

I use humble everyday materials to simulate fragile moments that live in between abandonment and renewal, connecting emotional and physical landscapes of home. Inspiration is drawn from emotional support systems that inhabit domestic spaces and empathy of loss from fragile narratives. In my process there remains ever present, a cyclical act of accumulating, repurposing, and building. My installations and sculptures are precarious and redolent with gestures of longing for stability within the home.

Gaston Bachelard stated that “homes are in us as much as we are in them.”<sup>1</sup> My concept of home represents an ambivalence, as a space that can be supportive and nurturing, and at the same time oppressive and disorienting. In this body of work, I express complex relationships in a space where melancholy is materialized. For instance, hollow paper cinder blocks stand in for emotional boundaries, while disjointed paper casted window frames collapse into diverse perspectives. Using repurposed, discarded materials to create metaphors for emotional support structures, the work expresses this ambivalent urgency to bury the past, while existing in the present with resilient adaptability.

The materials that I primarily use are clay, paper, and fiber because they are easily accessible and are a part of everyday life. I also appreciate how elemental and easily overlooked they become as an everyday material. In these works that are redolent with ambiguity, tattered, disjointed paper windows sag off the wall, while dusty colorful fibers entangle voids for these sculptures. Some discarded materials used are shredded clothing from the inside of a punching bag, and reclaimed clay shavings. The physical properties of

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<sup>1</sup> Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Beacon Paperbacks; 330. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969. pg.69

my materials which were once delicate and flexible are now stiff and dried. Essentially, we touch clay every day; from the ceramic plates off of which we eat, to the coffee cup we hold as we read, to the porcelain sinks and toilets that we use daily. I am interested in using clay in its broken-down stages to highlight the elemental tactility of the material as traces and remnants of human lived experiences. When clay is broken down both fired or not it forms dust. Joseph A. Amato said, "Dust is everywhere, and it is the source of everything". It forms the ceaseless tides of the becoming and dissolution of things. Out of it things are made; into it they dissolve".<sup>2</sup> Dust has a history of being most recognized visually in disastrous environments such as war, terror, nature, or man-made. However, dust has a lot more to be observed than just what is visible to the naked eye, it is but a fragment of its former existence. Dust goes through these life cycles of being broken down and built back up again and so does paper.

As a material, paper is cyclical in how it is made and recycled. Built with layers simulating the physical properties of human skin, paper is essentially a thin layered material. It is made by pressing together moist fibers of cellulose plant pulp derived from wood, rags, or grasses and then it's dried into flexible sheets. Paper is a very versatile material with many uses such as writing, printing, packaging, cleaning, and several industrial and construction processes.<sup>3</sup> It can be highly valued for a certain amount of time and then abandoned and discarded the next day. More specifically paper is used to

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<sup>2</sup> Lange-Berndt, Petra. Materiality. Documents of Contemporary Art Series. 2015.pg.189-190

<sup>3</sup> Burns, Robert I. (1996). "Paper comes to the West, 800-1400". In Lindgren, Uta (ed.). Europäische Technik im Mittelalter. 800 bis 1400. Tradition und Innovation (4th ed.). Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag. pp. 413-422.

record thoughts, memories, and to build an identity, and metaphorically speaking so does a home. During my process of repurposing paper, smaller pieces are torn, and re-hydrated with water and glue. I then build up crisscrossed layers of paper that are placed on the object that I am casting to give it strength. Paper and cloth have a lot of similarities as a material, especially in how they are both constructed. During the mixing process cellulous fibers are broken down and are built back up again. When they become reconstructed, these fibers form a crisscrossing pattern with each other creating a strong bond in the same way that a warp and a weft is woven on cloth.<sup>4</sup>

Ann Hamilton once wrote, “Cloth is the body’s first architecture; it protects, conceals, and reveals; it carries our weight, swaddles us at birth and covers us in sleep and in death.”<sup>5</sup> As Hamilton’s’ quote on cloth suggests, fibers connect humans universally to this human need to feel protected. I find this instinct in both humanity and nature alike. In nature, organisms search to find their place of shelter. They escape danger in search to find a retreat or to build a nest. Humans desire the same kind of refuge; underlying longing and not just for protection, but for comfort and belonging.

The formal histories of women’s work, heritage, and invisible labor that surrounds the domestic sphere is what draws me in to work with fibers. There is a restless upkeep that is involved in the home both physically and emotionally. I’m interested in complex support structures that make a person ambivalent towards the people they are closest to and how these relationships are maintained within the home. There are four main social support systems: emotional, tangible, informational, and companionship each playing an

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/engineering/embedded-fiber> accessed on 3/31/20

<sup>5</sup> Hamilton, Ann. *The Event of a Thread*. Ann Hamilton’s Studio. 2012-2013. New York. Pg.7

important role to maintain a stable, healthy home life.<sup>6</sup> Within those four main social support systems are these different perspectives. Research has shown that perceived and received support structures are linked to a person's mental health condition, both negatively and positively. Some have suggested that invisible support, which is a form of backing where the person has support without his or her own awareness, may be beneficial.<sup>7</sup> All these complex support structures and perceptions of support can translate into the precariousness of the textile structure. In my process of working with fibers there is this unmaking and making that is inherent in the nature of the material itself. It can be done and undone very easily and so can the support systems of a home especially when there are tensions, misunderstandings, stress, or if a traumatic event occurs. Amongst all the psychological clutter and the shards of everyday there can remain an attempt at a gentle resolve within the home.

Reflecting on the physical and emotional landscapes that make up a home, there is this longing for stability that is ever present. Using clay, paper, and fiber which are cyclical materials that can be used again and again allows me to create these precarious support structures that are resilient and adaptable to the present. Breaking these materials down, they become fragile and flawed in their reconstruction. Ripping, tearing, layering, binding, knotting, pinching, stretching, cutting, mending, accumulating, and building their function becomes transformed from their original use. Building from

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<sup>6</sup> Wills, T.A. (1991). Margaret, Clark (ed.). "Social support and interpersonal relationships". *Prosocial Behavior, Review of Personality and Social Psychology*. **12**: 265-289.

<sup>7</sup> Bolger, N.; Amarel, D. (2007). "Effects of social support visibility on adjustment to stress: Experimental evidence". *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. **92** (3): 458-475.

humble materials and abstracting them into metaphors of specific human experiences  
compels me to continuously search for redemptive moments in these fragile narratives.