

# Oikos



Issue 1, Summer 2015

# Oikos

Issue 1, Summer 2015  
CONTENTS

12  
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

14  
MASTHEAD

16  
GUESTS

18  
GOLD TURNED YELLOW  
Dena Yago

19  
THE SALTED EARTH  
Dena Yago

20  
SOLSTICE  
*Family Vacation*

22  
DINER'S CLUB  
*Consommé, Shiitake, Gigante Beans*

28  
BODY WORK  
*Presentation and pleasure*  
Olivia Henry

32  
METHODS  
*Speculative contraceptive ads*

40  
CULT CLASSICS  
*Radiance boosting technology*

46  
SAUNA  
*Very sweaty, very toxin free*  
An interview with  
Lili Huston-Herterich

58  
CE JOUR-CI CHEZ MADAME  
GERTRUDE  
*One sleeping pill with a cup of milk*  
Jennyfer Haddad



Marzena Abrahamik

66  
AMATEUR BOTANIST  
*Almost a full year living in Los Angeles*  
Natalie Smith

78  
HOROSCOPES  
*Romance and art are the keys today*  
Ria Roberts

90  
A L'OUEST  
*The pose, the props, a drink or a smoke*  
Marzena Abrahamik

106  
ADAPTOGENIC LATTE  
*Quick to make and deeply beneficial*  
Ria Roberts

132  
RESOURCES

134  
WHAT'S IN YOUR BAG  
*Polar Ice, free salad, hand cream*  
Erin Knuston

# SAUNA

An interview with Lili Huston-Herterich





Above: from *Several Swallowing Egg Sounds* at PeregrineProgram, 2015  
 Previous page: from *Pleasure of a Lazy Laity*, 2013

*What was the first piece of art you can remember making?*

My parents still have a lot of the super early drawings we did as kids. They're both artists. My dad houses a really absurdly meaningless paper archive that fills their basement (I worry about fire). Oh but that's not really memory, that's ephemera.

I don't remember the exact piece but I do remember doing a craft with my mom—I think it was a collage—with silver tinsel fringe and pompoms and crazy stamps my mom had made and Japanese paper we already had. I remember watching her make her collages next to my feeble-handed messes and getting angry—angry at her and also myself—and asking her, “Why are you so much better at this than me?” and her telling me our age difference, and how many years she had to practice. I remember thinking 32 years was a lot of years to just be practicing collage and that it was hopeless for me.

I also remember the moment where I lost looseness like the looseness really little kids have and feeling stupid about it—both about losing it and about ever having it.

*In a recent conversation, you talked a bit about how your studio location affects your projects. Could you expand on that?*

Yes it does a lot it always has. I moved into a three bedroom house with a boyfriend shortly after I finished my undergrad (where I was working primarily with photo and video) and we used the two extra rooms as our separate studios. It was a really small bungalow in a Portuguese neighborhood, detached with a basement—and it had small rooms all with doors. It was a very closed classic late '50s/early '60s layout. So when I went to work in my studio I would go into this tiny little room painted off-white with wooden baseboards and

a hollow wooden door and parquet floors and a window that opened by sliding the bottom half that looked onto a dead-end street. Across from it were our lesbian neighbours and their growing family. At that time they had two kids, now three.

I respond to materials very strongly, although I'm not sure I recognized that then, so I started making work on and with domestic space—video work about the generic colour of the entire apartment, “paintings” from removed eye makeup (when I wore it) on stretched old linens, woven works with jay cloths and feather dusters—getting very domestically referential there. But it also affected my understanding of work. I started thinking a lot about housework and artwork and why I was an artist. I had conflicting ideas of how I wanted my life to be. I believed (still do) in living well—eating well, surrounding yourself with good things, respecting your space, progressing your space—I'm really into interiors. Cleaning your space—that was a big one.

I was thinking about what the difference was between “productive” creative work and “unproductive” housework—the kind I used to procrastinate my creative. I was thinking about gesture, mark making, and even further the hidden gesture of the perfect space—masked in its seamlessness or something. Is this making sense?

*Yes, very much so. Did you have any trepidation about dealing with domesticity? I'm constantly amazed at how much stigma it still has as subject matter. I recently had a studio visit with a totally macho British male designer who, based on seeing my “feminine” but also feminist work, accused me of having “an angry woman trapped inside” of myself and that*

*I should let her out. It was really infuriating that this subject matter, which is political and relevant, was getting dismissed in that way. But I still think it's a pretty common response.*

Huge trepidations. That is my biggest fear, that I'll have to one day address this exactly with someone who can't see past it. I mean, I have but that sounds particularly bad.

*It was so frustrating. How does one reason with a troglodyte? You sort of can't.*

The outlet I found that was really particularly helpful with that was to think about it in terms of the distinguishing between fine art and fine craft. You really can't, but you can also throw them super shade to make them feel rightfully out of touch and foolish. It's really foolish. Art and craft—there is a hierarchy, and socially and historically it is gendered. But in contemporary art terms, traditional craft mediums—ceramics, textile, glasswork—really somehow escape the prejudices of craft.

I thought a lot about utility. Whether or not it has utility makes domestic work and art work different. Or what makes a chair different from a sculpture or a bowl.

*Absolutely! I think similarly about design, depending on the project. But then you start thinking “OK, so utility is about a relationship.” Of course, yes, I feel like this conversation is very real for designers.*

*Utility is about a relationship, which is contingent on the expectations the viewer/user/audience has for how they should approach the thing. So then you get into managing expectations.*

All I think about when I think about why anyone would ever want to make art anyway is relationships.

I really like the smirking work—the little knowing wink that you can't really tell is ironic or not because if it isn't it's embarrassingly revealing, but if it is, it's afraid and escapist. So it has to be sincere because the latter is no.

*Totally.*

Right, or like playing with expectations. Like smirking. I really like the smirking work—the little knowing wink that you can't really tell is ironic or not because if it isn't it's embarrassingly revealing, but if it's not it's afraid and escapist. So it has to be sincere because the latter is no.

*The archness. I think that it's a huge tool in creating intimacy. This might be a good point to talk about Sweat Shorts, since communal sweating in a tiny room is quite intimate.*

Oh ha, yeah that's why I couldn't meet on Saturday! Very sweaty, very wiggly, very toxin free. Yes, Sweat Shorts, OK. I have an opportunity to lead these workshops over the summer in Fogo Island, right after a show I have at The Power Plant which has been really all consuming because it's my largest project to date for sure. But Fogo won't give me a studio. I have a studio in an industrial building—it's a large space carved up into four studios. Myself and three other women and friends work there. We have a woodshop,

a rooftop for me to make cyanotypes, everything.

So to not have a studio for an entire summer was making me panic and I was thinking about how pathetic that was. At the same time I was working with Yuri [Stone] on his ideas of narrative and it's possible function in a non-textual format, and I realized that most of my work really has strong narrative. Mostly imagined narrative, but a throughline that I like that people can grab onto to carry them through the work—storytelling. A sauna is dark, difficult to be in, and a shared experience. I thought it would be a really minimally vulnerable way to get people together and share stories. And because they're in bathing suits or underwear, I gave them the starting point of their bodies for storytelling. The project with Yuri and PeregrineProgram also used the body as the source of narration. "The body." How female of you. How angry female of you. Do you feel trapped Lili? Inside your body?

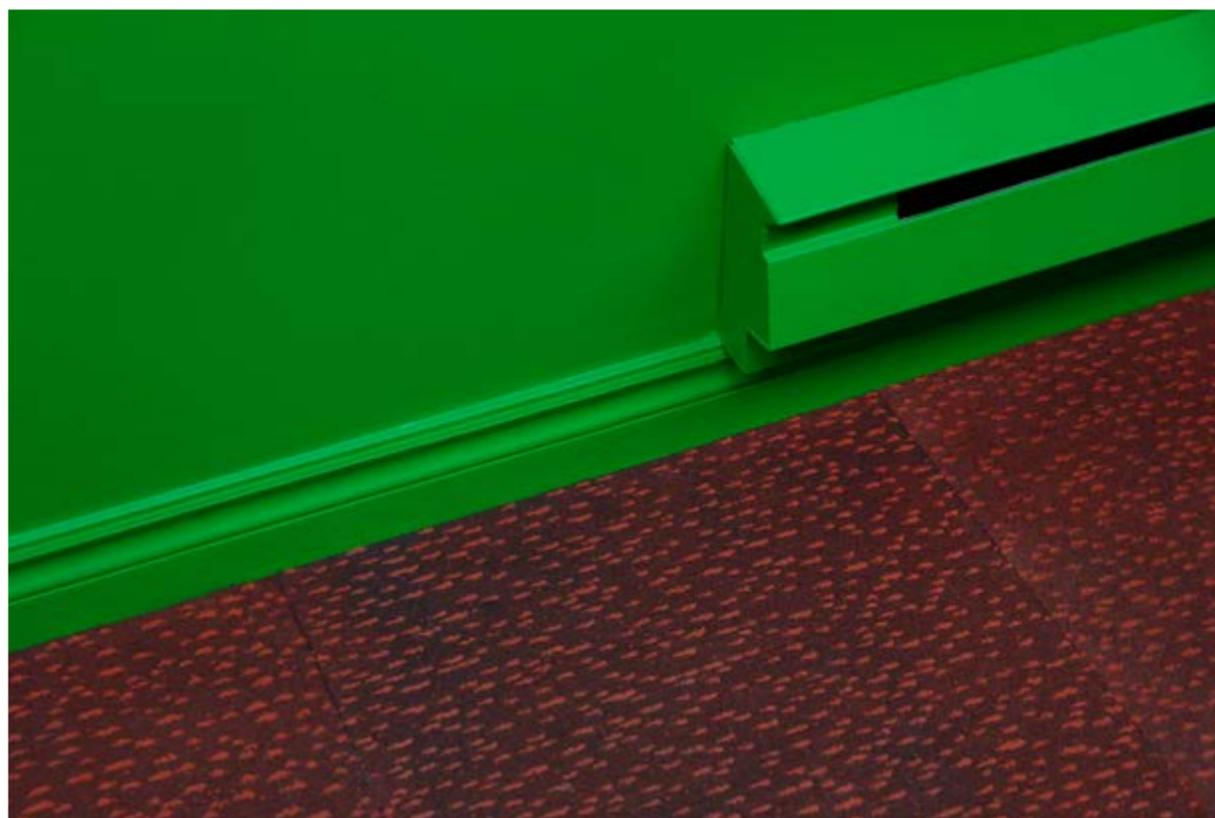
*Macho Brits are banned from the sauna! Your project made me think*

*about how thick the glass ceiling in Finland is. A lot of business deals are made in men-only saunas. Wow, such a good association.*

*Anyway, we can get back to business saunas later, back to yours!* Another association someone had with the work was interesting too—she's a curator of a pretty established university gallery here, and also a fighter, a lightweight boxer I think. She told me that because you have to be in a sauna for 3+ hours straight before your fight, her association with it is not leisure but pain and anxiety. She talked to me about how women sob the whole time, or talk about each others bodies in a real way—an athletic way but also a vulnerable way. The sauna is such a challenge physically that your emotional hesitance really falls to the wayside. It's also the most difficult place to commit yourself to listening. It was an endurance performance in physicality and etiquette—trying to listen, retain and respond, but being so uncomfortable. Hmm... what else about it...I started reading about autoethnographic approaches recently. I've never associated



Lili hosting *Sweat Shorts* at 8/11 Gallery, 2015. Photo credit: Sona Safaei.



From *nodding off with mush*, 2013

myself as an “identity based artist” because I really think that concept is absurd—how do you remove yourself from your work in that way? Even your materials are based on your demographic.

Autoethnographic researchers use self-reflection as a valid source for ethnographic research—a real trust in the mind and fully subjective subject.

*It’s always been funny to me the way that identity is put in it’s own category and sometimes referred to as a trend in the art world.*

*Were you surprised by how people reacted to the situation and the space? Did you have any expectations? If so, what were they?*

Yes, a trend and also one that people dismiss when an artist is described as “political” or “feminist.” I have heard people I respect say they “don’t like” political/identity-based/feminist art and I think they have in their mind some really post dated 70s/80s conceptual/bad video art/something? I don’t know where they’re going with. It’s just irrelevant. Irrelevant to even say.

Surprises...I wasn’t expecting anything. I really wanted it to be an event that happened and was recorded. I mic’d the sauna so I didn’t have to do any work, just listen. It was actually mostly people I didn’t know, which surprised me. It surprised me how difficult it was for me to commit to good listening. It was very surprising that people just saw the event somewhere and were like, “Yeah, for sure, I’ll tell this girl my story.” Or that people were so willing to listen to other people’s stories. A lot of writers attended. As the intent was to source material for fiction short stories, that intimidated me.

*Where do you think that openness, trust and willingness to be almost naked with strangers came from?*

Maybe selfishness. I hate how that word has a negative connotation. I can never find the right substitute. In essence people really do like sharing personal stories with other people who feel that they must listen. Or maybe the entire company was there because they wanted to listen. The sauna is dark and also a novelty.

*I would imagine it to have a confessional quality. To clarify, this was born out of an adaptive process? A way to generate work without a massive studio space?*

Yes. To prepare for a potentially studio-less summer. To write!

*A Sauna of One’s Own.*

Also the gallery, 8-11, had put out a call for programming in the sauna. I had never done anything participatory or performative before.

*A practical response!*

I love responding to a space. It’s my favorite way to make work. Ha yes, strategic. There’s the smirk, all strategy.

*Writing makes me think a lot about audience. Writing implies publishing and a wider distribution than say, an art object in a gallery.*

*As audience is something you seem to very actively consider (as opposed to some process based abstraction that’s for...everyone?) Maybe you can talk a little about your audiences and their scales, and how those things shift.*

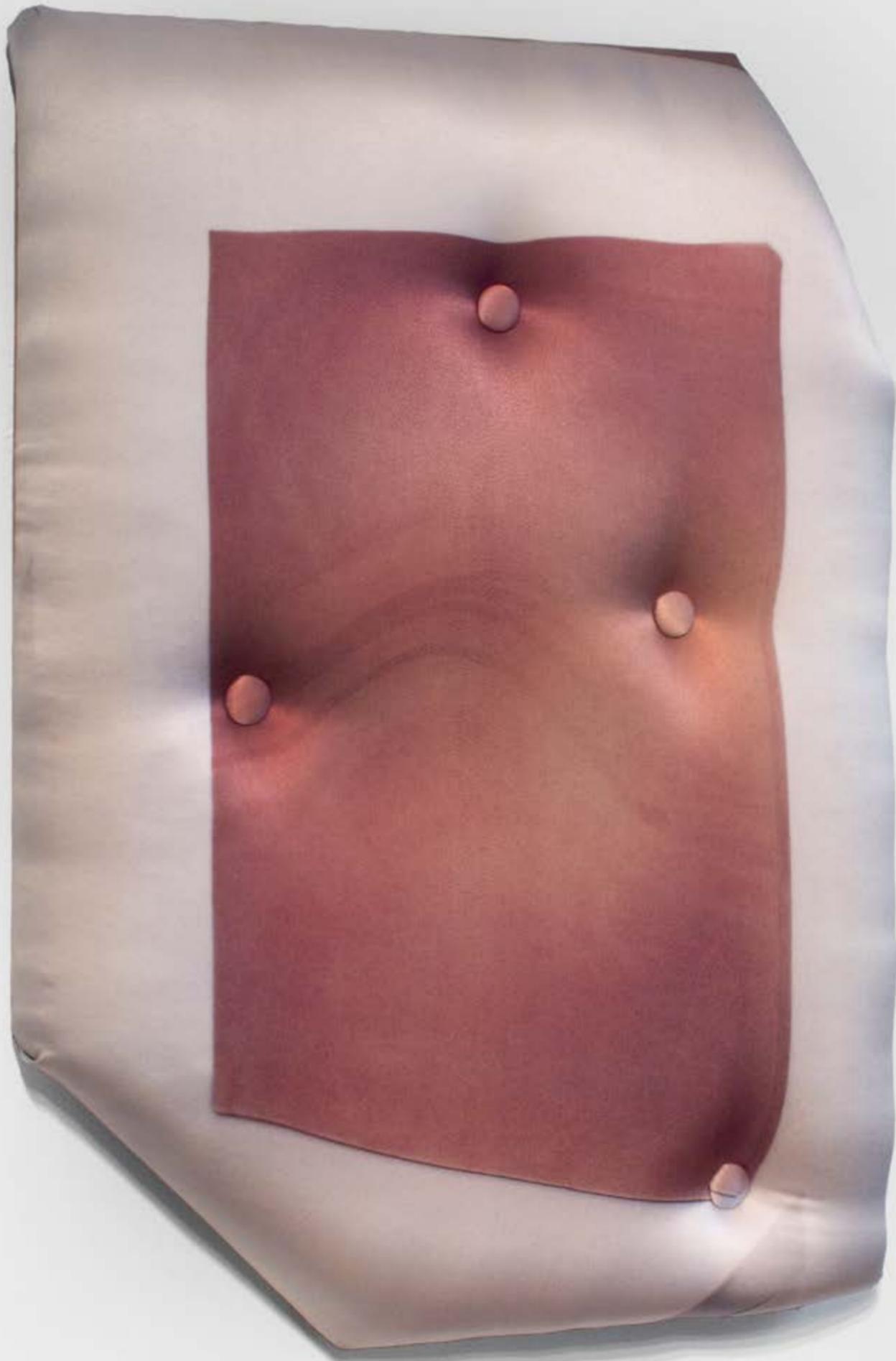
It’s funny you say that actually—about the implied wider audience. I was thinking recently, who the fuck is going to be my audience for this—my peers? I really am so dependent on space—some type of container that can house and host people (bodies)—that I am having a difficulty understanding how printed word can “accommodate” or host. Synonymously, I am always

considerate of leveling the playing field between audience/viewer and artist/institution—a sort of horizontal notion of the communicative players of a work. I always like thinking about how I let myself ignore some things in museums. Even if I may like it, it’s OK if I ignore it, even if it’s just to text or to talk to someone I’m with or to look at a stranger. It’s different in galleries for me. I’d like to be able to make exhibitions that people are able to miss parts of—an installation of elements that are integral to the space but can be really casually regarded in their isolation. In a sense a collection of short stories is like that too—you can enter and exit at any point. You can hate some and like others or just skim it all.

*In regards to audience, space, print, hosting and accommodation, you bring up really interesting points about narration—whether the narration need be linear or not—and agency for the viewer. I actually think that’s why I’ve always liked magazines so much, they give you options in regards to how invested you want to be, what sort of time or emotional commitment you’re looking for. I think a lot of times that easiness can act as soft power, people are more likely to eat the vegetables when you’re not shoving them down their throats, but instead leaving them on a side table sprinkled with truffle salt.*

*Who is your ideal audience and what do you want them to take away from your work?*

“Sprinkle” is a very good word for the truffle salt veggies and also as an extendable metaphor for works on display—they can be sprinkled here or there and become so integrated into the experience of the exhibition that you barely notice you’ve overeaten. It sounds vague and idealistic (I guess we are



Maybe an ideal viewer would be someone a little devout about something in their lives, not religiously but more like, a passionate basketball player or a proud older sister. Or someone who is really passionate about something that day, like getting fired or feeling pregnant? These people are definitely more susceptible to self-guided experiences.

talking ideals), but my ideal audience are open people with senses of humour, and my ideal takeaway for them is an experience. I know it's vague but it's really what I look for when I'm looking at art—some kind of experience that feels like it was led by me, with the assistance of work. Like, we did it together—the experience didn't exist before me and doesn't after me, it is the moment I made it and that's it.

Maybe an ideal viewer would be someone a little devout about something in their lives, not religiously but more like, a passionate basketball player or a proud older sister. Or someone who is really passionate about something that day, like getting fired or feeling pregnant? These people are definitely more susceptible to self-guided experiences.

*What's your ideal or fantasy space or site?*

I like challenging spaces and sites and my ideal really always changes but recently I've been thinking about the dream of someone giving me a budget to produce a full children's outdoor playground in a city—probably because I've been reading a lot about the architect Aldo Van Eyck who was prolific in Amsterdam for his playgrounds, but also has really incredible concepts of how space and a city should be. Van Eyck treats the inhabitants of his space as I'd like to treat the viewers of my work. His architectural theory of labyrinthian clarity is one that Nadia Belerique, Laurie Kang, and I are running with in our collaborative installation at the Power Plant this summer.

*What's your attitude towards the economy of your work? Would you ever consider producing in larger quantities and selling in stores?*  
I like the idea of quantity for the purpose of sale because it alludes

to the idea that the object is useable and therefore disposable.

*How do design/lifestyle boutiques make you feel? An anxiety I feel as part of the design and art worlds is the risk of preciousness and the cloying scent of privilege.*

*Sometimes I feel uncomfortable when I'm in a space that feels over-curved, or when I meet people whose aesthetic seems too perfect. It starts to get creepy. But at the same time, I care a lot about the things I surround myself with and what I consume. So there's a tension there, something to be negotiated. Do you feel this way? Do you have tactics for dealing with it?*  
I honestly feel nothing but inspiration from design and lifestyle boutiques. I love looking at form, design and material of life objects. But I think I feel inspired because it gives me ideas about what to make and look for for myself, never what to buy. I've quoted BLESS as a favourite artist collective and I still feel strongly this way. They bridge the world of art, fashion and boutique in a really fantastic way, I think because they have humour.

About nauseousness and privilege—I feel this in design boutiques so I treat them like zoos and observe and it's really not all that bad anymore, like going to a department store in high school and loitering until you don't feel like a freak anymore you just become part of the environment. Art is privileged and sometimes I treat it like a zoo and am more empowered and less participatory that way I think.

*What are you reading and watching lately?*

I have been reading, on and off again because sometimes he makes me angry, essays by Adolf Loos—*Ornament and Crime, Why a Man Should be Well Dressed*—I've also been researching Aldo Van Eyck,

and for fiction, Lydia Davis short stories which are so, so funny and fantastic. I also take a collection of Kim Gordon's writing called *Is It My Body?* I carry it when I just want to dip in and out. I watched *The Jinx* recently. I have *Images* by Robert Altman on my desktop, waiting to be watched. Recently I re-watched *Don't Look Now* and damn. I don't watch things too often nowadays but I think that's just a phase.

*What's your favorite food?*

My favourite food is cream cheese but maybe I should say something more realistic like Ethiopian. It's literally a draw between Ethiopian food or just "cream cheese."

*They are both quite apt. Ethiopian—communal and visceral—cream cheese—comforting and spiritual. They would be good together. True. Imagine cream cheese on Ethiopian sour dough. I promise I eat well. But I think favourites are for the extremes, right?*

*Lili Huston-Herterich has an upcoming collaborative exhibition with Nadia Belerique and Laurie Kang at The Power Plant, Toronto, and will be a 2015 visiting artist at Fogo Island Arts in Newfoundland, Canada.*



Right: from *Pleasure of a Lazy Laity*, 2013



# RESOURCES

BAZAZAS  
bazazas.com

CHERISSE GRAY  
instagram: pitifulmimosa

DEBORA DELMAR  
deboradelmarcorp.com

DENA YAGO  
denayago.com

DOMINICA PUBLISHING  
dominicapublishing.com

ERIN KNUTSON  
e-knutson.com

EVA O'LEARY  
evaoleary.com

HESTER  
hester.nyc

JENNYFER HADDAD  
jennyferhaddad@gmail.com

JOANA AVILEZ  
joanaavillez.com

LAUREN FRANCESONE  
laurenfrancesone.com

LEISURE PRESS  
leisurepress.net

LILI HUSTON-HERTERICH  
lilihustonherterich.com

LIZZY DE VITA  
lizzydevita.com

MARZENA ABRAHAMIK  
marzenaabrahamik.virb.com

MARILYN MINTER  
marilynminter.net

MEDIUM COOL  
medium-cool.net

NATALIE SMITH  
nataliesmith.info

NEGATIVE  
negativeunderwear.com

OLIVIA HENRY  
twitter: ahliv

PERFUME AREA  
perfume-area.com

RIA ROBERTS  
riaroberts.net

ROBIN MYERS  
robin-myers.com

SALLY THURER  
sallythurer.com

SHIKAMA  
sshikama.com

SHIRA INBAR  
shira-inbar.me

SUMMER FORUM  
summerforum.org

VAYA  
instagram: vayafood

