

When I was sixteen, my house and all my material belongings were demolished in a fire. While traumatizing, this event forced me to realize that a home is not necessarily a structure. Rather, it can be an amalgamation of the human condition and a collection of experiences and people. My sculpture is an altar to this concept of homemaking and serves to remind others and myself that we often place more value on material things rather than memories and recollections. This space is not intended to represent a house, but rather is a reminder that I am home in myself.

Cameron C.

Where is home? What is home? Following my line of inquiry and personal experience, I have come to the conclusion that you are a home. Your body is home. You have and will always live in your body. Your body is your only permanent address. It will be here as long as you are here.

My parents are Catholic. They pray every night in their bedrooms before they go to sleep. When I was about fourteen, my bedroom was hardly a place of worship. I stopped going to church and used my bedroom as an escape, a sanctuary of sorts that was reserved for rest. I decorated it with Catholic relics and shrines of rockstars. The shrines and relics were purely decorative and almost ironic. I am not religious; however, the Catholic relics embellished my walls as tribute to the films that had greatly impacted my adolescence (Virgin Suicides, The Craft, etc.). My bedroom was all that I had control of; I could not choose my home. As an aesthetically driven child, I hated that I could not have complete creative freedom with my house. I wanted to choose where I lived and wanted to decorate it according to my every desire. I wanted the power of making a home.

At the DMV, she received a call from our neighbors, “your house was struck by lightning,” they said. My mother was muddled in disbelief. During a storm in early September, my house was struck by lightning. This high voltage discharge created an all-consuming conflagration that essentially demolished my home and all of my belongings. The fire occurred at five-thirty in the evening on a Friday. I was at the DMV getting my license throughout the event. Had it been any other day, I would have been upstairs in my room, the main location of the fire. My mother would have been downstairs, incapable of reaching me. What did it mean to be struck by lightning? My mind raced with thoughts of the possible outcome of this catastrophe. At Six-thirty, my father arrived at the site of what used to be our home. He sent a photograph of the remains to me. I stared at the vacuous expanse, speechless. This photograph was a diatribe, it lectured my materialism and punished me for my maudlin behavior. Everything that I had meticulously collected and curated was obliterated. Over the span of sixteen years I had photographed, cataloged, and journaled every event of my adolescence. On the car ride from the DMV to my sister’s apartment, I sat in the passenger seat mourning my home. Pedestrians blissfully frolicked down the sidewalks. For them it was just another Friday. Despite the sudden downpour of chaos I had endured, life went on.

I moved three times when I was sixteen. I had several addresses, but I suddenly felt like I had no home. The Webster dictionary definition of a home is, “the place where one lives permanently, especially as a member of a family or household.” This clearly was not the case for my house. It was not permanent, just flammable. I have made a lot of work regarding the fire, perhaps too much. However, I do not think that I am making art to overcompensate for the place I once called home. I am making art to remind myself that I am my own home. I am home.

My house was just a building full of things. It was only significant for the memories that it held, but I, a living breathing home, also hold those memories. My journals, scrapbooks, and art from childhood were all gone. However, I hold all of my memories within me. My memory is still here and no fire could rid me of my own mental capacity to remember significant events and things. I wrote many essays and poems in October regarding the fire that happened in September.

Now I am seventeen and it is April. I realize my house was just a collection of things. Some of which were sentimental, but most of the items could be replaced. Everything that I owned from my 18x20 inch paintings to my undeveloped disposable cameras was obliterated. My family and I; however, could not be. We lost a house, but we still had a home.

To exercise the newly acquired nomadism that came about as a result of losing a house, I spent a few days backpacking through Point Reyes with eleven of my classmates. After about twenty miles of hiking, many of my peers came to the conclusion that nature is not what they would perceive as home. "I feel like I have to be in survival mode constantly," said one student. I agreed. I could not feel at home because I was preoccupied with constant tick checks and frequent searches for poison ivy. Many students, such as myself aspire to achieve some form of nomadism. Not because we want to abandon our homes, but because we want to see new horizons and live simply.

Nomads, or Nomadic People, travel frequently with few belongings. They travel without a permanent destination in mind. There are several types of nomads, such as hunter-gatherers, pastoral nomads, and peripatetic nomads¹. Hunter-gatherers travel as a means of obtaining food. As their source of food and water travels, they follow. Pastoral nomads and hunter-gatherers are fairly similar in the sense that they both move as they harvest to attain food. Rather than just following their source of food, pastoral nomads raise their livestock and travel with their livestock for plant life and game. Peripatetic nomads dwell in more urban settings. They go where ever work is available. In a way, I suppose I am a peripatetic nomad. I travel frequently when the opportunity arises. Oxbow has become a home to me. I will carry it with me. Oxbow was available to me and I took the leap (perhaps gracefully stumbled upon the opportunity is a more accurate recollection).

The Roma are a group of nomadic people that move constantly by horses and wagons, caravans or carts. Despite no permanent residency or nation-state, Roma people are rich in culture². From their unwritten language to their zealous music, the culture lies in its ambiguity and pride. Roma culture has influenced Western music and fashion. Roma culture is a miscellany of influences from a plethora of European and Asian countries³. The diversity and idiosyncrasies of Romani culture manifests in their constant migration.

Much like the Roma, The Drop City Collective was a motley of traveling people. The Drop City Collective was a commune of artists founded in 1962 and became "the world's first geodesic ghost town" by 1973. University of Kansas in Lawrence students, Gene Bernofsky, Jo Ann Bernofsky and Clark Richert, founded the counterculture movement of Drop Art. Drop Art can be found dangling off the side of a building or "the rooftop of a oft space."⁴ The concept of Drop Art was inspired by the geodesic domes created by Buckminster Fuller. The buildings and installations created by The Droppers were entirely made of salvaged materials. The Droppers reached an international audience and influenced a new age of alternative communities and impromptu housing.

I do not think that home is a finite space. I carry it with me, much like a turtle would. I am certainly not suggesting that homelessness is easy or romanticizing homelessness; however, I am asking you to consider the unnecessary baggage that comes with a "permanent" home rather than a temporary shelter. Home does not need to be an address. If anything, the concept of a permanent home is naive and idealistic. Nothing is permanent and everything is changing.

¹ "Nomad." New World Encyclopedia. Media Wiki, 15 July 2015. Web. 21 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Nomad>>.

² Kearney, Seamus. "Who Are the Roma People?" Euro News. Right On programme, 30 Apr. 2012. Web. 21 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.euronews.com/2012/04/30/who-are-the-roma-people->>.

³ Kearney Seamus

⁴ Grossman, Joan. Drop City Doc. Pinball Films, n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.dropcitydoc.com/#!about/c10fk>>.

dwellers:

her:

*her entrance was grand
her ceiling was high
she had many doors
(that of which were strong yet welcoming)
she smelled familiar
she was warm as warm as her eyes kind
there was too much love in her
she was a home too many
she housed many memories and joy
her soul was old
but her heart was young
she was too young to die*

*good mourning
you left me under the bed in august
dragged me into the dark
shoveled away the dirt
and never hesitated to wake me up
and remind me that i'm not yours*

*salmon brick
aging tile
torn phonebooks
fake plants
70's yearbooks
bronze hardware
fire place*

*Let's run away
I don't have a home
I don't need a home when I'm with you
Farewell, darling
you loved me with your pier 1 curtains
and scratched floorboards
I didn't love you enough
I didn't love you when I had the chance*

*In awe of the divinity that is her touch
I stood still outside the corridors of her chest
fearing that my unschooled touch
would love her wrong
fearing that my loving her
would erode the foundation of her pillars
I retreated to my own dwelling*

With the passing of her Father

*I was borne into mothering my mother
in restoring the home that He built
I illuminated her cathedral's bleak foyer
I sire'd her house into a home
Her lonely edifice longed for a tenant
to reassure her of its purpose
in the refurbishment of faith
I crept from the fissures of her walls
to embellish its furnishings*

I don't think that I have quite received closure. It's been eight months since the fire. I feel more without a home than ever. Being away from "home" doesn't feel the same as it did before I moved. I am not returning to a house brimming with things I love and value. I am returning to a house with replacements for everything that I have ever loved. It's bigger, emptier. I don't know my neighbors anymore. I don't think I believe that I am home. I think that I am attempting to cope by becoming this shell of a person I once was, perhaps a shell-less version. I can't go back to "home." I have no choice but to keep making houses into homes. I have to keep going.

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