Small Vanities

Alexander Weinstock
Bard College, aw5745@bard.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2017

Part of the Photography Commons

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License.

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2017/253

This Open Access work is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been provided to you by Bard College's Stevenson Library with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this work in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@bard.edu.
“...the things that surround us are inseparable from who we are. The material objects we use are not just tools we can pick up and discard at our convenience; they constitute the framework of experience that gives order to our otherwise shapeless selves”

(Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton [16]).

Small vanities, then, are the pleasures derived from the interaction with these material objects. In the following photographs, this interactions occurs twice. First, as a conversation between myself (the photographer) and the subjects — their display and distribution of material items, coupled with their own sense of place within the home shape my view of them. Secondly though, there is a conversation between the viewer and the prints on the wall. While the subjects are displaying themselves alongside inanimate pieces to form a cohesive whole, the flattening and redistribution of this “information” then shapes the viewer’s understanding of both subjects and objects. Going forward, these pieces, framed and hung alongside the accoutrements already described will give even further meaning to this concept of social interaction between people and things.

In photographing material goods, the work is inherently tied to concepts of privilege, class, and a form of social hierarchy. However, what you see on the wall is not, in fact, an emblem of any of the aforementioned concepts, but a visual illusion. A recreation of the ideas themselves that the viewer alone can ascribe meaning to. What interests me is the second conversation I talked about above. How does the viewer’s relationship to these images imbue them with a further sense of power, or detract from it? The interaction with these images becomes a small vanity for the viewer themself.