PAR FOR THE COURSE

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Introduction

My first two vivid childhood memories occurred in 1963. They both took place in the front driveway of the cul-de-sac of my family’s 1950’s suburban home in Independence, Missouri. It was late November and I was two and a half years old. My mother was excited and planned to drive us to a nearby neighborhood where we would go door to door to find new customers for her Avon sales route. She carried me to the car in our driveway. I stood on the clear, plastic-covered front seat of our new Corvair, and I wondered why we just sat in the car and didn’t move. My mother had turned the ignition key when the announcement blared over the radio. Then there was complete silence, followed by an unfamiliar and frightening expression on her face. Mother shrieked and hugged the steering wheel with her polka dot gloves and wept hysterically. She didn’t even bother to remove her matching scarf from her stiff, hair sprayed wig. President John F. Kennedy had just been shot.

My second memory is from the following summer. My father had just poured a new, smooth driveway a few days before and I was excited to ride on it with my shiny, red tricycle. As I began to pedal, something black and mysterious landed on the handle bar. I grabbed it before it flew away, and quickly discovered the pain of a wasp sting. Leaping off the tiny vehicle, I bolted indoors screaming bloody murder. My mother whisked me up onto her cherry print apron, and plopped me onto the red Formica kitchen counter. She immediately kissed my hand and applied Arm and Hammer baking soda to my wound. My father, sitting at the kitchen table, was waiting to be served his lunch. Disappointed, he grumbled, “Boys don’t cry.”

These memories of my parents acting out their traditional gender roles as the breadwinning, unemotional husband/father and the doting, compassionate, housewife/mother became fodder for my graduate thesis work. This paper will discuss my thesis exhibition par for the course, an idiom that Webster’s dictionary describes as meaning “not unusual” or “normal.”1 I created par for the course as an ironic fabrication of Cold War domestic containment culture based upon a fear of marginality, a construction of “normalcy” through a false sense of reality, and a

questioning of the pressure to conform to prescriptive gender roles.\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Par for the course} explores the ironic “game” my family and multitudes of other families thought they had to “play.” The interactive challenges of the “game” made the American dream for many families nearly warp into a surrealistic nightmare as a result of the constraints of domestic containment culture.

The American dream fostered gender roles of “normalcy” as a means of promoting and securing the American lifestyle of capitalistic abundance and prosperity and as a means of warding off the threat of communism. The female and male traditional roles were embedded throughout advertisement, television, church dogma and school instruction. At home, mothers taught their daughters how to cook, sew and keep house while fathers taught their sons how to fix and build things and play sports. Popular sociologists, such as the author Dr. Spock, suggested girls play with dolls to emulate their mothers and boys play with toy cars to emulate their fathers.\textsuperscript{3} Gender roles thus were taught at an early age. Indifference by the parents or their children or blatant violation of prescriptive roles created problems for those who could not, or chose not, to conform. My mother and I did not conform. She wished to work outside the home and I preferred dolls to sports. Mother and I were among multitudes of nonconformists “threatening” the security of the American lifestyle. In my thesis exhibit, I portray this “game” of domestic containment culture through the lens of one of America’s favorite family past time of that era: miniature golf.

\begin{center}
\textit{Putt Your Money Where Your Mouth Is}
\end{center}

Mini golf, an absurd mimicry of the sport of golf itself, is used to manifest the artificiality and false sense of reality of Cold War domestic containment culture. Golf was traditionally an elite sport that allowed the affluent white middle class to separate itself from lower social classes, and golf became popular with prosperous

\begin{footnotes}
\end{footnotes}
businessmen in the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{4} Modeling the courses and clubhouses after British aristocratic gardens and manor houses, golf in America connected itself to the upper class. Originally, American miniature golf mirrored elitism with the first course modeled after the Tuileries Gardens at the Louvre.\textsuperscript{5} As golf became the gentrified businessmen’s sport, the diminutive mini golf became a game that was less exclusive and readily accepted women. Since it was considered rude for women to lift their arms above their shoulders in public, the putting of mini golf was more ladylike.\textsuperscript{6} Women were said to excel at putting since the motion was similar to sweeping and mini golf became the rage of the 20’s in America.\textsuperscript{7} The game died out with the Great Depression due to lack of discretionary money for entertainment. Mini golf remerged in 1956 with the growth of the suburbs. In 1956, Congress passed the Interstate Highway Act to cover the cost of 41,000 miles of national highway. New highways led the white middle class to the fast growing homogenous, gentrified suburbs. These highways became quickly equipped with roadside attractions including a family game with tacky, kitschy obstacles renamed “wacky golf”, “goofy golf”, or “crazy golf.” According to author and historian Jonathon Haeber, “Miniature golf had become a reflection of history, economy, and society all at once.”\textsuperscript{8}

\textit{Tastes Like Chicken, Nearly 10\% Real Juice!}

Miniature golf served multiple economic and sociopolitical roles that helped make artificiality acceptable and desirable. Mini golf mimicked the artificial promise of security that Americans accepted and desired. Americans thought they would achieve security by conforming to, among other things, prescriptive gender

\textsuperscript{7} Margolies, 41.
\textsuperscript{8} Haeber.
roles. The postwar American dream of fulfillment through prosperity and the security promise of capitalism camouflaged the looming fear of communism. The fear of the atom bomb and communism mushroomed into an internal threat, while capitalism and domestic containment culture created a false sense of security in the American dream. In *Homeward Bound*, author Elaine Tyler May reveals how the tense relationship between the United States and Russia during the Cold War connected political and familial values. May states,

“They wanted secure jobs, secure homes, and secure marriages in a secure country. Security would enable them to take advantage of the fruits of prosperity and peace that were, at long last, available. And so they adhered to an overarching principle that would guide them in their personal and political lives: containment. Containment was the key to security.”

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*This Plastic Bag Is Not A Toy*

My interactive sculptural installation *par for the course* portrays the challenges and repercussions of defying the expected gender roles of domestic containment culture. The viewer/player in *par for the course* expects to hit the ball into the cup of each hole. But, I purposefully made the course extremely challenging, if not impossible, to play. By doing so, I have magnified the artificiality of miniature golf by conflating competition to the point of absurdity. This unrealistic competition mirrors the artificiality and difficulty of prescriptive roles. The obstacles of each hole in my installation symbolize the challenges many people like my mother and me faced. My father is “absent” from the holes, his role being the stoic male, only interacting when a harsher disciplinary action was needed for the children. The first hole represents my mother’s rebellion against her role of the dutiful housewife. The second hole symbolizes my refusal to fit into the mold of a typical boy. The last hole ends with the self-torture and judgment central to American domestic containment cultural constraints.

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10 May, 13.
As viewers first approach the gallery, they can observe that the gallery windows have been covered with plastic food wrap and glitter. I used see-through plastic because it was a popular domestic product invented post World War II. The crumpled plastic wrap and glitter also distort reality and one's understanding of what is outdoor/indoor, visible/invisible, as well as creating an atmospheric containment. The gallery becomes a separated, suffocating, claustrophobic entity, like a makeshift haunted house in an abandoned building (fig. 1). This atmosphere further peaks the viewer's curiosity of what is partially hidden.

I will now give a walk through of the interior of my installation with a short background, description, and explanation of each hole of my interactive mini golf course.
Hole # 1: The Kitsch(en) Debate

Entering into the installation *par for the course*, the viewer is immediately confronted with two structures. The first structure is the “front desk,” created from discarded refrigerator doors and bed frames. The front desk houses a worker/volunteer wearing a casual uniform. Attached to the front desk is the plastic interior of a refrigerator door providing pencils, scorecards, and golf balls covered with lint. In front of the front desk is a golf bag housing golf clubs made from ironing board legs (fig. 2).

Adjacent to the front desk is the second structure resembling a small house (figs. 3 & 4). The house is created out of discarded kitchen appliances and ironing boards. A fabricated, suspended drawbridge functions as an Astroturf fairway at the entrance of the home. This “fairway” connects to a small square refrigerator door that is covered with Astroturf. The Astroturf covered door is on the floor in front of the house and the word “WELCOME” is cut out of the artificial grass. This welcome mat has a miniature kitchen stove from a dollhouse with a golf tee affixed to the tiny stove (fig. 5). My intention was to entice the viewer, at this point, to begin to really question whether or not they think the installation is actually a playable game of mini golf. I hoped the viewer would feel like a forced participant in the “game,” mirroring the pressure of fitting into prescriptive gender roles. I wondered if the viewer would help him or herself to the golf equipment, or ask the front desk volunteer. Would viewers “conform” to the unwritten rule of not touching objects in a gallery without asking, or conform to the expectations of what it means to be a player in mini-golf? I also intended for the viewer to be a little apprehensive about how to play the game and whether or not it was possible or perhaps expected to step onto the drawbridge and enter the tiny house.

The house in my installation references a home similar to the one my parents purchased. Like the majority of those moving to the suburbs, my parents were able to obtain a single-family home through the aid of government policy, the G.I. Bill. They settled in the middle of the United States, in Independence, Missouri, a suburb of Kansas City. Independence is where President Truman retired after dropping the atom bomb, where the Santa Fe, California, and Oregon trails met before heading
West, and where the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints predict the second coming of Christ will occur. With my father a successful breadwinner at a large corporation, and my mother a full-time homemaker of a middle class suburban home, they were now living the American postwar dream of prosperity and supporting their country's political agenda.

My parent’s American postwar dream is represented in my installation by a fabricated, life size suburban dollhouse with a fenced backyard. The foundation of this “dollhouse” is created from discarded kitchen appliances, including oven and refrigerator doors. The materials reference Vice President Nixon’s debate with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev at the opening of the American National Exhibition in Moscow in 1959. This interchange became known as the “kitchen debate” as Nixon and Khrushchev did not focus on rockets or missiles, but on modern appliances and gender roles for the family.\textsuperscript{11} Nixon stated that domestic consumer goods were the most meaningful measure of American superiority over the Soviet Union, making life easier for American women while Khrushchev argued that Russian women were less concerned with being feminine and worked harder to show their superiority. Khrushchev stated that American homes are only built to last twenty years, while Russian homes are built firmly for the future. Nixon retaliated, stating that American systems take advantage of new technologies and those new homes and appliances will be obsolete in twenty years.\textsuperscript{12}

In my fabricated golf course, the home is likewise built out of discarded appliances crudely attached together to reveal their short life and disposability. The house has window boxes made from refrigerator door interiors that are filled with artificial flowers. They reveal the false security of the suburban home as a defense from outside forces amidst artificial flora and fauna. I have purposefully put quotation marks around the “kitchen debates” in this paper and misspelled the

\textsuperscript{11} May, 16.
\textsuperscript{12} May, 164.
phrase as the name of the first hole. The Kitsch(en) debate thus mirrors the ridiculousness and emptiness of ideals that the historical debates reveal, leveling the debates to the artificiality of mini golf itself. My fabricated home represents the irony of Nixon’s claims that new technology would provide happiness. The structure reveals the feeling of transgression that occurs as the American dream fails. The house also exposes the clutter and represents what these discarded appliances have left behind.

On approach, the exterior of the house appears inviting, intended to attract the viewer like the confectionary house that Hansel and Gretel stumble upon containing a cannibalistic witch. I over-decorated the house with artificial ivy, flowers, and butterflies to the point of being lowbrow or kitschy, complete with a welcome mat. An artificial moat and a drawbridge to the house give it a sense of false fortification. The viewer can see that once they have chosen a golf ball and club from the adjacent front desk, they will tee off from an orange track on the Astroturf welcome mat. The viewer/player must immediately begin obeying the house “patriarchal” rule by placing a foot on the drawbridge of the man’s castle. Depressing the drawbridge allows the tracks from the welcome mat to the fairway/drawbridge to connect. The player can now putt the ball into the home. The goal is visible. The connected track is a Mattel brand Hot Wheels boy’s toy car track leading a direct path into the suburban home through a handmade faux wedding cake. On the other side of the “cake” is a dustpan that is labeled as the first hole (fig. 6). The track leading in a straight shot to the dustpan, forces all players to assume the female role of housekeeping. People generally expect the first hole of mini golf to be easy, just as they assume being “just a housewife” is easy. Yet, as the ball is hit into the dustpan, it is shot back out at you. The ball does not want to be there, but does not know where to go. The rejected ball has left the player trapped. Even though this hole should result in a par of one, there is no score, no normalcy achieved, and no one is winning. It becomes an endless game of failure, the player enticed by the “easy” path into the dollhouse/castle.

The artificial moat and drawbridge juxtapose the clichés “a woman’s place is in the home” and “a man’s home is his castle.” For the man, the home was a place of
leisurely solace, an escape from the stress of work in the realm of freedom. His authority and rule was unquestioned, his decisions absolute. For the woman, the home was both altar and prison. The home contained consumer goods, sex, children, and intimacy. But, it also contained obligatory occupational roles such as “early childhood educator, counselor, cook, nurse, housekeeper, manager, and chauffeur”. For many women, this became a source of stress and discontentment, and with nowhere to go, the frustration remained in the home. In par for the course, the house itself becomes a prison. The player is forced to bend down and conform to the low ceiling of recycled ironing boards and is surrounded by two trap doors made from baby crib springs. Likewise, my mother’s home became a trap for her because of her desire to work outside the home and her boredom with housework.

As the dustpan rejects the player’s ball (like my mother rejected housework), the ball is shot into the interior of the home. The player loses control of the ball as it is shot into an array of confusion. On the right side of the dustpan, is a photograph of my parents as newlyweds amidst an assortment of cookie cutters from my childhood, and a suburban cul-de-sac of house-shaped kitchen canisters (fig. 7). The canisters and cookie cutters represent the conformity of a housewife’s role as well as standardized suburban housing. On the left side of the dustpan, is a heap of tiny shopping carts piled vertically in disarray (fig. 8). On the top of the carts nests a birdcage with a taxidermy specimen of a bird inside amidst scattered dollhouse furniture (fig. 9). These carts, cages, bird and strewn dollhouse furniture represents my mother’s feelings of transgression toward being an imperfect housewife. The sugar cookies made from the adjacent cookie cutters mirror my mother’s futile attempts at perfection. Although they resemble the shape of the cutters in the beginning, they quickly become unrecognizable figures and begin to look more like vomit.

The birdcage with the dollhouse furniture strewn inside quotes artist Laurie

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14 May, 185.
Simmons’s early work, *The Black Series* (1976-78) and *The Interior Series* (1978), where she replicated and photographed a 1950’s home as a dollhouse. The dolls were posed among tiny kitchenwares and furniture (fig. 10). These images recall nostalgia for the 1950’s suburban childhood and idealized motherhood, but the dolls are alone and surrounded only by objects, emitting a feeling of isolation. The doll is a false human and the dollhouse a false home, rejecting the idea of comfort and instead revealing a consumer society in which items cannot fulfill our emptiness.\(^\text{15}\) Simmons states,

“I was simply trying to recreate a feeling, a mood, from the time that I was growing up: a sense of the fifties that I knew was both beautiful and lethal at the same time...I think a kind of play acting was going on, setting up these things, that was less about the act of playing and more about the re-creation of a sense of visual memory.”\(^\text{16}\)

I have elaborated on Simmons’s concept of isolation, and despair by replacing the dollhouse with a house-shaped, rusting birdcage. The birdcage/home becomes a layered trap within the trap. Like Simmons, I have also upset gender politics by challenging the idea of suburbia as a housewife’s paradise. The plastic dollhouse furniture in both of our works represents the artificiality of playing house. Simmons’ dolls in her early work and my caged bird in my installation are trapped and surrounded by appliances and consumerism.

The caged bird in my installation is also stuffed, like one of Norman Bate’s taxidermy birds in his motel office in Alfred Hitchcock’s 1960’s classic movie, *Psycho*. Norman’s mother is meanwhile dead and preserved like a stuffed bird herself, staring as a sentinel from the window. Mother is forever trapped as a false symbol of security for Norman, even becoming a metaphor for the house itself, a

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dead caged bird. The house surrounding the first hole in *par for the course* has similarly become a trap for my mother as it was for many women of that era. The battle of the “kitsch(en) wars” has been lost. The player must finally give up on the first hole, pick up the ball and open the back door to move on to the second hole.
Hole #2: If the Shoe Fits, Beware It

The player continues to hole # 2 via the backdoor into the backyard. The backyard is where suburban children normally play and feel secure. But, this yard appears troubling. It is encompassed by a white picket fence. But the fence is rickety, uneven and unstable and assembled from battered ironing boards. The tattered domestic fence represents the reliance on the fortitude of motherhood in the atomic age. In 1946, major journals stated that increasing the birthrate was considered to be a woman’s civil duty and motherhood considered a demonstration of national goals.17 The arms race had become a race to procreate. If women adhered to their domestic roles they would rear children that would avoid “juvenile delinquency and homosexuality, stay in school and become future scientists and experts to defeat the Russians in the Cold War,” states author Elaine Tyler May in *Homeward Bound*.18

It was the consensus by an abundance of high-level government officials as well as influential leaders in industry, medicine, science and psychology that Communism and sexual deviance went hand in hand.19 In 1950, the Senate issued a report on the *Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government*, claiming that even “one homosexual can pollute an entire Government office.”20 This made homosexuals a threat to national security, causing a mass “lavender scare.”

I have portrayed this “lavender scare” in the backyard of my installation by creating a glittered, lavender lawn. I adorned the lawn with moving laser lights. At first the lawn seems enchanting, but soon evokes the panicky feeling of a wallflower asked to dance on an empty dance floor in a crowded room. The once calming backyard eerily begins to mock Mother Nature. Plastic native birds of Missouri are placed throughout the yard. The birds are triggered to sing by motor sensors and

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17 May, 137.
18 May, 109.
19 May, 96.
20 May, 97.
are surrounded by artificial butterflies, flora and fauna. The player can see the flowers and plants are growing like semi-controlled weeds. The flowers are growing through discarded refrigerator doors or through artificial cupcakes created from torched spray foam. The tins of cupcakes are sprouting household gadgets. The burnt cupcakes mimic my mother’s fear of her prescribed role of the housewife/mother (fig. 11). The cupcakes are a rather menacing and dangerous “warning” that she must set a good example for her children. In 1950, anti-Communist officials and leaders instilled a fear in American mothers of creating abnormalities through their guidance. Neglected children “became” criminals and overbearing mothers “created” sons that were effeminate, weak “perverts.”

Labeling consensual adult same-sex relationships in the same category with violent criminals who raped and murdered children, Republican Party national chairman Guy Gabrielson claimed that these “perverts” were as “dangerous” and “feared” as Communists.

Hiding behind the “dangerous” and “menacing” cupcakes of the blooming foliage of the backyard are tableaus of dissimilar cupcakes. These “perverted” cupcakes are the representation of the fears of the “lavender scare.” Their glittered artificial frosted “heads” and “bodies” are made out of spray foam with fabricated “legs” from Mattel brand Ken dolls (fig. 12). The frosted cupcakes are kneeling, mounting, and fisting each other, possibly performing fellatio or lewd mysterious sexual acts. The cupcakes appear to have ejaculated their glittered frosting like bodily fluids all over each other in partially hidden tableaus.

Homosexuality became one of the worst of crimes within a containment culture that saw the human body as the national body. Any sexual deviation outside of that heterosexual marriage became an attack on the American way of life. Homosexuality was thought to be a communicable disease spread by Communists to destroy the nation internally because homosexuals could escape detection like Communists by blending in with “normal” people. Likewise, the “perverted”

\[\text{21 May, 96.}\]
cupcakes I created seem contagious themselves. The cupcakes are like an out of control fungus in an orgy of infectious frosting. They are a growing disease that is secretly overpowering the lavender glittered lawn.

Overhead in the backyard of the mini golf course hang two sets of clothesline with poles fabricated from ironing board legs. The sky is cluttered with dirty laundry airing out on the line. Vintage tea towels from my grandmother and great aunt are noticeably worn, ripped and filthy. The upside down crocheted hand towels begin to take on phallic shapes as they hang next to tea towels with roosters or “cocks” printed upon them. There is also a partially hidden adult-sized pair of men’s underwear painted like a sock monkey’s bottom. The underwear cradles a baby doll as it hangs from the clothing line. More hidden objects on the clotheslines reveal unidentifiable sock monkey doll parts. The red wool area on the sock is no longer representing the mouth and bottom of a child’s handcrafted monkey, but rather alludes to sexual deviance by revealing something resembling plush gonads, yarne pubic hair and vaginal lips (fig. 13).

The sock monkeys reiterate artist Mike Kelley’s 1989 Manly Craft series. We have both chosen materials that are often unconventional “low art” crafts. In Kelley’s piece entitled Manly Craft # 5 (fig. 14), he shaped phalluses out of yarn octopi dolls. The dolls appear somewhere between cuddly and perverse. The flaccidity of the yarn contrasts with the erectness of the dolls making them reject all conventional gender categories.23 Likewise, in Kelley’s piece Estral Star #2 (fig.15), Kelley sews two sock monkeys together at the crotch. The sock monkeys were purchased from thrift stores, their dirt emphasizing a seediness that alludes to a discarded and filthy past.24 Both Kelley and I have used the familiarity of


handmade children’s toys to emphasize their intimacy. We have both used dirty familiar objects to exaggerate their goal of disturbance as we “play” with gender and the uneasiness of a grown man not only manipulating dolls, but also sexualizing them as well. I have elaborated Kelley’s play with gender with my “sexually deviant” sock monkeys. My monkeys discretely flaunt their “genitalia” from the clothesline like a trench coat flasher to an unsuspecting mother sitting on a public park bench.

The monkeys “hide” playfully hanging in the backyard above the Astroturf path to hole #2. The tee of hole #2 is highly visible, but the cup is only partially visual. The player must hit the ball onto a Hot Wheels track and bump the ball off of a large, rusting birdcage. The birdcage contains a vintage Kenner brand EZ Bake Oven toy lit with red precautionary, glowing lights. Several headless, nude Mattel brand Barbie dolls seem to fly about the enclosed cage and taunt the viewer (fig. 16). A Mattel brand Ken doll casually sits outside and on top of the cage. The Ken doll is wearing pants, and pulling apart a poultry wishbone that has Barbie pumps over the “feet” of the bone. Ken’s head is replaced with a burnt cupcake. An eggbeater protrudes out of the cupcake and a vintage Barbie head is positioned inside the eggbeater (fig. 17).

After the player banks the golf ball against the Barbie/birdcage bumper on the course, the cup for the ball in the course is only partially visible under a pair of refrigerator doors that are hinged together. The first door must be opened to putt the ball into the cup. On the outside of the door are refrigerator magnets. In bright colors, I purposely misspelled “NO FORNICAKING” horizontally while vertically transparent letters spell “FAGGOTS.” The magnets act as judgments of the “lavender scare” against the “perverted” cupcake tableaus. Adjacent to the magnets are children’s drawings of little boys crying blood. Once the door of the refrigerator with the magnets is opened, sandwiched inside is a mold of a generic boy cut from the foam (fig. 18). This boy mold signifies the pressure of having to conform to a specific role. Relinquishing the boy’s wish for Barbies and EZ Bake Ovens and settling for Hot Wheels cars and tracks prescribed rules, “success,” becomes achievable as two artificial sensor birds sing to mock the victory. The player must now grab the ball and head toward hole #3.
Hole #3: Don’t Ask, Don’t Teletubby

Even with the threat of the “lavender scare” overtaking the backyard, the player can see their escape to the third hole. The third hole is in a cage within a cage. The player has evolved from the rebellious dutiful housewife of hole #1 into the defiant boy refusing the gendered mold of hole #2, and now must face the judgment and self-torture in response to his or her nonconformity at hole #3. The player must enter a large human-scaled cage and putt the ball into a small house-shaped birdcage. The doorway to the third hole is fabricated from crib parts and positioned at the far end of the backyard. Three plush *Tinky Winky Teletubby* toys are attached to the frame of the entrance and project like low relief sculptures. They are manipulated into the positions of “see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil” in self-defense. *Tinky Winky* became particularly controversial in 1999 when Reverend Jerry Fallwell claimed that this particular *Teletubby* character promoted secret homosexual coding because it was lavender with a triangle emblazoned on its forehead, spoke with a male voice and carried a red handbag.25 Falwell’s homophobic judgment tried to instill fear in parents that the toy possessed homosexual identification and influence and should therefore be removed from the marketplace.

Below the *Teletubbies* is an American eagle plush doll bearing a sign saying, “squeeze me.” When the doll is squeezed though, the player realizes the American eagle is just a costume for the *Barney* toy that is embedded inside. The transformed eagle now sings the popular, “I love you, you love me, we’re a happy family, with a great big hug and a kiss from me to you, won’t you say you love me too?” *Barney and Friends* has also been scrutinized by conservative Christian groups for its purported homosexual coding with claims similar to those levied against the *Teletubby* character.26 *Barney* is purple and “overly friendly” to children,

supposedly promoting homosexuality. Although *Barney* and *Tinky Winky* are not from the 50’s or 60’s, they depict the continuing propaganda of the “lavender scare” into the present day. This is pervasive in children’s toys, but also throughout American culture even in military policy. Homophobic propaganda is obvious in the original suggestion, “Don’t ask, Don’t tell, Don’t seek, Don’t flaunt” by U.S. sociologist Charles Moskos for the military policy later coined “Don't ask, Don't tell.” From 1993 to 2011 the policy required homosexuals serving the American armed forces to keep their sexuality hidden or risk a dishonorable discharge if they did not conform. The policy just recently repealed was enforced for seventeen years. It required homosexuals serving in the American armed forces to keep their sexuality hidden. It was patriotic to kill for your country, but a crime to choose whom you love. If discovered, the offender faced a court martial with dishonorable discharge. Dishonorable discharge once again placed homosexuals in a group typically used for murderers, rapists, thieves, and deserters.  

The representation of the challenge of not conforming to these pervasive signals continues in the third hole as the player enters the doorway of the crib and is forced to crouch into a human-scaled cage made out of rusted bedsprings from adult sized beds (fig. 19). The player must then step up onto the bouncy platform of a refrigerator door covered with Astroturf that rests on top of two rusted bedsprings. The final judgment of the player/nonconformist begins. Now inside, the player can see the third hole. There is a number three tee with an orange *Hot Wheels* track attached to the top of a crutch which is bent into a circular shape, spoofing the notion of the handicap in golf (fig. 20). A golf handicap is a number that is used to regulate the scores so players of different proficiency can equally compete. It estimates the number of strokes a player is able to shoot relative to par.  

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There is actually no handicap in this mini golf game; all players have their skills equally challenged suggesting that the player is not alone in their futile attempts at par. Likewise, history has shown that transgressors like my mother and I were not alone with our challenges. We just felt alone due to the isolating mechanisms of the containment propaganda. Relief from the isolation and internalized judgment appears as a glowing exit sign inside the human-scale cage, with the intention that the player will realize there is hope of eventual alleviation from their oppression. With books like *The Feminine Mystique*, by Betty Friedan (1963), women realized that they were not alone in their despair. Friedan suggests that women might have fallen victim to a belief system that identified them through the lives of their husbands and children.\(^{30}\) Likewise, Dr. Alfred Kinsey’s books, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*\(^ {31}\) (1948), and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*\(^ {32}\) (1953), offered new information on the common sexual behavior of men and women. The Kinsey reports included information that homosexual sex and “sexual deviance” was indeed more common than the general public thought.

But public judgment continues with a vengeance. This ongoing judgment is represented not only in the open cage structure of the third and final hole but in the triggering of chaotic motion sensors as the player enters that cage. The structure comes alive as strings of red lights begin flashing warnings, twenty birds set off by motor sensor chirp fervently as they blankly stare. An erratic laser light dances across the bedsprings like the electrical storm awaiting the monster in Dr.


Frankenstein’s laboratory.

The small birdcage hanging inside, which houses the hole, also comes to life. Its hot pink chain is attached to the bedspring roof. The bottom of the birdcage is attached to a faded, vintage, kneeling body of a plastic Christmas lawn ornament. The ornament is a headless, praying Virgin Mary aglow from within (fig. 20). Inside the little birdcage, harsher, chaotic judgment occurs. A vintage dollhouse stove inside contains a wildly flashing strobe light. In front of the miniature stove, on a perch inside the birdcage, is yet a smaller birdcage. This smaller, inner birdcage is heart-shaped. Inside the heart-shaped birdcage sits a stuffed taxidermy specimen of a mejiro bird strapped to a miniature electric chair (fig. 21). It appears as if the mejiro is being shocked from the stove with strobe lights. The dead mounted mejiro is the same species as the singing twenty plastic sensor birds behind it.

As flashing lights and bird chirping continues, the player must hit the ball from the tee across a track in mid-air and into the house-shaped birdcage to successfully complete hole #3. So while the hole appears to be easy, it is in fact quite difficult. The ball can easily fall off the track into the open trap below and be lost forever in the bedspring floor of the human cage. If successful, the player’s ball falls into the Virgin’s body also making it irretrievable for the player. Either way, the game is over and the player is left crouching in a multi-caged environment. The plastic mejiros continue to sing, the lights continue to flash warnings, the stuffed mejiro continues to be electrocuted and still stares blankly at the player. As the drama of the game resides, the player’s visibility and vulnerability by those outside of the cage begins to be understood. Through the bedsprings everyone can watch the player’s struggle as they likely fail to make the hole since the floor is wobbling from the bedsprings and the tee is on the crutch in mid-air. The singing mejiros judge the bird of the same species being electrocuted in the heart-shaped birdcage like hurtful gossip overheard from a “friend.” The headless Virgin Mary prays for the player’s sins as a soft sound of golf clapping seems to mock the player’s attempts to score.

The player is further judged by me as an animated conflation of both the judgment of normalization and the embodiment of my childhood history that used humor and fantasy as a coping mechanism to mask reality. Dressed in a polka dot-
themed outfit-- a combination of the caterpillar's mushroom in *Alice in Wonderland* and an overgrown female munchkin from *The Wizard of Oz*, on multiple occasions I performatively sat outside the human cage (fig. 22). As players made attempts at the third hole, I sought to make the player mess up. When they were concentrating on their golf stroke, I tried distracting them by giggling loudly in harassment. My sarcastic laughter judged and disoriented the player with irony and humor, it was as if the installation itself had come alive and mocked the players as they finished the game. I intended the player to agonize over the absurdity of the pressure of my psychotic giggling and their need to concentrate on a ridiculously challenging game.

Artificiality evolved into reality as I represented the strange new status quo, reversing my own history of marginality as I became the judge of “normalcy.” My outfit was also highly and deviantly sexualized. It had a lavender plastic “cocksickle” hat positioned next to artificial birds and butterflies. I wore sunglasses created from dollhouse appliances. On the top right of the sunglasses, was the word BOY spelled out of refrigerator magnets. On the top left of the sunglasses was a wind up plastic, masturbating monkey with the head and hair of a blonde Barbie doll. My left shoe was made from “deviant” sock monkey genitalia. My right shoe was made from a black plush sheep doll stuffed inside a white plush sheep doll. Both shoes had toes I created by cutting a pair of women’s red glittered shoes in half and attaching the front of each shoe to my homemade shoes. The shoes represented my marginality as well as referenced Dorothy from Kansas after she ran away from home to a magical kingdom where she felt more accepted in the 1939 movie classic, *The Wizard of Oz*.

I laid on a nest of golden grass that was filled with fifty Barbie dolls, comfortably surrounded by mounds of clutter created from domestic appliance parts. Some of the discarded appliance parts were silkscreened with a lavender portrait of my family taken in 1963. Under the portrait was printed, “Ward, I’m worried about the Beaver.” This statement referenced my mother’s concerns about me, as well as the artificiality that characters like June Cleaver from the popular late 1950’s television show *Leave it to Beaver* expressed.

Amidst the chaos and judgment from multiple sources- the mechanical structure,
my own animation of lavender judgment, as well as from other players and onlookers passively watching- the player has to look around for the exit of the cage. The door is fabricated from old, rusty ironing board and leads abruptly from the uncertain floor of the bedsprings down to the floor of the gallery. The exit sign glows red and appears to be run by battery cables, but is in fact merely backlit. The metal rusted ironing board exit door is wrapped with a cord just like the red bulbs, but with the sockets empty and exposed. The intention is for the player to be a little concerned and unsure of their safety, wondering if they might be shocked and judged like the bird in the electric chair as they open the door to exit. But they are not and can safely, if precariously, step down to the gallery floor.
Conclusion

Having finished the third and final hole, the player is confronted by mounds of discarded kitchen appliance parts blocking the right exit path (fig. 23). Walking around the backside of the course, the shadows of the fence fill the gallery wall and dwarf the player (fig. 24). Even outside its structure, the course like Mrs. Kravitz, the nosy neighbor on the 1960’s television series Bewitched, still casts an ominous judgment upon the player. Mrs. Kravitz was always spying on the main character of the show, Mrs. Samantha Stevens. Samantha was born with special talents that Mrs. Kravitz didn’t possess. In her desperation to appease her husband’s fears of the couple appearing “abnormal”, Samantha tried to abstain from using her witchcraft and conceal her heritage. She denied her own special powers so that she could appear as a “normal” American housewife and avoid judgment.

Disparity and judgment are still inherent in our culture today, lingering from the prescriptive gender roles of domestic containment culture. Like the birds in the human-scale cage of my installation judging the bird of the same species, we remain our own judge and jury. The numerical majority remains the minority in terms of power and privilege with this ideology permeating the American occupational workforce. Although more women than men go to college, are in the workforce and run their own business, according to the Department of Labor 2007 statistics, women still only dominate industries and fields seen as “female.” Furthermore, two-thirds of American families rely on the mother’s salary as the dominant income. Even though the Equal Pay Act discriminating against gendered wages is now nearly fifty years old, females with the same occupation and education as males make a mere 77 cents to the male dollar. This ideology pervades politics as well. Michele

Bachmann recently quoted the Bible in her republican presidential candidacy campaign stating, “Wives submit yourselves to your husbands.”

Bachmann’s policies not only seek to re-establish the patriarchal ideologies of the immediate postwar culture, but also blatantly heterosexist ones. She wants to reinstate the offensive “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” military policy. This would once again liken homosexuals to the likes of “traitors” or “perverts.” Furthermore, homosexuals are still being blamed for being a threat to national safety and security. From the spread of Communism in the 50’s, to A.I.D.S. in the 80’s, homosexuals are often depicted in media as immoral, irresponsible traitors and transgressors. A man in Indiana was recently denied donating to a blood bank because he appeared to be homosexual. Just a couple of months ago, on Sept. 11, 2011, Oklahoma State Representative Sally Kern proclaimed, “Gays pose more of a threat than terrorism.” All of this is to say that the history of a repressive normalization of American family values continues and needs more than ever to be ironically challenged by my chaotic lavender environment.

With par for the course I intended to explore and reveal how and why Americans got to the point of electing someone that spews hate like Sally Kern, are considering Michelle Bachmann for president, or might be re-introducing a policy like “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” Most of all, on a personal level I wanted an explanation of why parents that love me so dearly and say they are proud of me, still don’t want the neighbors they despise to know I’m gay. I found the answer to all this and more in exploring what I consider the core of American Cold War domestic containment culture: denial, denial, denial.

35 Colossians 3:18.
My family, like many other families, is always pretending things are not the way they are, falsifying reality to the point of absurdity for fear of being marginalized. My family constructed an appearance of a cookie cutter lifestyle on the outside, while so much chaos was happening within. My mother didn’t want others to see her as a failed housewife or mother. Nevertheless, she longed to work outside the home and lovingly raised a homosexual child, two practices that threatened the American ideology of domestic containment and challenged gender prescriptions. My mother’s denial of my homosexuality and disinterest in housekeeping resulted in her developing hoarding behaviors. She even went shopping and purchased in bulk calling it “her therapy.” The clutter slowly took over our lives and incited daily fights between my parents. Her guilt about having an untidy home prompted her to stop allowing visitors in the house. Mother finally was able to get out of the house and work by opening a thrift store. But, in accepting daily donations from strangers, she simply fed her hoarding impulse, filling four apartments in one of their rental properties, along with the basement and garage. My brother moved into the rental property, moved the excess into four large storage units then gutted the apartments making it one house. Yet, ten years later the walls are still just framework because he wants to replace every nail in the foundation to make sure they are all the same, even though they will never be seen once they are covered with drywall.

I began to wonder if I was mirroring my family’s behaviors of denial when I began working on *par for the course*. I started collecting material near my apartment in Honolulu that I had noticed was being discarded on a weekly, if not daily, basis. I found the repetition of the domestic appliances and the material interesting. As I began filling up one, two, and then three studios, I started relating it to my mother’s embarrassing hoarding tendencies and wondered if I was repeating her behavior. I realized that where we diverged was in my conscious creation of meaning out of this impulse. I was trying to expose and share my emotions and history through my materials, while my mother was using her clutter to deny and bury her subconscious thoughts and feelings. My “chaos” and excess was a purposeful attempt to reflect on the psychological and societal conditions of this behavior.

*Par for the course* was a search for clarity amidst the clutter of artificiality.
that I felt was blurring part of American history as well as my own biography. I found that I was judging and blaming my family and society, just as I felt my family and society was judging me. I realize that my parents, my brother and myself, despite our nonconformist behavior, were and are victims of domestic containment culture. This realization has allowed me to accept and better know myself, my family and how the American ideology of domestic normalcy functions. I felt so guilty as I was constructing *par for the course*. I kept wondering if I was disrespecting the people I love most by airing dirty family laundry. But, I finally realized that it was everyone’s laundry, not just my own.
Figure 1: Plastic wrapped gallery windows

Figure 2: Front desk with golf clubs
Figure 3: Signage/ House front view

Figure 4: House with welcome mat and drawbridge (overview)

Figure 5: Tee #1
Figure 6: Faux Wedding Cake w/track into dustpan (hole#1)

Figure 7: Cookie cutters, canisters, wedding picture, vomit cookies
Figure 8: Shopping carts, birdcage

Figure 9: Stuffed bird with scattered dollhouse appliances
Figure 10: Laurie Simmons, *Woman/Purple dress/Kitchen* (1978)

Figure 11: Dangerous, menacing cupcakes
Figure 12: Fornicakes (perverted cupcakes)

Figure 13: Laundry line with deviant sock monkeys
Figure 14: Mike Kelly, *Manly Crafts* #5, 1989

Figure 15: Mike Kelly, Estral Star #2, 1989

Figure 16: Birdcage/bumper with *EZ bake oven* and flying *Barbies*
Figure 17: *Ken* doll on top of birdcage/bumper with wishbone

Figure 18: Fridge doors with mold of boy (hole #2)
Figure 19: Cage entrance to hole #3
Figure 20: Tee #3

Figure 21: Stuffed bird in electric chair
Figure 23: Blocked exit

Figure 24: Shadows
Bibliography


