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**The Complexity of Domestic Interiors:  
Laurie Simmons's Depiction of Women's Identity in the Home.**

A Thesis Presented

by

**Lauren Cesiro**

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

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**Master of Arts**

in

**Art History and Criticism**

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Abstract of the Thesis

**The Complexity of Domestic Interiors:**

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Laurie Simmons was among a group of artists in the 1980's working in photography, film, video, and performance who recognized the influence of the mass media on the American public. Simmons used her art practice to comment on these images tailored to the consumer. Much of her photographic work of dolls and dollhouses challenges the viewer's concept of the relationship between women and their domestic interiors.

This thesis examines three photographs from the following series: *Color Coordinated Interiors (1982-1983)*, *The Instant Decorator (2001-2004)*, and *The Long House (2002-2004)*. In these series, Simmons presents the home as a complex environment that both shapes and is shaped by one's identity. In each of these exemplary photographs, Simmons's women become literally and figuratively multifaceted in both public and private spaces in the home. Gradually, throughout these three series, she separates the women from their surrounding objects. These works show how she has explored issues of gender identity construction and in particular a feminine identity. Informed by writings by Betty Friedan, Hannah Arendt, and a range of

feminist scholars whose perspectives I found helpful and resonated with my own, I will explore how Simmons uses interiors to construct and comment on feminine identity.

Laurie Simmons's photographic work of dolls and dollhouses challenges viewers to examine their domestic surroundings. Her work asks questions such as: What shapes a person's identity? Is identity static or in flux? Is there such a thing as a universal woman's identity? Much is written about feminism, the home, and art, but Simmons's work has been under-analyzed in these areas. This thesis examines Simmons's work in light of these concerns.

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## Introduction

American artists coming to age in the 1970's were faced with a political climate of uncertainty triggered by the military occupation of Vietnam, President Richard Nixon's involvement with Watergate, the radioactive leak at Three Mile Island, and the women's rights movement. Mass media played a critical role in educating the public about these events. On the other hand, the media also used images to provocatively bombard American citizens with available products. Laurie Simmons was among a group of artists in the 1980's working in photography, film, video, and performance that recognized this trend and used their art practice to comment on these images tailored to the consumer.

In 1977, these artists mounted an exhibition of their works in New York. This became known as one of the first and influential exhibits to address Americans' inundation by images. It was titled "The Pictures Generation". Works from John Baldessari, Sarah Charlesworth, Barbara Krueger, Sherrie Levine, Thomas Lawson, Cindy Sherman, and, above all, Laurie Simmons were included.<sup>1</sup> Simmons, among others, was one of the first to ask viewers to interact critically with the images that surrounded everyday America. These pictures shaped the way Americans looked at their public and private worlds.

Much of the imagery in Laurie Simmons's work deals with dolls and dollhouses. These subjects challenge viewers to examine their domestic surroundings. Using collage, sculpture, photography, and interior design as her mediums, Simmons adds miniature playthings from childhood to ask questions such as: What shapes a person's identity? Is

identity static or in flux? Is there such a thing as a universal woman's identity? These questions are tackled through her photography of [mostly] women interacting in various domestic interiors.<sup>2</sup> Much is written about feminism, the home, and art, but Simmons's work has been under-analyzed in these areas. This thesis examines Simmons's work in light of these concerns. It will address three photographs from the following series: *Color Coordinated Interiors (1982-1983)*, *The Instant Decorator (2001-2004)*, and *The Long House (2002-2004)*.<sup>3</sup> In these specific exemplary photographs the home is presented as a complex environment that both shapes and is shaped by one's identity.<sup>4</sup> Simmons's women become literally and figuratively multifaceted in both the public and private spaces within the home.<sup>5</sup> These works show how she has explored issues of gender identity construction and in particular a feminine identity. The situations that face these women within their homes can then be related to identity construction in general. Informed by writings by Betty Friedan, Hannah Arendt, and a range of feminist scholars whose perspectives I found helpful and resonated with my own, I will explore how Simmons uses interiors to construct and comment on feminine identity.<sup>6</sup>

Women's identity in western history has been intimately connected with the home. *In How to Make a Home Happy: A Housekeeper's Hand Book (1884)*, the relationship between women and interiors were made permanent.<sup>7</sup> The handbook states, "...it is not we that make our surroundings merely, but our surroundings in turn make us...the very act of fashioning beautiful forms forms us into beautiful fashion."<sup>8</sup> Constantly equated with things around the home, women's bodies during the Industrial Age were defined and categorized with their domestic interiors. For some observers, women and their homes had become interchangeable.<sup>9</sup>

Betty Friedan launched an attack on this concept of the home with the first wave of the Feminist Movement in the late 1950's.<sup>10</sup> She argued that the home, its chores, and the men that worked outside of it enslaved women. Her words inspired the formation of the National Organization for Women and opened many doors politically, socially, and personally for women. Her ideas were supported by Marxist feminists. Stevi Jackson, an active feminist theorist put it "...women's position in the labor market was different from men...in addition to any paid employment women undertake, they are typically also engaged in unpaid domestic work."<sup>11</sup> Women as slaves to their domestic materiality became the point of contention for First Wave Feminists, who saw the household in an undesirable light. Many of Friedan's ideas were contested with Second Wave Feminism. In the 1970's, these Feminists confronted the First Wave Feminists' focus on white and middle class problems. What these Feminists did not challenge was Friedan's emphasis on the negative qualities of domestic interiors and what that means for women in the 1970's and today.

Friedan's Feminine Mystique (1963) enlightened the public about the undesirable qualities of home life for women in the 1950's and 60's. Today, I would argue, the home is a complex site, even more complex than it was in Friedan's day. The domestic space is a place where family and friends gather to share meals or holidays. It is a place of solace where comfort and relaxation in bedrooms and living rooms are of supreme importance. It is a place of artistic self-expression, as people collect objects to exhibit around the home. Most importantly, these multipurpose spaces in the home provide us with spaces to construct our identities. Whether it enslaves us or comforts us, Friedan's liberation of women from the home has not erased the importance of domestic life for identity

construction. The home now presents dilemmas for both men and women. For the purposes of this paper, the complexity of domestic interiors will only be explored in relation to women's identity construction.<sup>12</sup>

*Color Coordinated Interiors, The Instant Decorator, and The Long House* explore feminine identity construction in different ways. Simmons begins with a motionless portrayal of "The Teenettes",<sup>13</sup> plastic Japanese dolls, in various colored rooms within the home. Gradually, throughout these three series, she separates the women from their surrounding objects. Simmons's complicated women are examples of the Feminist mantra that all women, like all experiences, are different. There is no such thing as a fixed and universal identity. Simmons's women express their emotional, physical, and mental individuality in their domestic spaces. The formal and aesthetic qualities in Simmons's photographs, collages, and mixed media pieces of the 1980's and 2000's provide an original artistic expression of ideas about identity construction in the home.<sup>14</sup> For Simmons, identification is never a matter of pleasure.<sup>15</sup> It is a time-consuming and painful commitment to understand yourself which is complicated by the public and private spaces of the home.<sup>16</sup>

## Chapter 1

*Color Coordinated Interiors* (1982-1983) displays a monochrome view of several rooms in a home. Simmons has placed “The Teenettes” in front of rear projections that represent domestic spaces. Each space is saturated in color. It is interesting to note that Simmons never planned the final outcome of these shots. She did plan the organization of each room by matching the colored dolls with a room of their same color. About her composition Simmons says, “What surprised me was that sometimes the figures stood statically in front of the background and other times they seemed to live there....I never really got why some pictures worked and others didn’t. I think, in hindsight, that the screen and lights and rapid-fire background changes were all part of a yearning to animate the figures.”<sup>17</sup> I argue that the haphazard placement of some of the dolls creates a space where they are static, silenced, and trapped. I have chosen three images from this series to exemplify how these women in their homes have a stagnant identity. Through Simmons’s use of color, texture, and space the viewer is made to focus on the relation of the woman or women to the room in the house that they occupy. Issues of body, space, and dislocation are developed in a way that shows these women are inseparable from their surroundings. The complete color created in each room generates an oppressive feeling. Artist and critical theorist David Batchelor argues that Western tradition has subordinated color to line. He calls this idea “chromophobia”.<sup>18</sup> According to Batchelor, this fear of color reveals an artists emphasis on whiteness, a sense of uniformity, and

order. Using hues and shades of only one color, Simmons's work lacks chromophobia yet she still creates a homogeneous look to her domestic spaces.

### **Chromophobia and Homogeneity.**

In *Red Library II* (fig.1), we view from behind an all-red woman, what is presumably a study or an office. She is frozen into a position as she enters the library. The shelves of books, the glass windows, and the furniture are either explicitly red or produce a hue of the color. The placements of these objects in the room construct a texture and pattern specific to this space. The repetition of color and texture has the viewer searching for the person in this scene. The red "Teenette" that stands with her back to us is a prisoner in her own room. For one thing, like the other dolls, her clothing is sculpted onto her body. The ripples in her top or the lines separating her pencil skirt from her legs are the only hint we have that there is a body underneath this clothing. The difficulty in discerning this woman from her environment shows that the objects in this room define her purpose. Here, she is merely texture, color, and pattern. In the 1970's and 80's, when Simmons made these photographs, many feminists were concerned with the question: how can we explain women's subordination?<sup>19</sup> The red "Teenette", I believe, is literally submerged in subordination. She is surrounded by patterns and textures in this monochrome room and so she is made equal with the rest of the room. A faceless, and body less form; she illustrates an insignificant woman who has become identity less.

The "Teenette's" oneness with her environment is produced in part by the texture of her clothes. The pattern on her sweater mimics the books on the bookshelf. Her

pencil skirt looks like the smooth cushions on the two chairs in front of her. Her likeness to her material objects allows us to associate her with the things in her room. Red's clothes bind her to her room and do not allow her to take any action. According to philosopher and theorist Hannah Arendt<sup>20</sup>, "Identity is the performative production, not the expressive condition or essence of action."<sup>21</sup> In order to discover identity, one must take action. Arendt states that the public sphere is the only realm where a person can take action and create his or her identity. Prior to or apart from these public actions the self has no identity. Red, stuck in the private realm of the home, is tied to this room by her physical characteristics. Simmons shows us a woman whose existence is not focused on identity creation. Thus, I would suggest that Arendt's ideas could apply to the home. This idea will be developed further in the following series.

The color, as well as the patterns on the "Teenette's" clothes, is mimicked in the room around her. Red is the same color as the room. Like Matisse's *The Red Room*, this monotonous color scheme blends chairs, rugs, walls, and desk together. Her purpose in this room is to fade into the design Simmons has created. In this, Simmons seems to use a strategy similar to that of Le Corbusier and Amedee Ozenfant whom, as art theorist David Batchelor says, create a hierarchy of color by discussing unity of color. For them, colors were organized by major scale, dynamic scale, and transitional scale. This was a way for designers to control the use of color and give it structure.<sup>22</sup> The major scale, if followed correctly, is thought to be the way to produce a great painting. This scale is made up of "ochre yellows, reds, earths, white, black, ultramarine blue and...certain of their derivatives."<sup>23</sup> Red is synonymous with harmony in modernist design theory as well as in Simmons's world. I argue that, for this "Teenette", the color coordination between

her and the rest of the room produces confinement more than harmony. Simmons's Red "Teenette" is one color, one pattern, and one texture. This combination creates a restrained atmosphere. Red's existence is thus limited to her surroundings. Modern design theory may categorize the color red as harmonious but Simmons's Red demonstrates that complete accordance with ones surroundings is restrictive.

Betty Friedan believed that the home was too limiting. According to Friedan, the home was a trap that women fell into and had to escape. She said, "The home was a place that they [women] were identified solely as wives and mothers rather than fully developed individuals. A life of domesticity, of household chores, cleaning, cooking, and caring for others was not enough if a woman was to be an individual. She must be free to develop her own potential."<sup>24</sup> The overall red color of the "Teenette" suggests that she is not able to escape her completely defined identity. How is she ever to find her own self that is free from the pieces in this environment when she is literally and metaphorically a slave to it? She cannot separate herself from this room, from this created identity, because she matches its color, pattern, and texture so well. Red's complete harmony with this space marks her as just another object occupying the library.

This cohesion is an example of a goal of American marketing ads in the 1950's. These ads presented women with the idea that they could express themselves as individuals through the acquisitions of commodities.<sup>25</sup> Red's room shows commodities in the form of chairs, books, and lamps. She has financially consumed these possessions yet, as we have seen, they have literally consumed her. Applying the ideas of Friedan, in order to become an autonomous and self-defining subject Red would have to leave this preconceived identity behind. Friedan believed that this action would allow women to



create their own journeys in life. In contrast, the safe site of the home, drenched in memories of childhood, controls and defines women, Friedan insisted.<sup>26</sup> The home is a site where women do not create their own identity. Red illustrates Friedan's fears. Her multifarious ties to this library control and define her. If Red were to leave the room, her purpose would change. It is this act that would spark an active participation in the creation of her identity. Until then, she is a commodity in her own home.

One could argue that Simmons's "Teenette" does have an identity. The tidy red library supports the notion that cleanliness is important to Red. For Red, living inside of and cleaning this home is part of what defines her individuality. Kevin Melchionne, an artist and art critic, expands upon this idea. He believes that there is a category of art called the "art of domesticity".<sup>27</sup> Melchionne says, "...the house is art but the very way of living in it is also an art, made and remade on a daily basis....these two arts, making and living, are connected."<sup>28</sup> Melchionne believes that this everyday occurrence is a part of environmental art; an art that envelopes surroundings rather than existing as a specific object.<sup>29</sup> Simmons's Red "Teenette" demonstrates his ideas here. Red has developed habits of cleanliness that respect and reflect her feelings towards this space. Melchionne calls this person a "radical aesthete".<sup>30</sup> This person feels as if they are one with the work in which they live. Formally, Red lives in perfect harmony in this pristine and severe environment. She matches her surroundings in both color and texture. This may not be an identity created by noticeable action but it is an identity nonetheless.

Through her color, texture, and space within this room, Red has become subsumed by her surroundings. "Radical aesthete" or not, Red holds equal weight with her commodities. Once she steps out of the defined boundaries of this home, the rules of

her life can change, but Simmons's goal was to have these "Teenettes" blend in with their environment. She says, "...I was thinking about disappearance and obscurity - the possibility of being subsumed by a place, a location, a role and certainly about fading into and finally vanishing in the background - blending in as an ultimately desirable state."<sup>31</sup> Simmons's explanation supports Melchionne's idea of an "art of domesticity". Red has become one with her environment and shows that she has expressed her life through her surroundings. Friedan's plea for women to escape the home is negated. Nevertheless, the ability of the home to confine women has allowed some sort of action in Red's identity construction.

### **Proportion and the Autonomous Woman.**

*Coral Living Room with Lillies* (fig. 2) depicts a rear-projected living room that overtakes its occupants. There are two women, or possibly two forms of the same woman, interacting on top of a sofa. These "Teenettes" are red and yellow, and once again match their environment. Unlike Red, these two dolls seem dislocated from their environment. The size of the lilies and the furniture indicate that the scale of the women is extremely disproportionate in relation to the rest of the room. They seem like playthings or toys solely present for the benefit of someone larger. The incongruity in size allows the space to act upon the "Teenettes". Matching colors and differing sizes force these dolls to fuse with their surroundings. Even though there are two actual dolls, their similar pose and closeness liken them to images on a filmstrip; moving ever so slightly in each frame to eventually produce a new movement. For this reason, these two dolls could actually be one image of the same doll as her identity splits. This split also

foreshadows the existence of multiple identities in one woman that comes to fruition later in Simmons's work. Simmons has played with the solidity of these dolls by dividing them in two and playing with their proportions. Identity for these dolls is based on multiplicity and scale rather than any action they may take. These factors place these "Teenettes" in the same category as Red: their surroundings act upon them instead of allowing them to act.

Simmons's large rear projection creates a sense of dislocation for these tiny "Teenettes". The large lilies looming in front, the purse that sits on the table, and the reflection-less mirror in the background are all clues to the size of the room. Moreover, these women seem to be placed into their surroundings instead of interacting within their surroundings. Whereas Red was incorporated into her environment through color and texture, these women are dislodged, as they are significantly smaller than the material reality surrounding them. This difference in scale is a metaphor for the impact the home has on a woman's life.

Biddy Martin and Chandra Mohanty, two feminist scholars, discuss how the experience of "home" weighs heavily on a person when they begin to recognize themselves as a subject. They support their argument with a reading of Minnie Bruce Pratt's biography "Identity: Skin Blood Heart". Throughout the essay, Pratt's process of identifying herself as a subject comes by asking the question: what is "home?" Pratt says that she is, "shaped by the buildings and streets in the towns that she lived. The stability of these structures is undermined by the fact that they have seen race, class, and gender struggles."<sup>32</sup> Martin and Mohanty interpret Pratt's words as exemplifying home as more than just a place to play out daily routines. The home, and its location, is packed with

multiple histories that impact a person's view of him or herself. This idea is crucial to our understanding of these two "Teenettes'" living situation. The things of the house tower over these women and reinforce their doll-ness. They have both become a plaything for someone else to toss about the couch.

Their status as toys makes the "Teenettes" subservient to whoever wants to play with them. Hannah Arendt described a situation that parallels the experience conjured up by this one. She says, "...the inhabitants of the private realm: women, children, slaves, laborers – are subject to the demands that their bodies and nature make upon them, and to the orders dictated to them by the master of the household to which they belong as property. They are victims to the predictable, repetitious, and cyclical processes of nature and the despotism of the household. They are incapable of freedom."<sup>33</sup> Arendt's words come from a different space and time in history, yet I believe her ideas resonate with Simmons's work. In the private realm of the home, Simmons's "Teenettes" are not able to express their freedom. The presumed "master" of this household has treated them as toys.

This hierarchical separation between master and puppet is seen in patriarchal society as well. Indeed, Simmons created this photo in the 1980's, when many chose a patriarchal view over a feminist view. This decision was reinforced by the social policies of the administration of President Ronald Reagan. Fiscally, Reagan prioritized individual initiative over those of the state and sought to dismantle big government and the New Deal by cutting public spending.<sup>34</sup> He undermined liberal programs like welfare; civil rights and women's rights took a back seat to financial gain.<sup>35</sup> The outcomes of Reagan's policies are illustrated in work like Simmons's. In *Coral Living Room with Lillies* (fig.

2), the “Teenettes” lives are products of patriarchy. Much like American women and or minorities during the Reagan administration, these “Teenettes” have become mere playthings, pawns within the larger context that they are imprisoned. Conspicuous wealth has been prioritized over their own well-being.

Coupled with the “Teenettes” diminished size is their constricting color. The “Teenettes” are a similar hue to the interior of the living room in which they are imprisoned. Variations of yellow and light red are found on the walls, the furniture, and several objects placed in the living room. In this space, the dolls’ purposes are to be objects. Like Red, if these dolls were to leave the room their purposes could be redefined.

Feminists of the 1980’s spoke to this idea. Many of them challenged the Reagan administration’s shift of focus from social to financial concerns. Lesley Johnson, independent social research professional, notes, “Feminists in the 80’s developed a powerful critique of this notion of the modern subject – in particular, of its cultural idea of the self-determining, autonomous individual.”<sup>36</sup> For Feminists in the 1980’s, men and women were never autonomous; they were molded by past experiences, the influence of family members, and their various environments. The color coordinated room and bodies of these “Teenettes” provide a space where they exist as part of their setting. If separated from this living room, the dolls would keep their yellow and light red colors. Simmons’s photograph speaks to the idea that no person is ever truly an autonomous individual. Simmons’s women show that physical dislocation alienates a person from their surroundings but does not cause the concept of displacement to vanish.

Among this bleak outlook that the concept of home is consistently oppressive, Simmons provides the viewer with a glimmer of hope. What begins to separate these women from their room, and foreshadows Simmons's creation of a liberated woman inside the home, is the fact that these women could be one woman split in two. Their poses are mirror images of each other without the use of a mirror. Also, the dolls are colors that, when looked at on a color wheel, seem to morph into each other. In physically fracturing the women and alluding to a changing color, Simmons begins to expose the falsity of a stable moment. As she puts it, "Sometimes I do think everything looked better 'then' but the patina of memory can often be very flattering and ultimately misleading."<sup>37</sup> "Then", some time in the past, where women who match their rooms in size and color exemplify perfection, is not necessarily truthful. The transforming "Teenettes" demonstrate a potential movement from past into present. There is a perfectly tidy and lived-in space behind this dualistic woman – a space of which she cannot completely occupy. At the same time, she is a mutable accessory, a toy, within the rest of the room. Her identity is defined by this living space but Simmons alludes to an autonomous woman in the home.

In regards to scale, these "Teenettes" do not hold equal weight with the rest of the objects in the room. They are living inside of this habitat as smaller and insignificant to their objects. Thrown on the couch, they are an afterthought. The fact that they match the room, coupled with their small size, makes them simultaneously one and independent from their surroundings. In the eyes of modern society, it is impossible for the "Teenettes" to be autonomous. Even if they were to leave this living room, the dolls

would be perpetually carrying around the colored burden of their home. Their identity is still created in relation to their surroundings.

### **Lay out and Furniture Design.**

Simmons's previous use of size and color are employed in *Blue Tile Reception Area* (fig. 3.) In this image, these features focus the viewer's attention on the room and not the women. The "Teenettes" have become the furniture. Simmons's depiction of the "Teenettes'" bodies through color, texture, and pose literally join them to this room. Save for a fireplace and a door, the "Teenettes" are the only occupants of this room. According to Simmons, the dolls were not her main concern. She says, "I always wanted to make pictures that were neutral overviews of a scene or memory; I wasn't interested in interactions between the characters. Also, the dolls weren't the main characters of those earlier rooms. The furniture and décor were important – those pictures were about giving everything equal weight."<sup>38</sup> At first glance, the women look congruous with the rest of the room. The room is larger than the dolls yet it does not look disproportionate. The dolls are also the same blue found throughout this room. The splashes of white on their plastic clothing from the flash of a camera create a feeling of three dimensions. Upon closer inspection, I would argue, these dolls are still controlled by the space they occupy.

By omitting the furniture, the heavily patterned aspects of this room are accentuated. The blue wallpaper, ceiling, and the lighter blue decorated doorframes seem to be more like a design and less like wallpaper, ceiling, and doorframes. The "Teenettes," in their blue and patterned clothing, blend into the background, which forces the viewer to see them as part of the whole room design. They have become part of the

room like decoration and furniture are part of a room; their function is to be decoration. In her book Women's Domestic Body: The Conceptual Conflation of Women and Interiors in the Industrial Age, design historian Beverly Gordon says that women became associated with the home in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as men were taking more jobs outside of the home. Function and decoration of the home became the women's responsibility.<sup>39</sup> These three "Teenettes" seem to epitomize this phenomenon.

Simmons's blue room and the "Teenettes" 1950's sense of fashion appear to be taken from the Donna Reed show or popular culture of the time. While it is not explicitly certain that Simmons read Betty Friedan, I believe her work resonates here. Friedan believed that images of material wealth, perpetuated by American capitalism, gave American women in the 1950's a sense of false promises. Women were led to believe that they could express themselves as individuals through the acquisitions of commodities.<sup>40</sup> The "Teenettes" have become these commodities. For one thing, their bodies are, like the dolls in *Red Library II* (fig.1) and *Coral Living Room with Lillies* (fig. 2), pre-sculpted and pre-fabricated toys. The textures of their clothing begin to resemble those of patterns on a couch or a dresser. The doll on the right wears a plaid dress that appears like chair caning. She interacts with another doll that wears a top similar to velour piping found on furniture during the 1940's. The doll on the left sports a long knee length skirt with stripes so deep they resemble knots found on wooden cabinets. Their pre-fabricated clothing becomes a way to identify the "Teenettes" as furnishings. These dolls are identified as objects, which would certainly put the home as creator of identity in an undesirable light.



One might interpret this image in light of Arendt's ideas about identity construction in the private realm. Simmons's *Blue Tile Reception Area* (fig. 3.), gives visual support to Arendt's primary concern of keeping the public and private realms separate. According to Arendt, biological selves are all the same when in the private realm or the home. The home is where one carries out the immediate needs and wants of their body without the use of speech.<sup>41</sup> Arendt worries that our basic bodily needs of thirst, hunger, and sleep make our political, or public, spaces homogeneous. These "Teenettes" illustrate this concern of sameness in the private realm through their overall color and patterned clothes, which forces them to blend in with the background. Arendt advocates for leaving behind these universal bodily needs so the public sphere can be a place to celebrate differences.<sup>42</sup> Simmons's women are unable to transcend their sameness. Their color and composition has physically connected them to their homogeneous room.<sup>43</sup> The private realm of the home pre-determined their function as design.

Unified through color and texture, skin and body operate as one in this image. The placement of the "Teenettes" in this space then adds to the idea that the function of these dolls is based on furniture and design. One doll fits more or less into the outline of a doorway. The other two dolls seem to be aware of the fireplace, as one's arm is tangential to the large construction. In other words, it is as if these women literally and figuratively fit inside of the boundaries provided for them. Social Science Professor and feminist theorist Joan W. Scott says: it is better to take experience rather than bodily functions as the determining factor in identity politics. Scott states, "...when experience is taken as the origin of knowledge, the vision of the individual subject...becomes the

bedrock of evidence upon which explanation is built.”<sup>44</sup> Subjects are constituted through various experiences.

This seems impossible for these neatly organized dolls. The identity created for them here is associated with the function of the dolls as design objects. Marxist feminists, like Stevie Jackson explained, see women as valuable players in capitalism because of the focus marketing companies place on them to buy commodities. Simmons shows the viewer that these women are both buyers of commodities and commodities themselves. Their placement in this image has kept them confined in the room.

Through color, texture, and space Simmons blurs the boundary between a woman’s body and her home. Simmons says, "...can you remember a time before you could read, sitting on somebody's lap, looking at a book, and being read to?...and how large those pictures loomed....I can remember the sensation of almost standing inside the image on the page, my boundaries became somewhat blurred, and for an instant I existed within the story. I'd like to go there again."<sup>45</sup> The viewer sees the “Teenettes” in figures 1-3 as part of a larger story about the home. They exist through the construction of their spaces and cannot be separated from them. Their color-coordinated bodies, textured clothing, and placement within a room completely connect the women to their surroundings. The identity of the “Teenettes” has been determined by their appearance alone. Simmons’s work relates to Arendt’s concern that private spaces subordinate and confine women. The room, commodities, and decorations in this series become more important than the women. The home is oppressive, threatening, and inflexible for these dolls and does not allow for the engagement with experiences to create an identity separate from these spaces. While this series puts the home in a negative light, I believe

Simmons's next two series show an active woman inside of her private domain. In the *Instant Decorator* series, the radical aesthete slowly becomes the creator of her own identity.<sup>46</sup>

## Chapter 2

Different from *Color Coordinated Interiors*, *Instant Decorator* (2001-2004) shows rooms populated with more people and many more objects. The rooms no longer match the colored dolls that occupy them.<sup>47</sup> Simmons has also replaced the “Teenettes” with collaged women from various sources. These women are now layered with magazine paper, fabrics, and other materials to create various facial expressions and scenes within their homes. Simmons engages with feminist aesthetics to create scenes that show the interconnected nature of these women and their surroundings. In creating this series, Simmons says that her decisions were made based on color-coding the room.<sup>48</sup> Her main goal was to match a “Teenette” of a certain color with the room that she occupied. While this motif recalls the images in *Color Coordinated Interiors*, the goal here is much different.

*The Instant Decorator* shows how Simmons has created both literal and metaphorical layers of collage that create a lived-in space with which the viewer is familiar. Like the last series, Simmons uses texture and composition to show the identity construction of these women. Arendt’s ideas about public vs. private space are also addressed as Simmons shows that these separate spaces can exist in the home.<sup>49</sup> I will refer to the kitchen, dining room, and living room as public spaces and the bathroom and bedrooms as private spaces. Public spaces are defined, for the purposes of this paper, as any place in the home where people, other than those who live in the home, can congregate. Private spaces are, for the purposes of this paper, rooms in the home where

one is most likely to be solitary and alone. Provided with both private and public spaces in the home, the women in this series no longer seemed trapped. Their bodies are active in their surroundings, their composition within their environment is intricate, and their sense of connectedness to their backgrounds is questioned. The home is now a place where one can create an identity that is layered, complex, and, I would contend, based more on individual experiences.

This chapter argues that this layered notion of identity, and Simmons's engagement with feminist aesthetics, puts the home in a complex light. The home becomes a place that cannot be neglected when analyzing identity construction within Simmons's photographs in these three series. Many of the points I stress in this chapter are best exemplified by Simmons's appropriation of feminist aesthetics. Her choice of collage as the medium is one example.

In her article about painting, feminism, and history, art historian Griselda Pollock discusses the differences between Helen Frankenthaler and Jackson Pollock. For Pollock, the way both artists interact with their canvas is very different. She says, "...do Pollock's slashing and throwing of paint, his gyrations around a supine canvas enact a macho assault upon an imaginary feminine body? Are the traces of paint on canvas the residues of a psychic performance? How could we then read Frankenthaler's pouring, pushing, smoothing gestures as she knelt on or near the canvas as a surface continuous with her space and movements?"<sup>50</sup> Pollock believes that how one engages with her medium demonstrates a kind of aesthetics. Additionally, the body cannot be forgotten in feminist practice.<sup>51</sup> Simmons's actions and interactions with her different textures, prints,

papers, and materials evoke this idea of feminist aesthetics. To understand *Instant Decorator*, we must understand aesthetics and feminist aesthetics.

A discussion of traditional and contemporary aesthetics is beneficial before feminist aesthetics and Simmons's cut construction are connected formally and theoretically. In their introduction to Feminism and Tradition in Aesthetics, Peggy Zeglin Brand and Carolyn Korsmeyer trace the history of aesthetics. For the purposes of brevity, their description of the history of aesthetics will not be the focus here. Brand and Korsmeyer define aesthetics, having developed in early modern European theory, as "theories of perception that are interested in discovering the nature of the apprehension of beauty and other perceptual qualities of intrinsic value."<sup>52</sup> In other words, aesthetics is the way in which a society creates standards to evaluate art. Canonical texts of aesthetics show a historical, and generally Western, interpretation of these ideas. Varied theorists interested in evaluating art share the same two presumptions; art's value as timeless and art's intrinsic value.<sup>53</sup> These ideas assume that art is created by artistic genius and art has the same value for everyone.<sup>54</sup> Is it possible to think about cut construction, or other forms of contemporary art outside of the traditional terms painting, drawing, or sculpture by using a definition of aesthetics from 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe?

Historically, feminists saw traditional aesthetic definitions as limiting and privileging a few. Feminist theorists take specific aspects of traditional aesthetics to task while incorporating new ideas. These guidelines create a new space from which we can view art. I use the term guidelines because agreement by feminist theorists on a feminist aesthetic is not possible. Many do not believe there is such a thing.<sup>55</sup> What some feminist theorists do agree on is the possibility of feminist aesthetics. There are three

general presumptions commonly shared by many feminists writing about art. Overall is the desire to question traditional aesthetics and to put art back into everyday life.<sup>56</sup> The ideas presented by leading Feminist theorists and feminist aesthetics, coupled with overarching ideas about aesthetics, are understood through the series *Instant Decorator*.

### **Beginnings of Independence.**

In *Lavendar Bathroom* (fig. 4), we are presented with a private space – the bathroom. This woman is sitting on a stool, observing us, as we view the scene. Her tub is filled with water and her martini glass refers to a symbolic relaxation. This bathroom, presumably hers, reflects her personal desires and interests in the form of material objects. Different here from the previous series is Simmons’s attention to detail. There are rugs, artwork, plants, and windows to the outside. The viewer is presented with a room of a sort with which they might be familiar. We can see a way in which Simmons has constructed an identity for this woman through a collage aesthetic and a focus on the body. The private space of the home allows her to express herself physically and mentally.

Sociologist Janet Wolff has noted that, “...nearly all accounts of modernity have focused on the worlds of work, politics, and city life. Despite the presence of some women in these realms of the public sphere, they are primarily areas in which women have been excluded, made invisible.”<sup>57</sup> Wolff advocates for an equal consideration of the private and public realms. Simmons presents us with a woman who is not invisible in her private bathroom. We see her individual expression through the commodities in her room. Unlike the series before, the woman here has taken control of the objects around

her. I would argue that she could have chosen these things for herself and, in turn, is not a slave to them. The work jibes well with Melchionne's statement that, everything in a house has a place. "The space is a composition. To move a piece of the composition is to destroy the work of art."<sup>58</sup> The interior may be opulent but it reflects the occupant's personal desires and creates a space that seems lived in. This bathroom presents us with a new kind of radical aesthete. This woman has hung up a drawing of a classical figure, placed a classical sculpture on the floor, and positioned flowers, pillows, and fuzzy rugs all around the room. Simmons's use of feminist aesthetics helps to illustrate this idea. By including these hand-picked items, this woman is expressing her various tastes and experiences. Feminist aesthetics rejects the idea of a universal model of consciousness.<sup>59</sup> This woman has used this space as a stage in which she is able to express her individuality.

The layers of texture seen in the fabrics and patterns of this private space signify a complex process of identification. Arendt argues that the private self is conflicted. Thinking, willing, and judging are ways of perpetually enforcing an inner resistance to change.<sup>60</sup> In private, the self is able to constantly question and reassess its decisions. This self-doubt, according to Arendt, enforces mental boundaries and preserves a static identity in the home. I would argue that Simmons has welcomed us into a private space where action has, in fact, occurred. Through the textured rugs, the fabric of the curtains, and the various trinkets that fill this room, we have strong evidence that this woman has engaged with a decision making process that was not stunted by the thinking, willing, and judging of others. It is in this private bathroom that this woman is able to express herself. This private expression is just as important as an action in public. This woman has an



acting self that is multiple, layered, and complex. The results of that are in her private space.

The woman's still body counteracts the acting self that is demonstrated through the things and feel of the room. This woman sits almost naked and stares out at the viewer as her white body pops out from the purple-layered background. This separation of room and body is the beginning of Simmons's women shedding layers that are socially imposed upon them in order to truly discover their selves in the home. Unlike the "Teenettes" we are accustomed to seeing, this woman's seductive gaze is overtly sexual. It is interesting that Simmons has placed this woman among three different portrayals of the human figure. The Greek and Roman inspired sculpture on the floor and drawing on the wall signify an ideal form of beauty. This woman mirrors those ideas in her pose while simultaneously negating them with her gaze. She is part Greek and Roman sculpture and part modern figure that is influenced by the hairy drawing near her sink.

Whatever her idea of ideal beauty, this woman's body is colonized by the viewer's gaze. Homi Bhabha, in *The Other Question*, discusses "the other" and how this idea is shaped by physical body differences. For him, the body is "always inscribed in the economy of pleasure and desire and of power and domination."<sup>61</sup> While he is speaking about the colonized, I believe that this can pertain to women as well. I would argue that women's bodies have been portrayed as "things" to be colonized by the American media and American politics. In this image, we see articulations that are consistent with popular academic psychoanalytic feminist theories of the gaze in this woman's outward stare.<sup>62</sup> This woman seems to return the viewer's gaze in an act of desire. She has begun to take action within this private space.

At first glance, Simmons has presented yet another color-coordinated interior. Through the analysis of this woman's possessions, her returned gaze, and separately colored body, the viewer is actually presented with a woman taking action within a private space. Aware of it or not, Simmons has employed various tools suggested by feminist aesthetics. For one thing, she has used the medium of collage to interact with various materials and create a complex space in which this woman lives. Secondly, she has created a highly individualized space that showcases this woman's interests and desires. Finally, and most importantly, this woman reflects the gaze enforced upon her by modestly inviting the viewer into her bathroom. Simmons has set the stage for the creation of an independent woman in the home.

### **Performative Action in Private Spaces**

In *Yellow Kitchen* (fig. 5), race, class and gender constructs are present as we are offered a view of a more "public" space within a home. The kitchen is where family members, friends, and relatives, can come to converse and meet one another on a daily basis. Here we see three different women engaged with their surroundings. One woman is holding a casserole and seems to be yelling; another woman is holding a coffee kettle, and a third woman is standing in a robe staring out at the viewer. Surrounded by a cluttered kitchen, filled with cakes and a variety of sweets, these women are engaged in their own individual activities. In this public space they are each taking actions. They are creating their own identities by living their own lives. Simmons continues to build upon this idea of women as psychologically separate from their environment.

The public space of the kitchen forces these women to put their private convictions into action. Through their individual actions, the individual identities of each woman are portrayed. Hannah Arendt's ideas about the public are illustrated here. According to Arendt, the public is a realm of performance where an individual is actively engaged with their identity.<sup>63</sup> Indeed I would concur with her ideas. The everyday happenings of life in the public realm enable people to escape the physical labor of the private realm.<sup>64</sup> I would add that the private realm is equally as important. I believe that one may never be able to be performative in the public realm without the ability to build one's self in the private realm. The individual emotions and actions shown in each of Simmons's women demonstrate the importance of both public and private spaces in the shaping of identity. It is in this public kitchen in a private home that each woman has her own sense of self on display. Arendt contends that actors act to create identity. This presupposes an unstable, multiple self that seeks self-realization in action; identity is the reward for such actors.<sup>65</sup> These women are acting in a simultaneously private and public space to create an identity for themselves.

I can infer that these women are able to create their own identities but I cannot speak for them because I am not them. Simmons's women reinforce this idea that there is no such thing as a universal sameness of experience for any individual.<sup>66</sup> For one thing, they each occupy different mental and physical states. Through their various actions, these women bring their own history, geography, and psychology to this space that creates their own distinctive lives. As Mohanty puts it, "...if the assumption of the sameness of experience is what ties women (individual) to women (group, regardless of class, race, nation and sexualities,) the notion of experience is anchored firmly in the

notion of the individual self, a determined and specifiable constituent of European modernity.”<sup>67</sup> Simmons seems to be expressing the idea that if we group all women together we fall into the trap of agreeing with a European modernity. For Mohanty, this way of thinking is a generalization that does not take into account race, class, nation, or gender. To focus on a unified sisterhood is a middle class, psychologized notion that erases power differences within and among groups of women.<sup>68</sup> Ignoring our differences hurts women and reifies the western belief that there is a universal truth and a universal subject.<sup>69</sup> Simmons’s collage conveys the idea expressed by feminist theorists, that there is no universal woman subject. Good art is determined by the relationships of subjective experiences, which are shaped by race, class, nationality, and gender.<sup>70</sup> Simmons’s women show us that identity construction is localized as well as nationalized. Each engages with her common public environment in her own unique ways.

Simmons’s women engage with their public spaces through various domestic activities. According to Melchionne, these domestic doings inadvertently produce spaces that are lived in in a creative way. This is called the “art of domesticity”.<sup>71</sup> Visually, Simmons has done this by piling sweets on the counter tops to create a collage of food. The viewer can infer an image of these women’s identities through their domestic actions. The busy countertops show that these women are entertaining for someone or something. Simmons’s women are constantly on display in this public space of the kitchen. Melchionne asserts that being on display would cause anyone to live differently.<sup>72</sup> Simmons’s women are aware of this fact. They have created a kitchen that, aside from the chaotic accumulation of sweets, looks rather coherent and color coordinated. Piles of sunflowers in the windows and the kitchen match the yellow

cabinets, floor, and patterned chair. There seems to be a harmony between function and style in this kitchen. Harmony is a central theme of the “art of domesticity”. Coherence is achieved by allowing one to do what one does normally in the home while also reflecting the artists’ individual feelings about the space.<sup>73</sup> Simmons’s women demonstrate this balance between function and style. They are showing various emotions and actions among the crowded sweets and the yellow room. The public space of the kitchen has made their lives a show; yet, unlike the women in *Color Coordinated Interiors*, they do not live their lives as they “ought to”. Simmons shows the viewer that this public space of the kitchen actually allows for experimentation and expression which aides in the creation of the self.

Simmons’s women demonstrate several actions in this kitchen. Many feminists would argue that women must abandon “suburban domesticity”, the world of the private, ordinary home, in order to pursue a fully developed personhood. Elizabeth Wilson, a feminist theorist who wrote about women and urban life, would agree with this sentiment. In Wilson’s opinion, the public spaces of the city serve as the sphere of women's potential emancipation, in opposition to this everyday world of domestic life and homely existence in the suburbs.<sup>74</sup> The “home-ly” existence in the suburbs is seen as debilitating and degrading. Simmons’s women show that the private space of the home cannot be ignored as an important factor in women’s identity construction. Multiple emotions, experiences, and procedures combine in this kitchen styled by individual specific desires. The viewer is presented with various individual identities that are created by these women. Performative action in the public spaces of the private home is possible.

### **Confronting Sex and Gender Stereotypes.**

In *Pink and Green Bedroom/Slumber Party/Really Crowded* (fig. 6), Simmons's collage combines ideas about public and private spaces of the home. The viewer is presented with a private bedroom filled with women. In the center of the collage, there is a woman who places her hand on her head and seems to be in contemplation. Despite this pensive moment, women cover her room, surrounding her on all sides. The space is compressed and builds a cluttered feeling. The lack of interaction among the women suggests that they could be the thoughts conjured up by the woman on her bed. This idea of multiplicity was first addressed in *Coral Living Room with Lillies* (fig. 2) of *Color Coordinated Interiors*. It was there that the viewer was presented with two similar women who were possibly a mirror image of each other. The women in this pink and green bedroom however, are different than the peach and coral "Teenettes". The artwork and objects that make up the surroundings in this bedroom do not tower over these women. The playful colors coupled with the horses and toys give the viewer the sense that they are inside of a child's room. This place is wrought with personal history. Despite this possible onus, Simmons creates a private space where this woman can grapple with her private ideas

The woman lying on the bed is deep in thought. Her hand to her head and face positioned at the ceiling; she is not aware of the other women in the room. The women who surround the room seem to be posing and acting for the viewer. Lying on her bed, this woman is comfortable enough to let down her guard in this bedroom. While these women are all in different poses with different facial expressions, they physically

resemble the woman on her bed. For this reason, they may be manifestations or the thoughts of the woman on the bed. According to feminist theorist Judith Butler, performing in the private realm enforces sex and gender identities. Simmons's women dispute this idea. They illustrate how the private realm can allow one to contest sex and gender stereotypes. Simmons displays this idea with the thinking woman on her bed. In the private space of her bedroom this woman is able to contend societal ideas. Butler says, "the multiplicity of the self rebels against the univocity of the sex or gender".<sup>75</sup> In her private realm, this woman is taking action in the form of thinking, judging, and willing in order to address her sexual identity. The multiple women present in this room are signs that the woman on her bed is able to understand the layered complexity of the public realm. Here she is able to challenge concrete identities with her thoughts.<sup>76</sup>

Apart from sexual identity, these different personae also exemplify a feminist idea that multiple experiences create layers of our identity. Race, sex, class, nationality, and gender are some experiences that help shape our perception. Feminism understands this and promotes a more complex model of consciousness so that we may appreciate all experiences in a variety of ways.<sup>77</sup> These women may be manifestations of these specific layers of consciousness that are inscribed on middle class women by society. One woman seems to represent a stereotypical view of innocence as she wears a white dress and looks up to the sky. Another lies on the floor, one leg in the air, as if she is in the middle of an exercise. The multiple women scattered throughout the room are in different clothes with different facial expressions and actions. With these different women, Simmons has illustrated the idea that identity is complex and layered.

The assortment of women produces an image that is simultaneously communal and dislocated. Inside of this private bedroom space, these women appear to be cramped. Simmons creates a haphazard composition of the women so they look as if they are falling off the page. This collaged placement creates a sense of fantasy and adds to the idea that these women may in fact be manifestations of the woman on the bed.

The women's sexual nature also makes them seem out of place in this pink and green room filled with toys. This woman, or young girl, may want to grow up, yet her private room is inhibiting those changes. Melchionne observes, "...all houses and all interior decoration of houses imply repertoires of habit...but their very architectural structure and decorative organization oblige us to live in one way and not another. An interior is a composition and so...requires us to maintain it, that is to act in ways that respect what has been created."<sup>78</sup> For Melchionne, our home reflects our habits. We live one way or another depending on how we decorate our spaces, and we are required to maintain those spaces accordingly.

We can see these ideas exemplified here in the contemplative nature of the young girl. The woman on her bed is trying to reconcile her feeling of disconnection to the surroundings that housed her as she matured. She is lost in the idea of what she "ought to" be versus her many manifestations of what she wants to be. Each aspect of this room brings the viewer to a stereotypical young girl's fantasy where everything was ponies and playthings. We know that these pictures and toys are not simply decorations. For this young girl, her room is both comforting and complex. It is comforting because there is now a private space for her fantasies to take bodily form; she is able to begin to deal with the complexity of society. On the other hand, this private space has done that which



Arendt has warned us about – it has made her a slave to herself. Her surroundings have not changed, yet she has. Simmons’s woman’s conflict is heightened by the textures, patterns, and materials used for this cut construction. Cut construction implies a different way of engaging with ones artistic media. Relationships become a better way to view aesthetics.

In *Pink and Green Bedroom/Slumber Party/Really Crowded* (fig. 6), and all of the images in this series, Simmons uses cut construction and collage to produce feminist aesthetics.<sup>79</sup> There are layers of fabrics, colors, images, and movements taken from a variety of sources that interact with and relate to each other to create a diverse group of images that work together. The fabrics are interconnected just like Simmons relates to the images that she collects. A textured surface is what she strives for. She says, “...how far can you go with a photographic surface? Everything photographic looks the same and is therefore limited. But I sort of felt that way about painting. Where could you go with those limited materials and that language, and find something new to say?”<sup>80</sup> Simmons, like Helen Frankenthaler, works with and through her materials and her medium to create a collage that is mixture of parts of herself. This interactive quality is one of the many aspects that make Simmons’s *Pink and Green Bedroom/Slumber Party/Really Crowded* (fig. 6) an example of feminist aesthetics.

In *Pink and Green Bedroom/Slumber Party/Really Crowded* (fig. 6), the unified color, plastic nature, and stiff pose of “The Teenettes” have now been replaced with a more active group of women. Simmons focuses on texture and composition to show a complex and layered individual. The women in *Instant Decorator* interact with their surroundings in public and private spaces in the home. Looking at commodity

accumulation, individual actions, or mental fantasies, these women illuminate the complex nature of the home in identity construction. Simmons's use of feminist aesthetics, as seen in her use of collage and cut construction, further explains that identity construction is layered.

With various materials and constructed women, Simmons addresses issues of body, space, and dislocation with each of these works to show that the women in *Instant Decorator* no longer match their environment. The home is a complicated space in which these women construct themselves. In her next series, Simmons's women are finally conscious of their boundaries in the home and triumphantly step outside of them.

### Chapter 3

In *The Long House* (2002-2004), Simmons's women are no longer bound by their public or private setting. In fact, these two worlds seem to blur. Through depictions of their bodies, composition, and dislocation, the viewer has a sense that these women are in control of shaping their own identity. Simmons has placed the women from *The Long House* in various rooms of the home. This time, they are not pieced together by cut construction; they are one unbroken image. Within each room, there are three-dimensional objects that surround them. The objects look like an afterthought in light of these powerful and strong women. The brightly colored lighting highlights their strength. Very interested in light and shadow, Simmons has introduced lighting to create a different mood in each scene. Although these women still occupy the home, they have now begun to command their own space. By using lighting, various mediums, compositions, and one cut construction, Simmons has created a woman separate from her surroundings. These women are using the house in which they occupy instead of being used by the house. This last series highlights women's engagement with their environment. They stand out physically and are more psychologically liberated. In contrast to the women in *Color Coordinated Interiors* and *The Instant Decorator*, these women are active; they are actors. They are not objectified as if some commodity, like other objects in the home.

## **Two and Three Dimensional Space Co-Existing.**

In *Downstairs Kitchen* (fig. 7), Simmons presents a kitchen speckled with different lights and shadows. There are two women among this new ambience. One woman is completely nude and the other is in her intimates. They each sit on a chair and, like the women in *Instant Decorator*, are engaged in separate actions. This kitchen is darker and emptier than the bright yellow kitchen with desserts from the series before. Plates, bowls, and flowers are difficult to discern as they are covered in a green light. Now, the focus is on the women and their actions. Through a combination of mediums, Simmons has created a divide between people and objects. Unlike the previous images where multiple women in a scene may have signified the same woman's thoughts, these women are obviously two different women. Their difference is seen in body size, facial expression, and action. The emphasis on the bodies of these women draws the viewer's attention to their separation from their surroundings. They look and feel physically different from the previous women we have seen.

The major difference in this series is Simmons's mixture of mediums. In *The Long House*, she works with cut construction and three-dimensional pieces. Interesting to note is that these women are flat while their surroundings are three-dimensional. Simmons has now made a clear distinction between the woman and her belongings.

American interior designer Billy Baldwin wrote an essay about how to express the comfort of living. In his essay he says, "the rooms that are really successful declare the owner's independence, carry the owner's signature, his very private scrawl."<sup>81</sup> I believe that Simmons has achieved success in this room. She has stripped this kitchen to the bare

essentials so that the focus is no longer on the environment but rather the individual people seated at the table. Baldwin continues his essay with rules for the successful creation and maintenance of a room. His ideas include separating patterns, repeating colors throughout the home, and balancing the sizes of all the objects in a room.<sup>82</sup> I believe that Simmons has followed these rules. In this kitchen there are not traditional patterns, only splotches of color. To the viewer's surprise, the size of the women is proportional to the objects in the room. In this way, Simmons's room expresses a place of comfort for these women. At the beginning of Baldwin's list, he states that the number one rule of decoration is that you can break almost all the other rules. Simmons has broken the previous rules she set for herself in order to present two distinct women.

It is interesting that Simmons has chosen to place these partially naked women in the public space of the kitchen. Each woman is engaged in her own actions; one looks at the viewer in a more provocative way than the woman in *Lavender Bathroom* (fig. 4) in the *Instant Decorator*, and the other is not conscious of the viewer as she is occupied with her own pleasure. Both of these women are acting out moments in their own lives. In terms of identity construction, these women have created their own experiences.

Joan W. Scott says, "...it is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience."<sup>83</sup> Scott's statement agrees with Arendt when she suggests that people are identity less until they have engaged in action. According to Hannah Arendt, when actors act, they are reborn. Their momentary engagement with action in the public realm grants them identities witnessed by various spectators.<sup>84</sup> Here, the viewer is the spectator who witnesses the actions of these women. While these are not the everyday performances one might associate with the kitchen, these women are

engaged in separate actions that allow them to experiment with identity constructions that pertain to the body. They are also able to understand another person's body in this public space because they are witnesses to each others's actions. This space of the kitchen has been used for their own purposes as they define their own lives. In this simultaneously private and public space, Simmons's women have separated themselves from their surroundings to experiment with their own surroundings. Arendt suggests that the private self, the self-constructed by ethnic, religious, or cultural factors cannot be made or acted upon.<sup>85</sup> This implies that an individual can take no action in parts of their private identity. I would argue that sexual identity is a private issue. Simmons's women prove that in a private home, and independent from their surroundings, they have the ability to explore and create their personal sexual identity.

Simmons has successfully separated these women from their surroundings. She has achieved this through a mixture of mediums and diverse actions. Sexual mores, the stigma of public spaces, and political ideas of the kitchen have been dismissed through these women's actions. Seyla Benhabib, feminist theorist, says,

...the modern individual has supported the dichotomy of mind/body male/female. It is said that one must break free from all ties, freeing yourself from the social relationships and influences of childhood, putting aside all emotional ties and bodily restraints of domestic existence and entering the public world of men as a fully formed individual. This disembodied subject is an illusion...the self does not have to imagine itself 'leaving home' to become the self. Selfhood is formed precisely by the social relationships of everyday existence, including those of domestic life.<sup>86</sup>

Simmons's women support Benhabib's thesis. In the home, with public and private spaces, one is never free from the self. The women in Simmons's kitchen have disregarded the everyday conventions of this room by engaging in individual actions.

They have succeeded in separating their bodies from their surroundings in order to experiment with their individuality.

### **Lighting and Simmons's Collage Aesthetic.**

In *Orange and Green Lounge* (fig. 8) the extreme lighting in this living room showcases the two-dimensional bodies of these women. These two women are occupied with more demure actions than the two women in the kitchen. One woman looks out the window and another looks at the viewer while she lounges on the couch. Again, Simmons has created a public room where the women dominate the space with their own actions. Unlike the previous two series, *Orange and Green Lounge* (fig. 8) shows minimal decorations on the walls. The lighting has become the decoration in the room. The color-coordinated lighting is reminiscent of *Color Coordinated Interiors*. Different now is that these women command the light. The extreme colors separate the women from their insignificant objects. The composition of the women in the room, as well as the decoration in the room, draws the viewer to the women and their separate experiences.

I argue that the living room Simmons has organized provides these women with a neutral space to create their own identity. This is demonstrated by Simmons's use of lighting in *Orange and Green Lounge* (fig. 8.) Both of these women have their own individual lighting that highlights her and her actions. The red light is closest to the woman by the window and the woman on the couch sits under a yellowish light.<sup>87</sup> The different lighting separates these women from each other as well as their surroundings. Lesley Johnson speaks to this idea of breaking from ones surroundings. She states,

“...the history of modernity is defined as a process of breaking with the past, with a world that is constituted as tradition, so each individual must replicate this journey in their own life. To become the autonomous, self-defining subject of modernity, each person must break with the safe and comforting sphere of their childhood where their identity was defined for them by others.”<sup>88</sup> The colored lights that illuminate the face of one woman and the pose of another visually designate each woman to her own space. This visual separation suggests that each woman is important to her surroundings. The “Teenettes” and the paper-doll-like women in *Instant Decorator* are held as insignificant to or equal to their surroundings. In *Orange and Green Lounge* (fig. 8,) these women have broken free from their comforting childhood setting with the aid of the colored lighting.

Simmons’s composition of this room also adds to Johnson’s notion of the importance of breaking from one’s childhood. The placement of the women distracts the viewer from the surroundings of the room. One woman has her back to the viewer while the other lies on a couch and stares out of the space. When speaking about the interior of a home, Melchionne says “...part of the success of any interior design is that...our attention...never overrides our purposes for being there. A well designed interior is like artfully applied makeup; unnoticed but captivating.”<sup>89</sup> Simmons’s women are in two different poses. She has placed them in such a way that their sexualized actions interest the viewer. For this reason, the surroundings pale in comparison to the women in the room. It is interesting to note that this composition also draws the viewer’s attention to the lack of shadows cast by the women. This stresses their two-dimensionality while



separating them from their objects. Simmons's women seem to command their own light.

The patches of lighted color in this room create a feeling of collage. It is as if Simmons has combined the solid colors from *Color Coordinated Interiors* with the actual collaging in *Instant Decorator*. The windows and walls are a solid red while simultaneously containing green and yellow. Simmons's use of light creates a patchwork look to the photograph and stresses its two dimensional space. This creates a stage for the women to be autonomous. Francis Sparshott, a philosopher of aesthetics, says, "...environmental features (in a home) function as texture, adornment, or modification of a setting rather than as an icon asserting itself upon us....it serves as accent or foil."<sup>90</sup> This is the first time in Simmons's series that she has completely spotlighted the women and created a setting to accent them. The barely recognizable patterns of the couch and the fabric also make these environmental features of Simmons's work additions to the focus of the independent women. Simmons has created a texture different from the clothing of the "Teenettes". The women that occupy this living room in their various experiences and colors create the texture of the room.

In an interview in 2007, Simmons said "...I'd say that light and shadow are the most important things to me. In the end, I'm a picture maker, and if the light isn't there, I can't make the picture. That's where the alchemy happens."<sup>91</sup> The lighting concentrates the viewer's gaze on the women. The patchwork effect that is created emphasizes that these women have broken free from their surroundings to create an identity separate from their environment. Simmons's women are acting freely in this public space of the home. These women have broken free from the restraints imposed on them in *Color*

*Coordinated Interiors* and *Instant Decorator*. Simmons has illustrated that the domestic interior is a complex place for identity construction.

### **Unified yet Fragmented.**

I would argue that *Den* (fig. 9,) is the culmination of Simmons's ideas about women in the home. The viewer is presented with another living room, a public space, within the home. One tall woman stands in the middle of the space. Her shadow is double her size and she dwarfs the objects in the room. A spotlight creates patches of light that surrounds her body. The candle by her side also gives off a light that seems to be emanating from her hip. This woman's bold presence is undeniable. The blurry tables with figurines and the dimly lit rug and couch cause the objects to fade into the background. Simmons has drawn the viewer's attention to the woman. On the back wall there is a framed image of a flower that seems to be a nod to the opulence of the bathroom scene in *Instant Decorator*. Simmons has left behind the lavish decoration and dislocated bodies in *Color Coordinated Interiors* by constructing a unified woman's body. This woman is not sutured like some of the women in *Instant Decorator*. Enlarging the size of this woman and her facial expression, Simmons has created an individual woman in this domestic interior. The viewer is confronted with a very different woman than previously seen in Simmons's work.

Simmons portrays this strong woman in many ways. Firstly, the woman is alone in this room. Unlike Red from *Color Coordinated Interiors*, this woman faces the viewer and stares back. Secondly, this woman is not a cut construction. Her body is one unified cut from a magazine or newspaper. She is not so much dislocated in her space so much

as she is separate from her space. Her shadow, on the other hand, splits as it hits the corners of the walls.

In her essay As Housewives We Are Worms, Lesley Johnson discusses feminist theorist Jessica Berman's notion that the unified body is a façade. Berman says, "the modern subject is created by their capacity to embrace and celebrate the absence of security and order characteristic of contemporary social existence."<sup>92</sup> The split in Simmons's woman's shadow illustrates that the body is actually fragmented. This split is akin to Arendt's assertion that the power of the self comes from an inner multiplicity.<sup>93</sup> "The self," wrote Arendt, "is not ever one."<sup>94</sup> Similarly, here, the woman is simultaneously unified and fragmented. The co-existing of these two contradictions demonstrates further the complexity of domestic interiors. For Arendt, this understanding that the self is multiple grants one the capacity to create her own actions. These actions lead to a self-constructed identity. Simmons has created a unified woman who is aware of her multiplicity and has the power to create her own identity. This woman is distinct from her surroundings.

The size of this woman contributes to the idea that she is an unattached figure in this room. In the past two series addressed in this thesis, Simmons has portrayed her woman as slightly dislocated from their surroundings. They seem to be either too small or simply decorations pinned against the backdrop of a room. In *Den* (fig. 9,) the opposite has occurred; the space is too small for this large figure. Simmons has portrayed this visually by making the door on the left side of the women significantly smaller than her body. She seems to dwarf the objects on her tables. Instead of being an accessory to the room in which she occupies, this woman sees her surroundings as accessories to her

life. According to Arendt, “free people have the ability to leave the necessary, life-sustaining concerns behind to enter the public realm of freedom, speech, and action. The fact that they can leave concerns behind marks that they can act.”<sup>95</sup> This woman indeed is free from her surroundings because of her multiplicity. I would argue that the size of this woman in relation to her room is a symbol of her freedom from her surroundings. According to Arendt, this woman would now be free to create and promote a creative self. In *Den* (fig. 9,) the home has become a place to showcase the psychology of the self.

The inner workings of this woman portrayed by Simmons would, no doubt, be very different from the other women in the series. Her cartoon-like facial expression is a clue to this difference. Simmons’s woman shatters the idea that there is one unified “woman’s experience”. Professor of feminist theory and technoscience, Donna Haraway states, “...there is nothing about ‘being’ female that naturally binds women. There is not even such a state as ‘being female’, itself a highly complex category....”<sup>96</sup> For Haraway, categories of gender, race, or class are forced on people by historical experiences. She advocates for the understanding that each woman, like each man, has his or her own unique experiences. In Simmons’s *Den* (fig. 9,) the sunken eyes and pursed lips of the woman contrast sharply with the Marilyn Monroe look of the yellow-spotlighted woman in *Orange and Green Lounge* (fig. 8.) By using different facial expressions, poses, and compositions, Simmons has created a space for each woman to participate in their own experiences and create their own identity in the home.

Simmons’s woman in *Den* (fig. 9) is very different from the women she has portrayed before. She says that this series is as much about male fantasies as it is about

female fantasies.<sup>97</sup> I contend that the female fantasies of powerful women who command their own space and actively create their identities are illustrated in *Den* (fig. 9.)

Simmons portrays this woman as powerful by making her the tallest in the room.

The woman's unified body is illustrated with a fused cut construction. At the same time, the shadow casted by this woman presents a clue to her multiple identities. It is in this final series that Simmons has created an autonomous woman, liberated from her environment. Here the domestic interior acts like a stage for this woman to present herself to the viewer. *The Long House* employs various lighting techniques, a mixing of mediums, and playing with scale to show how these women are free from their domestic environments. Regardless of public and private spaces, these women stand out physically and are more psychologically liberated in this final series.

## Conclusion

Simmons's women have illustrated the complexity of domestic interiors. Sociologist Janet Wolff argues, "...nearly all accounts of modernity have focused on the worlds of work, politics, and city life. Despite the presence of some women in these realms of the 'public sphere', they are primarily areas in which women have been excluded, made invisible."<sup>98</sup> Domestic interiors are important aspects of feminine identity for this reason. Historically, women have a connection to the home that needs to be explored when considering identity construction. Simmons sees the value in the public and private space within the home in these three series.

Simmons's women are portrayed in a multitude of rooms and with various emotions and gestures. Gradually, the viewer can recognize that the home is a setting where these women can command their own spaces. These women may be subsumed by their setting, become a part of the layered texture of their surroundings, or cast shadows over their material objects, yet they can not escape the mental, physical, and emotional importance of the home in regards to their identity construction. Scott says that questions of identity should focus on experiences and how they are constructed.<sup>99</sup> Simmons's series show that women's identity construction is constantly in creation in public and private spaces within the home.

Each series explores feminine identity construction in different ways. In *Color Coordinated Interiors*, Simmons uses the "Teenettes", women fixed in their clothing,

positions, colors, and, ultimately, their environments, to match their surroundings. They become incorporated by their surroundings by Simmons's choice of color, texture, and composition. These women begin to look like commodities, sometimes morphing into furniture, as they combine with their setting. These dolls are at once one and separate from their surroundings. It is in this series that Simmons explores the home as a place that confines yet identifies these dolls.

*The Instant Decorator* depicts the home in a more complicated light. Simmons's cut construction and collage work allows for these women to begin breaking free from their backgrounds. In both public and private spaces within the home, these women are emotive and expressive. Their engagement with their own individual action allows them a space to create, define, and understand their own identity. In this series, Simmons employs feminist aesthetics that aid in our understanding of feminine identity. Working with her materials and using various textures, patterns, and colors, Simmons's homes are layered and changing like these women's individual characteristics. The home is at once a space that holds the possibility of chaotic action and contemplative respite. Simmons's women grapple with this complexity as they construct their surroundings and navigate through the covered surfaces.

It is not until the series *Long House*, that these women become fully realized. They are now separate from their surroundings as they cast fragmented shadows over their objects and stand as a unified construction. These women are now a different material than their bare surroundings. Spotlighting and individual gestures help to delineate the women from their objects and spaces. The viewer can now focus on the women in the room as the rest fades into darkness. Feminist theorists value experiences

and environments in the construction of identity. The women in the *Long House* are aware of our post-modern boundary constructions and choose to act for themselves. Their identity is owned by them and just so happens to be portrayed in the home.

According to Betty Friedan, in order to emancipate women, the home must be left behind.<sup>100</sup> This negative view of the home does not account for the fact that women can create their own action in this domestic space. Melchionne says, "...so long as the home remains the site of so much daily practice, the question of the quality and rewards of domestic practice needs to be posed. Feminist or not, we all come home to cooking, cleaning, and by implications, decorating chores that we do with more or less aesthetic sensitivity."<sup>101</sup> The home cannot be dismissed in the production of these women or any woman's identity. Simmons shows us the importance of this space in the life-long process of identification.





Figure 1. Laurie Simmons, *Red Library II*, from the series *Color Coordinated Interiors*, 1983, photograph. Salon 94, New York, New York.



Figure 2. Laurie Simmons, *Coral Living Room with Lillies*, from the series *Color Coordinated Interiors*, 1983, photograph. Salon 94, New York, New York.

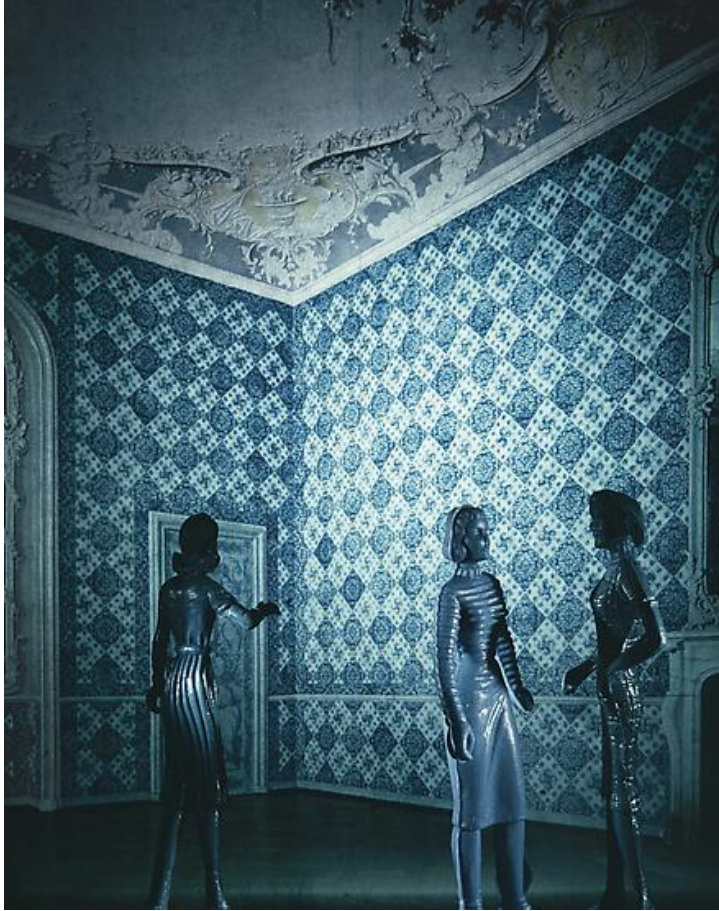


Figure 3. Laurie Simmons, *Blue Tile Reception Area*, from the series *Color Coordinated Interiors*, 1983, photograph. Salon 94, New York, New York.



Figure 4. Laurie Simmons, *Lavender Bathroom*, from the series *The Instant Decorator*, 2004, mixed media. Salon 94, New York, New York.

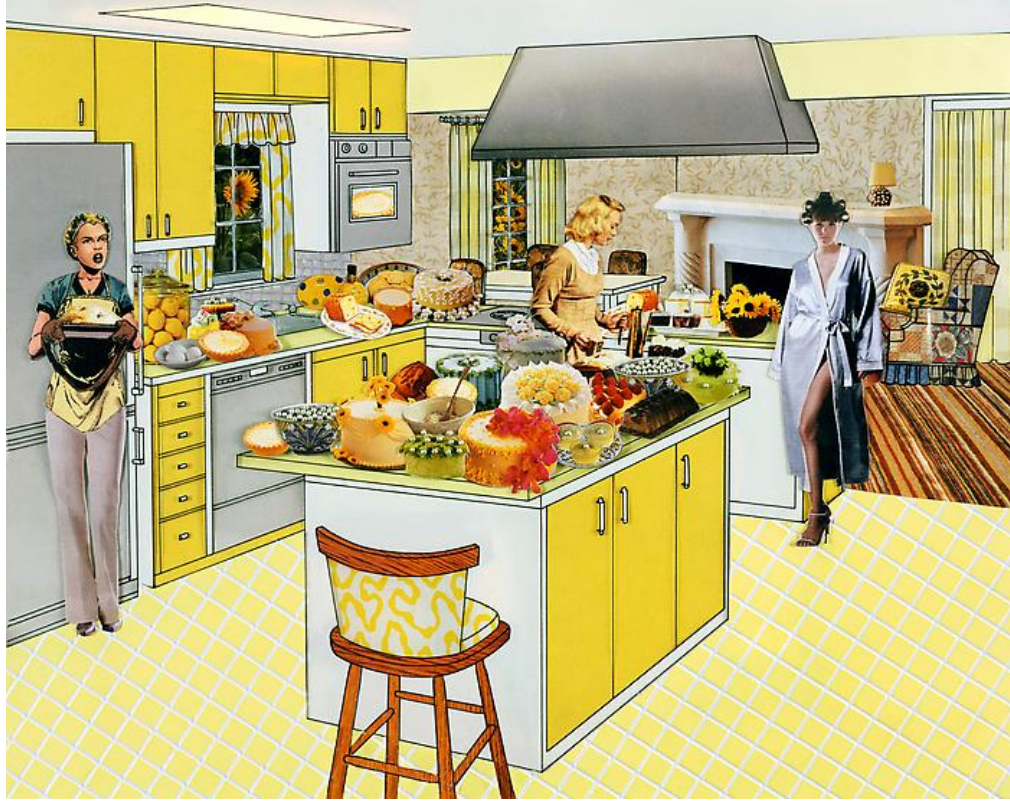


Figure 5. Laurie Simmons, *Yellow Kitchen*, from the series *The Instant Decorator*, 2003, mixed media. Salon 94, New York, New York.



Figure 6. Laurie Simmons, *Pink and Green Bedroom/Slumber Party/Really Crowded*, from the series *The Instant Decorator*, 2004, mixed media. Salon 95, New York, New York.



Figure 7. Laurie Simmons, *Downstairs Kitchen*, from the series *The Long House*, 2004, mixed media. Salon 94, New York, New York.



Figure 8. Laurie Simmons, *Orange and Green Lounge*, from the series *The Long House*, 2004, mixed media. Salon 94, New York, New York.





Figure 9. Laurie Simmons, *Den*, from the series *The Long House*, 2004, mixed media. Salon 94, New York, New York.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> “Pictures Generation, 1974-1984,” last modified April 21, 2009, [http://www.metmuseum.org/special/se\\_event.asp?OccurrenceId=%7B2051DF8B-82AA-4AA7-85BC-22F72DE7F10E%7D](http://www.metmuseum.org/special/se_event.asp?OccurrenceId=%7B2051DF8B-82AA-4AA7-85BC-22F72DE7F10E%7D).

<sup>2</sup> Much of Simmons’s work deals with issues of feminine identity that came out of the first wave Feminist movement.

<sup>3</sup> In the 1990’s, Simmons’s work does not address issues concerning domestic interiors.

<sup>4</sup> Simmons also addresses issues such as memory, childhood, temporality, and stereotypes in her images. These ideas are beyond the scope of this paper and will not be addressed here.

<sup>5</sup> Each of Simmons’ series’ listed here contains a plethora of photographs. Many of them tackle issues of women’s identity in the home. I will only address the three I feel to be most fertile from each series.

<sup>6</sup> Photos from the series *Color Coordinated Interiors* expresses ideas that Friedan wrote about in the *Feminine Mystique*. Although there is no indication that Simmons read it, Friedan’s ideas seem to resonate with the experiences that Simmons sets up in this series. Therefore, I have drawn upon her writings. While Arendt, Friedan, and other scholars’ ideas influenced this analysis, there is no evidence that Simmons has actually read these scholars.

<sup>7</sup> Some consider these writings outdated but, nonetheless, they are historically important as well as significant to my analysis and resonate with my ideas.

<sup>8</sup> Beverly Gordon, “Women’s Domestic Body: The Conceptual Conflation of Women and Interiors in the Industrial Age,” *Winterhur Portfolio*, vol 31. No 4, (1996): 300.

<sup>9</sup> Gordon, “Women’s Domestic Body: The Conceptual Conflation of Women and Interiors in the Industrial Age,” 281.

<sup>10</sup> For more information about Betty Friedan’s ideas see the *Feminine Mystique* (1963.)

<sup>11</sup> Stevi Jackson, “Feminist Social Theory,” in *Contemporary Feminist Theories*, ed. Stevi Jackson and Jackie Jones (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 14.

<sup>12</sup> Feminist theory and interior design theory are adopted in this thesis to analyze Simmons’ work.

<sup>13</sup> “The Teenettes” will herein be referred to by their color.

<sup>14</sup> I will highlight aspects of the progression of identity construction and I will analyze these images to demonstrate how this is done.

<sup>15</sup> William S. Bartman and Rodney Sappington, ed., *Laurie Simmons* (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 1994), 22.

<sup>16</sup> This is a critical interpretation based on my observations that were informed by Feminist theory.

<sup>17</sup> Skarstedt Fine Art, *Laurie Simmons: Color Coordinated Interiors 1983*, exhibition guide, New York: Skarstedt Fine Art, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 23.

<sup>19</sup> Jackson, “Feminist Social Theory,” 12.

<sup>20</sup> Hannah Arendt, in pre-war Germany, believed the “Woman Problem” was unimportant in the realm of politics. I believe, like Bonnie Honig, legal and political theorist at Northwestern University, has suggested, Arendt’s rejection of an identity-based politics

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opens the space for a variety of experiences that, in turn, value a variety of identities. In this way, Arendt's philosophical work is critical to our understanding of Feminisms focus on multiple experiences as creating multiple identities. For more information see Honig, Bonnie. "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity." In *Feminists Theorize the Political*, edited by Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott. New York: Routledge, 1992.

<sup>21</sup> Bonnie Honig. "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), 216.

<sup>22</sup> Batchelor, 48.

<sup>23</sup> Batchelor, 48.

<sup>24</sup> Lesley Johnson. "As Housewives we are Worms: Women, Modernity, and the Home Question," in *Feminism and Cultural Studies*, ed. Morag Shiach (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 477.

<sup>25</sup> Johnson. "As Housewives we are Worms: Women, Modernity, and the Home Question," 477.

<sup>26</sup> Johnson. "As Housewives we are Worms: Women, Modernity, and the Home Question," 477.

<sup>27</sup> Melchionne develops his argument based on Philip Johnson's *Glass House*. I believe his analysis is suited here because we can see through Red's home and into a private space. This "Teenette," as well as the other women in Simmons' series address in this thesis, are perpetually living in "glass" houses. For more information see Kevin Melchionne, "Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decoration, and Environmental Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 56, No. 2: (1998), 192.

<sup>28</sup> Melchionne's argument includes "care-work." For him, all of these ideas encompass domestic responsibilities that make up the term homemaking. For the purposes of this paper, care work will not be addressed here. For more information see Melchionne, "Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decoration, and Environmental Aesthetics," 192.

<sup>29</sup> Melchionne, "Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decoration, and Environmental Aesthetics," 192.

<sup>30</sup> I believe that this way of life relates to yet another layer of identification imposed by capitalist structures – class. Single people living tranquil lives or wealthy families typically practice radical aestheticism. Class structures will not be addressed here. For more information about the "radical aesthete" see Melchionne, "Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decoration, and Environmental Aesthetics," 193.

<sup>31</sup> Skarstedt Fine Art.

<sup>32</sup> Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. "Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do With It?," in *Feminism and Cultural Studies*, ed. Morag Shiach (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 522.

<sup>33</sup> Honig. "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," 220.

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- <sup>34</sup> Sylvia Bashevkin, "Facing a Renewed Right: American Feminism and the Reagan/Bush Challenge," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 27, No. 4: (1994), 673.
- <sup>35</sup> Bashevkin, "Facing a Renewed Right: American Feminism and the Reagan/Bush Challenge," 673.
- <sup>36</sup> Johnson. "As Housewives we are Worms: Women, Modernity, and the Home Question," 478.
- <sup>37</sup> Skarstedt Fine Art.
- <sup>38</sup> Laurie Simmons, "The Antidecorator," *The New York Times*, April, 13 2003.
- <sup>39</sup> Gordon, "Women's Domestic Body: The Conceptual Conflation of Women and Interiors in the Industrial Age," 285.
- <sup>40</sup> Johnson. "As Housewives we are Worms: Women, Modernity, and the Home Question," 477.
- <sup>41</sup> Honig. "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," 219.
- <sup>42</sup> Honig. "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," 227.
- <sup>43</sup> Some of Simmons's photographs in this series have the "Teenettes" interacting. This idea will not be addressed here.
- <sup>44</sup> Joan W. Scott. "Experience," in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), 25.
- <sup>45</sup> Bartman and Sappington, 29.
- <sup>46</sup> Despite the negative tones of my comments about Simmons' dolls, this series is the only series, among the many that deal work in the home, that addresses colored or, rather, not white dolls. I believe there is much to be said about racial issues and *Color Coordinated Interiors*. These ideas are outside of the scope of this thesis and will not be addressed here.
- <sup>47</sup> From 1983-2000, much of Simmons's work did not deal specifically with women and domestic interiors. For this reason, her work between these years is not considered in this thesis.
- <sup>48</sup> Simmons, "The Antidecorator."
- <sup>49</sup> If we think of Arendt's ideas about the public as a place of expression for antagonistic ideas, then we can apply her thoughts about the public domain to places outside of the public sphere. For this reason, Arendt's analysis can apply to public spaces in the home.
- <sup>50</sup> Griselda Pollock. "Painting, Feminism, History," in *Destabilizing Theory*, ed. Michele Barrett and Anne Phillips (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 144.
- <sup>51</sup> Pollock. "Painting, Feminism, History," 155.
- <sup>52</sup> Peggy Zeglin Brand and Carolyn Korsmeyer, editors, *Feminism and Tradition in Aesthetics*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 4.
- <sup>53</sup> Brand and Korsmeyer, 6.
- <sup>54</sup> Brand and Korsmeyer, 7.
- <sup>55</sup> For more information on feminist aesthetics see Felski, 2000; French, 1993; and Mercedes, 1998
- <sup>56</sup> Rita Felski, *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture*, (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 178.

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- <sup>57</sup> Johnson. "As Housewives we are Worms: Women, Modernity, and the Home Question," 476.
- <sup>58</sup> Melchionne, "Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decoration, and Environmental Aesthetics," 193.
- <sup>59</sup> Brand and Korsmeyer, 15.
- <sup>60</sup> Honig. "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," 223.
- <sup>61</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism" in *Location of Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 1983), 96.
- <sup>62</sup> Brand and Korsmeyer, 16.
- <sup>63</sup> Honig. "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," 220.
- <sup>64</sup> Honig. "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," 218.
- <sup>65</sup> Honig. "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," 220.
- <sup>66</sup> Chandra Talpade Mohanty. "Feminist Encounters," in *Destabilizing Theory*, ed. Michele Barrett and Anne Phillips (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 83.
- <sup>67</sup> Mohanty. "Feminist Encounters," 83.
- <sup>68</sup> Mohanty. "Feminist Encounters," 83.
- <sup>69</sup> Mohanty. "Feminist Encounters," 83.
- <sup>70</sup> Hilden Hein and Carolyn Korsmeyer, ed., *Aesthetics in Feminist Perspective*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 75.
- <sup>71</sup> Melchionne, "Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decoration, and Environmental Aesthetics," 192.
- <sup>72</sup> Melchionne speaks specifically about Philip Johnson's *Glass House*. While this thesis does not address Modern architecture, I believe Melchionne's ideas are applicable here. For more information see: Melchionne, Kevin. "Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decoration, and Environmental Aesthetics." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 56, No. 2: (1998): 191-200.
- <sup>73</sup> Melchionne, "Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decoration, and Environmental Aesthetics," 193.
- <sup>74</sup> Johnson. "As Housewives we are Worms: Women, Modernity, and the Home Question," 476.
- <sup>75</sup> Honig. "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," 226.
- <sup>76</sup> Honig. "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," 226.
- <sup>77</sup> Felski, 179
- <sup>78</sup> Melchionne, "Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decoration, and Environmental Aesthetics," 194.
- <sup>79</sup> I do not use the phrase "a feminist aesthetic" because this implies one type of feminist aesthetics. The value of feminist aesthetics is in the diversity inherent in the definition. Using the phrase "feminist aesthetics" allows for a variety of definitions.
- <sup>80</sup> "Conversations: Laurie Simmons and Marvin Heiferman," *Art in America*, (2009).

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- <sup>81</sup> Billy Baldwin, *Billy Baldwin Decorates*, (Seaucus: Chartwell Books, 1972), 29.
- <sup>82</sup> Baldwin, 30.
- <sup>83</sup> Scott. "Experience," 25.
- <sup>84</sup> Honig. "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," 217.
- <sup>85</sup> Honig. "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," 230.
- <sup>86</sup> Johnson. "As Housewives we are Worms: Women, Modernity, and the Home Question," 479.
- <sup>87</sup> Simmons' use of lighting is also theatrical. This will not be developed further because it is outside of the scope of this thesis.
- <sup>88</sup> Johnson. "As Housewives we are Worms: Women, Modernity, and the Home Question," 477.
- <sup>89</sup> Melchionne, "Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decoration, and Environmental Aesthetics," 199.
- <sup>90</sup> Melchionne, "Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decoration, and Environmental Aesthetics," 199.
- <sup>91</sup> "Interview with Laurie Simmons," *Artkrush*, Issue 71 (2007).
- <sup>92</sup> Johnson. "As Housewives we are Worms: Women, Modernity, and the Home Question," 477.
- <sup>93</sup> Honig. "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," 220.
- <sup>94</sup> Honig. "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," 220.
- <sup>95</sup> Honig. "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," 221.
- <sup>96</sup> Christina Crosby. "Dealing with Differences," in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), 138.
- <sup>97</sup> Linda Yablonsky, "Better, More Surreal Homes and Collages," *The New York Times*, February, 15 2004, 18.
- <sup>98</sup> Johnson. "As Housewives we are Worms: Women, Modernity, and the Home Question," 476.
- <sup>99</sup> Scott. "Experience," 37.
- <sup>100</sup> Johnson. "As Housewives we are Worms: Women, Modernity, and the Home Question," 476.
- <sup>101</sup> Melchionne, "Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decoration, and Environmental Aesthetics," 196.

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