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Drawn to Beauty: The Practice of House-Beautification as Homemaking amongst the Forcibly Displaced

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ABSTRACT *Addressing the role that house-beautification plays for individuals coming to terms with the traumas associated with involuntary dislocation, Drawn to Beauty: The Practice of House-Beautification as Homemaking amongst the Forcibly Displaced situates aesthetics as critically important to the emerging interdisciplinary framework articulating the conditions for remaking home in the aftermath of domicide, environmental disaster, and other instances of home's destruction. Culled from a wide array of sources including personal experience, housing theory, an analysis of third realm beauty, trauma studies and my extensive research-creation practice, this text proposes that attention paid to the daily manipulation of home's things and objects is a particularly active site for (be)coming home anew.*

KEY WORDS: Forced displacement, Third realm beauty, House-beautification, Everyday aesthetics, Homemaking

Introduction: Third Realm Beauty and the Readiness to Feel at Home Following Forced Displacement

This paper examines the link between home beautification practices and forced dislocation; its aim is to situate aesthetics as an integral focal point for the further development of housing theory and policy as it affects refugees, exiles and other homeless populations.

The relationship between the personalization of home interiors and individual identity and, more generally, the meaning of home within a variety of disciplines (including sociology, psychology, architecture and philosophy), has been the subject of a great deal of research in the recent past. This focus on home interior personalization has resulted in the development of a number of core concepts and hypotheses

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regarding the distinction between home and house, as well as the relationships between home and memory, home and gender and home and journeying (Altman and Werner 1985; Arias 1993; Benjamin and Stea 1995; Mallett 2004; Seamon and Mugerauer 1985; Ureta 2007).

At the centre of this analysis is a set of questions about home's properties, associations and manifestations (or lack-there-of) in the political, cultural, emotional and embodied realms: What role does material culture play in the resettlement process of individuals who have experienced forced displacement? How can the study of day-to-day acts of house-beautification expand our understanding of the stratagems for making home anew in a time of increasing domicide and mounting political and environmental refugeeism?

The research-creation methods and materials used to shape the probative answers offered here include the presentation and analysis of a series of performance art events that I convened over the past five years, personal stories of home and its loss as told by the performances' collaborators and participants and salient aspects of housing theory and trauma studies.[1] Such a project necessarily draws upon earlier research, as noted above, and deliberately calls upon an interdisciplinary approach.

The aspect of my research-creation presented in this paper borrows from Arthur Danto's conceptual framework of "Third Realm beauty", which implicates deliberative attention to, and appreciation and manipulation of material effects. I propose that Third Realm beauty is the specific category of beauty most relevant for the exploration of home's material and immaterial cultures within the iterative, and often conflictual, conciliation process of making home anew in the aftermath of forced displacement.

This introduction is followed by an overview of the personally embedded arts-based methodology I used to investigate the relationship between Third Realm beauty and the resettlement process. Next, I introduce the five series of live art performance events that are core to this research-creation. Then, having established the link between displacement, Third Realm beauty and the significance of an arts-based approach, I turn my attention to the performativity of aesthetics in response to the traumas of forced dislocation. Working with the material emergent from the live art events and post-performance interviews, I examine how post-traumatic growth comports with home beautification practice, even in instances of resistance to beauty. Direct quotes from the individuals who shared their experiences during the events and afterwards are included as a way to illuminate the personal, social, historical and political associations they have drawn in making sense of their displacement and relocation. The paper concludes by proposing that the integration of home beautification practice early on in the recovery from dislocation is vital to the sensemaking process necessary to reconstitute home.

"Third Realm beauty is the kind of beauty something possesses only because it was *caused* to possess it through actions whose purpose it is to *beautify*. It is the domain, in brief, of *beautification*" (Danto 2003, 68: italics in original). Beautification may be undertaken on a grand scale, such as during urban renewal, but it is also the stuff of everyday life: the ordering of a home, the sweeping of a floor, the placement of an object, all can be seen as acts of beautification. And, as Sebastian Ureta points out, activities associated with house-beautification can serve "as a platform to "materialize" many of the social processes of change" (Ureta 2007, 316). It is in this context that I offer the idea that, for the forcibly displaced, the manipula-

tion of objects and belongings within the home is a particularly active site of the material, affective and ideological identity reconstruction necessary to the re-establishment of a sense of belonging.

Adaptation to new housing situations following an unwelcome move necessitates coming to terms with more than the physical dislocation. The reconstruction of home subsequent to forced displacement is often accompanied by the reconstruction of self and one's relationships to place, family, community and culture. Making one's intimate surroundings more physically attractive and emotionally satisfying is more than a matter of mere surface adornment. The loss of familiar possessions is more than a material loss. "A man's belongings are an extension of his personality; to be deprived of them is to diminish, in his own estimation, his worth as a human being" (Tuan 1974, 99). Exploring Third Realm beauty in relation to homemaking practices offers an opportunity to evolve a more complex and nuanced appreciation of the role of aesthetics within housing studies focused on migrating populations, their children, grandchildren and subsequent generations.[2] My research indicates that aesthetics is radically important in the lives of involuntarily dislocated people. Further, an engagement with everyday aesthetics in the aftermath of involuntary migration is not limited to the practical, nor is it simply a technique for remaking home. In itself, it is indicative and expressive of a readiness to make home anew.

At the Nexus of Personal Experience and an Art-based Interdisciplinary Research-Creation Methodology

The combination of my personal and familial experience, an arts-based interdisciplinary research-creation methodology and on-going critical reflection has led me to appreciate just how much the beautification of one's home interior and surroundings is heavily involved in the sense-making process.[3] My attempts to articulate the relationship between home-beautification practices and resettlement draw upon my own experience of having to re-establish my household after an arson attack which completely destroyed our living space, along with all the objects that helped to constitute "home" for my family and me. Other personal experiences of dislocation, as well as those of my forebears who were part of the transatlantic refugee movement associated with twentieth-century European anti-Semitism have also served as an impetus for this enquiry.[4] The specific form my research has taken has been the creation of five different series of live art events, which I initiated in Montreal between September 2008 and October 2011.

Why Should We Cry? Lamentations in a Winter Garden (a bi-weekly public event, convened in collaboration with Ottawa-based artist Deborah Margo) involved over 50 participants. Beginning with the fall equinox and ending on the winter solstice of 2008, individuals with experience of displacement gathered to share their culturally specific mourning songs and personal contemplations about migration, home and beauty. Hosted by the DARE-DARE artist-run centre, which supports innovative research-creation projects, these gatherings (held in Cabot Square Park at the corner of Atwater and Sainte-Catherine Streets in downtown Montreal) explored the processes of coping with the loss that often accompanies the disruption of home. We emphasized the power of collective public singing and shared storytelling to influence "psychological wellbeing" and "social reconstruction" (Stein 2004; Unwin, Kenny, and Davis 2002; Urbain 2008; Zelizer 2003). While affirming a

central role for lamentation songs, vocal explorations of mourning, and the sharing of narratives related to the (un)making of home, our intention was to leave open the possibility for people to explore and name for themselves how the terms *beauty* and *home* make sense given their own experiences of displacement (lived personally or handed down from previous generations).

In the days and weeks after the final *Lamentations* event, I was inspired to continue exploring beauty, home and the power of participatory public art. In the context of Concordia University's Faculty of Fine Arts' launch of two art research spaces in February 2009, and in collaboration with Montreal-based artists Reena Almoneda Chang, Meena Murugesan and Émilie Monnet, I endeavored to create a framework within which a self-selecting group of mostly strangers could open the possibility of further investigations into the notions of home and beauty.[5] In *homeBody*, as with the *Lamentations* project, a deliberate attention to aesthetics was crucial to the process within which the more than 60 individuals who took part in one of the three consecutive evening events could connect their own experiences to the larger narrative that took shape as the events unfolded.

Most pertinent to this paper are the final three live art events: *The Jewish Home Beautiful-Revisited I* (2 June 2010); *The Jewish Home Beautiful-Revisited II* (23 January 2011); and *Home Beautiful-Inviting the Ancestors* (22 October 2011). Together they attracted nearly 100 participants. All three interactive performances were set within contexts shaped by the historical fact of the establishment of the State of Israel and concomitant oppression of the Palestinians, the role that has been attributed to the beautification of home as an integral part of the survival of the Jewish people,[6] and an active critical engagement with the Jewish cultural affirmation of home(land) as exemplified in the multiple iterations of the theatrical production entitled *Jewish Home Beautiful* in the USA and Canada from the 1940s onward.[7] In keeping with the original ethos of *Jewish Home Beautiful*, each of the "revisited" events was scheduled to coincide with a Jewish holiday celebration (the first with *Shavuot*, the second with *Tu Bishvat*, and the third with *Sukkot*) and an appropriate festive stage-setting created. In addition, each event had a specific "home" theme linked closely to the selected holidays: the first was associated with the symbolic sense of home, the second with the ecology of home and the third with the built environment of home.

Aside from the predetermined elements, which served to set the pace, create the ambience and invite certain activities (such as polishing tarnished silver and sharing personal stories of home and displacement), all the events were unscripted and open-ended. What emerged was specific to the individual participants and the unique configurations of individuals that attended each particular event. Because of their dialogic nature, each of the events provided an occasion for participants to speak freely about their personal experience with displacement and homemaking. Discussions also focused on the current and historical socio-political contexts within which these individuals' stories emerged. These exchanges provided much of the material used in this analysis.

Following each of these events, I invited participants to speak with me about their experience. Involvement in these follow-up conversations was voluntary; there was no obligation on the part of attendees to respond to my request to be interviewed. Within a month after each performance, I contacted those who had indicated interest and availability and convened the interviews.

In total, 26 people accepted my invitation, 18 of whom had attended *The Jewish Home Beautiful-Revisited* events. During each of the 26 individual interviews, I introduced a series of three open-ended questions. I began by inquiring about the individual's personal/familial experience with forced displacement. I then asked each person to speak about home and then about the role of the house beautification process in establishing a sense of home. The remainder of the conversation was unstructured and largely self-directed by the interviewee. While I asked an occasional question, each person shared their stories, as they wished, for as long as they wanted. The people who volunteered to meet with me were highly motivated and had much to say. Inevitably, our conversations lasted several hours.

The self-selection process inherent in both the choice to attend the events and the choice to enter into a follow-up conversation enabled participants to gauge for themselves the importance and significance of speaking about home, beauty and displacement. Those who chose to engage with me in these post-performance dialogues spoke at length about their experiences of displacement and the role that home beautification practices played in their becoming home (again). They also offered comments about the actual events themselves.[8]

These situated learning and knowledge-creation sites provided me with a renewed appreciation for the process of home beautification. Working with audio and video recordings of the live art events and the follow-up conversations, I identified commonalities and differences amongst the many stories and experiences that were shared with me. It was during this analysis that the relationship between simple acts of home-beautification and the willingness to recreate home in a new environment became evident. From the more than 100 h of audio recording accumulated over the course of the live art events and follow up conversations, I have chosen the passages that offer the thickest descriptions of individual sense-making strategies; ones that link the (un)making of home with personal, social and political identity on the one hand, and with deliberate acts of home beautification on the other. I have selected the most information-rich citations, those highlighting the ways in which Third Realm beauty has been activated in the lives of the interviewees. This approach should give the reader an immediate appreciation of the settings of the live art events. More importantly, the emotional and sensorial connections inherent in the trauma recovery process for the forcibly displaced are made patent.

When We Lose Our Sense of Beauty, We Lose Our Sense of Life Itself

Peter King understands "dwelling" as "both a physical and an ontological condition whereby we feel secure, stable and complacent" (2005, 67). For him, "When we are living our lives and pursuing our interests we, as it were, take our housing with us. It forms the basis upon which we can act, and this is the very reason why we are able to ignore it and take it for granted" (65). When we are healthy and all is well between others and ourselves and we have the objects and space that we need, we rarely, if at all, take notice of our experience of these things. Indeed, while "transformation and change are part of the refugee experience, not all change is perceived as loss or defined as problematic or unwelcome by all individuals involved. Nor are refugees necessarily helpless victims, but rather likely to be people with agency and voice" (Eastmond 2007, 253).

Often, it is only when there is some deeply felt assault on any one, or all, of the loci of home that we fully appreciate the effective working dynamics of the systemic whole. For many, feeling secure, stable and complacent is not easy once the experience of home has been disrupted. While not all forced displacements are experienced as traumatic, the majority of the individuals who collaborated with me over the years did at one point or another in the planning, implementation or post-performance reflection process, self-identify as trauma victims. Several recognized that they, as children caught up in the upheaval of moving, or subject to the world of stories and memories their parents created, did not have the capacity, skills and support that would have helped them to more fully integrate their private experiences into the flow of the world around them.

The undoing of the self in trauma involves a radical disruption of memory, a severing of past from present and, typically, an inability to envision a future. And yet trauma survivors often eventually find ways to reconstruct themselves and carry on with reconfigured lives (Brison 1999, 39). Of the paths to reconstruction and reconfiguration, perhaps one can be extrapolated from a comment made by one of my interviewees.

Alexis, a Canadian immigration lawyer who has been supporting the efforts of a Rwandan refugee claimant who participated in one of the live art events told me (in a conversation in June 2012): "As refugees we lose our sense of beauty and when that happens we lose our sense of everything, of life itself". If the corollary of Alexis' perception is true that a recovery of a sense of beauty reveals or aids in the recovery of an engagement with life, then clearly the aesthetics of homemaking, as a most immediately available arena of personal action, cannot be dismissed as "merely" decorative or superficial. For individuals suffering the kind of total breakdown that Alexis describes (as for those who do not feel themselves without agency and voice), as much as it affects interpersonal connectivity, individual values and cultural belief systems, the beautification of home is grounded in the physical. By attending to the sensible – that is, the cognitive/perceptual "which registers genuine sensuous qualities such as colours, sounds, tastes and smells" and the emotional/sensation "which evaluates the sensuous data on a scale between desire and aversion" (Welsch 1996, 9) – we might more fully understand the conditions for successfully (re)creating home for the involuntarily dislocated.

Aestheticizing Trauma

Focusing on the ways in which the traumas associated with involuntary migration are aestheticized to make them more palatable reveals that Third Realm beauty is core to the experience of dwelling. Wolfgang Welsch (1996, 16) affirms that aesthetics are "fundamental in our knowledge and our reality"; if reality, as he asserts, "is not independent of cognition, a fixed given quantity, but the object of a construction" sensuous knowledge is of vital importance, perhaps a deciding factor, in the capacity to construct home anew in the physical realm, in association with the social, affective and political worlds we each inhabit.[9]

The reciprocal relationship between the personal and the socio-political is critical to keep in mind when considering housing pathways (Clapham 2002, 2009) of the forcibly displaced, not only because of the staggering numbers of individuals currently living as refugees, internally displaced peoples and exiles, but also

because of the inherent challenges facing these populations as they attempt to settle into new housing and, often, new places, communities and cultures. Any investigation of Third Realm beauty necessarily connects aesthetics with other social systems since the beautification of one's living quarters implicates the individual in a place-based, material-laden, sensory and imaginative ordering of experience.

Through acts of home-beautification, the pain of the loss of home is intricately absorbed by and into aesthetic experience. This is because a material object can contain and reflect a myriad of worlds (personal, social and political) and emotional responses. In the course of the *Home Beautiful-Inviting the Ancestors* event, Rana, of Palestinian origin, spoke of an image whose physical presence in her home reaches beyond the material:

> There is a painting that my Dad has behind his desk in his office; it's a picture of a Palestinian man. I think he is a farmer by the way he is dressed; he's barefoot. And he is carrying the earth. It's like a big globe and in the centre of it you see famous mosque in Jerusalem, the dome. And he is carrying it on his shoulder. You can see the weight. Just by the expression on his face you can see that it's a very heavy weight. Every time I look at the painting; it's always there though I rarely notice it; I feel like that. I don't know; maybe because I am of Palestinian origin, but I feel a big weight.

As is evident in Rana's description, the ordering of experience – often internalized and inscribed over long periods of time – is not only personal: it touches on the cultural, the ethical, the economic and the civic (Danto 2003; Kingwell 2009). For Rana, speaking about the painting became an opportunity to communicate her personal experience within the public forum of the live art event and speak to the larger issue of Palestinian displacement.

Learning From Beauty

Understanding and appreciating aesthetics in relation to home's loss is a complex matter. It entails an exploration of the deliberate and unintentional "pragmatic and symbolic" (Shusterman 2000) negotiation of materiality and an attention to the details of placement, process and relationships in the ordinary occurrence of daily life. In addition to exploring aesthetic materiality, Yuriko Saito gives attention to the "aesthetics of ambience". Both are pertinent to the effort of fleshing out how and why even ordinary experiences of beauty matter so much to individuals whose (sense of) home has been damaged or destroyed. She suggests that "an equally significant part of our everyday aesthetic life is the appreciation directed toward an ambience, atmosphere, or mood surrounding a certain experience, comprised of many ingredients" (2007, 119). While such activities and ambiences can be seen as basic to anyone's subsistence, they are indispensible aesthetic experiences for those that inhabit the crossroads between remembering what was lost and taking up residence anew.

Learning from beauty is vital for the displaced – in terms of specific foci and as we spread our attention across all facets of the interconnected whole that is dwelling. "Seeing beauty isn't [only] a matter of looking at one thing intently; it is a

matter of looking at a lot of different things together" (Armstrong 2004, 39). While the active appreciation and cultivation of beauty can reinforce old ways of knowing, it can also invite new possibilities of becoming "more alert and responsive" (Armstrong 2004, 45), thus enabling us to more fully recognize the interrelatedness of all the material and immaterial elements of sensing and making a house feel like a home. Like all significant learning, this takes practice.

While focused particularly on art, Richard Hickman's assertions about the multifold intelligences implicated in aesthetic experience are useful here as they detail the ways in which repeated and sustained attentiveness to aesthetics stimulate neural, experiential and reflective aptitudes, which are all necessary for the complex tasks of shaping the conditions for home. The effects of exposure to aesthetic experience, as outlined by Hickman, include refinement of expression, imagination, intuition and empathy, as well as an increased likelihood of creative experimentation. These skills in turn help ensure that human "society remains dynamic and is able to confront and tackle new problems as they arise" (2010, 57). Imagination, suggests Hickman, involves the kind of thinking that "is not simply fantasy or the conjuring up of mental images of things not experienced, but the actual construction of new realities" (113). In a time of housing upheaval, these faculties can be adapted by the individual and the community to reconcile memory and expectations; to mourn; to adjust to new places, people and possibly languages; and to make connections from the proximate experience of the here-and-now.

By extrapolating from Elliot Eisner's list of lessons the arts teach, which focuses on the importance of repeated and prolonged exposure to aesthetic experience in the education of children, I believe it is possible to get an even more nuanced understanding of the ways in which aesthetic experience within the home functions in the lives of displaced individuals. Aesthetic experience, according to Eisner, can help people to realize that complex forms of problem-solving are seldom static but change with circumstance and opportunity; to think with and through material; and to learn to say what cannot be said and thus expand their range of feeling and experience (2002, 70–92). In short, aesthetic practice, which, says Eisner, "traffics in subtleties", can invite displaced persons to live more fluidly and responsively within their new environments. Even small acts of beautification can be very satisfying. The deliberate appreciation of beauty is, therefore, oddly, a rather useful and straightforward way to develop situated knowledge and tease out the indirect attitudinal and gestural dexterity and ingenuity necessary for the complex and life-long process of recreating home; a process that is very often psychologically challenging, physically arduous, financially burdensome, culturally disorienting and politically charged.

Sensory knowledge can become new mental knowledge, just as new thoughts can reshape the sense people make of their feelings as they come to terms with loss. There are ways of knowing, perceiving and problem-solving embodied in our physical being that are accessible and made manifest perhaps only through aesthetic experience, which, as Hickman (2010, 56) suggests, makes us more likely to be sensitive to our environment and the beauty that inhabits us, independent of the geographical location in which we find ourselves.

Aesthetics, Memory and the Present Moment

Past recollections and new memories unite to (in)form the (already) transforming autobiography of self and/at home. Perhaps, this is particularly so because "home and homelessness" are "essentially ideological constructs, involving compounds of cognitive and emotive meaning, and embracing within their meaning complex and variable distinctions between ideality [*sic*] and reality" (Somerville 1992, 537). Housing *as home* is simultaneously a physical, place-based experience and a matter of emotional attachments, sensorial memoried experience and storied reasoning. It can be accessed through and by several overlapping and sometimes contested frameworks. Three are delineated by Eastmond: "*life as lived*, the flow of events that touch on a person's life; *life as experienced*, how the person perceives and ascribes meaning to what happens, drawing on previous experience and cultural repertoires; and *life as told*, how experience is framed and articulated in a particular context and to a particular audience" (2007, 249: italics in original). Home aesthetics operate in all three frameworks: the objects and things associated with homemaking connect the household to the flow of life in the present moment, how they are appreciated is indicative of the meanings of home shaped by the entirety of an individual's housing experience and, even as their stories are told, these same objects and things become the focus of (new) stories told about them and about home.

The beautification of home, then, is a site of exchange where the aesthetics of memory and the aesthetics of present experience act upon one another. Here, engagement with the material world is covalent with the realms of reminiscence, imagination and creativity. Direct involvement with the senses in both affective and physical ways is, therefore, doubly performative for forcibly displaced individuals. On the one hand, aesthetic connections act upon what is recalled from previous home experiences (including those passed on through family stories and other cultural transmissions) and, on the other, they shape the experience of home in the now.

The relationship between the past and present is complicated by many factors including whether what is being recalled is an experience of trauma. "New experiences can only be understood in light of prior schemas. The particular internal and external conditions prevailing at the time that an event takes places will affect what prior meaning schemes are activated" (Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 1991, 440). While some displaced persons have access to pre-dislocation schemas of home that they rely on to create home anew, in many instances the trauma of the involuntary move(s) represents a rupture that renders these schemas (and their associated memories) inaccessible.

Yet, post-traumatic growth is still possible (see for example Caruth 1991; Herman 1992; Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004). One can gain an "increased appreciation for life in general, and many smaller aspects of it", and one can learn to identify "new possibilities for one's life or the possibility of taking a new and different path in life" (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004, 6). But, these things are very hard to do in the abstract while suffering the effects of trauma. The care of and attention to one's material belongings can play an important role here. These are activities that tend to take place on a small manageable scale, they can be repetitive and predictable and they can subtly stimulate an aesthetic moment. With time and repetition, aesthetic experience "can provide a context which facilitates or cultivates a range of

positive thinking dispositions" enabling the possibility of imagining new connections and relationships in one's new abode (Hickman 2010, 37). Beginning with simple actions, attention to the home's objects offers an opportunity for exploring and adapting to uncertainty, not only by bringing us back to what is affectively familiar but also creating new notions of normalcy.

Understood in this way, the practice of beauty in the realm of homemaking is not just a profound engagement with the appearance of things. It is a wholly interconnected examination, experimentation and exploration of being, being in relation *with* and becoming.

Material Possessions: The Special and the Ordinary

An interview with my mother about her early childhood recollections provides a wonderful example of the power that even the idea of the care and manipulation of objects has to evoke and, in a way, tame traumatic memory. My mother talked about economics: "Everyone wants beauty, but not everyone can afford the best. We learned to "make do" with what we had". She continued:

> Even if it is old and whatever, you make it mean something to you, you know? In my parents' house growing up we had one bed for three girls since my parents couldn't afford more. In the winter the one who slept in the middle was the luckiest because she was the warmest as there was no heat in the house and living in Montreal it was very cold in the winter. It was a very cozy feeling as a matter of fact. Our mother used to warm our pyjamas on the oven door and we used to get into them and jump right into bed. Neither my father nor mother ever complained to us even though I could imagine that life in Poland was much more luxurious; it was likely much easier living on the farm at least until the Bolsheviks came. Then they had to hide in the haystacks in the barn and survived having pitchforks poked into the stacks.

My mother travelled from the idea of everyone wanting beauty, to "making do", to old things, to making meaning, to childhood memories of cozy homemaking, to the image of her father in a haystack threatened by pitchforks, in one leap, all stimulated by my questions about the meaning of caring for the things of home. If we read her words as spoken, we end at trauma; but embedded in her memory is the forward motion of a history in which trauma was overcome and home remade, there is pain but it is not paralyzing. And, the whole is a stream of memory attached to the care of the things and objects of home.

An emphasis on procedure is crucial for understanding and appreciating home beautification practice. As my mother experienced it, cleaning or polishing even cracked and broken furnishings could be more rewarding than simply plunking down a fancy expensive item bought on credit or paid for in cash, if care and attention were brought to these processes. Her sense that the value of the "thing" is connected to the meaning and care given it resonates with the comments of Diana, a second-generation Holocaust survivor. In our conversation following the first *Jewish Home Beautiful-Revisited* event, it was obvious that her reaction to the ornately laid table was visceral and negative:

> When I saw the table, I looked at it and I thought like, "Whose idea of beauty is this?" First of all, I didn't even find it beautiful. It's not my aesthetic; I never even aspire to it and I also never knew that. Nobody ever had that kind of fancy stuff. You know we had nice things you know that we had gotten, but not that kind, not that, like we never had real silver or cut glass crystal, nor do I really like that. My aesthetic would be a little different.

Speaking about her own process of homemaking, Diana told me:

> I often find that the physical helps with the preparation of setting a *kavana*.[10] Without the *kavana* it feels empty to me. That could even relate to my feeling of beauty as well. To me beauty is about having a *kavana* also; it's about intentionally putting things in your space or disposing them in a way that is trying to create a sense of cosiness or something; a sense of comfort.

Diana, like my mother, has clearly found a way to imbue her homemaking with purpose and meaning. Rather than experiencing housekeeping as the drudgery of chores, or associating it with unending repetition, after years of sweeping a place clean and other mindful aesthetically charged beautification practices, we can, if we are lucky, come to recognize the space in which we dwell as home, even as we become more ourselves in the process. By conditioning our individual and cultural capacity to take care of what is "out of place" in our daily handling of so-called ordinary objects, or by co-activating artful manifestations of imaginary and real worlds, we become aware of the qualities we want to cultivate as we make ourselves at home.

Citing David Harvey, Easthope (2004, 132) summarizes the definition of "dwelling" as "the capacity to achieve a spiritual unity between humans and things"; and, citing Martin Heidegger and Edward S. Casey, she situates place and dwelling as the cumulative effect of what individuals construct cognitively and emotionally "through repeated encounters and complex associations". Such a performative attachment to place *as home* is particularly necessary for individuals whose sense of dwelling has been ruptured by violence. For both my mother and Diana, repeated aesthetic encounters with material objects and things have built a repertoire of associations laden with a complex assortment of emotions, memories and stories.

The Crux of Beauty-Making's Significance is in the Making

House-beautification gestures support the process of relocating the displaced individual at the centre of her/his experience of home. Creating coherent narratives out of the fragments of memory and dislocated histories is similarly productive:

> Working through, or remastering, traumatic memory (in the case of human-inflicted trauma) involves a shift from being the object or medium of someone else's (the perpetrator's) speech (or other expressive behavior) to being the subject of one's own. The act of bearing witness to the trauma facilitates this shift, not only by transforming traumatic memory into a coherent narrative that can be integrated into the survivor's sense of self and view of the world,

> but also by reintegrating the survivor into a community and re-establishing connections essential to selfhood. (Brison 1999, 39)

Susan J. Brison's perceptive analysis of how trauma victims must lift and shift the weight of someone else's interpretation of their lives is key to understanding the performativity of both Third Realm beauty and the dialogical live art methodology used in this research-creation. Brison is not suggesting that in order for the trauma to be overcome, it has to be forgotten. What she is proposing is that the speaking about trauma has to become less about what "has been done to me" and more about "what I have done and can do" in order to endure. And that, furthermore, this shift from passive submission to active affirmation can be more effective if it is accompanied by a process of being heard and being seen as a survivor. The findings of the live art events and follow-up interviews very much support Brison's insights.

The extent to which forced dislocation disrupts one's sense of identity and interrupts the fluidity of quotidian experience was a major consideration in determining the framework of the live art events. By deliberate design, the dialogical performances created a temporary community that supported a process of active listening, a pseudo continuity. One of the underlying questions was whether these events would inspire a self-reflexive process regarding house beautification and the function of narrative to reclaim a sense of agency, which could then be transferred beyond the staged setting. There is evidence that this did occur. Rana, Diana, my mother and several others who helped shape the live art events and who took part in the post-performance interviews associated their experiences during the events with their efforts to re-establish some of these connections to place, history, material culture, family traditions and community. The medium they used was the telling of stories about the people and places evoked by the objects and things they valued.

I endeavoured to create performance spaces that were safe enough to encourage new narratives to emerge, a process I continued during the follow-up conversations. This continuity is evident in an exchange with Vera, a Jewish woman whose early life was irrevocably marked by the *Shoah* (the Holocaust). During the first *Jewish Home Beautiful-Revisited* event, after taking part in the polishing of tarnished silver, Vera told the assembled group of people a story of a childhood doll she had suddenly recollected. Several weeks later, during the interview I asked Vera: "So do you mind talking a bit about the memory that you recalled?" She responded by saying: "We are talking about the doll, right? Yea, yea, sure I can talk about that. Don't you have that on tape?" Just as I started to say that I did have the recording, Vera began to narrate a new story about a second doll she recalled at that moment. In this telling, she linked the two dolls. She also connected these dolls with the home and the people left behind and with her post-displacement experience. I have included the verbatim transcription of Vera's second story in an annex to this paper because it is so exemplary of how memories are recalled and continuity is recreated in the presence of a trusted witness.

For many, not only story-telling, but also physical attention to the handling, the care and the placement of material household goods imbues the passage of time with a sense of renewed continuity and purpose. It creates a new narrative. Trauma "undoes the self by breaking the on-going narrative, severing the connections among remembered past, lived present, and anticipated future" and "reveals the ways in which one's ability to feel at home in the world is as much a physical as

an epistemological accomplishment" (Brison 1999, 41 and 44). The sensorial connection, lived viscerally and made sense of culturally, is a vital locus of identity reconstruction and of recreating, coming and being at home. Brison points to the necessity of interpersonal relations as crucial to trauma recovery, which includes being "able to regain control over traumatic memories […], recover a sense of control over her environment (within reasonable limits), and be re-connected with humanity" (1999, 45). I propose that the care and manipulation of one's home's objects is also vital.

More than 30 years ago, Yi-Fu Tuan proposed that, "to be forcibly evicted from one's home and neighbourhood is to be stripped of a sheathing, which in its familiarity protects the human being from the bewilderments of the outside world" (1974, 99). What I have observed throughout my investigations is that this disorientation can be alleviated by attention to making the physically unfamiliar in one's new housing environment more familiar. This familiarizing implicates the actual objects and things (such as furniture, dishes, linen, decorative items and books), their placement within the house, the patterns of their use and the stories that emerge over time.

These processes not only provide the means and mechanisms of regaining control over one's environment (within reasonable limits), they also aid in the integration of memory and the re-establishment of ties with humanity by supporting the mourning process. "It is as though beauty works as a catalyst, transforming raw grief into a tranquil sadness, helping the tears to flow and, at the same time, one might say, putting […] loss into a certain philosophical perspective" (Danto 2003, 111). There is something quite comforting in the gestures of homemaking since these help create a sense of order and the consistent environment so necessary in the aftermath of traumas associated with displacement (Gurwitch and Messenbaugh 2005, 30). "The valuation of order and cleanliness goes a lot further than its mere aesthetic value" (Ureta 2007, 329). For Ureta's subjects, "order is beauty, but at the same time it is a sign of normality" and (citing Giddens), he concludes that besides beauty, cleanliness and order of things at home represent a source of "ontological security" (Ureta 2007, 329). However, much the precariousness of home is felt by the forcibly displaced, a certain sense of predictability and control can be found by engaging with Third Realm beauty.

Eastmond (2007, 254) finds that displacement "often does entail a radical break with familiar conditions of everyday life and requires the re-negotiation of self in relation to new contexts". And, beyond tracing the history of how material culture has been recognized as a key component of self-actualization, Garvey (2001, 49) proposes that "banal routines located in the home are fundamental in understanding the relationship between domesticity and self-identity". Garvey emphasizes "transience over permanence, insignificance over investment". She also suggests several key elements in the beautifying process, including spatial and material order and attention to the social and material routines of house maintenance and decoration (50–53). Citing Giddens, Garvey asserts that the coherence of self-identity is "achieved through continuous revision" (56). I find it useful to overlay both Eastmond's and Garvey's assertions: becoming familiar anew is a process that requires repetitive actions and purposeful activity.

This is certainly true for Meena, a young woman of Tamil descent. Following the *homeBody* series, she spoke to me about gardening, cooking, cleaning and the process of hanging decorative fabrics on the walls of her apartment:

> I move every year so home is not related to any particular geographical place. Home is more in the gestures. […] I think that for cultures such as mine that have lived through colonization and displacement there does have to be a certain kind of resilience and beauty making. The *beauty making* is definitely, definitely, definitely, definitely linked to establishing a sense of home.

For individuals whose sense of coherence has been interrupted, the recurring, and sometimes cyclic, attention to and reorganization of objects in one's home is particularly meaningful and productive in the process of not only remaking a consistent (sense of) home anew but also of making a consistent (sense of) self. The crux of beauty-making's significance is *in the making*: the processual nature of beautification can affect the way in which forcibly displaced individuals relate to the loss of their ideological homes and operate within the material culture of the built environment.

In our follow-up conversation, Vera told me:

> To look at me, to listen to me you would never know; there is nothing that says I'm a foreigner in any way. I don't even have an accent; some people who came at my age do and that attests to my desire to assimilate when I arrived, you know. I succeeded. But nonetheless I think in terms of identity work, I still identify myself as a foreigner, as a refugee. It is an important chunk of my identity, to see myself in that way I think in part because it was an experience that was very deep and so it really is connected to who I am even though I have been here for 40-odd years or whatever – its been more than that: 50-odd years, its still important. […] As for feeling at home, I don't know; I'm still working; I mean I think it has a lot to do with identity and who you are. So you try and get some solidity to that identity.

I asked Vera, "At what point for you did beauty become important?" After a long silence, she said:

> It's a good question. Cause like we came here and I don't think it was right at the beginning. I think maybe it is connected to survival. […] What I wanted more than anything else was to make my living space my own, whatever that meant and so I still do this. […] The idea of practicing home is important and I think it has to do with paying attention.

Linked to both affective states and performative value, beautification, then, is a necessary procedural enactment for Vera, who carries the legacy of forced dislocation personally lived, as much as it is for Meena and Diana, who experience the lingering effects and "postmemories" (Hirsch 1999) bequeathed to them by their parents and grandparents.

The ability to embark on beautification, however, is not given. Whether one's original home is recalled from actual lived experience or created through recollections mediated by an imaginative investment (Hirsch 1997, 22) of the stories and images "remembered" by second, third, (and plus)-generation displaced persons, it seems that the role of beauty, for people whose sense of home has been ruptured or destroyed, only becomes apparent when the most acute risks, threats and perils associated with the direct experience of having to move are no longer felt.

As Vera and I continued to speak, I asked her about when beauty began to play a part in her family's resettlement process. She answered haltingly as she thought and spoke simultaneously:

> At what point does the realization come that maybe it is not temporary? I think that certain others things must kick in at that time and I am not sure that the beautifying instinct would come in then... I think that that's when you begin to mourn; you begin to mourn when you begin to realize that it may be permanent. And I think that if you are heavily into the beginning of the mourning process you are too angry to create beauty perhaps.

Recalling my mother's "you make it mean something to you", Diana's "it's about intentionally putting things in your space […]", Meena's "*beauty making* is definitely, definitely, definitely, definitely linked to establishing a sense of home" and Vera's own "what I wanted more than anything else was to make my living space my own" it is clearly possible to get from mourning and anger to home (anew) through the performance of beautification. The process of getting from one to the other implies an act of volition.

The Importance of Choice Making and Overcoming the Resistance to Beauty

While beauty may not be necessary for sheer survival following forced dislocation, it may be crucial to feeling alive. As Danto avows: "Beauty is an option for art and not a necessary condition. But it is not an option for life. It is a necessary condition for life as we would want to live it" (2003, 160). Choosing to embrace beauty is perhaps one of the most telling signs of one's capacity to determine the course of one's life after the trauma of displacement. Indeed, following forced displacement, choice making – and acting on the belief that one's choices matter – are decisive elements in making the transition from victim to survivor: they are both a sign and a means of building resilience and practicing home.

Amos Rapoport, writing about home environments, states: "It seems characteristic […] that *they are chosen*. One could almost argue that *if they are not chosen they are not home.* An imposed setting is unlikely to a home environment, although it may *become* one" (1985, 256: italics in original).[11] Given the findings from this five-year study, I am convinced that aesthetic engagement is amongst the processes and activities that most tend to increase the chances of this *becoming*: the appreciation and cultivation of the beautiful co-habits with the work of transitioning from "journey to dwelling" (Seamon 1985). Displaced people need food, shelter and access to health care. They may need access to language training. All of these things are unquestionably important. What is equally important for the displaced is the need to feel a sense of their own agency in managing the changes in their lives. At first, this sense of agency might only be possible in a small theatre of action, the home. This cycle of research-creation reveals just how much even the simplest acts of home beautification can help the forcibly displaced to activate the choice-making process. While at first these gestures might be wholly related to where to place an object or how often to dust, over time the choice-making process – and the belief that one's choices matter – transfers to other realms of life thus supporting the

transition from victim to survivor. Through the minutia of everyday life, when one is feeling helpless, agency is gained one small beautification gesture at a time.

While post-traumatic growth through aesthetic appreciation is possible, coming to terms with the loss also involves disbelief, grief and other strong emotional states. In her compelling reflections about the counter movement to the state of depression that seemed to prevail in the aftermath of 9/11 amongst a certain group of scholars, Anne Cvetkovich states: "The goal is to depathologize negative affects so that they can be seen as a possible resource for political action rather than as its antithesis. This is not, however, to suggest that depression is thereby converted into a positive experience; it retains its associations with inertia and despair, if not apathy and indifference, but these affects become sites of publicity and community formation" (2007, 460). Cvetkovich's affirmation of the productivity of even the most difficult of emotions and states of mind is most useful as it anchors the understanding and appreciation of how the traumas associated with the loss of home can be, given the appropriate conditions, experienced as constructive.

It would seem that Third Realm beauty might be useful here. After all, insofar "as beauty involves pleasure, that is, a state which, by definition, we would seek to continue in, it would appear that there is an interest, and hence a potential for action, at least associated with beauty" (Kirwan 1999, 74). The choice to engage in home-beautification, however, is not self-evident. The very promise of pleasure may be what impedes one's readiness to embrace beauty: "Because taking pleasure in something depends upon our frame of mind we may, without realizing that we are doing so, resist pleasure because we reject the mood it comports with" (Armstrong 2004, 55). A willingness not to cling to the past can seem like a profound act of individual and cultural betrayal. At another level, abandoning the stance that one's new home is temporary is also fraught. It means, accepting the original loss, as well as letting go of a disruptive but comfortable-through-familiarity positioning of oneself.

Some live art event collaborators and participants spoke of how wary they were of "investing" in aesthetic appreciation and in making efforts to endow their dwellings with beauty, thinking that their housing situation was only temporary – even though the originary displacement may have occurred decades previously. In the follow-up conversation to *Home Beautiful-Inviting the Ancestors*, Rula, a Palestinian woman, stated, "On the concept of home and beauty, you really have to take the time and effort to appreciate it and think about it and get connected to it". She acknowledged just how much the Nakba[12] shaped her experience of home:

> For years, I experienced the trickle down effect of the loss of home from previous generations and, as a result, I don't have a place of special meaning. It is only now that I'm starting to invest in the concepts of home and beauty because before I tended to devalue these, just in case they would disappear. Even gardening: I have only recently come to appreciate those little aspects of the original home, the story, beauty in the food and in relation to the efforts of getting the olives.

Although her sense of displacement has not left Rula, she has begun to find a way and reasons to overcome her resistance and invest in home:

> My husband places a huge emphasis on making our home beautiful. He survived the war in Lebanon. People who have lived that kind of trauma need what beauty offers. It creates stability. It is not a superficial thing; I think it is a real internal need for him, even if he can't articulate why. Before it used to annoy me and now I am trying to find common projects of beautifying our home and give it meaning now that I'm readier to deal with the questions of stability and identity. What makes it possible for me now is the desire to pass it on to the next generation especially knowing that our parents will not be around forever and our kids will blame us for not passing it all along. Beauty requires that you invest yourself in creating it, appreciating it and passing it along to the next generation. It provides a framework to express your home and make you feel safe and comfortable.

Rula's movement from rejection to investment is informative: resistance to beauty and processes for overcoming such resistance are factors that must be taken into account when considering aesthetic engagement with making home anew in the aftermath of forced dislocation.

As Rula's experience illustrates, a choice for aesthetic practice can help us to understand that the real betrayal lies not in the letting go, but in the incapacity or unwillingness to transform the trauma of displacement into a life-affirming embrace of renewed inhabiting, with all the vulnerability and responsibility inherent in such growth. To some extent, appreciating beauty means that one has accepted that one is entitled to pleasure and is not threatened by the fear of betraying the experience of home's loss through the process of making one's home anew.

Implicit in Rula's description is that the ramifications of allowing oneself to savour beauty can be even greater, they can actually touch on one's sense of a right to existence. This is made explicit in Diana's eloquent self-reflection:

> Beauty is an opportunity to have a sense of being entitled to exist. The word *entitled* is very important to me because I never felt entitled. […] Beauty is attention to detail, a detail that has a meaning in it. […] I mean I think our home is maybe a place where most of us hope to have a certain sense of control and when that is taken away from us, you know? I do remember as a child not feeling like I had a right to be there. We had no place that was ours. It wasn't about ownership cause we never did own […]. I sort of remember this feeling of never being able to quite relax. And that stayed with me. Beauty now feels like quite a privilege, you know?

Clearly Diana's sense of "beauty in the making" has been acquired through steadfast attention to the material world as much as to her inner sense of home. This steadfastness has, in turn, fed and re-enforced her inner sense of self.

Undertaking the gestures of beautification, of homemaking, means overcoming resistance and making choices. The correlation between when home's loss is felt most acutely and the readiness to pursue beauty is most evident in the mourning process. Making sense of experience and moving through grief calls for and necessitates repose; a repose that is more than simply inactivity or relaxation, a repose that is an active resting and a *settling* at home – even, and perhaps especially when, feeling homeless. Beauty, after all, can make us more aware of what

has been lost (Armstrong 2004; Thompson 2009; Thompson, Hughes, and Balfour 2009). While aesthetic experience might be beneficial, it can also reveal the ruptures of displacement. Reclaiming the power over the experience of displacement is possible through an engagement with practical and symbolic beautification activities; however, such gestures are not without their risk. Reclaiming power also, as Rula so poignantly expressed, indicates the acceptance of a new future. The psychological distances that must be travelled are impressive.

Third Realm Beauty and Material Sorting

Closely associated with house-beautification processes, material sorting is also likely to involve both physical gestures and affective mechanisms. Often, in situations of forced displacement, there is not a lot of time to decide what to take and what to leave. Citing David Parkin, Jean-Sebastien Marcoux addresses the "role played by mobile possessions in securing memory in location" while affirming the "importance of the things that refuges forced to flight, sometimes from the threat of death, choose to bring with them. And how they use these objects to reobjectify themselves in a new environment" (2001, 69–70). "The things that people take with them, those "aide-mémoires", help preserve a constancy and continuity. Going further, we could also say that memory may be constituted in motion through the displacement of objects. Bringing things with oneself, then, is to make the choice of remembering" (73). While some displaced persons do indeed manage to bring assorted items with them, others either do not have that option or choose to start afresh by leaving everything behind.

Talking about a tattered and stained 100-year-old embroidered cloth used for the ritual meal during the holiday of Passover that was brought over from Poland, my mother acknowledged that it could not be used on account of how moth-eaten and raggedy it was: "And yet to us it is a thing of beauty because of who made it. To think that so long ago my grandmother put so much work into this thing, all the beading and the embroidery. Just appreciating what went into it makes me feel very emotional". For my mother, the no-longer-functional object is still a prized possession on account of its affective value.

The emotional connection that is so meaningful to my mother is similar to Sheila's experience with items bequeathed to her by her recently deceased father. Sheila's father was relocated from Turkey to Montreal in the early 1950s. His parents followed him within the decade. Following *The Jewish Home Beautiful-Revisited I*, Sheila spoke lovingly of the home that she has built with her husband and of the myriad ways in which their physical space is permeated with beauty:

> The beauties of nature in many forms, natural and humanly modified, surround me. Indoors, I have chosen to have an uncluttered space where everything visible has a story that provides the beauty of continuity even if the item itself has no intrinsic beauty of its own.

While there are several items brought over from Turkey during her grandparents' move and others still purchased more recently during subsequent trips back to her father's birth country on display, most of the furnishings in Sheila's house are locally sourced or handmade. "Home beautiful", for Sheila, is inscribed in a sense

of continuity as iterated through the objects and things accumulated from here and there over the generations, as well as the stories told about these items. It is perhaps especially when the old and the new objects – as well as their extant stories and affective associations – blend in the resettled households that the process of identification is most robust.

With the "original" items functioning symbolically and/or concretely as a metonymy for the home that is no longer and serving as the skeleton around which the new home is reinvented (Marcoux 2001, 74), the newly acquired objects and things extend and shift the associations with the original items so that the present home can indeed be experienced in the present. The bodily experience of beautification of one's home as manifested in acts of cleaning and decoration (Hecht 2001, 134) migrates and morphs as the old and new merge in the everyday attention that one pays to home. Whether the actual objects would have been or are currently deemed to have material beauty, the aesthetics of the memoried and memorialized items come in play as a focus for emotional and sensorial meaning-making. Objects and things that are brought from one's place of origin do not only matter because of their physicality; the memories associated with them are also transported. My point here is that material culture and stories told about home's loss merge and combine with new objects and stories thus helping the displaced to integrate into the resettled dwelling place.

Sandeep, a participant in three of the live art events in this cycle of research-creation, is a world-renown musician, composer and educator who was born in India and grew up in Germany. Well aware of the power of aesthetics and the dangers associated with the Nazi ideological construction of *heimat* – the love and attachment to homeland, which resulted in a rejection of anything and anyone foreign – Sandeep comments:

> We are living in the time of global warming, which means that large parts of the planet will become uninhabitable for human beings and we'll see – perhaps not in our generation, but perhaps in our children's or grandchildren's – huge migrations of people, huge pressure to migrate, and if you continue to haggle over land you are going to just create violence to no end. I don't understand this land issue; being un-landed myself, I don't get land ownership; I don't understand it. [I think that] you have to be linked to something else, more anchored in our relationship to each other than in a relationship to any soil.

Clearly "inconsequential aesthetic responses" (Saito 2007, 6) are indicative of the profound moral, social, political and environmental associations that individuals take with them and transpose into their new home environments following forced relocation. Sandeep's comments highlight how, in time of estrangement and alienation, "home is no longer just one place. It is locations. One confronts and accepts dispersal and fragmentation as part of the constructions of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become" (Hooks 1990, 148). Third Realm beauty can inspire the forcibly displaced to see home as a place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality and recognizing frontiers of difference.

Conclusion and Potential Future Research

The study of resettlement using non-traditional, arts-based methodologies, including the research-creation projects that I have been involved with, supports the on-going growth of the housing studies field and links new developments to earlier contributions, including those of David Seamon:

> Active involvement with one's physical environment is as an important element in reestablishing place as a sense of psychological security and interpersonal familiarity. The need to clean the new apartment into which one has just moved or to change actively in some way a house which one has just bought are obvious indications of this fact. Yet in how many environments today are people without a role in building, repairing, improving or cleaning their environment and what part would increase in such responsibilities have in strengthening a sense of place? […] Active human effort in relation to the physical environment is an integral step in a successful completion of the dwelling process. (1985, 240)

Implicit in Seamon's theoretical proposal is that aesthetics is co-active with dwelling and, moreover, necessary for individuals whose (sense of) home has been destroyed. For people whose quotidian routines have been disrupted as a consequence of their home's destruction, aesthetically charged repetitive gestures such as cleaning, dusting, sewing, washing dishes, bed making and folding laundry are as vitally necessary as more public activities that may appear more important.

When we are experiencing the chaos of disorder and destruction and when we do not feel capable of exerting any control over the conditions of (our) home, a retreat to a scale of intimacy can comfort us. The practice of creating an appropriate equilibrium between chaos and order can satisfy us through routine appreciation for and attention to beauty. By appreciating the "less-than-perfect" furnishings, unfamiliar objects and settings in which we often dwell after forced dislocation, we can learn to embrace the impermanent, the transient, the insufficient, the imperfect and even the accidental, thus bringing ourselves to give meaning to our lives.

Moreover, by telling stories from a perspective of survival, the definition of home can be expanded to the point of becoming "an inner psychological dimension not dependent on geographic location. We may understand it as a capacity of the psyche to offer a fixed point of reference to which we may return so that we may assimilate new experiences without loss of identity" (Hill 1996, 575). An internalized feeling of being at home seems to be more likely when the continuity of life is re-established. However challenging and disruptive the loss of home has been, in recognizing and embracing the precarity of home, over time, through the active engagement with Third Realm beauty and the shaping of new coherent narratives, the trauma associated with loss of home can be alleviated.

This paper has highlighted the role of everyday aesthetics in the homemaking process amongst second- and third-generation displaced individuals; additional research could be directed at ascertaining the relevance of such activity amongst populations in more acute stages of housing crises. There are unfortunately several instances in which such an enquiry might be activated, including amongst the Haitian survivors of the 2010 earthquake and the Japanese communities who have

lived through the triple catastrophe (the magnitude 9.0 earthquake, the tsunami, and the Fukushima nuclear emergency). Moreover, with intensifying strife in so many places around the world, the need to identify viable approaches for helping in the home resettlement process within the first generation is crucial to mitigating the long-term lingering impacts amongst the children and grandchildren of the victims of home's loss. What I am arguing for here is twofold: a greater sensitivity about the significance of implicating people in the choices associated with relocation; and a greater awareness on the part of the people who work with the displaced about the practicality of Third Realm beauty. Indeed, as evidence from the research-creation projects written about above indicates, aesthetics need to be considered as a vital focus within housing theory and policy dealing with displaced persons. This is an age of mass global migration. With over 42 million people currently displaced involuntarily (UNHCR 2011), intentionally engaging Third Realm beauty potentially readies us to feel at home in the world despite the increasing challenges of housing instability, habitat destruction and the ruptures in relationships that often accompany these experiences.

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Notes

1. Some of the live art participants are referred to as collaborators since they were actively involved in shaping the structure and content of the performance events.
2. See for example: Bakewell (2008), Safran (1991), Van Hear (2011) for articulations of categories and classifications of displacement (e.g. refugees, exiles and the homeless).
3. The progress of my critical reflections can be found in Neumark (2010, 2012) and forthcoming.
4. Educator Morwenna Griffiths closely examines the question of "research and the self" and points to many of the problematics associated with subjectivity in research including partiality, generalizability and bias. Addressing each in turn, Griffiths argues that arts-based research is trustworthy and transferable. Moreover, she takes the position "that it is impossible to research any human context disinterestedly". Griffiths suggests: "Researchers not only take political and ethical stances, but, being human beings, they also inhabit them and are not fully aware of them. Only when political and moral positions are acknowledged or exhibited can strategies be found to enable the outcomes to be judged rigorous or otherwise. Such strategies do not entail that it is better to be an outsider than a participant researcher" (2011, 182). Two key strategies that Griffith suggests are conducive to revealing just how much "all research is affected by the selves (relationships, circum-

stances, perspectives and reactions) of the researcher" are reflective practice and reflexivity. Roughly, "reflective practice" attaches more to the relational self embedded in time and place, and as becoming what it is not yet. "Reflexivity' attaches more to the relational, embodied self in a specific social and political context: to his or her individual perspectives and positionality" (184). Griffiths' theoretical stance is closely aligned with how I have approached this cycle of research-creation from the start. Methodologically, the live art events that I have initiated are both dialogical and iterative. Moreover, by revealing my political and moral positions, I open this work up to both critical engagement and assessment.

5. The two research labs are: Canada Research Chair in Inter-X Art Practice and Theory, Sandeep Bhagwati's *matralab* and Canada Research Chair in New Media Arts, Sha Xin Wei's *Topological Media Lab*.
6. For a discussion of this idea, see Neumark (2010).
7. First written by Betty Greenberg and Althea Silverman in the late 1930s, this centre stage community ply was scripted to include the stories, songs and food items associated with different Jewish holiday traditions. Greenberg and Silverman's pageant came at a time when the North American Jewish community was feeling a growing anxiety about anti-Semitism in Europe and concern around Jewish assimilation into the secular culture of the times. For a fuller discussion, see Neumark 2010.
8. Concordia University compliance protocols were followed for all of the live art events and follow-up conversations. All collaborators and participants that are identified within this paper have consented to having their names made public.
9. See also Jacobs, Kemeny, and Manzi (2004), Jacobs and Manzi (2000), as well as Clapham (2002, 2009) for an overview of social constructionism as it pertains to housing theory.
10. While both in Hebrew and in Yiddish, the word *kavana* literally means intention; the term is often understood as the kind of mindset and direction of the heart that is to be cultivated in all aspects of mundane and spiritual experience.
11. Another instance of displacement that is bound up with the perception of choice is when the elderly can no longer continue to live in their familial home. I was a team member of a multi-year Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada-funded project titled *Aging in Place* (directed by Nancy Guberman). Between 2008 and 2011 – through the use of semi-structured interviews and photo elicitation – we explored seniors' conceptions and experiences of home as they reached the point of needing to relocate to an assisted living environment. Amongst the most salient findings of this study was the decisive role that (the perception of) choice played in the smooth transition to new living arrangements and the mitigation of social exclusion that had been feared prior to the move by selecting particular objects that held special meaning to be placed in the new housing environment.
12. Literally, The Catastrophe, the *Nakba* refers to the time marked by forced expulsion, ethnic cleansing and massacres in Palestinian villages and the transfer of British colonial rule in Palestine to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land as Israel became a state.

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Annex: Vera's "Real" Doll Story

The story about the childhood doll that Vera remembered and told during the first *Jewish Home Beautiful-Revisited* event apparently continued to resonate in the weeks following the performance. When we got together several weeks later for a post-performance conversation, Vera unexpectedly began to reveal another hidden memory:

> There are actually two dolls. I think I only told the story of one. Oh my God! [Vera laughs]. The dolls are connected; I never knew that until this moment. But there are two dolls and I talked about one doll, which was a doll that my grandmother sent us. This was important for her to have sent that to us. My mother of course was kind of happy to get it but there is a story about it: [My grandmother] sent us this doll, which was dressed in traditional costume and the importance of having something from home. I have to finish this story and then I will tell you the other doll story, which I think is the real story. So

this doll arrived and it was a beautiful piece and we had it up like on a shelf and everything; it was dressed in traditional Hungarian costume. It was very colourful and my grandmother wrote saying "I'm sending you this, it's really important for me to be sending you this and please take very good care of it" and it was this really beautiful letter. And my mother reading this letter at first really didn't think much of it but then she started to think and she thought that her mother, my grandmother, must have put something inside the doll; so the doll actually got taken apart, completely destroyed so that all that was left really was the porcelain head because it was made of fabric and my mother was sure that there was something hidden in it. There was nothing hidden in the doll; so that's that doll. [Vera laughs]. On one level it really does have to do with the fact that my grandmother was trying to maintain that connection because we had been displaced and our whole family was broken up. We had all lived together in a one-bedroom place for a long time so for her it was like "Take this, its part of us". We had nothing; we left with nothing. And then there was nothing even left of the doll but her head. The other doll: the other doll was my doll that my mother got me I think for my fifth or sixth birthday, so that was just before we left and it was a nothing special doll made in Russia, completely plastic. I think I had some clothes for it. It was the kind of thing, you know it was held together by rubber bands inside for the arms and legs and everything, but it became my absolute favorite doll. So we were preparing to leave and in the flurry of the leaving I forgot it. I had said goodbye to my grandmother. My grandmother had actually stayed in Budapest and my grandfather accompanied us on the train and to the farmhouse from where we were going to go and we had said goodbye to her. The whole thing was completely traumatic. I mean everything; because I had lived with her all my life. My aunt and uncle had already left which was a huge, a huge loss and then we were leaving. And so, it was like I was trying to process it all, everything was frightening. But the doll was forgotten. And so we were walking along the street towards the train station. I have a real visual; my grandmother comes running after us with this doll and she says: "You forgot your doll". She realized how important it was and I have, I had this doll that doll for years and years and years and years until it was smashed around enough. I actually don't know what happened to it. I think it got packed in a box in a move but by then it was pretty much gone. But that's the real doll story. They are objects of course, they are only objects but it's the value that they take on because of the relationships they embody. So that was very, you know, very powerful you know. It was kind of a dual memory, a memory that was hiding another one. I mean it is amazing. That is basically what happened; I was moved by one, but actually (Vera laughs) there is one that is kind of deeper and I couldn't have gotten to this other doll if I hadn't told the first doll story.