fabrication of desire for an effortless form of housewifery correlates to the promotion of ease and efficiency as qualities befitting a democracy.[330] These canned and frozen food products, along with domestic technologies were additionally disseminated through commercials during the sit-coms, which depicted the lifestyle these products might afford, participating and producing in the so-called "cult of efficiency." At its extreme, techno-utopian level, food industrialists envisioned a day when the housewife would never handle raw food again, reorienting food preparation to circulate around canned and frozen goods. [331]

In addition to the narrative depictions of domestic life offered during prime time shows like *Father Knows Best,* domestic advice programs aired during daytime hours. NBC's *Home*

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[329] John Keats's 1956 book *The Crack in the Picture Window*, offers a hybrid journalistic and social scientific account of the early years of life in newly fabricated suburban communities. The book does a fine job at detailing the isolation and estrangement and resultant familial structures and consumption patterns experienced by inhabitants—geographically cut off from their extended families— of these developments. See Keats, John *The Crack in the Picture Window.* New York: Ballentine, 1956.
[330] Shapiro, Laura *Something From the Oven: Reinventing Dinner in 1950s America.* New York: Viking, 2004: 7.
[331] Ibid., 51-52.

was one such program. Kathleen Collins, in her book length study of television cooking shows, describes *Home* as mimicking the format of magazines such as *Good Housekeeping* or *McCall's*.[332] Lynn Spigel, in her book *Make Room for TV,* writes that *Home* enacted an "implicit integration of housework, consumerism, and TV entertainment that the network promoted as a 'machine for selling.'"[333] *Home*'s cooking segment featured Poppy Cannon, author of *The Can Opener Cook Book*. Collins writes that Cannon, the so-called can-opener queen, "became one of the best known faces of the zealous appetite for convenience."[334] Indeed, this promotion of canned goods and the corollary proposition of ease of preparation relates to the domestic-labor shorthand circulated in the suburban sit-coms and domestic advice programs like *Home*, as the mess or drudgery of food preparation or housekeeping is effaced in favor of a disembodied, mechanized, aestheticized or deskilled forms of domestic labor. Opposite Cannon on the food preparation spectrum in the 1950s was Dione Lucas, a highly skilled, no nonsense TV chef. Collins writes that Lucas "had the dubious skill of unwittingly provoking palpable anxiety."[335] Her strict pedagogy, display of the utmost skill and demonstration of expertise without struggle or great effort made her television program a spectacle of unreachable skill and, as Collins suggests, a site of angst around one's own competence in the face of such mastery. These forms of frictionless display of domestic competency promised by can foods or the latest ovens, Lucas's spectacular display, or enacted in the family sit-com worked in tandem to produce a mythical domestic fabric, which circulated around the visage of a confined but productive female body.

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[332] Collins, Kathleen *Watching What We Eat: The Evolution of Television Cooking. Shows* New York: Continuum, 2009: 60.
[333] Spigel, Lynn *Make Room For TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992: 83.
[334] Collins. 63.
[335] Ibid., 52.

The Art of the French Chef

With the debut of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* in 1961, Child and her publisher Knopf targeted the same demographic as *McCall's* and NBC's *Home.* However, the cookbook was, as David Strauss points out, directly antagonistic to the conception of cooking as a chore and eating as a matter solely of sustenance.[336] Child writes in her introduction, "This is a book for the servantless American cook who can be unconcerned on occasion with budgets, waistlines, time schedules, children's meals, the parent-chauffeur-den-mother-syndrome or anything else that might interfere with the enjoyment of producing something wonderful to eat."[337] She proposes a new kind of French cooking which can be executed with items from the American supermarket. In doing so, Child critiques the mystifying tone surrounding gourmet culture:

> We have purposively omitted cobwebbed bottles, the patron in his white cap bustling among his sauces, anecdotes about charming little restaurants with gleaming napery, and so forth. Such romantic interludes put French cooking into a never-never land instead of the Here, where happily it is available to everybody.[338]

She tacitly calls out *Gourmet* magazine, which ceaselessly published just such anecdotes and vignettes as part of its elite gourmet form of exoticism. In examining issues of *Gourmet* magazine between 1967 and 1972—the period marked by *The French Chef*'s more nationalized broadcast— the transformation of the publication is remarkable. In 1968, female letter writers are referred to exclusively as Mrs. John Doe and all of the advertisements explicitly address a male readership—chiefly ads for alcohol, cigarettes, and cars, many which made use of the imagery of male, heterosexual desire in their sales pitch. Interestingly, a travelogue detailing a trip to Paris in the spring of 1968 made no mention of the student uprisings unfolding around the

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[336] Strauss, 228.
[337] Child, Julia *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* New York: Knopf, 1961: xi.
[338] Ibid., xii.

corner from whatever tony restaurant the author lovingly described. By 1972, the magazine shifted dramatically, especially in terms of what products were advertised. For the first time, *Gourmet* came to resemble *House Beautiful* in its plentiful ads for domestic commodities and labor saving devices. Ads for Armstrong Flooring, for instance, suggest: " We think you should spend more time in the kitchen creating. Not waxing," or "Our floors give gourmet cooks something they want: more time to cook."[339] *Gourmet,* which branded itself as the magazine of good living and featured extensive romantic accounts of meals in Monaco, began to acknowledge and court a female readership and conceptualize the home cook as an agent in the home with domestic concerns beyond that of experiential consumption. This shift in the pages of the publication of record for the American gourmet indicates the ways in which Child's cookbook and television program cracked open the gendered-male field of gourmet culture through the powerful acknowledgement of both the labor of cooking and American women as worthy of entry to the rarefied realm of gourmet taste.

The circumstances under which *The French Chef* made its television debut in 1963 on WGBH Boston, a non-commercial, educational television station that hit the television airways in 1955 and maintains its status as the producer of today's PBS flagship programming, indicate the timeliness of Child's book and television show in terms of contemporaneous revaluations of television, the labor of cooking, and the cultural cache of Frenchness. The idea for the program stemmed from Child's visit to a book review program in which she did a small cooking demonstration. The segment received a wave of positive responses, calling for the production of a proper cooking show. As Child recounted in 1968, "the Kennedy factor, plus the ability to reach Europe in a few hours by air combined to awaken American palates to the pleasures of the

[339] Armstrong Advertisements *Gourmet* June and July 1972.

table."[340] She goes on to further specify her audience as she suggests, "during the 1960s there was more time to cook since usually only one family member worked."[341] Explicitly marking her imagined viewers as single breadwinner, upper middle class Americans capable of international travel, Child's sense of her program's viewership echoes critiques of educational television as elite culture for elites. While this may have been who Child imagined watched her program—people just like her—Dana Polan in his book on *The French Chef* examines Child's numerous fan letters and deduces that viewers valued the program as much for its entertainment value as its pedagogical impulses. [342] As a 1967 *New Yorker* cartoon and the program's primetime schedule spot suggest, Child's viewers brought a myriad of motivations and interpretations of the program. The cartoon depicts a balding, middle-aged man—beer in hand—seated in an overstuffed armchair, less than a foot away from his TV set. Littered next to his chair are discarded beer cans, he leans forward, his free hand forming a fist, to get a better look at Child wielding a mallet—the caption reading "Sock 'em again, Julia baby!" Lee Lorenz's cartoon frames the mode of viewership of *The French Chef* as similar to that of a sporting event. The male viewers leans forward, eyes at half-mast, suggesting perhaps the erotic appeal of Child's embodied gourmet cookery. Child may have imagined her audience as a part of the upper middle class aspirational jet set, but as this cartoon suggests, *The French Chef* possessed appeal beyond this group.

The French Chef first gained a national audience in 1964 when NET began distributing the program to its member stations. With the emergence of PBS and CPB in 1967, the Carnegie Commission singled out *The French Chef* as an example of entertaining cultural programming

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[340] Child, Julia *The French Chef Cookbook* New York: Alfred Knopf, 1968: vii.
[341] Ibid., viii.
[342] Polan, Dana *The French Chef* Durham: Duke University Press, 2011: 192.

that would serve as a model for the future of the new federally mandated and funded expansion of the reach and scope of educational television. Polan argues that "rather than being the mere beneficiary of a nationwide public broadcasting system, *The French Chef*, then, stood as the pivotal success that helped construct that system."[343] Winning an Emmy in 1966, *The French Chef* was the first educational program to gain industry prestige at such a level.

If public television worked to produce socially relevant, entertaining programming, what, then, exactly was socially relevant about *The French Chef*? Bearing in mind the televisual, political, and industrial fields of domesticity characterized by bodily confinement, efficiency, and effacement of labor as well as the politicized nature of both food and women's labor at the end of the 1960s, let us turn to a discussion of how Julia Child's television program *The French Chef* intervened, for one thing, in the tidy, efficient, and disembodied field of labor and display. In direct contrast to the televisual texts of domesticity discussed previously, Child's half hour show reinserted the labor and more explicitly the fallible, laboring body into the production of a gourmet meal. Further, Polan suggests that Child "helped in no small way to move the dominant home dining experience from mere ingestion, mass produced blandness into an experience of sensory pleasure and fun[.]"[344] This evocation of sensory or bodily experience and pleasure was quite central to Child's domestic intervention, as she always keenly tasted and fondled her creations. While *The French Chef* remained fully embedded within the fields of this obsessive form of Cold War domesticity, Child disrupted the staid, contained forms of televisual domesticity through process, gesture, physicality, humor, generosity, intimacy, and empowerment. The uninterrupted 30 minute format that *The French Chef* enjoyed during this

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[343] Ibid., 199.
[344] Polan, Dana "Television that Tastes Good: The Generous Pedagogy of Julia Child and *The French Chef*" *Moving Image Source: Museum of the Moving Image*, 6 August 2009. Web. 24 April 2011

formative period in public television lent the program an unwieldy and unpredictable liveness. Child had to keep talking, cooking and teaching for 30 minutes straight, as she hacked gigantic fish carcasses to make a bouillabaisse from scratch or delicately folded egg whites to create the intimidating soufflé. Collins asserts that Child: "had a way of making the viewer feel like she was the only one present, as if she were simply sitting in Julia's kitchen watching her talk to herself as she prepared dinner."[345] This sense of intimacy distances Child's domestic performance from the sort of disciplinary or instrumental display enacted in the fictive culinary spaces in *Father Knows Best*. Further, Child's insistence upon the autonomy of the chef in the kitchen and the inconsequence of "unseen" mistakes destabilizes the presumed surveillance and scrutiny of the domestic. In this way, Child's kitchen, labor, utterances, and body were under her jurisdiction. Child is sole inhabitant of her kitchen and utilizes direct address to hail the viewer as her intimate companion, colleague, and confidant.

Upon close inspection of a single episode, whether it be the modest proposal of *Elegance with Eggs* or the visceral battle for *Bouillabaisse à la Marseillaise* it is quite clear that Child's pedagogical and gestural address is not about ease or efficiency, but about experience and satisfaction. Child's physicality and verbal antics lends the program its drama and humor, endowing the cooking experience with gravity, levity, and esteem. Child's brand of culinary performance as embodied work re-skills and, as Collins suggests, demythologizes the hygienic and confined feminine role and encourages a sense of ownership and empowerment around the activity of cooking. This stands in opposition to the anxiety and alienation that characterized the streamlined, efficiency-oriented consumerism within the 1950s middle class market. Child's activities decidedly departed from this commodity based techno-domestic ethic of middling taste

[345] Collins, 77.

and efficiency. Child's interventions were fully embedded in the technological space of the kitchen as but moved away from the technological determinist narratives of progress away from cooking as such and television as site for commodity display.

Still bearing the mark of the postwar domestic consumer economy, the early episodes were filmed in the Boston Gas Company's display kitchen, intended to demonstrate the marvels of modern appliances and utilities. Child both works within and interferes with the frameworks of domestic display and technology, departing from the efficient labor shorthand described previously. Child's intervention into these fields is couched in a language of techniques and productivity but importantly cloaked in the experiential rhetoric of taste, pleasure, and enjoyment. *The French Chef* promoted gaining a competency through proper techniques while in execution the body seemed to take over, unleashing a wonderful form of slapstick and intuitive experience. The mismatch of Child's rhetoric and her mode of execution is a part of the demythologizing process that Collins described. In the *Bouillabaisse* episode, another revelatory mismatch is brought into relief. The hacking, chopping and gutting involved in producing the fish based broth and soup is vigorously and enthusiastically demonstrated. Child rematerializes the peasant history of the dish through the mess of heads and guts involved in producing the seemingly exotic dish through storytelling and demonstration. At the beginning of the episode, Child chides the "gourmets" for their needless obfuscation of the simple, hearty dish. After this revelatory and cathartic cooking mayhem, the dish is poured into an elegant tureen and Child, as she always does, proudly walks the fruits of her labor to the dining room for display and consumption.

This scene of display and anticipatory enjoyment that concludes each episode makes manifest the ways in which the physicality of cooking can be transferred into a form of

aspirational, gourmet cultural capital. Pierre Bourdieu describes taste and cultural capital as offering an imaginary form of class mobility and in this way *The French Chef* continues to address the anxieties about class identity through playing with or making choices about lifestyle and exploring internal modes of escape from the dominant domestic scripts detailed previously.[346] In their anthology *Edible Ideologies,* Kathleen Lebasco and Pater Naccarato describe the kind of culinary capital offered by Child, writing that: "such programming claims to offer its consumers upward class mobility through culinary capital, its underlying purpose is to maintain the very class hierarchy that it seems to erase."[347] I insert this interpretation of Child's enterprise not to diminish her activist disruption of the televisual domestic text, but rather to indicate the ways in which *The French Chef* sits as a vexed text, interference within and against dominant representations of domestic labor. Child certainly maintains a staid form of cultural capital derived from traditional forms of class hierarchy and conceptions of quality while also inserting a modern sense of humor, intimacy, and respect for reproductive labor.

Illustrating the internal conflicts of Child's intervention, 1967's *Queen of Sheba Cake* begins in the elegant dining room where most episodes end. One of the last episodes to be filmed in black and white, the set's ornate wall-mounted candelabra and neoclassical molding bear a strong decorative affinity to the spaces of the White House televised on Jacqueline Kennedy's 1962 tour. Child announces "we are having a champagne and coffee party today in honor of the Queen of Sheba." She then reveals that the royalty in questions "turns out to be none other than

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[346]In this regard, Bourdieu writes: "[Taste] generates a set of choices constituting life-style, which derive their meaning, i.e., their value from their position in a system of oppositions and correlations. It is a virtue made of necessity into virtue by inducing 'choices' which correspond to the condition of which it is the product. (175)." Bourdieu, Pierre *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste.* Trans. Richard Nice Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.
[347] LeBasco, Kathleen and Peter Naccarato "Julia Child, Martha Stewart, and the Rise Culinary Capital" *Edible Ideologies: Representing Food and Meaning* Albany, State University of New York Press, 2008: 225.

this dark beauty, made of chocolate and almonds and rum and butter." Her racialized enthusiasm for the myriad of sinful delights that comprise this most decadent cake comes to a pronounced pitch as she enumerates the cake's enticing ingredients; she then practically yells "let's go into the kitchen and make the best chocolate cake you have ever put in your mouth!" A celebration of the sensual delights of butter, chocolate, rum in the context of the frivolity of the "champagne and coffee party," which is importantly *not* a nutritious meal, relishes in cooking as the pursuit of pure pleasure. As she moves into the kitchen—which by this time is a more elaborate but folksy, decorated domestic space complete with false windows and tchotchkes—and begins to cook, she remarks that one might use water as a liquid to melt the chocolate and she asserts that the French would never do that and makes the case for dark Jamaican rum as the only way to do it right. As she bakes, she doles out pieces of technical expertise for achieving precise flour measurements and the best way to beat egg whites with a stand mixer. The live quality of the cooking period retains Child's breathless enthusiasm and her sometimes-halting speech. Her embodied, vulnerable presence and ability to move forward despite missteps alongside the way she marks the climax of the baking process, when time becomes of the essence, renders that act of baking a cake something more dramatic. She licks the spatula, declaring that the recipe is designed with the cook in mind, with a bit of extra batter in which to delight. She reveals her past mistakes and allows her viewers to learn from her errors. We see her work to unmold the cake, and the climactic moment is drawn out as she pulls out two plates at the end, one for herself one for you, the viewer. She concludes by suggesting that the cake would do "wonders for a committee meeting" and she is certain this will be the best cake you've ever eaten. A committee meeting is certainly a different proposition than the champagne and coffee party Child proposed at the outset. Managing both the aspirations of a leisurely afternoon of highbrow French delights and

the white middle class hustle of committee meetings and entertaining, Child knowingly offers both fantasy and reality in the context of her frenetic 30-minute program.

The French Chef was, thus, radical in terms of both its content and form. As Polan points out, many viewers considered "the viewing experience of Child's show as a from of modernist art activity, more like the experimental film and video work that was coming onto the art scene in the sixties."[348] While Polan finds such a correlation somewhat "amusing" and neglects to delve into potential shared interests of video artists and Child's project, the affinities are numerous and merit exploration. As Rosler suggested with regard to her use of video, she found the format offered mode of community address than other media. Other video artists, such as Vito Acconci, utilized video to convey a sense of duration and, importantly, the effects of duration on the body. *The French Chef*'s commitment to matching camera movement and editing to the laboring body of Child as she works to complete her task in the allotted 30-minute window, lends the program an electric liveness and drama. Likewise, in Acconci's 1971 work *Centers* the artist points at the center of the camera, working to hold his arm in place for the 22 minute duration of the video. The ordinary, albeit aggressive, gesture of pointing is stretched to its extreme, as the artist's struggle to maintain his arm aloft is elevated as a central drama of the video work. Child fills the 30 minutes with frenetic movement while Acconci takes one movement and stretches it for 22 minutes, rendering both real time experiences. The unedited or almost unedited approach to video lends both Acconci's arbitrary and singular gestural task and Child's frenetic orchestration of gestures an air of liveness. *The French Chef* was lauded, as Polan points out, in the alternative press for its unconventional approach to broadcast television and, of course for its accomplishment of a different kind of high-brow escape from the

[348] Polan,192.

temporality and format of commercial television. The twofold nature of *The French Chef*'s alternative take on sixties television performed favorably in terms of an elite liberal desire for uplifting and enlightening programming as well meeting the aesthetic desires of an art world with the presentation a formally advanced utilization of the televisual medium. So too did the mainstream press praise the program more so for its unique televisual quality than its culinary content.

Though, it must be noted that the continued success of *The French Chef* came in part from its less overt politics, at least when compared to contemporaneous public television programming described earlier. Its ulterior politics are cloaked in its appeal to good taste in both food and television. The feminist intervention into TV cookery and gourmet culture came in part by virtue of the program's aesthetics and format. As a program that emerged and came of age in the mid to late 1960s, Collins suggests that Child was situated within the process of "leaving behind the ideals of conformity and security in favor of diversity and exploration." [349] Collins continues: "Cooking was becoming a casual hobby and for others a link with a personal sense of self. Both were radical changes."[350] Collins rightly identifies the unorthodox quality of the empowered, leisurely, or enlightened kitchen promoted by Child. Lebasco and Naccaroto, conversely, remind us that such disruptions are mortgaged on the continued salience of display for the consolidation of class identity, asserting "food cultures serve as an important vehicle for circulating dominant cultural ideologies, including those that sustain the prevailing class hierarchy."[351] The scope of the libratory promise of enjoyable cooking outlines a site of liberation for and by an affluent white middle class audience, who had begun to chafe in the face

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[349] Collins, 94.
[350] Ibid., 94.
[351] LeBasco and Naccarato, 236.

of their unprecedented access to the convenience commodity which diminished the value of their reproductive labor.

The parting shots of *The French Chef* put domesticity on display and labor, again, out of sight. *The French Chef* built itself up around Child's enactment of these mismatches—between labor and display, techniques and the body, humor and pedagogy— with what Polan describes as her "awkward vulnerability," promoting a fallible yet powerful vision of the cooking experience.[352] Child offered an empowered, entertaining and distinct counter-text to tidy, conventional, and disembodied forms of domestic display while still participating in its structural limitations, protocol, and class politics. Further, as Tracey Deutsch importantly points out Child's exposure to France and "Frenchness" comes thanks to her professional and personal entanglement in wartime espionage while working for the Office of Strategic Services where she met her husband, Paul Child. Paul Child's work with the United States Information Agency in the service postwar communist containment via cultural programming took the couple to Paris where Child famously enrolled at the Cordon Bleu and launched her culinary career.[353] Deutsch situates Child's encounter with France within a rubric where culture, given her husband's work an exhibits agent with the USIA, possessed a transformative political power inflected with a liberal democratic ethos. Thus, Child's commitment to pedagogy and to tasteful cultural enlightenment derived from gourmet cooking echoes the cultural mandate of The Great Society, which situated the arts and humanities as vital to the improvement of American democracy. Johnson's Great Society quest for both full stomachs and the fuller life manifested itself in the establishment of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities in 1965 and the foundation

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[352] Polan, 190.
[353] For a full account of international cultural programming in service of Cold War containment See Penny Von Eschen *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.

of the Hirshhorn Museum in 1966, institutionalizing the celebration and support of the visual and performing arts begun under the Kennedy administration. *The French Chef* and PBS, sought to widen access to cultural enrichment for the ordinary American. Deferring to an early Cold War cultural formation, Child put forth palatable and entertaining vision of what this "fuller life" and "good taste" while also offering a feminist intervention into a male dominated gourmet culture and offering an empowered and embodied representation of domestic work for white middle class women.

Gefilte Fish After 1968

Julia Child appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1966, her painted, unsmiling visage surrounded by free floating, semi-psychedelic, steaming copper pots, and alarmingly white, gourmet fish confection. Painter Boris Challiapin's odd representation captured Child's strange charisma and iconicity as her red-hued head greeted the reader with an assertive gaze. *The French Chef* marched through the 1960s and on to the 1970s, transitioning on television from black and white to color, and offered a vision of everyday self-cultivation within the sanctioned space of the domestic interior.[354] In the early seventies the program moved away from the sense of lived duration and closer to the content of *Gourmet* magazine making changes to its editing practices such as introducing segments filmed outside of the kitchen in France as well as transitional dissolves. The new, early seventies color version of the program, carried by over 200 stations nationally, diminished her live presence through the improvement of camera and editing techniques along with the incorporation of shots of Child shopping in France. *The French Chef*

[354] Collins, 88-91.

came to an end just after Nixon's power play to strip PBS of much of its funding and creative control.

A generation of artists and activists also acknowledged the potency of televisual media to disseminate counter-texts and from which to appropriate formats and models. The publication *Radical Software*, founded in 1970, served as one of the focal points for theorizing television alongside emergent and newly accessible portable video technologies among artists and activists. *Radical Software*'s spring 1973 issue, titled "The TV Environment," presented an ecumenical overview of contemporary television, an analysis of the material and social habits that emerged around TV, beginning with the assertion "with the continuing growth of television it will become more and more difficult to separate what is inside and what is outside the TV environment."[355] All this is to say, that the producers of disruptive or activist video art ought to be understood as literate, savvy media producers and consumers, not simply anti-TV zealots. While art historians such as David Joselit have argued that television operates as a closed circuit, I hope I have demonstrated the ways in which viewing must be pried apart from conceptions of passivity. Joselit at the end the introduction to his book *Feedback: Television Against Democracy* draws a line in the sand, declaring that "art stands against television and television stands against democracy."[356] This overly simplified vision declares, for the record, the good guys—artists—and bad guys—TV, in the fight for American democracy. I take issue with Joselit's black and white, deeply gendered re-articulation of categories of the avant-garde defined in opposition to the culture industry. As this dissertation has shown, these lines are nothing if not clouded and gripping to these pieties produces one-dimensional interpretations of both "progressive" art and

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[355] "The TV Environment" *Radical Software*, Volume II, No. 2 The TV Environment, (Spring 1973).
[356] Joselit, David, *Feedback: Television Against Democracy.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007: xiii.

"regressive" popular culture. The flow between fields of cultural production does not adhere to these convenient categories that allow for a problematically redemptive reading of the art of the sixties. While Joselit makes a claim for the interpretation of a broad image ecology, his account of television lacks any sustained analysis of industry, format, and even programming. For instance, in his chapter on the media activism of the Black Panthers, he makes no mention of the 1968 interview with Bobby Seale or other radical documentaries produced by WNET and other networks. I propose that by understanding television as something that people *do* and by looking at the diverse televisual landscape of the late sixties and early seventies when video art emerged, we gain a more nuanced account of the vexed politics of both art and television.

In the wake of the stymied revolutionary energies of 1968, the anti-Vietnam war protests of subsequent years and the radicalization of second wave feminism, the domestic emerged as an alternate text and site for activism. Recalling the politicization of cooking and food purchasing, artists and activist, both male and female explored the spaces, commodities, and power relations of food and cooking. Reasserting the kitchen and domestic labor as sites of a new kind of Cold War politics, video artists and activists collaborated to produce the kitchen as site for oppositional gesture, political speech in videotapes to be distributed through the mail or screened on public television and in art and educational institutions. Just as Child likely consumed televisual and printed representations of gourmet culture and the domestic arts, which might have populated her domestic imaginary as dominant discourses to interrupt, Laura Cavestani Kronenburg, Abbie Hoffman, and Martha Rosler consumed and harnessed *The French Chef* and other televisual depictions of the domestic as texts to be played with, expanded, and mutilated. *The French Chef* launched a new genre that would take hold in the seventies, that of lifestyle television that focused great attention on the practices of everyday life. While Child's pedagogy

can and was interpreted as introducing a new set of directives, routines, and taste competencies to which the postwar subject was subjected, *The French Chef* also opened up a space for play and enjoyment in the elaboration of one's identity in relationship to the activities of every day life in a way that correlated with the countercultural elaboration of a form of lifestyle which deviated from the top-down mandates of the postwar consumer society.

The, polyphonous quality of *The French Chef,* thus, provided complex fodder for artists and activists experimenting with video. Abbie Hoffman, Frank Cavestani, David Schweitzer, and Laura Cavestani Kronenberg's 1973 video *Abbie Hoffman makes Gefilte Fish* takes up and modifies then culinary components and pseudo-instructional address circulated by *The French Chef*. The video, clocking in at about twenty-one minutes, is shot in a small shabby New York kitchen, located in the famous Chelsea Hotel, on a hand held portapack video camera. The setting, format, and content of the video are all just about the same as an episode of *The French Chef*, combining cooking, storytelling, tips of the trade, and so on. Like *The French Chef*, the video begins with some of the prep work already underway or already completed. At the outset Hoffman and Laura Cavestani Kronenburg are seen crying having already sliced the pound of onions that serves as the base of the dish. Gefilte Fish is a dish that takes hours to produce and like Child's bouillabaisse involves boiling fish bones and all. Throughout the video Hoffman chops, grates, tells stories, smokes, tastes, and relaxes as the fish heads boil away on the tiny stove. In terms of pedagogy, Hoffman strays from technical exposition in favor of instinctive cooking and anecdotal chitchat about the recipe's history and the quality of the ingredients. The camera work casually mimics the interplay of close-ups of ingredients and wide-shots of the kitchen on broadcast cooking shows, while also experimenting with video's capacity to render strange the ordinary through nonsensical close ups, soft focus, and repetitive vertical rolls.

The video time and again emphasizes the "from scratch" authenticity of Hoffman's execution of his family's recipe. Gefilte Fish occupies a religious and cultural significance, as a dish traditionally served on the Sabbath and on holidays. Hoffman makes numerous references to the traditional, thrifty, and authentic status of the dish as a marker of the history of Jewish exclusion and disenfranchisement. He goes on to bemoan reliance on store-bought readymade gefilte fish in a jar, declaring it to be a "homogenized gray thing" because the care had not been taken to boil the bones and skin to add to the mix. Hoffman tells the viewer and his collaborators that Jewish cooking is "long long long" and requires lots of patience. This insistence on the qualitative difference of his homemade dish meshes well with Child's insistence on doing things the right way even if it proves challenging or time consuming. Hoffman tells a story of bringing his famous gefilte fish to a dinner with psychologist and pediatrician Benjamin Spock while hiding out with his family in the Virgin Islands. According to Hoffman, Spock, after he "checked out the kids," eschewed the fish balls and instead served smoked shrimp pate right out of the can. This story underscores Hoffman's negative attitude towards commercially produced processed foods as well as the necessity of familiarity with ethnic cooking. He lauds those who have the guts to try something that looks like, as he puts it "grey dog shit that's been sitting out in the Mojave desert for a year or two." This sort of food literacy was something that Child's pedagogy promoted, as she encouraged the home chef to not be intimidated by her food's complexity or "Frenchness." Hoffman, conversely, suggests that one must be raised Jewish in order to try, appreciate, and produce the dish. Hoffman mobilizes fluency with an ethic food culture to some extent as a marker of subcultural difference rather than part of an upwardly mobile form of cultural capital as we saw in *The French Chef*.

The video refuses to offer an explicit how-to sort of explanation. Every now and again Hoffman will stir or add a little more of this or that or reveal the best place to get fresh horseradish. He tells Kronenburg about getting the horseradish and cod, mentioning how the deli workers only spoke Yiddish and gave him a deal when he told them he was making a movie for channel 13. The emphatic Jewish-ness of Hoffman's performance and cultural gate keeping offers an alternative to Child's invitation to her imagined viewership to spice up their bland and alienating cooking routine. For Hoffman, cooking did not need the revolution promised by *The French Chef* as it had always been culturally rich, rewarding, and intimate. As Hoffman shreds onions and weeps, he correlates his tears to the "two thousand years of suffering" endured by the Jewish people. The informality and non-pedagogical nature of Hoffman's cooking relates in interesting ways to an episode from the extremely popular sit-com *The Goldbergs,* which ran from 1949 to 1956. In contrast to the WASP middle class suburban sit-coms described previously, which would come to supplant shows such as this, the Goldbergs were a less affluent, ethnically Jewish, and multigenerational family group.[357] George Lipsitz writes of the incompatibility of programs like *The Goldbergs* with television's central role in the development

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[357] *The Goldbergs* began as its televisual life as urban sit-com set in the Bronx, by the second season the family moves out to the fictional suburb of Haverville. In this way, this show stands as a transitional text mobilized commercial television executives and corporate sponsors to help the TV audience transition from a depression era consciousness to a postwar culture of consumerism. As figures of both insurmountable difference and aspirational assimilation, the Goldberg family sits at awkward crossroads, one that ultimately did not seem commercially viable. Vincent Brook writes that the formerly very popular show was cancelled soon after the family relocated to their suburban locale. Brook details a number of episodes in which the incompleteness and struggles with assimilation and conformity challenged a *Father Knows Best* sort of tidiness while operating as a legitimizing force for dominant domestic scripts. See Brook, Vincent "The Americanization of Molly: How Mid-Fifties TV Homogenized "The Goldbergs" (And Got "Berg-Iarized" in the Process)" *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (Summer, 1999): 45-67. For an account for Jewish assimilation during the 1950s see Abrams, Nathan "More than One Million Mothers Know It's The REAL thing: The Rosenbergs, Jell-O, Old Fashioned Gefilte Fish, and 1950s America" *Edible Ideologies: Representing Food and Meaning* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008: 79-103.

of the consumer economy, asserting: "the relative economic deprivation of ethnic working class households would seem to provide an inappropriate setting for the display and promotion of commodities as desired by the networks and their commercial sponsors."[358] Indeed, an episode from the first season of *The Goldbergs* titled "Molly's Fish" depicts a narrative confrontation of corporate food executives and working class, ethnic food folkways.

The narrative centers on the Goldberg matriarch, Molly, and her fabulous gefilte fish. Molly prepares a large quantity of her famous fish balls to sell at a community bazaar. A food industry operative some how gets a hold of a jar of her fish. He found it to be outstanding and seeks out its maker. After meeting Molly, he invites her to fly out to his company's test kitchen in Chicago. Under extensive scrutiny in the test kitchen, Molly disappoints the food industrialists due to her intuitive cooking method. She has no precise recipe or ingredient ratios and when forced to repeat her method in efforts to duplicate *the* perfect permutation, Molly is unable to give a command performance. In this episode, ethnic intuition and know-how butts up against commercial interests. What is more, after Molly's closely scrutinized command performances she loses her touch and is unable to make *her* fish, even back in her home, for over a month. Both Molly and Hoffman rely on their own intuition as opposed to techniques and published recipes as a marker of non-transferable cultural capital. This narrative depiction of an unsuccessful encounter between industrial food production and ethnic home cooking prefigures Hoffman's and Child's critical, ethnic interventions into readymade food culture and reiterates, in narrative form, Lipsitz's account of the incompatibility of commercial interests and ethnic working class identity.

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[358] Lipsitz, George "The Meaning of Memory: Family, Class, and Ethnicity in Early Network Television Programs" *Private Screenings: Television and the Female Consumer.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992: 71.

In addition to Hoffman's ethnic intervention and intuitive modification to Child's domestic critique, the video serves as a document of post-1968 political sentiments and the ways in which Hoffman as activist envisions the connections between the cooking and Cold War politics. In terms of style, the handheld mode verges on a documentary style. The video was completed just before Hoffman disappeared in an attempt to avoid arrest for drug charges.[359] Laura Cavestani Kronenberg was a member of the pioneering group Videofreex who produced videotape compilations of behind the scenes activities of Hoffman and the Yippies and other countercultural events along with artist's videos. [360] The Videofreex were briefly on the CBS payroll, producing a pilot for a show called *Subject to Change*, the result of a 1969 cross country tour documenting alternative culture and radical politics. Produced for public television, this hybrid video—part documentary, part performance, part culinary demo—reflected the experimental context of both television and video art of the late sixties and seventies. These disparate narrative components were drawn together by considering the domestic as yet another mediatized site appropriated, inhabited and interfered with by the media-savvy Hoffman. [361] To this effect, Hoffman quips, directly referencing Child, "if you can you make a bomb you can make a soufflé. It's the same." Explicitly and humorously linking Child's culinary activities to the military industrial complex, Hoffman scrutinizes the public, political life of gourmet cooking. The delightful formal similarities between a nuclear mushroom cloud and a soufflé overflowing its ramekin tacitly correlate gourmet taste with the Cold War arms race. French cooking is the cooking of Cold War empire, which he dismisses in the video as "real fancy" while Jewish

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[359] Jezer, Marty *Abbie Hoffman: American Rebel.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992: 251.
[360] "Videofreex" *Video Data Bank,* 2011.
[361] David Joselit has a great account of Hoffman's particularly astute and effective form of media activism during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago 1968. See Joselit, David *Feedback: Television Against Democracy.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007: 109-131.

cooking embodies radical politics. It is most similar, according to Hoffman, to African American cooking in terms of its resourceful use of less than desirable ingredients, a process derived from historic disenfranchisement.

Hoffman links Jewish and African American cooking at a time when the political alliance between these groups had begun to fray. While Hoffman strove for political solidarity via shared cultural practices, his own upbringing in Worcester, Massachusetts was decidedly middle class. As Hoffman biographer Jonah Raskin points out, Hoffman "had little if any direct experience with crushing poverty, no memories of Europe, and none of the cultural and psychological dislocation associated with the immigrant experience."[362] Rather, Raskin argues, it was the "cultural vacuity of middle-class society more than direct political repression or economic deprivation" that inspired Hoffman's activism. [363] In his own autobiography, Hoffman describes his family's upward mobility in assimilationist terms; "slowly my parents got sucked into the social melting pot, where they were to summer uncomfortably for the next thirty years."[364] Hoffman's clear disdain for his parents' chosen path towards an American middle class identity sowed the seeds of juvenile delinquency and later international activism. Hoffman later linked his choice of life path to an assertion of his Jewishness. He declared that Jews in the US had two choices, to "become better Americans" or to be "wiseguys who go around saying things like Workers of the world unite." [365] In an 1969 essay—"Thorns of the Flower Children"—for the countercultural publication *Woodstock Nation,* Hoffman declared that a generation of rebellious young Americans:

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[362] Raskin, Jonah *For The Hell of it: The Life and Times of Abbie Hoffman* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996*:*1
[363] Ibid.
[364] Ibid., 8.
[365] Ibid., 17.

> saw their fathers disappear behind the corn flakes box and hurry off to his other life in a distant land called DOWNTOWN.... They heard from their mothers over and over again about being respectable and responsible and, above all, reasonable.... They monopolized the TV set with Bob Hope, baseball games, situation comedies about people like them and of course Ed Sullivan.[366]

In articulating the root of political movement with which Hoffman would become synonymous, Hoffman obliquely references the homogeneity of food commodities, in the case the omnipresent corn flakes box, as representative of the counterrevolutionary, all American malaise brought on by postwar prosperity. His quest for rebellion and distinction manifested in performing his Jewishness as mode for the production of political awakening, self-knowledge, and self-fashioning.

As the gefilte fish nears finishing, Hoffman hams it up for the camera and jokes about Julia Child and carefully plates the finished dish, adding the fresh horseradish and declaring it to be "finger-licking good," appropriating Kentucky Fried Chicken's slogan coined in the mid fifties. Kronenberg adds enthusiastically: "mmmmm and you made it yourself." The video ends with the repetition of these scenes and phrases and an iris effect that narrows the frame into the shape of a television monitor for the parting shots in which one can hear a cat's meow and *Silent Night* on the radio. These final moments deviate most from *The French Chef*'s format and underscore the features of the medium while also relishing in the moment of enjoyment and pleasure after patiently executing the long, ancient recipe. Hoffman and Kronenburg gather on Christmas Eve in the Chelsea Hotel to cook an intricate, slow and distinctively Jewish dish. This publically funded and televised work rejected WASP Christmas tradition and gourmet taste; lampooned Child, her taste pretensions, and Cold War politics; while embracing low and slow ethnic from scratch home cooking as a maker of countercultural distinction.

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[366] Ibid., 1.

Rosler Gourmet

Martha Rosler created *Semiotics of the Kitchen,* one of the most famous video works ever produced, while living in San Diego. The artist and new mother moved back and forth between New York and San Diego for several years in the late sixties, before settling there in 1969 and enrolling at University of California, San Diego's MFA program. Remarking that UCSD was an "enclave in the midst of the great military machine which was San Diego," sets the work she produced under the tutelage or program directors Eleanor and David Anton against the backdrop of a perpetually "hot" experience of the Cold War. [367] *Semiotics of the Kitchen* of 1975 was not Rosler's first video work nor was it the first to contend with the politics of domesticity. *A Budding Gourmet* of 1974 was Rosler's first video work and has been historically minimized in the literature about the artist and video art in general. It is a good deal more complex, narrative, literary, and confessional in orientation than more celebrated video works, setting it apart from early formal and conceptual inquiries into the medium that render video art more legible in terms of a narrative of modernist art history. In a 1978 essay for Gregory Battcock's anthology *New Artist's Video*, Kim Levin argued that California video art took greater inspiration from television than those works produced in New York.[368] Somewhat pejoratively deciding that California video relates more to television than to the art of the past, Levin declares that this West Coast TV landscape just was not "our terrain."[369] She describes Rosler's milieu as a "group of politically oriented artists in San Diego [who] take the news and documentary as their models. In San Diego, narrative is a populist stance and art becomes investigative reportage, exposing the

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[367] Rosler, Martha "Interview" *California Video*: *Artists and Histories* Los Angeles: Getty Research Institue, 2008: 198.
[368] Levin, Kim "Video Art in the TV Landscape: Notes on Southern California" *New Artist Video* New York: E.P. Dutton Press, 1978: 66.
[369] Ibid., 66.

evils of society."[370] Levin, as she describes the California scene, also asserts New York's distance from these "evils" and conveys a sense of lessened culpability on the part of the superior cultural center for the current state of media and culture, while allowing that we are "all children of the media."[371]

Levin's assertions, pejorative though they may be, capture the attunement to television, narrative, and politics that characterized Rosler and her colleagues production in the early seventies. Assertively narrative and literary in tone and content, *A Budding Gourmet* took its structure and script from a postcard novel in which Rosler detailed the fictional autobiography of an anonymous woman navigating gourmet cooking and anxieties around class her class status. Rosler utilized the postcard novel format extensively throughout the seventies to convey women's stories in short serialized format. Other series included *McTowers Maid* and *Tijuana Maid. McTowers Maid* conveyed the story of a young fast food employee's awakening to the processes involved in the industrial production of food. She adds, gourmet and—later psychotropic—ingredients to McTower's typical burger fare and, finally organizes her coworkers to unionize. *Tijuana Maid,* disseminated in both English and Spanish, detailed the journey of an undocumented worker's journey across the border to work as a housemaid from the standpoint of the painfully out of touch white middle class family for whom she works. One installment features a "recipe" for peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and condescending questions translated into Spanish, including "have you ever been to a supermarket?" These works reached their audience via the United States Postal Service, their 12-part serialized structure producing cliffhangers for readers and carving out space for the literary in conceptual art.

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[370] Ibid., 69.
[371] Ibid., 66.

With 1974's *A Budding Gourmet,* Rosler abandoned the serial format for a unified narrative and adopted a deadpan voice and performance style to give life to the anxious and naïve narrator. Rosler states "the tape kind of drones on in my delivery of the time."[372] The tape begins with a backlit silhouette of Rosler dressed in a dowdy blouse and seated at a table with a teapot and cast iron Dutch oven. Her face is somewhat obscured, lending the tape the look and tone of an anonymous confessional. Our narrator begins by expressing her wish to become a gourmet, she believes this will "better me and make me a more valuable person to myself and others. I will be more knowledgeable about the good things, the things that make like pleasant." She echoes Child in asserting that gourmet sensibilities turn eating into an experience. As this faceless upper middle class subject continues to intone her worship at the altar of quality, Erik Satie plays in the background as a series of image juxtapositions cross the screen. Reminiscent of Rosler's montage work in her *Bringing the War Home House Beautiful* series, images of tuxedoed wait staff serving elegant arrays of French delicacies arranged upon ornate silver platters give way to depictions of poverty and hunger in the United States and beyond, complicating the narrator's quest for distinction. *A Budding Gourmet*, thus, significantly implicates white middle class women for their participation in what she terms as the "internalized imperialism" of gourmet food cultures and illustrates the unseen and uneven dynamics of power that structure participation in gourmet food cultures. The work duplicates the juxtapositions of the contemporaneous television viewing experience, where one might, for example, catch the end of Child's decadent Queen of Sheba cake recipe and the beginning of PBS's documentary *Banks and the Poor.* Holding these extremes in tension throughout the work, *A Budding Gourmet* engages the televisual field from the standpoint of the viewer and offers a

[372] Rosler, in *California Video* 199.

secondary commentary on the conflicted liberalism of the public television viewer as Rosler spells out her protagonists devotion to the activities of cultural appropriation and middle class aspiration characterizes by a mix of self-satisfaction and anxious aspiration.

The cavalcade of images of crown roasts and impossible confections visualize gourmet culture while Rosler's narrator suggests that Europe has become passé, too commercial and inauthentic. Articulating a disdain for the popularization of French food and evoking shifts in Cold War politics that placed greater emphasis on the global South as sites of strategic and ideological interest, our protagonist sings the praises of Brazil, asserting that "fine China from France is what people used to compare, now its stunning lace from Brazil." Presenting a more "bohemian," less "mainstream" iteration of gourmet food cultures, Rosler critiques a new formation of exoticism cultivated by the "liberal" middle class of the early seventies, who sought distinction via cultivating distance from both earlier iterations of gourmet culture and from the convenient supermarket food commodity. She injects this display with a dry, ironic humor through her performance and delivery that furthers the work's critical appeal and radical self-consciousness. While our protagonist favors Brazil over France, she still frets over what to server her husband's boss when he comes for dinner, making clear that whatever kinds of empowerment that come thanks to the cultivation of gourmet tastes, the expectations and structures of heteronormative domestic life persist. Significantly, Rosler recognizes her own complicity in aspects of class privilege. Jayne Wark argues that *A Budding Gourmet* "clearly discounts the tendency to categorize all 1970s feminist art as essentialist. Moreover, by examining women's roles within the context of "ideal" family values, Rosler exposes the extent

to which women, too are complicit in fostering and sanctioning privilege and exploitation."[373] Firmly establishing the consumptive forces and power dynamics of gourmet culture, *A Budding Gourmet* works to link, as Cavestani and Hoffman do, the politics of the public sphere with gourmet tastes and American exceptionalism.

Rosler's narrator mitigates anxieties about her lack of old-fashioned breeding through the development of her more "exotic" tastes, she derives confidence from her ability to take the "best of all times and places" and make them her own. Railing against the nation's ignorant Coke drinkers and declaring that she *even* does Indian cooking, Rosler's droll enunciation offers what the artist calls a "rather depressed, seething" protagonist. Recalling *All in the Family*'s sidesplitting skewering of all ends of the political spectrum, Rosler does not hesitate in making herself or her class-gender-race subject position the object of ridicule. Rosler pushes for a "conceptual art that was less about ordinary language propositions or idealist definitions of art, and I also wanted to incorporate into my work a politics that was situated somewhere in ordinary life."[374] Positioning her work at the nexus of taste, race, gender, class and television, Rosler engaged the politics of each with self-conscious humor and intellectual rigor. This model of conceptual art proposed by Rosler foregrounds its politics and decisively embroils itself in a wider cultural environment.

Taking up the equation of the culinary and the prosecution of war, Martha Rosler's 1975 video work *Semiotics of the Kitchen* adopts the format and medium of the cooking demonstration while rehearsing the ordinary violence of domestic confinement. Rosler does not cook, but rather runs through an alphabet's worth of domestic tools—one for each letter—pantomiming extreme

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[373] Wark, Janye *Radical Gestures: Feminism and Performance Art in North America* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006: 115.
[374] Rosler, *California Video*, 199.

yet deadpan frustration. Rosler situates *Semiotics of the Kitchen* within a culinary context: "A woman in a bare-bones kitchen demonstrating some hand tools and replacing their domesticated meaning with a lexicon of rage and frustration is an antipodean Julia Child."[375] More palatable to observers of video art due to its less literary approach and its outward pretenses toward conceptual concerns, this work has enjoyed a surfeit of interpretation. Rolser extrapolates the multi-functionality of images and actions of domesticity within the ideological discourse of middle class cold war domesticity we have been tracing. This video is but one part of Rosler's sustained, career-long examination of gender, domesticity, and labor across medium. Rosler made this video right after graduating from UC San Diego, a city that was not only a heavily militarized space but also a central site in the development and production of domestic design, technology and architecture during the Cold War era. The contours of this domestic capital juggernaut and its relationship to war economies would have been palpable. Tapping into television as a medium where domestic confinement, display, and maintenance unfold incessantly, Rosler violently and humorously enacts the symbolic and ideological warfare of Cold War domesticity.

In her article "House Work and Art Work" Helen Molesworth suggests that *Semiotics of the Kitchen* engaged in "an archeology of the everyday" and "insisted on the reciprocity and mutual dependence of the categories of public and private."[376] Underscoring the domestic as a site of display and confinement and television's centrality in dissemination images of domesticity, Rosler's gestural affront to kitchen confinement offers new readings and interpretations of domestic artifacts, divorced from any semblance of normative productivity.

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[375] Rosler, Martha "For An Art Against the Mythology of Everyday Life," *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975-2001.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004: 7.
[376] Molesworth, Helen "House Work and Art Work" *October*, Vol. 92 (Spring, 2000): 82.

Through her kitchen theater, Rosler, as a domestic automaton gone haywire, destabilizes the gestural competencies that characterize the housework, and reveals the politics of artifacts that have been naturalized or made invisible. Her gestures necessarily related to Child's embodied and emphatic pedagogic address. They produce static within Child's gestural script, repurposing gestural performance for a different pedagogical purpose. Rosler's destabilization of domestic display stems from what Molesworth refers to as "distanciation."[377] Recalling Bertold Brecht's notion of epic theater, distanciation offers a kind of non-narrative form of de-familiarization offered through a thickly pronounced form of gestural play.[378] Embodying an agitated slapstick, Rosler's inversion of the domestic how-to—as she uses the ladle to toss pantomimed soup over her shoulder—ends in high comical fashion as she uses her body to represent letters U through Z, culminating with a Christ-like Y and a Zorro slash through the space above the counter topped off by a bemused shrug.

Child's and Hoffman's interruptions of staid domestic texts and gestures offered celebratory and educational revisions to the depiction of the culinary arts. Rosler, on the other hand, refuses to participate in the revised culinary texts offered by Child and Hoffman, offering only what she call refers to as a "decoy" domestic demo.[379] What is more Rosler, as a Jewish woman, refuses to inhabit the Molly Goldberg, ethnic matriarch subject position. It is worth noting the ways in which Molly Goldberg's character is a presented as a desexualized bearer of ethnic authenticity through her productive labor, whereas the housewives of the suburban sit-com, while productive, retain the utmost in terms of normative sexual appeal. Rosler resists the

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377 Ibid., 92.
378 See Brecht, Bertold "Theater for Learning" The Tulane Drama Review Vol. 6, No. 1. (September 1961): 18-25.
379 Rosler, Martha "Video Shedding the Utopian Moment" *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975-2001.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004: 54.

position of ethnic insider and intuitive cook that Hoffman so willfully inhabits as well as rejecting the smilingly productive sex object. *Semiotics of the Kitchen* transforms the kitchen into a space of pedagogical agitation by intervening in the normative functionality of both Rosler's ethnic female body and the domestic artifact. In this way, Rosler beckons us via gestural estrangement to recognize the function of domestic display and technology as a product of its ideological and political scaffolding. This exploration of various televisual instances of domestic display has positioned television and video art within the same larger field of imaging the domestic.

While Rosler positions her activities as the antithesis of Child's form of domestic display, *Semiotics of the Kitchen* shares affinities with *The French Chef* and other public television programs. Rosler's balance between exaggeration and restraint renders her gestures a complex text within and against the media constellation we have been tracking. Rosler's non-generative gestures violently sever the tidy labor shorthand enacted by the suburban sit-com discussed earlier. For instance for the letter K, Rosler seizes a large knife and aggressively stabs the air, a decidedly non-domestic gesture. In fact, this act of imagined maiming calls to mind the shower scene in Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 film *Psycho*—where a figure in a housedress repeatedly stabs Janet Leigh—more so than any typical sort of "how-to" display. Other items on Rosler list deviate less from their typical function, but all of these pseudo-demonstrations take on a mechanized and hyperbolic affect. For instance, as she demonstrates the letter P with pan, she pantomimes making an omelet with an exaggerated jerkiness far off from Child's embodied demonstrations on *The French Chef.*

Conclusion

Rosler recalls the late sixties and early seventies as a "period that saw the greatest upsurge of public activism since the 1930s. We all felt, those of us who were working in video and media, at least—that we worked within a matrix of and against a backdrop of social upheaval."[380] Feeling obligated to "make use of new technological tools to help make a more just and unitary world," Rosler and the architects of public television shared a liberal utopian vision for the libratory possibilities of television and video art. Rosler's vision for video art not only swings open the studio door but also destabilizes the power of art world tastemakers as she and artists like her took control of the work of interpreting and disseminating their work. As the organizers of the 1974 Open Circuits conference argue in their book *The New Television: A Public/Private Act* that "art and television have been straining against their respective pasts—art to find a larger public medium in which to act," and "television searching for a new television at once more personal and more imaginative in nature."[381] These parallels echo the stories traced throughout this chapter: art works to transcend the pieties of good taste while television strives for greater merit and creativity.

Through a variety of approaches, Child, Hoffman, Cavestani, and Rosler, as media producers, mobilize the kitchen as a space of agitation and pedagogy. Child's emphatic insistence on the physical demands of cooking, openness to the unknown vicissitudes of culinary activity, and discernable display of sensory pleasure shares a family resemblance to Hoffman's and Rosler's later revisions to and critiques of the form that Child helped to create and institutionalize. Just as Child offered an embodied and generously pedagogical response to the dominant texts of cold war food culture and display of domestic labor—characterized by

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[380] Rosler, *California Video Art*, 201.
[381] Barzyk, Fred and Douglas Davis, Gerald O'Grady, Willard Van Dyke "Preface" *The New Television: A Public/ Private Act* 1977.

efficiency and anxiety, Hoffman and Rosler use the kitchen as a site of media activism through subcultural, ethnic and political storytelling and gestural estrangement respectively. This chapter points toward the potential productivity of considering the overlaps—thematic, technological, political and historical—between the consolidation of forms of pedagogical lifestyle television and the preponderance of video art in the early 1970s. Child, Hoffman, and Rosler respond tactically to cold war domesticity. As we have seen, these media producers all produce re-appropriations of the televisual kitchen around a shared dissatisfaction with this official text of domestic labor and cultural politics. They all offer pedagogical pathways through and beyond a dominant form of cold war domesticity.

Just as Jacqueline Kennedy worked to develop an enlightened, internationalist or Europhilic taste to combat the onset of a dull form of middlebrow taste, Child worked to uplift American food cultures from nationalized banality with continental expertise. In direct contrast to these operative televisual texts on domesticity, Child's half hour show reinserted the labor and more explicitly the fallible, laboring body into the production of a gourmet, from-scratch meal. Gourmet food and other forms of high cultural distinction worked to offer ways of conveying good taste and Americanness apart from participation in consumer citizenship. Likewise, public television and video art sought out space separate from the network system and art market respectively to articulate new formations and criteria. Rosler and Hoffman directly address television as they work to reveal the contested nature of this elevation of cooking from chore to art and the politicized nature of gourmet food cultures in the context of Nixon's Cold War and the gradual dismantling of many of the Great Society's social welfare programming.

CONCLUSION

The expansive Watergate complex in Washington's Foggy Bottom neighborhood, designed in 1962 by Italian architect and urban planner Luigi Moretti, exuded the promise of the international modernism at the dawn of the sixties. Yet, the scale of the Watergate development met opposition from inside the Kennedy administration. The Fine Arts Commission in particular objected on the grounds that its modern design and domineering height were as *Washington Post* article put it "neither fine nor artful."[382] The semicircular structures disparagingly referred to by *Architectural Forum* as "antipasto on the Potomac" were, of course, completed and opened for business in 1965 despite the executive protestations.[383] The efforts on the part of the Kennedy administration to delay and modify the project outwardly were a result of the official taste of the Camelot White House. During the sixties, Watergate served a flashpoint for architectural taste in the nation's capital; did modernism have a place in the development of a new national symbolism at the dawn of the New Frontier?

Ten years later, the Watergate complex would play host to a very different kind of controversy with the Nixon-endorsed break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters on June 17, 1972. The paranoia with which Nixon viewed the activities of the Public Broadcasting Corporation proved to be tip of the iceberg in terms of his deep suspicion of all who might oppose him. Moretti's curvilinear structure witnessed the final unraveling of a consensus between government and citizen, its status as a site of national shame supplanting its controversial architecture and allegedly ostentatious scale. Watergate marks in some ways the death knell of the period of struggle over the conjunction of national political consensus and taste that this dissertation has traced. The transformation of Watergate from a symbol of misplaced

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[382] "Fine Arts Wins Delay In Watergate Zoning" *The Washington Post* April 19,1962: B1.
[383] Ibid.

modernism to that of corrupt national politics portended the cultural shifts the seventies would witness. An interest in the perhaps always-doomed project of defining a shared sense of Americanness via taste gave way to what cultural historian Christopher Lasch would call the culture of narcissism. Lasch, writing in 1979, declared that the so-called American Century had ended. Liberalism, for him, had become politically and intellectually bankrupt, having lost its capacity to shape or explain the modern world. Lasch linked the cultivation of the self to a competitive form of lifestyle consumption. Lasch's conception of a cultural malaise stemming from a slavish devotion to the solipsistic development of the self informed President Jimmy Carter's plea for a new era of civic devotion in his televised 1979 "Crisis of Confidence" speech. Carter and Lasch both envisioned the nation as having reached a breaking point. Carter put it this way:

> We were sure that ours was a nation of the ballot, not the bullet, until the murders of John Kennedy and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. We were taught that our armies were always invincible and our causes were always just, only to suffer the agony of Vietnam. We respected the presidency as a place of honor until the shock of Watergate.[384]

Carter tracks the cavalcade of tragedies that beset the nation throughout the sixties, culminating with Nixon's betrayal of the nation's flagging trust, tracing a litany of moments in which American exceptionalism was challenged.

This dissertation has traced the cultural fabric underpinning this coming crisis of confidence. Projects devoted to national taste-making gave way in the seventies to a greater belief in the power of the individual consumer as arbiter of a personalized taste, which came to be understood as a kind of empowerment. No longer content to participate in mass taste or to achieve collective distinction, the lifestyle consumer of the seventies sought individual solutions and self-expression. This shift in the nature of consumer culture links to a growing distrust in

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[384] Carter, Jimmy "Crisis of Confidence" July 15, 1979.

collective cultural projects and by association the trustworthiness of government to lead equitably or just in general. The period this dissertation focused on represents the a waning of consensus, both political and cultural, as the limitations of Cold War liberalism dramatically revealed themselves in the litany of traumas articulated by Carter. From Jacqueline Kennedy's controversial development of an elite historicist taste as representing the nation at its best to Oldenburg's depiction of a modern and debased taste structuring everyday life in America, we have seen how determinations of taste and the changing material culture of sixties America conveyed efforts to stave off or explore cultural mediocrity. Beneficiaries of the postwar promise of homeownership and a comfortable suburban existence, Smithson and Graham explored the spatial and psychic confines of suburban malaise. Lady Bird Johnson's forceful critique of postwar development, coming in the form of her beautification campaign, laid the groundwork for the national conversation about the status of the built and natural environment that these artists joined as they worked to both redeem and condemn suburbanization, its constituent infrastructure as well as its critics on aesthetic and social terms. *The French Chef* and the institutionalization of public television reflect in some ways a return to a Kennedy era quest for high cultural credibility while also promoting a form of individual cultivation via the management of lifestyle. Laura Cavestani Kronenberg, Abbie Hoffman, and Martha Rosler seized upon this conception of cooking as constitutive of elite cultural status and examine with suspicion and irreverence the politics of the elevation of particular forms of ethnic cooking from chore to art.

In bringing together these diverse case studies in art, policy, architecture, television, design, and criticism, this dissertation has, I hope, demonstrated the complexity of sixties liberalism and the ways in which the cultural front of the Cold War played out in conversations

about taste that spanned national audiences. In a contemporary political context where the problems and challenges of the arts and culture are largely absent from a national policy dialogue, it is worth noting their former centrality in the form of a short lived and unevenly experienced Great Society. If Lasch perceived the nation as entering an "age of diminishing expectations" in the late 1970s, then the negotiations of expectations, national identity, and taste in the preceding decades are vital homework in the comprehension of the dispersion of narratives of belonging and affinity into diffuse, individualized identities.

We can see each chapter through this lens of self-fashioning. Each of the projects and individuals under examination utilize self-fashioning as a means to forge or critique national taste in a diversity of ways. Jacqueline Kennedy's affinity for the American Empire style, for example, was called upon to frame and offer a vision of a nation rising to meet the challenges of the coming sixties by exemplifying highbrow taste as American on television. Oldenburg's desire to embrace the vernacular modernism of Los Angeles while also distancing himself from the western city's cultural context produced *The Bedroom Ensemble,* a work that troubled its critics who were faced with what they perceived as the work's excessive representativeness of a certain, all too common, depraved American taste in interior design. As Graham and Smithson worked to distance themselves from their New Jersey upbringing, they were also drawn back to their suburban roots in an effort to denaturalize these commonplace environs. Graham called out critics of suburbia for their hypocrisy by parodying their often-dire humanist prose, positioning himself as both sage and permissive in his apprehension of late modern architecture and space. Child embodied the power of self-transformation in her embrace of gourmet cooking, as a site of empowerment, expertise, and enlightenment. Kronenberg Cavestani and Hoffman explored these possibilities outside the rubric of liberal pluralism's devotion to certain forms of ethic or cultural

knowledge with their comedic demonstration of Jewish cooking and Hoffman's emphatic performance of ethnicity. Rosler, on the other hand, refused the liberating potential of cooking, critiquing the very practice of self-cultivation through gourmet culture for its colonial impulses and declining the domestic as a site of empowerment, demonstrating instead the confinement inherent in domesticity.

These divergent case studies unite around the ways in which taste works as a point of translation between an individual and national identity. As the relationship between these two formations fray, discussions about taste possess a moral dimension and serve as a means through which fundamental questions about politics, family life, and national identity might be explored. While taste in the sense that the Kennedy or Johnson administrations conceived it retracted from official discourse, the moral panic over violence and sexuality in popular culture framed as "in bad taste" dominated cultural discourse in the eighties and beyond. Questions over both decency and quality that characterized the uproar in the nineties over National Endowment for Arts fellowship recipients Karen Finley and Andres Serrano asked the Supreme Court to deliberate on the taste making practices of the NEA. At the same time, the rise of domestic impresarios like Martha Stewart in the eighties revived a historically inflected domestic taste as a vital part of the upwardly mobile financial class's quest for cultural capital. There are two related impulses traced throughout this dissertation that begin to unravel in the decades to come. For one, the commitment to the role of government in the arts, espoused by both Kennedy and Johnson, came under fire from social conservatives, who mounted an overall attack against government beginning during Ronald Reagan's presidency. The prevailing conception that the government should intervene in the social and cultural life of the nation and fund new programs, in the arts and otherwise came under fire. And the other, the notion that lifestyle can define a national

culture via television, put forth by Child and Kennedy, laid the groundwork for the explosion of lifestyle television. Innumerable cooking and interior decoration programs emerged and flourished in the context of the fragmentation of both the television audience and the mass market, which, as Laurie Ouellette argues in her book on lifestyle television, promote the ideal of neoliberal self-improvement as opposed to government-driven collective forms of cultural uplift. [385]

To close, this dissertation presented the potential of interpreting the art of the sixties and seventies alongside contemporaneous media, keeping both in fine grain focus. Analyzing high art and popular culture from the standpoint of taste cleared the way for the examination of a variety of objects, media texts, individuals, and institutions and their publics. Reading this array in tandem opens on to new interpretative pathways, where insights into the motivations behind the development of video art might inform our understandings of public television's early years of institutionalization and vice versa. This approach could perhaps enliven art history curriculum, especially in the context of an introductory art history survey, making clear art's relevance to the comprehension of cultural and political history vital to every college education.

[385] Ouellette, Laurie *Lifestyle Television* New York: Routledge Press, 2016.

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