

CLOSET ARCHITECTURE

Reflections on the queer domestic interior

by

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

In the midst of a cultural moment that has seen a moratorium placed on public space, and a growing sense of contraction and isolationism on a global scale, our attention shifts to the private domestic realm. We zoom in, past grand chambers designed to impress non-existent visitors, and suites structured to create the illusion of order in our otherwise chaotic lives, until we reach that room most synonymous with secrecy, compartmentalization, and shame: the closet.

Closet Architecture traces the architectural, linguistic, and cultural evolution of the closet through time, in order to find new insights into this space of identity, interiority, and isolation. While the closet has become the go-to architectural metaphor for queer shame, it has historically operated as a space of power, knowledge, spirituality, and intimacy. How might a better understanding of closets in a historical context lend us a greater sense of agency as queer people? How can spatial practice help us take back the closet?

Closet Architecture employs an auto-ethnographic approach to research, centering my own lived experience as a queer designer to build broader cultural reflections on solitude and privilege, exclusion and retreat, and shame and empowerment through this most paradigmatic architectural type.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Closet Architecture would, quite simply, not exist without the support of a few key individuals.

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To my internal and external readers, Fiona Lim Tung and Emre Yurga, thank you so very much for

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INTRODUCTION

I started writing *Closet Architecture* while living in a 3.25 x 3.65 metre room in my parent's house. I never expected to be thrust back into a closet at the age of 25, but it seemed that the fates themselves had conspired against me.

It was March of 2020 and a new highly contagious virus had begun to creep its way across the globe. Once bustling streets became veritable ghost towns, save for the odd masked figure making their way across the hushed expanse. As bodies began to pile up, it was clear that our freedom of mobility would soon become limited. Fearing archaic stay at home measures might be put in place, my parents suggested I come to visit with them in Hamilton for a few weeks before returning to Cambridge for my next semester of studies. I agreed. Little did I know that these weeks would quickly turn into months.

Only a few days after arriving, we received word that my grandmother Evelyn had taken ill quite suddenly. Seemingly out of the blue, she found herself on death's door. With a lockdown in full effect at her long term care facility, only my

father was allowed to visit her. Being those early months, when the virus was most mysterious to us, he was asked to wear a hazmat suit. He stood at her bedside, a figure out of some dystopian apocalyptic film, and held a phone receiver to her ear as my mother and I cried our way through last goodbyes from the comfort of our living room. She was unresponsive, and my father was only given so much time to see her before he was asked to leave. She passed a few hours later, and her last moments were spent alone.

Evelyn's funeral was a dismal affair – the only attendants (due to restrictions on the size of gatherings) were my parents, a Polish priest, and myself. What family she had outside of us lived beyond closed borders in the United States and Poland, and her few remaining friends found themselves trapped inside of facilities much like Evelyn's. The priest asked us to pray and sing along with him in Polish, but none of us were versed in the family tongue. Her departure from this world would not be heralded by song, but silence. Hers was just one of many unsung endings.

My relationship with Evelyn was complicated, to say the least. She was not my blood relative, being

my father's stepmom, but she was my grandmother. I was her only grandchild, and she had taken great care of me when I was young, showering me with love and attention. As I grew older, however, it became clear there were great gulfs in our political and spiritual beliefs – she was conservative in all things, and had, shall we say, outdated views on race, gender, and sexuality. As a result, I developed a policy of steering clear of topics that might upset her – my personal life foremost among them. While she longed to be closer to me, I never opened up to her about the reality of my life or my friends, let alone the people I dated. I couldn't stake her love, nor my potential inheritance, on her willingness to look past her firmly held beliefs.

The truth is that while I loved Evelyn dearly, I didn't trust her. In my world, I had lived openly for some years now and Evelyn represented the last vestiges of my Closet . I kept her at an arm's length for the entirety of my adult life, never seeing fit to share any detail, and mar her image of me as an "ideal" grandson. As I gazed at Evelyn's body in the open casket for the last time, I couldn't help but wonder if the bones of my Closet would be buried with her, or if I had sentenced a piece of myself to remain in the Closet forever.²

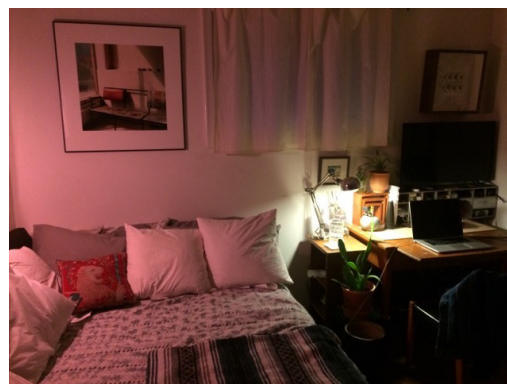


Figure 0.01 - The author's bedroom

1. I refer to many different types of closets in this text – from recessed closets, to wash closets, to early modern closets, to the Closet. Know that, from this point forward, when I say Closet with a Capital C in this text, I am speaking about the closet as a construct of queer secrecy, and not an actual architectural space.
2. More on Carrie Bradshaw later...



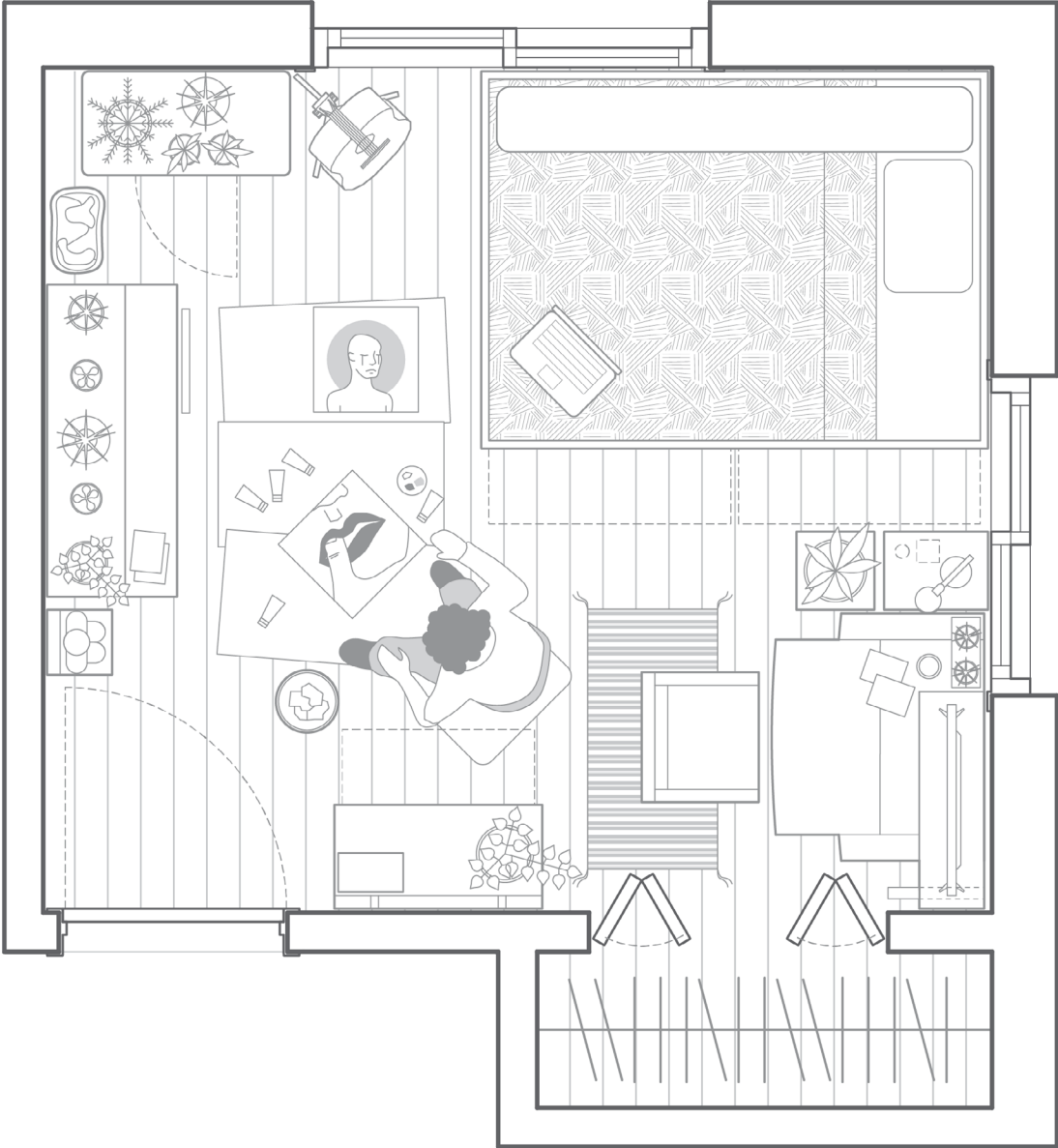
In the weeks that followed, a pall was cast over the house. It had, not so long ago, belonged to Evelyn, who gave it to my parents after moving herself into long-term care. While Evelyn herself had departed, her ghost was still very much present. A quick glance around any room in the house would find one of her belongings, and closets still played host to all sorts of items she had collected over the years. Surrounded by pieces of her on all sides, I found myself thinking more and more about the Closet that had kept us strangers, and defined so much of my adolescence.

These questions and thoughts about the Closet were soon compounded by a wide-spread closeting of a different sort. A dreaded province-wide lockdown was announced and, for many, their homes ceased to be the comfortable retreats they once were, morphing instead into a sort of prison.³ In many cases, given the prevalence of the open plan, these prisons were not much larger than a single room.

While I at least was afforded the bounds of my parents' entire house as the new limits of my world, living at home as an adult came with another set of challenges. As much as I love my parents, it

Figure 0.02 (opposite) - The emotionally exhausted author in his room

3. In his essay "The Rights of Retreat and the Rites of Exclusion", architect and historian Robin Evans explains that spaces of retreat, positive spaces which are designed to keep people out, are inversions of spaces of exclusion, the negative spaces designed to keep people in. Many prisons, for instance, were once luxurious castles before their conversion into spaces of exclusion. If a luxurious retreat can be easily converted into a prison, I see no reason we cannot perform the opposite operation.



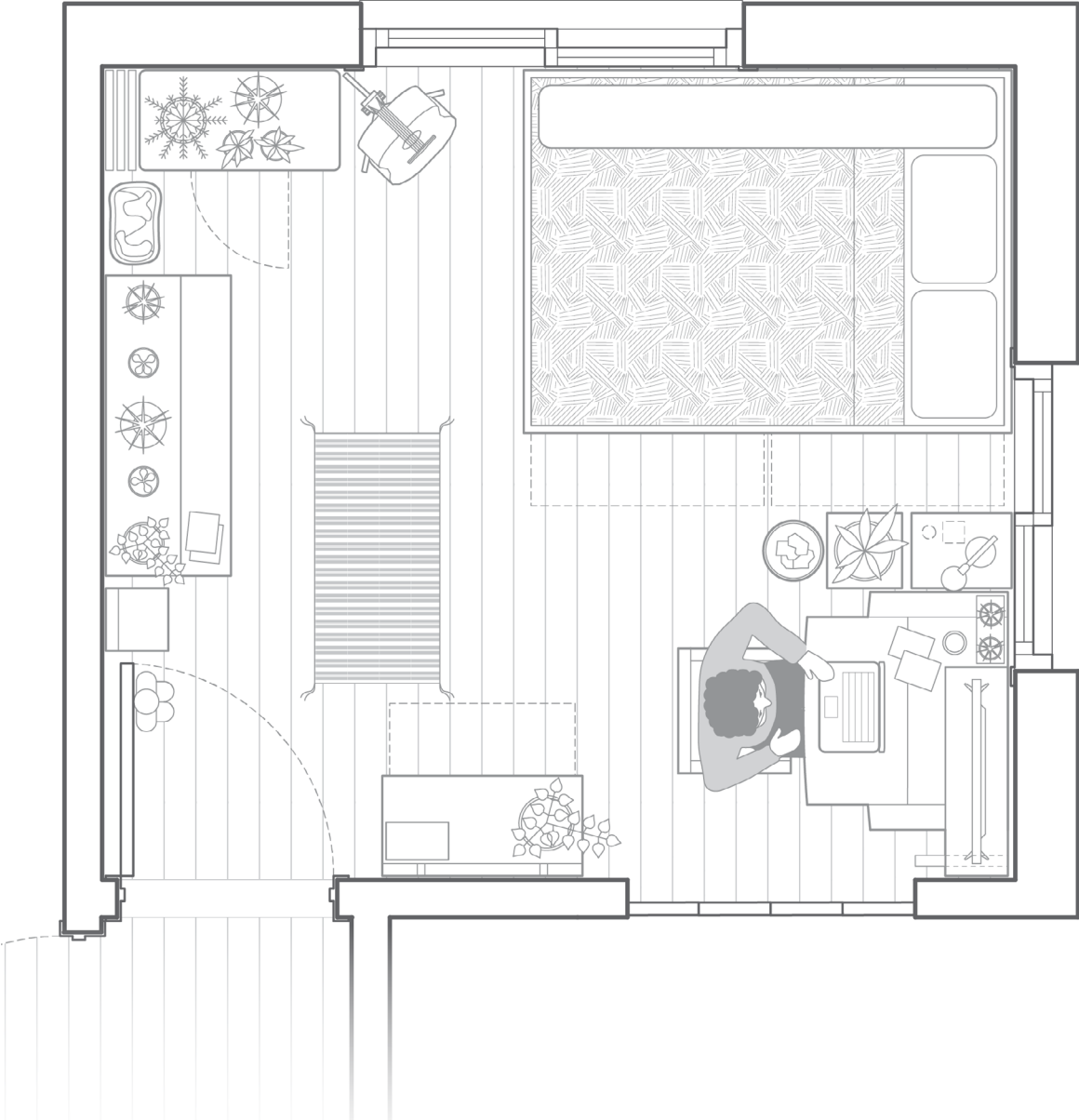
became increasingly difficult to maintain a sense of identity as a fully realized adult while living with those who saw me as a child. Desperate for agency in the wake of my rapidly deteriorating sense of adulthood, I ended up spending a great deal of this time alone in my bedroom.

Wishing to make the most of the situation, I made some modifications to my room. I adapted the space to my every need, turning it into a functional office, art studio, gym, and dining room at the drop of a hat. While this worked for a time, my growing sense of isolation in this space brought with it a creeping sense of *déjà vu*. I realized that I had been in this space (both physically and mentally) before.

As a teenager, the Closet manifested in me as days spent alone in my room. Unsure of who I was and what I could be in this world, I would spend hours scouring the internet for queer role models to emulate. I would invent excuses to not spend time around other people because the façade I was putting on was so exhausting to maintain. In order to come to terms with who I was and what I wanted to be, I had to remove myself from a world I considered hostile.⁴

Figure 0.03 (opposite) - The creatively inspired author in his room

4. Studies at Fenway Institute's Center for Population Research and Yale University have shown that queer people, in particular gay and bisexual men, bring the Closet with them into adulthood. Many show symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder without ever having experienced any major traumatic events or violence. This is because the Closet is a sort of death by a thousand cuts. The constant need to hide, and fear of getting "caught" keeps our body on the defensive. With each homophobic slur, or correction of a feminine mannerism, a new scar appears. Even after one comes out, if they ever do so, the body carries these trauma responses with it.



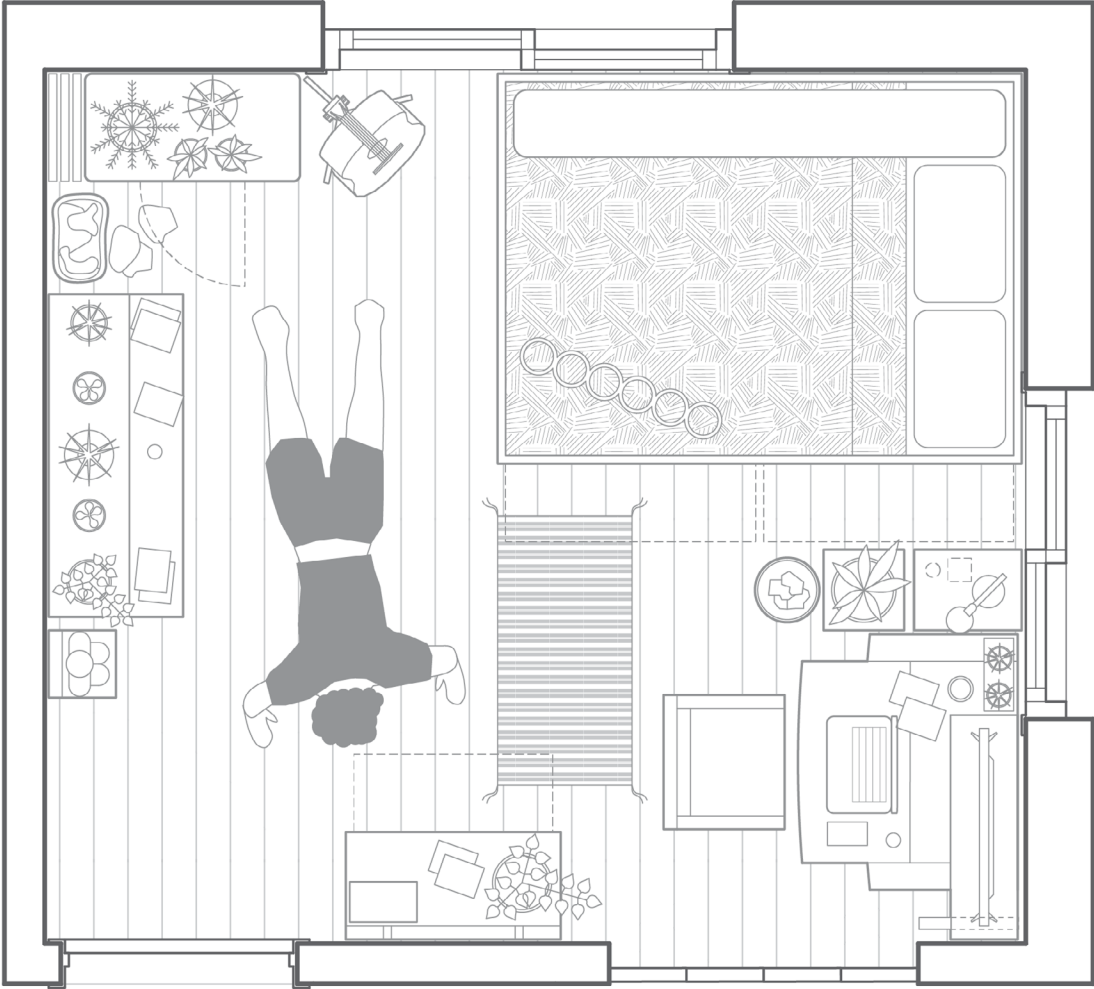
Realizing that I was, once again, being swallowed whole by the Closet, I decided to take definitive action. If the Closet was so inescapable, I would make it my mission to transform it into something entirely new.⁵

It was under these circumstances that I began my research. As I delved deeper into the history of the architectural closet, I began to realize that there was much more to this story than I had initially imagined. I began to realize that contained within the closet was a discourse on the history of privacy and identity in Western society. What's more, I began to realize that closets had undergone something of a devolution over time, having been transformed from spaces of power in court to subsidiary architecture of concealment. So it was from these initial investigations that *Closet Architecture* was born.

I am, of course, not the first to perform an in depth examination of the so-called Closet. In fact, it is a topic that has been hotly studied in the realms of queer theory and sociology ever since Eve Sedgwick published her seminal text *Epistemology of the Closet* in 1990. As one of the foundational works of queer theory, Sedgwick's insights have been essential to

Figure 0.04 (opposite) - The studious and productive author in his room

5. When I describe the Closet as inescapable, I speak of the sensation of always being put back in the Closet no matter how many times I come out. So long as we operate under a "straight until proven gay" mentality, I am viewed as being stuck in a lie of omission if I don't ritually declare my sexuality to every stranger I meet.



wrapping my head around the problem posed by the Closet, and her methodology of deconstruction is one that has been very influential to this work.

In Eve's view (and I would tend to agree) the Closet is a product of heteronormativity, in which all difference is measured against a heterosexual standard.⁶ The Closet can only exist in a world in which being anything other than heterosexual and cisgender is a deviation from the norm. Heteronormativity tends to simplify the world into binaries; male and female, married and single, straight and gay, in and out— just to name a few. However, sexuality and gender are not as fixed as a heteronormative society would like us to believe and indeed, to acknowledge their fluidity as a collective would begin the work of dismantling the Closet as we know it. Sedgwick does not advocate doing away with binaries altogether, but rather embracing and fully utilizing all of those many labels and identities in between, so to destabilize the heterosexual norm. What's more, Sedgwick crucially points out that, of course, sex matters much more to some people than others. What may be a grave secret for one might not even scratch the surface for another.

Figure 0.05 (opposite) - The author, a paragon of good health, in his room

6. Heteronormativity describes the pervasive attitude that heterosexuality is the only normal and natural expression of sexual orientation. Under heteronormativity, all other orientations are deviant, as are expressions of gender that do not align with physical sex.

Another key work in understanding the architectural link between closets and the Closet was Charles Urbach's phenomenal essay "Closets, Clothes, Disclosure." Urbach's work tracing the origin of the recessed closet to early American, protestant design ethics makes clear the closet's transformation from an architecture of identity and power into an architecture of shame. His notion of the "ante-closet", that threshold between the possibility of the closet and our performance in the outside world, is one that I use as a jumping off point for a much larger discussion about the facades we take on to protect ourselves.

Speaking of performance, I would be remiss not to mention Judith Butler's extremely influential theory of gender performativity, as outlined in *Gender Trouble* and expanded upon in *Bodies that Matter*. Butler's exploration of gender as something that someone does, rather than something that someone is, is revolutionary, and has turned our society's perception of gender on its head. It is particularly interesting in relation to discussions of closets, spaces in which we store the many "costumes" that we wear into the world on a daily basis. The Closet could easily be perceived as a result of gendered norms perpetuated by society, and a fear that

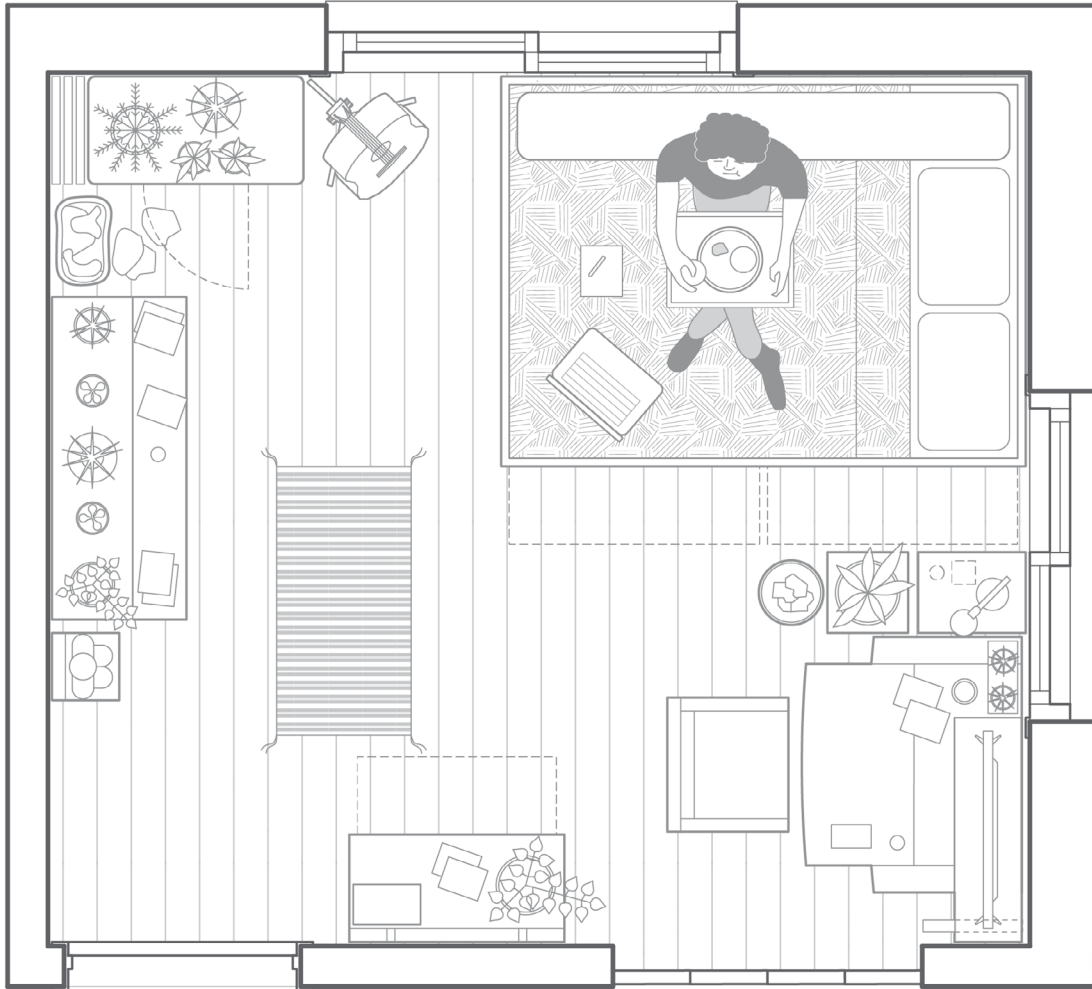
breaking the rules of gender performance might result in violence. What's more, the early modern closet's popularity in court had everything to do with creating private spaces in which one could drop their act, and exist as themselves outside the bounds of propriety.

Perhaps the text that has been most essential in developing my understanding of such early modern closets is Danielle Bobker's *The Closet: The Eighteenth Century Architecture of Intimacy*. Bobker's incredibly thorough look at closets in 18th century literature pays close attention to the types of relationships that crystallized in these rooms, both fictional and factual. Her focus on re-centering the discussion of closets through these relationships, and not as the solitary spaces they are often portrayed as, has been highly influential to my thinking around how we might subvert the Closet as a construct.

What I hope will set my work apart from these and a plethora of other fantastic works published on the Closet is my unique approach to its study. First, as you have no doubt gleaned already, I will be exploring my own experience of the Closet in this work. As its prisoner, despite my repeated attempts at liberation, I am as much the subject of this study



Figure 0.06 - The author's work station

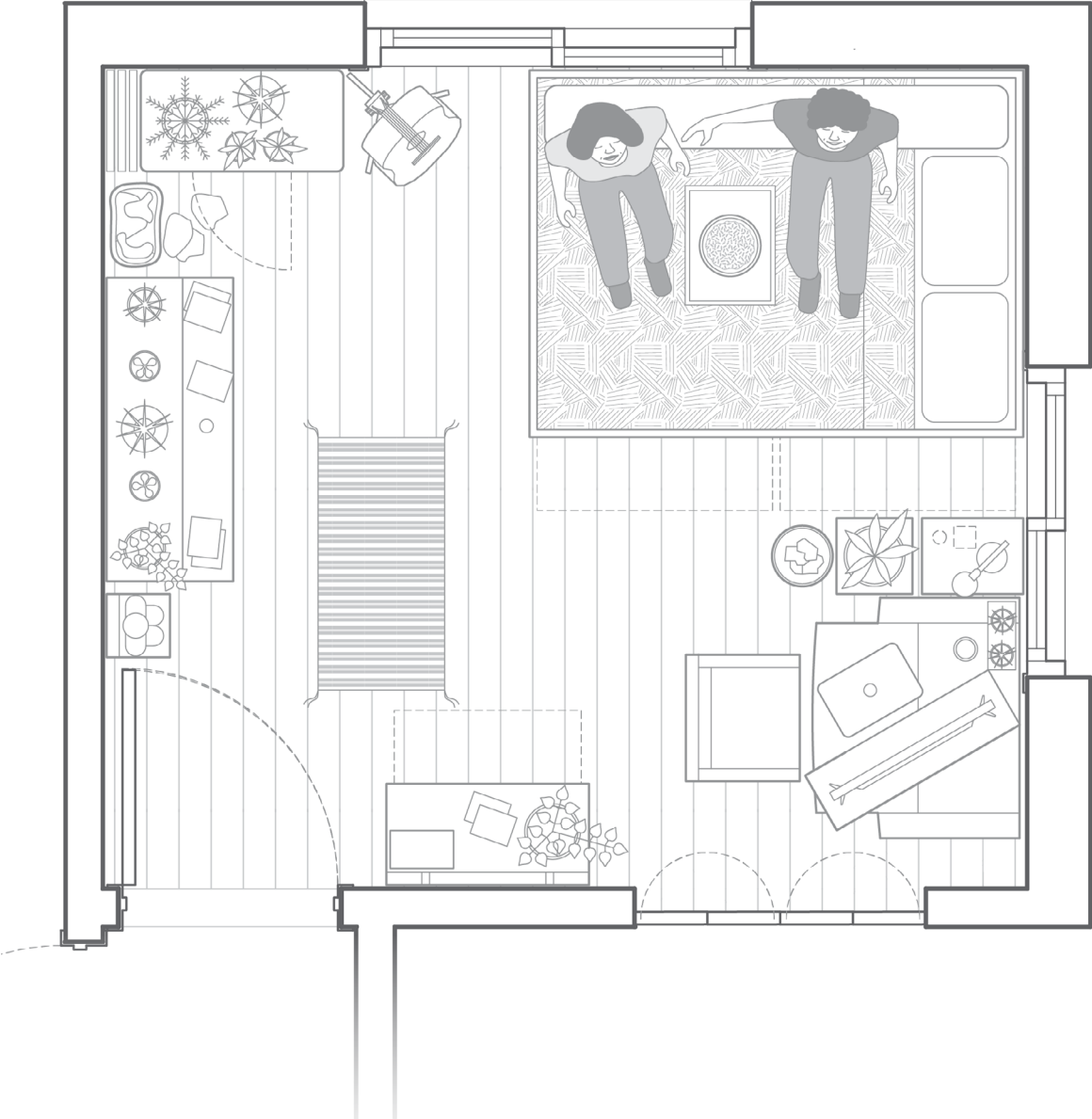


as the Closet itself. For this reason, you might think of the text as a work of autoethnography. Each of the historical closets we will explore are, ultimately, grounded in my experience, which I express through personal anecdotes, liberal footnoting, and detailed “autoethnographic” drawings of both my surroundings and psyche.

Secondly, my approach to unpacking the Closet is distinctly architectural. While many sociological studies of the Closet do indeed make mention of the architectural closet for which it is named, few delve deeply into its rich history as a private domestic space. Even fewer still acknowledge that the closet is actually an architectural typology, defined by its small size, its solitary nature, its use for collection, and ties to its owner’s sense of identity. In deconstructing this typology, we begin to see that while closets have undergone something of a defamation through time, these qualities are consistent. This tells us that, while the contemporary closet has become the perfect architectural metaphor for queer shame, Closets still contain the potential to operate as sites of power and knowledge as they once did.

Finally, my approach to this thesis is decidedly

Figure 0.07 (opposite) - The author takes yet another meal alone in his room



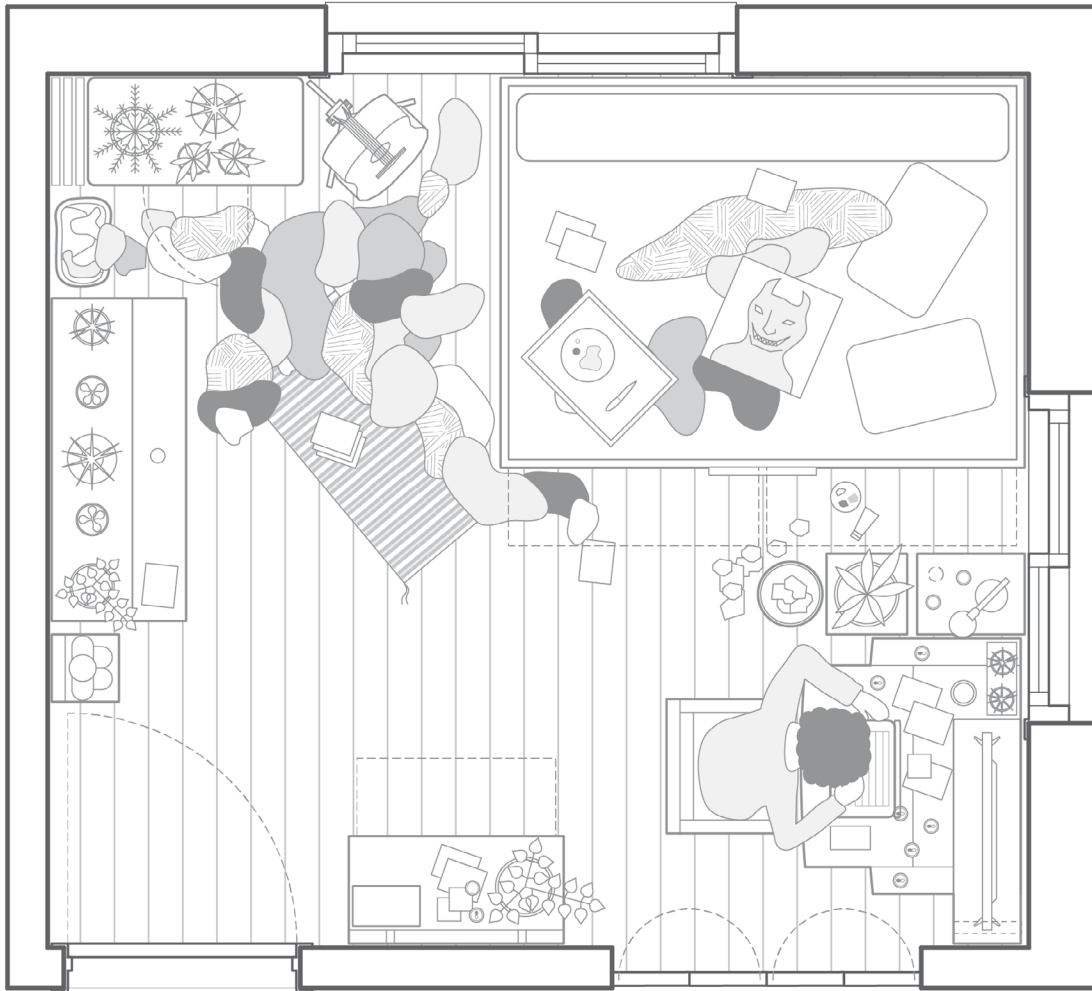
queer – and not just because I wrote it. Queer theory has a bad habit of couching itself in academic language, so to justify its existence to the powers that be. I am of the mind, however, that a truly queer work of academic writing must break at least some of the rules. Genderqueer theorist and professor Jack/Judith Halberstam tends to agree, and outlines the importance of this in their book *The Queer Art of Failure*.⁷ Jack states that new, queer types of knowledge can only be found outside of the typical restraints enforced by heteronormative institutions. Queer knowledge is found in the breaking of rules, whether that be achieved through an informal and direct use language, or the incorporation of low theory along with academia's traditional high theory.⁸

Closet Architecture is, ultimately, a thought experiment. By framing the text as a journey through my mind, I aim to deconstruct the closet not only as an architectural typology associated with secrecy, identity, and intimacy, but to take control of a space that has historically made me feel helpless. In extending the architectural metaphor of the architectural closet through time, new insights about the Closet as a source of power rather than shame can begin to come to the surface.

Figure 0.08 (opposite) - The author entertains a guest for the first time in months in his room

7. Jack/Judith Halberstam goes by both names, Jack and Judith, as a radical expression of their gender-queer identity.

8. Low theory, as described by Halberstam, encompasses theory built upon forms of media that have historically been viewed as vapid by the academic community. This includes, but is not limited to, reality television, video games, and internet memes. In embracing that these types of media are an important reflection of society, new forms of knowledge can begin to form through their analysis, particularly when analyzed in tandem with high theory.



Before we go on this tour, however, let's review our itinerary.

In the first chapter of this thesis, "Ante-Closet," I discuss the Closet as an architecture of queer shame, looking at the development of the recessed closet in early American home design to explain this architectural metaphor. The reader and I meet outside of the aforementioned ante-closet, a space in which we decide which pieces in our closets, both literal and metaphorical, we will don before entering the world beyond. After dressing in our guises of choice, I invite the reader to follow me on a tour of several closets in the private apartment of my mind, in the hopes that they might point us towards a new vision of the Closet.

The second chapter, "Axis of Honour," invites the reader into a traditional English closet, where I recount the evolution of privacy in Western domestic space through the closet, and a burgeoning sense of individuality cultivated through collection. I explore Mark Girouard's concept of the axis of honour in the private apartment, in which admittance to the a superior's closet is the greatest honour one could receive. In its exclusivity and tie to its owner's most vulnerable

Figure 0.09 (opposite) - The train-wreck of an author in his room

self, I demonstrate how the closet can act as a seat of power and tool for ascension through the social ranks, independent of class.

The third chapter, “Studiolo,” looks at the renaissance Italy’s very own iteration of the closet (in some ways its progenitor) to examine the room as a tool for meaning making and identity formation. The studiolo was an early experiment in self-expression through space. Utilizing heavy symbolism typical of the high Renaissance, the room becomes an architectural simulacrum of its owner, and a space for navigating their public and private worlds. I walk the reader through some of the symbolism in my own studiolo, based on those of Duke Federico III of Urbino, painting them a curated image of my ought self.

In the fourth chapter, “Boudoir,” I look at the evolution of the boudoir in baroque France as a feminist construct and eventual space of sexual liberation. The boudoir operates as an early version of Virginia Woolf’s “room of one’s own,” liberating women to think without interruptions from a hostile world outside. I follow the room’s transformation from a “sulking room” into a veritable sex den, and site of countless sexual liaisons in literature. In its

sexually liberated nature, the boudoir functions on a currency of intimacy, which I explore through the example of the royal favourite.

In the fifth and final chapter, “Cabinet,” I invite the reader into my new home (which I did, indeed, abandon my life in Hamilton for), the former headquarters of a secret society. I discuss the closeted nature of the secret society to suggest that Closets are universal, and not just a queer phenomenon. I then propose we reimagine Closets as Cabinets, councils of trusted advisors so named for the room in which they held private meetings. I reflect on the merging of mine and my roommate’s worlds in this curious space, and the development of a “communal private” between us. Having taken this journey with me, you, my trusted reader, become an honorary member of my Cabinet.

Having sufficiently prepared you for the journey ahead, I think it’s time we begin in earnest. Any question before we proceed? No?

Then without further adieu, I present to you *Closet Architecture*.



Figure 0.10 - View from the author’s bed, looking toward his closet

(ante) **CLOSET**

No, I will not come out.

I am not a debutante. I have not acquiesced to a strange ritual in which my sexual maturity is to be flaunted for social capital. Nor am I a butterfly, a once ugly creature emerging from my dark cocoon. I will not spread my rainbow wings and take flight in a shower of glitter. Let's leave the insect metaphors to Franz – his was closer to the truth anyway.⁹

I am not a star peering through the clouds at night, nor a bud blooming into a flower. I am not a stubborn stain on a flokati rug, primed for bleaching. And while, yes, I am inside an interior of sorts, it turns out that I rather like it in here.

It would be sad indeed if I didn't, having spent more time assembling this Closet of mine than on any other project in my life. I have put in my 10,000 hours. More even. If my friend Malcolm is to be believed, this space is one of the few subjects, if not the **sole** subject, in which I can consider myself an expert.¹⁰ To those who have chided me for continuously broadening my skill set rather

9. Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* tells the tale of Gregor Samsa, a man transformed into an insect, rejected and imprisoned by a family that he has, up until this point, voluntarily subjected himself to a prison-like existence in service of. Each time he is given a respite from the confines of his room, Gregor is subjected to disgust and violence at the hands of those he loves. Like I said, I'm good in here.

10. Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers* popularized a theory by K. Anders Ericsson that it takes 10,000 hours to become a true expert in any given skill. Even under the conservative assumption that I have concealed my sexual identity for an average of 6 hours a day for my teenage years, I would clock in at over 15,000 hours.



BOTH SIDES OF THE STORAGE-WALL MODEL are here placed end to end to show all at once the total amount of storage space which it provides for a living room and a hall. The hall

side of the wall with game and sports closets is nearest to the rooms. Space for things that are usually needed only once in a while, like suitcases and picnic baskets, runs across top.



TWO SPECIALIZED CLOSETS for sports equipment and extra clothes are built into hall side of wall. Raincoat closet is of waterproof construction with rounded corners for easy cleaning.



DISK SWINGS DOWN from the living-room side of wall. Knickknacks and stationery are kept above it in shallow drawers. Cubby holes provide room for envelopes, letters, bills and receipts.

than specializing: eat your heart out.

You, dear reader, are currently standing in my ante-Closet, occupying that same space that only door swings seem to inhabit, in plan at least.¹¹ As you can (barely) see, my Closet doors, like most, try to make themselves as invisible as possible. The jamb is recessed, the leaves plain and flush with the wall. They have been painted in the same white as the room beyond, so to be glossed over at a glance, and I have installed minimal hardware that does not draw attention. Blink, and you might miss it. You will be surprised to know how much of my work on this Closet has been spent on this unassuming façade. But as my colleagues in the design profession and a certain departed billionaire can attest, it is almost always more difficult to make something simple.¹²

Can you feel the electricity as you stand there? The ante-closet is a charged space in any room. It is the liminal between the abject and estimable. It is the moment that each of us stand naked, faced with the choice of how we will be perceived by the outside world before deciding if we will rebel against or, more likely, capitulate to its expectations of us. The place in which persona is born. If, as a

Figure 1.01 (opposite) - Ad for George Nelson's Storage wall, Life Magazine, 1945.

11. In his essay "Closets, Clothes, Disclosure," a work that has had considerable influence on this thesis, Henry Urbach puts forward the idea of the ante-closet as the threshold between a space that stores our unmentionables, and a space in which objects are displayed openly. He posits that attention grabbing interventions to this intermediary space, be they apertures or material treatments, architecturally represent a similar resignification as the re-appropriation of slurs like "fag" and "queer," or symbols like the pink triangle. There is great power in turning badges of shame into markers of pride.

12. R.I.P. Steve Jobs – can't wait to finally meet you in hell.



certain famous playwright posited, all the world is a stage, then the ante-closet is our dressing room.¹³

Keeping this in mind, I have strategically positioned a full length mirror adjacent to this ante-closet, so to afford myself and you, dear reader, the opportunity to glimpse an, albeit distorted, image of ourselves. This moment of reflection has always been crucial to me before proceeding into the world outside – a courtesy I am happy to extend before your foray into my interior architecture. It has been suggested in a study of queer space that the mirror is the natural pair to the closet.¹⁴ We are fractured beings, capable of inhabiting any number of roles. The mirror is an object that allows us to take those disparate pieces from our closets, apply them to our bodies, and exert some semblance of control on how we are viewed, however ephemeral that image might be.

Take a moment to observe yourself in this mirror world, and decide which costume you will don for today's performance.¹⁵

Are you sure? Good. You look great.

Now, I'm sure you're getting sick of me speaking

Figure 1.02 (opposite) - Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier, Detail of a mirror in the Cabinet of Count Bielski, 1734

13. William Shakespeare's invocation will strike a specific chord for those among us who have felt the need to hide pieces of ourselves, and play the roles expected of us. There is always room for a little gravitas in our expression of fractured identity.

14. Aaron Betsky's *Queer Space* posits that the elusive "queer space" requires three building blocks. First is the closet, that most interior space that contains those material fragments from our past through which we construct our identity. Next is the mirror, the lens in which those fragments of identity can be applied to create a sort of idealized self. This space, and the self seen in the mirror, is free from the constraints of reality, but disappears as soon as we look away. The third is the space of orgasm, in which the constraints of the material world cease to exist in a moment of pure pleasure. In this temporary space of dissolution, and the ephemeral and unreal become our reality, however momentarily.

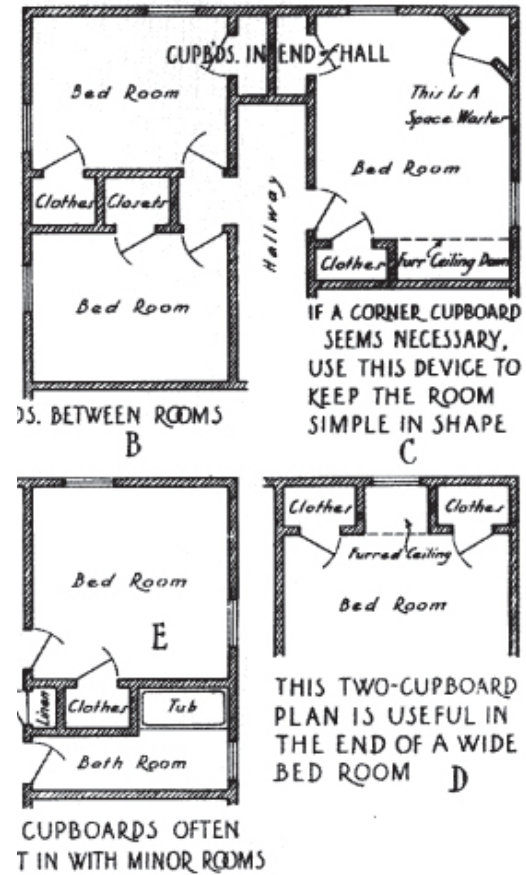
15. Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity, popularized in her text *Gender Trouble*, posits that gender is largely a performative act; it is an almost ritualistic repetition of certain images we have culturally ascribed to masculinity and femininity. One might conceptualize the ante-closet as the space in which this phenomenon becomes material.



to you from behind closed doors. I earnestly hope they aren't muffling my speech too much, but one can never be too careful. I learned from a young age to never let strangers wander into your home. And it is just that – a home.

See, beyond these doors, my Closet is more spacious than you realize. Until now, you've likely been picturing it as subsidiary, a wall recess packed with clothes, knick-knacks, and shame. It's a fair assumption. For the last couple of centuries, at least, this has been the image we have been conditioned to conjure when we hear the word closet: a room that is contained within another room. It is ancillary, a space so not worth mentioning that we refuse to acknowledge it is an adjacent room like any other. A room designed to contain that which would otherwise create disorder in our picture perfect lives.

It will surprise nobody, least of all myself, that this conception of the closet as a space for shame comes from Christian tradition. Even (former) Catholics like myself, with our ostentatious and frequently gaudy sense of colour and ornament, are taught that modesty is a virtue. This perhaps sees its extreme in the Franciscans and other



TYPICAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR CLOTHES STORAGE CUPBOARDS

Figure 1.03 (opposite) - Closets from the Joseph Stebbins house, Theodate Pope Riddle house, and G. N. Wilcox house, taken for the Historic American Buildings Survey, 1933

Figure 1.04 (above) - Wooster Bard Field, Diagram suggesting how one might incorporate a recessed closet from *House Planning*, 1940



monastic orders who eschew material possessions as being counter-intuitive to spiritualism. The contemporary conception of closet as an architectural type, however, does not find its roots in asceticism, but rather the Protestant faiths in the early days of the American republic.¹⁶ It makes its first appearance as a sort of moral mask of frugality for those beginning to amass and stockpile goods in the late days of the industrial revolution. As an architectural type that masks our hoarding tendencies, this sort of closet served to replace what was seen as a garish and immoral display of wealth embodied by the storage solutions of Europe.

Before this point, in the European tradition at least, storage had largely taken the form of large pieces of furniture – wardrobes, chests, and cabinets that were often referred to as closets. Frequently designed specifically for the rooms they would inhabit, such pieces had an undeniable presence within those spaces, works of architecture in and of themselves.¹⁷ Wardrobes were temples, with noble facades that followed the rules of classical order in an invocation of the spatial structuring they performed. Cabinets bore ornately decorated facades invoking worlds beyond, hosting interior compartments specifically designed for whatever

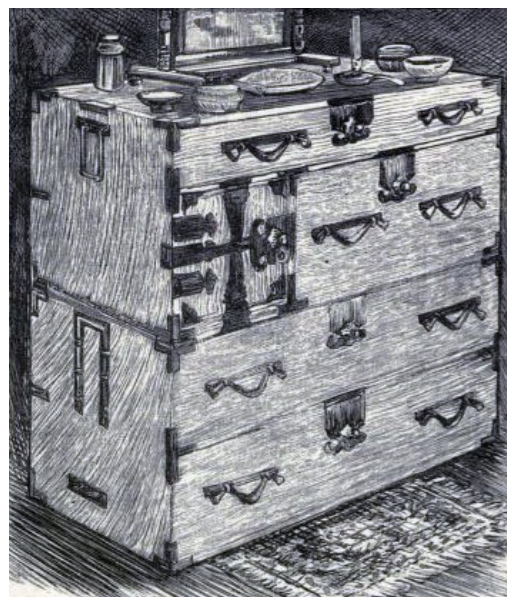
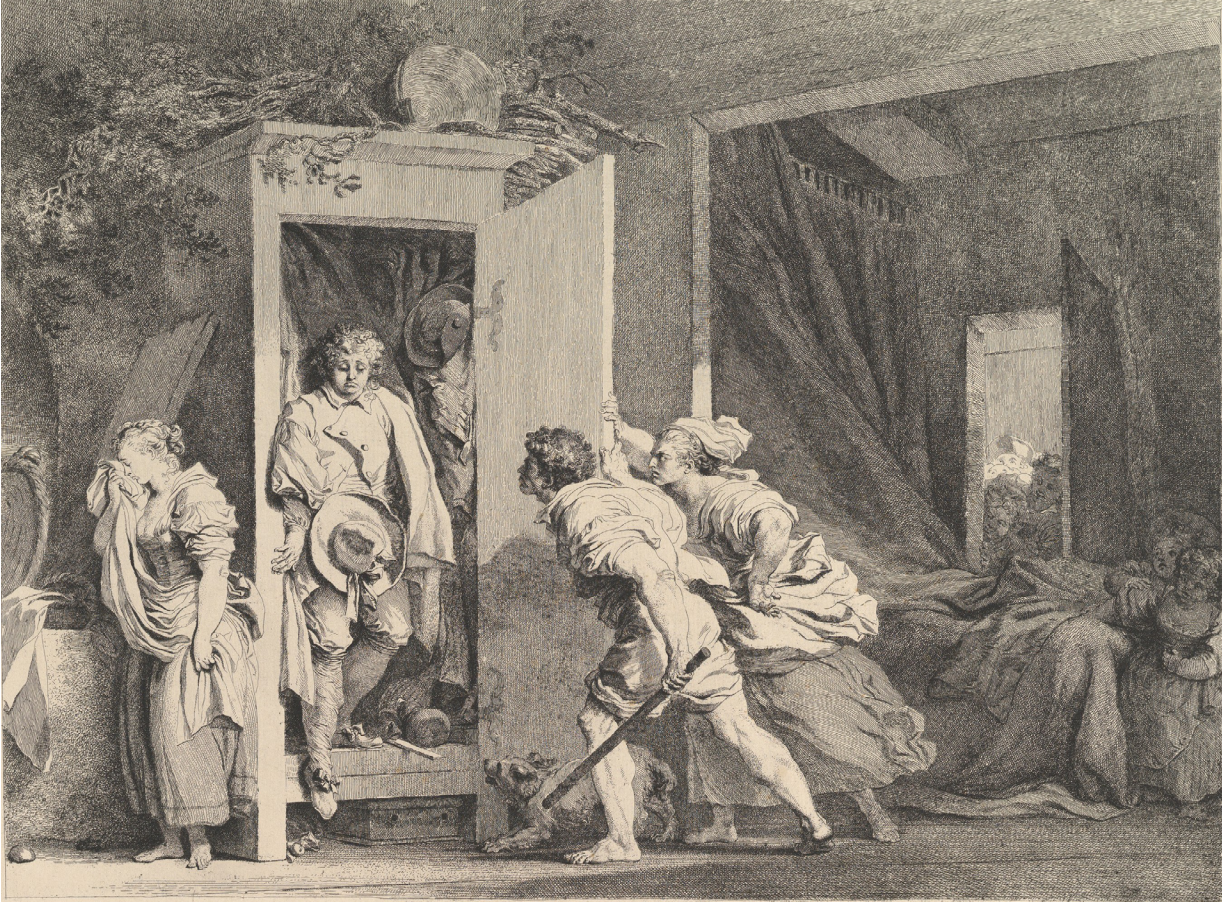


Figure 1.05 (opposite) - Wardrobe structured as a piece of architecture, complete with pediment and faux corinthian columns.

Figure 1.06 (above) - Lady Mary Anne Broome, *Victorian Travelling Chest of Drawers*, 1878.

16. The modern closet as an unassuming room dedicated to storage evolves in 1840s America, in large part due to the Protestant work ethic, which lists frugality as one of its core tenets. Andrew Jackson Downing's *Cottage Residences* gives us some insight into the mindset of the closet as a space to be intentionally glossed over. In concealing one's material acquisitions, one can at least project an image of grace to the outside world, false as it may be.

17. Pieces of freestanding furniture became increasingly considered as part of an architectural whole in the 17th century, as popularized in the palatial designs of Charles Le Brun and Daniel Marot.



collection they were meant to display. When viewed in concert, these architectural objects represented a microcosm of the world outside. They were a way to display one's acquisitions, in a time in which material goods were much harder to come by, with pride. And pride, of course, is a sin. So while, by sheer virtue of their utility, these objects did not vanish from our homes entirely, the Protestant invention of the recessed closet saw them not only fall out of favor, but lose their air of grandeur in favour of a more demure presence. But more on cabinets later.

Perhaps when I first built it, my Closet resembled a recessed closet – a small room crammed with those objects and memories I considered unsightly. It was a safe, a panic room of sorts, to lock myself in when faced with a perceived sense of judgment or danger. It is, of course, under such conditions of perceived danger that the notion of the closet as an intangible space to hide in and “come out” of first appeared, linguistically speaking.¹⁸ The advent of “homosexuality”, a term first coined in the early days of sexology and classified as a mental illness, came with an increased public consciousness of queer individuals, and with it the first instances of institutionalized homophobia.¹⁹ It was not until

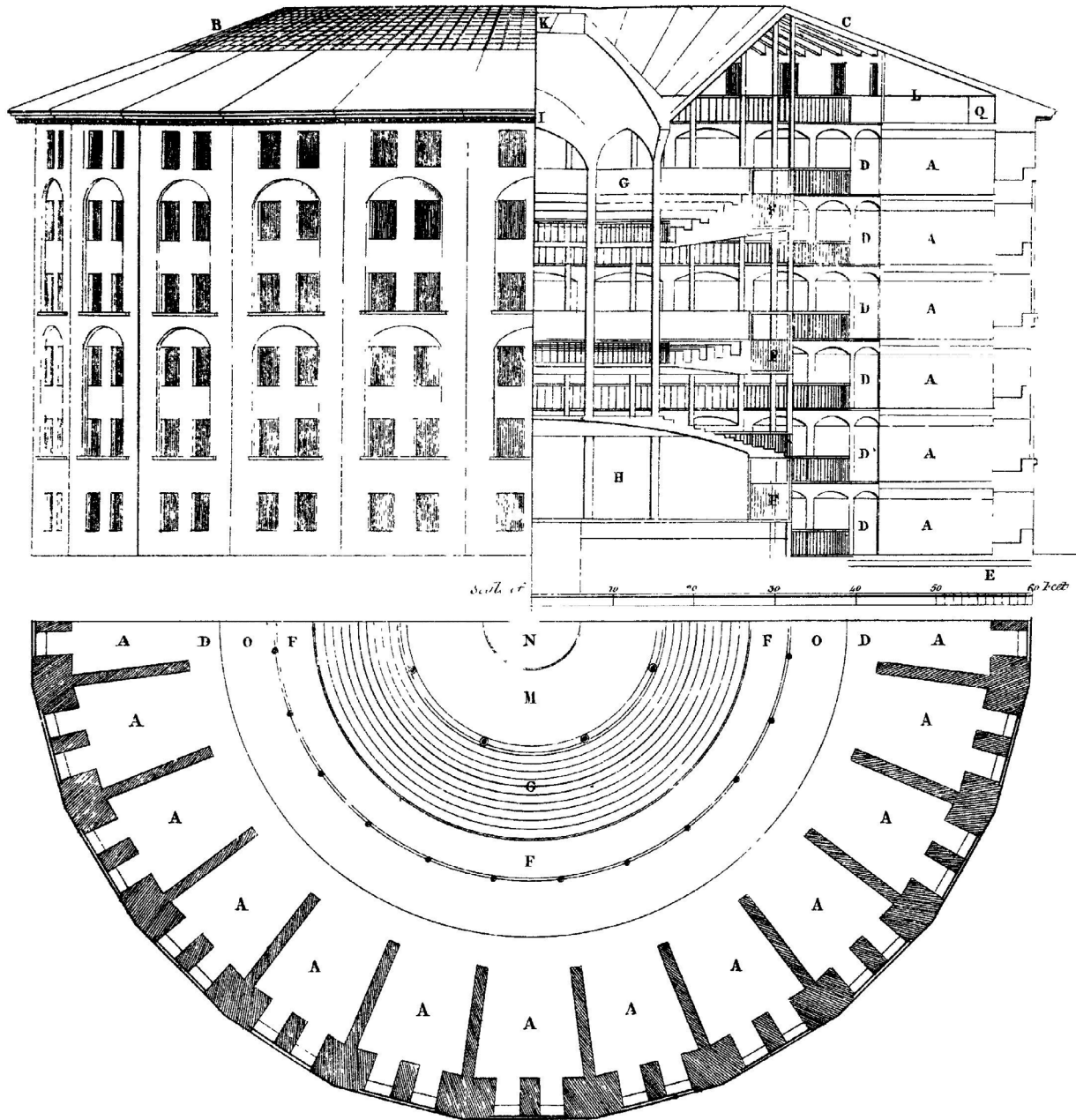


Figure 1.07 (opposite) - Jean Honoré Fragonard, *The Armoire*, 1778

Figure 1.08 (above) - Jan Luyken, *Woman takes things out of a closet*, 1711

18. “Coming out” is a term that evolves in the early 1950s as a product of the study of sexology. It is widely attributed to sexologist Evelyn Hooker who, despite her somewhat black and white conception of sexuality, paved the way for the eventual removal of homosexuality as a recognized mental disorder. Kudos Evelyn.

19. Michel Foucault’s *A History of Sexuality* focuses much of its attention on the evolution of a language around sexuality that enables both the formation and systematic oppression of communities of sexual minorities.



we gave queerness a name that it fell under the scrutiny of the public eye, creating a sort of societal panopticon that honed in on everything from strong homosocial bonds to gendered mannerisms as sites of inquiry.²⁰ This panopticon necessitated that queer people find a place to hide - and we had already invented just the space for that.

Since the mid-1990s, however, the metaphor of the closet as a queer interior architecture has come under significant criticism. Following the lead of Eve Sedgwick, many queer thinkers have come to see the closet as a construct that implies a set of essentialist binaries: straight and gay, public and private, shameful and prideful, artificial and authentic.²¹ In reducing identity and authentic self-expression to a binary system, in or out, the closet seems to imply that not only is sexuality the defining characteristic of life as a queer individual, undermining their innate human complexity, but negates those gray areas of human sexuality and intimacy we have become increasingly aware of. Particularly in recent years, in which rainbow capitalism has seen the normalization of queerness in Western society, and sexuality has come to be understood as a fluid act, the architectural metaphor of the closet as a space of shame that

Figure 1.09 (opposite) - Willey Reveley, *Plan/Section of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon*, 1791

20. Jeremy Bentham's panopticon prison is an enduring architectural idea that has only become more potent in our surveillance society. The design is simple: a tower acting as an all seeing eye is placed at the centre of a round chamber, with cells arranged around the edge of the room. Prisoners are placed in a position in which they are unable to discern whether or not they are being watched, but know there is always a chance they may be observed. They regulate their behaviour accordingly.

21. While criticisms of the closet as rooted in a binary concept of sexuality can be found in any number of queer analyses, most are building on the argument outlined in Eve Sedgwick's 1990 publication *Epistemology of the Closet*.



one needs liberation from seems to have lost much, if not all, of its verity.²² In the words of Josh Thomas: “Coming out, to me, just seems so 90s, you know?”²³

So these days, and I would venture to guess the same is true of many others, my Closet has come to resemble a closet of another kind. An older sort of closet, in which privacy and power, performance and authenticity, were not binaries, but a dance between two parties. Here, give me a moment to undo the lock and I will show you what I mean.

[rattle]

[snap] Sorry, this one’s stuck.

[clunk]

Ok, just a few more. [jingle]

[pop] And...

[click]

There we are. Come on in.

Figure 1.10 (opposite) - Gay fathers march together at the 1991 Toronto Pride Parade.

22. In a 2017 interview, Aaron Betsky posited that, as corporations have become aware that the gay community is a market that can be tapped, public acceptance and the depiction of queerness has become so mainstream that subversive queer spaces have largely become extinct.

23. Comedian Josh Thomas’ emphatic invocation in his queer coming of age series *Please Like Me* echoes a sentiment shared by many queer individuals, myself included.





AXIS of HONOUR

As I pull open the double doors, you can see that I am dressed to impress, with fine clothing covering all but my hands and face. We aren't quite past the point of formality yet, but that is precisely why I have invited you to talk.

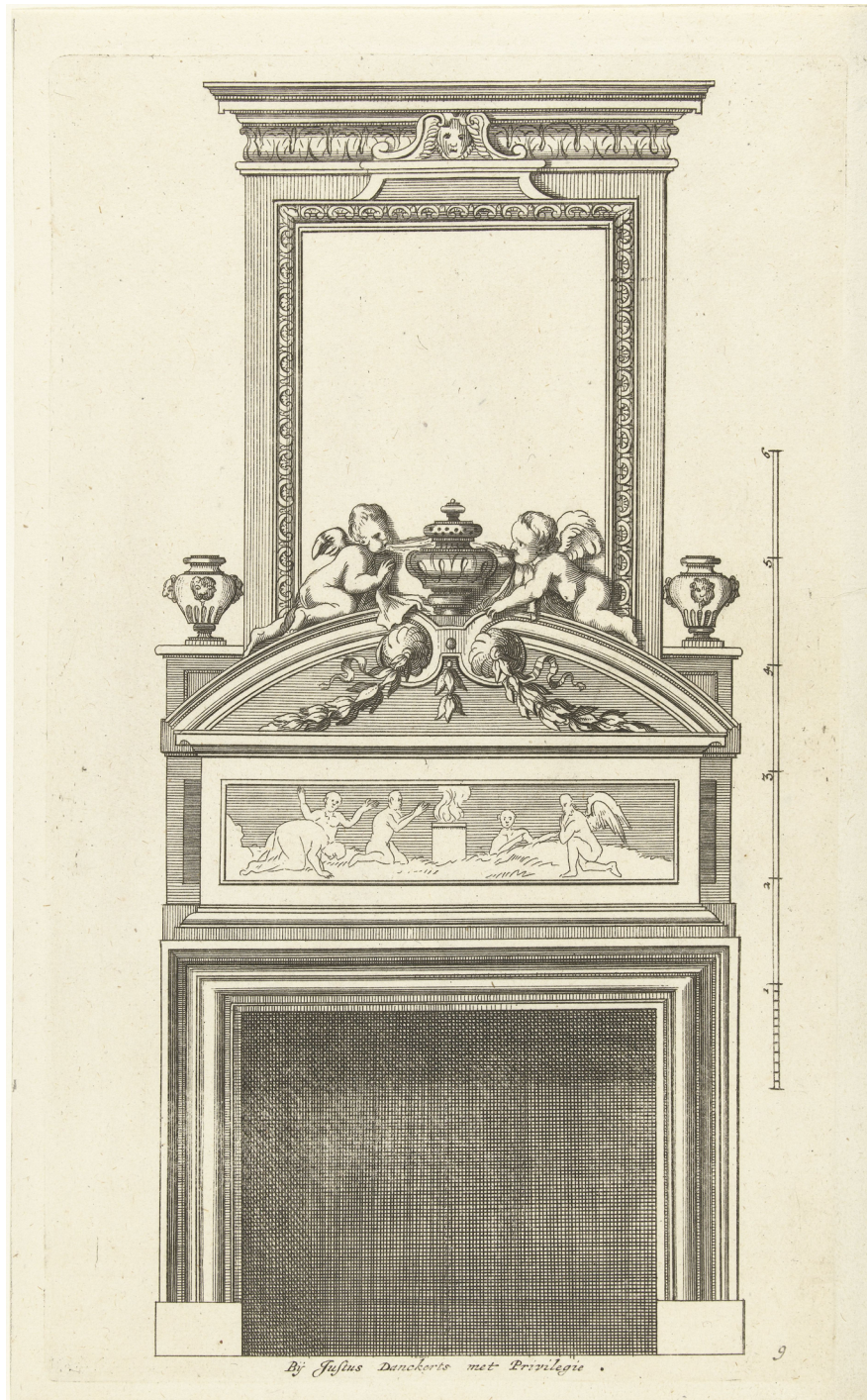
It's nice to see you, too.

I bid you to enter, and you step through the unassuming French doors. You are, no doubt, surprised at the space before you. It is far more stately than the room we call a closet today – grander even than the ever sought-after walk-in. Carrie Bradshaw could never.²⁴ In fact, there isn't a shelf or garment rod in sight.

High ceilings, typical of the palatial houses of

Figure 2.01 - My personal design for an early modern closet

24. Sex and the City's Carrie Bradshaw has become a veritable gay icon for her eclectic sense of fashion, her fabulous lifestyle, and her incessant use of rhetorical questions. Carrie's obsession with her closet is well documented, and mirrors that of the nobles who used them at the height of their popularity. I couldn't help but wonder: does a closet full of Minolo Blahniks constitute a cabinet of curiosities?



nobility lend the relatively small room an air of grandeur and openness. Light pours in through a tall, narrow window on the wall to your left. A roaring fireplace on the opposite side of the room immediately draws your eye. Its ornate (but not so ornate as to be tacky) mantel bears the likeness of two cherubs that appear to be blowing hot air. Don't worry, the symbolism isn't lost on me. This hearth, situated at a place of honour in the room, lends the modestly sized chamber both a sense of coziness and prestige, a far cry from the dark recess you once pictured.

The paneled walls of this room are lined with all manner of works of art, ranging from large paintings to cabinet miniatures.²⁵ I have always had rather eclectic sensibilities, and you will see everything from portraits and landscapes to abstracts and surrealist nightmares displayed on these walls. There is a decidedly homoerotic theme to this collection, which features works exclusively by queer artists through the ages.²⁶ Such a maximalist display may be seen as rather decadent or even grotesque to some (I'm looking at you Pepys), but I am the master of this closet of mine, and I shall decorate it as I like.²⁷

Figure 2.02 (opposite) - Cornelis Danckerts after Pierre Bullet, Mantel elevation, c. 1675-1686

25. A cabinet painting is a miniature work of art, typically no larger than 60cm in each dimension, that evolved out of the a culture of illuminated manuscripts in the 16th century. Cabinet paintings as a genre are attributed to the artist Frans Francken the Younger, a progenitor of the Antwerp school of art, and typically feature either immensely detailed landscapes, in an attempt to make miniature the majesty of nature, or small images of another cabinet collection. Similar in scale and aim, cabinet miniatures developed in Tudor England as a form of portraiture. Both types of artwork were commonly featured in closet collections.

26. The collection includes works by Caravaggio, Cecil Beaton, Francis Bacon, Beauford Delaney, Robert Rauschenberg, John Singer Sargent, Gilbert and George, Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol, Keith Haring, Robert Maplethorpe, Marsden Hartley, David Hockney, Henry Scott Tuke, Leonardo Da Vinci, Frida Kahlo, and Diane Arbus.

27. Samuel Pepys, prolific 17th century diarist and naval administrator to King Charles was known as something of a closet fanatic. Being of low birth, Pepys rose through the ranks as a courtier, and discovered the power of intimacy fostered in the closet. In one of his early encounters in King Charles' closet, he disparages the king for making an eyesore of beautiful works of art by displaying so many at once.



Directly in front of you, as you have no doubt noticed, is another set of casement doors. They are tall with an ornamental moulding and decorative filigree that draws you forward, daring you to imagine what grand chamber might yet lay beyond. That's right – my closets are many in this private apartment, making up an entire wing of the palace that is my mind.²⁸ And no, you should not expect to tour them all. That would be presumptuous indeed. Here, take a seat in one of these handsomely upholstered wingbacks, pour yourself a cup of tea, and allow me to explain.

The closet might be understood as our first dedicated architecture of domestic privacy. That is to say, when the closet originated in the so-called “great” houses of Europe, it was the only room built with the express purpose of providing its owner solitude.²⁹ It might be hard to imagine from a contemporary framework where the domestic has become synonymous with the private, but the privacy that we take for granted in our homes today was once a great rarity – both from the perspective of the lower strata, whose homes rarely had more than one room to share between an entire family, and the upper strata, whose lives were played on in the public eye. In fact, truly private space was

Figure 2.03 (opposite) - Charles Wild, *Windsor Castle: The King's Closet*, 1816

28. A friend of a friend, Dr. Frances Yates, describes in her book *The Art of Memory* an Ancient Greek and Roman mnemonic technique known as the method of loci. Also known as the memory palace technique, the method of loci involves closing one's eyes, and imagining their mind as a physical space, with all manner of rooms. This space might be a palace, a library, a museum – whatever feels natural to the person practicing. When one wishes to commit something to memory, they need simply to close their eyes, walk through the rooms of this space, and place that memory somewhere specific. When one needs to retrieve that memory, they may once again traverse the halls of this memory palace, and need only to find where they left the memory in order to retrieve the information there contained. This technique is regularly used by masters of memory, including those who compete in memory competitions.

29. When I refer to the nobility of Europe as “great” houses, I do not mean that as a judgement of their value as people, but simply to refer to them by the terms commonly used by medieval historians. As far as I am concerned, the upper classes of society are anything but “great,” and have acted as oppressors in nearly every conceivable respect throughout history. I don't owe them one iota of respect, nor do you.

not socially constructed in the home until the late medieval period – at least in Europe.

I don't claim to be a great proponent of Eurocentric thought, nor would I call myself a medieval historian in any respect, but you will have to indulge me this foray into European (and particularly British) medieval history, particularly that laid out in the written work of famed architectural historian Mark Girouard, and celebrated museum curator Peter Thornton. In order to build an understanding of the closet as a social construct, we must trace its origin, and as far as I can tell, closets are as Western of a phenomenon as they come, acting as monuments to a burgeoning sense of individualism, secrecy, and a material culture enabled by 16th century colonialism.

I will try to make this as quick and painless as possible.

The Hall

To understand the significance of the architectural closet, and the veritable domestic revolution it represented, we must first familiarize ourselves with the architectural and social conditions that

eventually gave birth to it: that of the medieval castle and country house. In medieval Europe (and, in truth, all time periods since), as Rousseau has explored extensively in his treatise on inequality, power was derived first and foremost through the owning of private property.³⁰ Country houses were not the rustic farmsteads that those words conjure an image of today, but large manors and vessels for political power, sat in the midst of vast swathes of land owned by the nobility. Noble families leased this land to all manner of individuals of lesser status, who in turn became their subjects.

Owning and leasing land was key to one's status, in that power and influence in medieval society were still very much a product of the manpower available to an individual. A clause in the lord's lease required his male subjects muster to fight for him as a private army, should the need arise. Some who worked directly under the lord would travel with him as he moved between his various estates, forming an impressive entourage known as a riding household, whose size spoke directly to that lord's power.

The relationship between lord and subject was, to a degree, symbiotic: while their servitude and



Figure 2.04 - Loyset Liédet, *Wedding Banquet*, c. 1440

30. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 18th century French philosopher and enemy of right wingers everywhere, explores social disparity at length in his *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*. In it he explores the concepts of natural and moral inequality: while natural inequality cannot be helped, as it is a product of our birth, moral inequality in civil society has everything to do with “amour propre,” or self love. Self love necessitates comparing to and holding oneself above others and deciding to dominate them. In order to dominate others, a select self-loving few claim land as theirs, resulting in conflict. They then proceed to trick others into establishing a set of rules and laws that end this conflict and uphold their “freedom” while maintaining their status quo as society's dominant class.



willingness to fight for him garnered influence and power, the lord offered a security and protection that his subjects would not have outside of the community he created. It was thus in a lord's best interests to treat his subjects well, both to attract new ones by word of his generosity as a landlord, and to prevent losing what influence he already held. Those who offered personal services to the lord as chamberlains, cooks, attendants and the like were offered accommodations in exchange for their work, and assimilated into the household. In order to house and feed such large households, and as a display of a lord's wealth and power, country houses and castles were typically built around a room known as the hall.

The hall was, for much of the 15th century and before, the centre of life in the country house, particularly in England, France, and Scotland. This lofty, multi-purpose dining room was typically located on the ground floor, and almost always several storeys high. A surprisingly large span for this space could be achieved through the use of robust wooden trusses and in some cases, massive stone columns. Halls were warm and welcoming, in comparison to many other drab chambers of the medieval castle. In early castles and country



Figure 2.05 (opposite) - Abraham Bosse, *Banquet of the Chevaliers of the Holy Spirit*, 1634.

Figure 2.06 (above) - Taddeo Zuccari, *The Solemn Entrance of Emperor Charles V, Francis I of France, and of Alessandro Cardinal Farnese into Paris in 1540*, c. 1559.

houses, a hearth was located at the centre of the hall with a roof vent that allowed smoke to escape, while later halls boasted large fireplaces. The hall usually boasted large ornate windows as well, which were a feat of engineering at the time, letting in an unmatched level of light, and indicating the lord's respective wealth.

The high table, which seated the lord and their family, was located atop a dais at the end of the hall. The other subjects were seated at long tables that ran perpendicular to the lord's table, with those of the highest status seated closest to the lord and servants sat at the other end of the hall. Should a lord's superior pay them a visit, the high table would be theirs to command, and the lord would take his place at a table nearby. While a sense of hierarchy was certainly present in the hall's architecture, the sharing of meals across social classes fostered a sense of community within the home that transcended the social strata of society. What's more, beyond acting as a large communal dining room, living room, and performance space, the hall transformed into a sleeping chamber for servants in the evening. With the majority of the lower class coming from homes where space for living, cooking, dining, and sleeping all took place

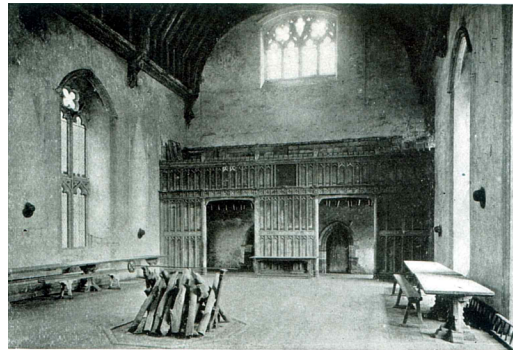


Figure 2.07 - Mid 14th century Great Hall at Penshurst Place

in one room, the hall would not prove to be too much of an adjustment.³¹ It was a room not only for the lord, but the people who afforded him whatever power he held.

The Great Chamber

It should come as no surprise that the sense of egalitarianism embodied by the hall would not last. Power was increasingly consolidated by the state over the course of the late 15th and 16th centuries, made possible by an enormous revenue brought in through taxes, and the development of a centralized military and police force. With this transformation, manpower became less and less the currency of social status among noble households. Power was held by the sovereign alone, and proximity to them was now paramount to one's influence. No longer beholden to their subjects in the way they once were, the structure of the great household began to change. Nobles tired of loud halls filled with those they now saw as markedly below them, and began to withdraw from the hall, taking their meals away from the rest of the household in a private family room called the great chamber, or solar.



Figure 2.08 - Jan Christoffel Jegher, *De volwassenheid*, c. 1643-1666

31. In the houses of lower class individuals before the 18th century, there was no real sense of privacy. All of the programs of a house were contained in one room, not unlike our contemporary studio apartment, and family members even shared a bed. The tradition of the family bed is still the norm in many cultures, where the construct of privacy has not taken as much of a hold.



The great chamber was the largest bedchamber in a house, usually located on the first floor above the hall and was typically reserved for visiting royalty. When it wasn't occupied with royal guests, it was used as a private living room for the family of the house, and was the only room in the house in which the family could truly be alone without servants attending to them. Even bedchambers, which we often see today as bastions of solitude, were places in which nobles were attended to nearly constantly. In the solar, families could relax and exist without any attendants present. In many ways, this chamber acted as the closest cognate to a true sense of solitude embodied by the closet, save perhaps the garderobe, which had not yet been elevated to its later status as a "super closet."³²

The migration of the high table from the dais in the hall to the great chamber, while seemingly minor, marked a significant shift in the ritual of the household, and began to enforce a greater sense of social hierarchy within the architecture of great houses. Soon, halls began to be partitioned, and were eventually relegated to a diminutive room used exclusively by the staff of the house. Behind it, family members could withdraw to the newly christened private parlour, a novel room

Figure 2.09 (opposite) - The solar, or great chamber, at Bunratty Castle, Ireland

32. Garderobes, or wardrobes in English, originate not only as spaces for storing clothes and other valuables but also as privies, usually projecting from the edge of castles. It was thought that the ammonia from shit would keep insects like moths from eating valuable clothing. Sounds like an olfactory nightmare to me. Eventually, garderobe would become the term for the more private of two closets in a private apartment, though this was often precisely because the room doubled as a privy.



for informal meals held by the family. The great chamber, which one typically ascended to through the hall, became a space of great import, where meals and discussions with significant guests were conducted. This vertical hierarchy, in which people and activities of lower import were largely housed on the ground floor, while important people and activities were housed upstairs, became the norm.

In the late 16th century the growing power of the state and the desire to attract royal visitors eventually saw more and more space in the great house dedicated to so-called state rooms like the great chamber. In order to accommodate this space, many great houses were extended, and three-storey country houses became more commonplace. In a three storey house, the ground floor would largely be dedicated to service programs, the first floor to domestic programs, and the second floor to matters of state. This served both as a rather literal symbol of a lord's status above their servants, and a sovereign's status above them, but a practical concern, in that the upper floors of the house were typically drier and brighter. This architectural metaphor of vertical hierarchy can be seen throughout country houses of the Elizabethan and Jacobean era, but perhaps find its height in the

Figure 2.10 (opposite) - Joseph Nash, *Grand Staircase, Hardwicke Hall, Derbyshire, 1840*



architecture of Derbyshire's luxurious Hardwick Hall, which features not one, but two great chambers – one dedicated to the family for their private affairs, and another dedicated to important state affairs, designed to impress.³³

The Private Apartment

It is not, however, in vertical hierarchy that the closet rears its ugly head, but rather in a horizontal hierarchy established in 17th century palaces and formal houses. Ideas of symmetry as an expression of social order through architecture, largely adopted from Italian Renaissance architects like Palladio, began to take root around various parts of Europe.³⁴ It was particularly well received in the design of palaces in which queens, who more often than not acted as representatives of an alliance between countries, demanded equal and mirrored architectural representation to their male counterparts. Soon, in an attempt to emulate royalty, country houses would follow the suit of royal palaces, adopting a more symmetrical, Palladian plan in what we now refer to as the formal house. In this symmetrical architectural paradigm, a new apparatus for power that flowed horizontally, rather than vertically, began to take

Figure 2.11 (opposite) - Hector Heylbroeck, *Enfilade on the ground floor of Hotel Merghelynck in Ypres, Belgium, c. 1889*

33. Constructed for Bess Hardwick, the second wealthiest woman in England (after Queen Elizabeth herself) Hardwick Hall's architecture was some of the most lavish of its time. With a showy façade that is more glass than stone, the building famously makes a performance of social hierarchy housed within. One ascends a dramatic stair, passing through a floor dedicated to servants, an unusually luxurious first floor for the family, complete with its own great chamber, before ascending to a magnificent second floor designed to impress even the highest ranking visitors. One passes through an extraordinary gallery into the high great chamber, whose intricate frieze marks it as the gem of the house.

34. Andrea Palladio was actually a fairly obscure architect of the Italian Renaissance until his *Four Books on Architecture* were brought to England and popularized through the design of formal houses.

root – that of the private apartment.

A private apartment in the formal house or palace describes a suite of rooms laid out in enfilade, meaning that one must pass through each room to enter the next. Usually located off a larger, more public room, the way in which the private apartment acted as an apparatus of ritualized power was simple. When seeking an audience with an individual of greater status, one was afforded a greater degree of honour the deeper one was allowed to progress into their private apartment, particularly in the case that the higher status individual accompanied them. Conversely, should a lower status individual receive a guest of high status, they were afforded a greater honour the deeper that person was willing to venture into their home.

This phenomenon has been described by Mr Girouard as an “axis of honour,” a sort of dance of trust and influence in the formal house. The deeper one went into a private apartment with its owner, the less formally the owner acted. We are of course most open, most ourselves, in the spaces in which we feel at home. This letting down of a superior’s guard as they progressed into increasingly private

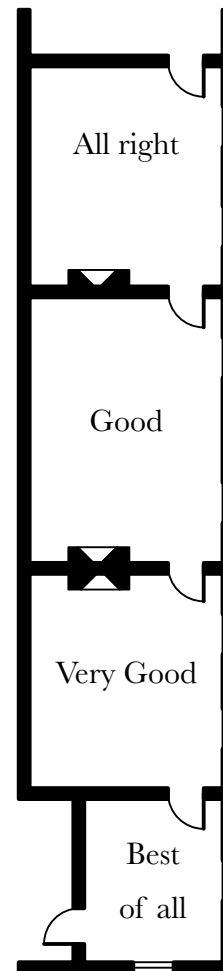


Figure 2.12 - Diagram of the axis of honour as described by Mark Girouard

space allowed one to learn all manner of secrets, which conversely increased one's status at court.

A typical private apartment had at least three chambers: first, an antechamber or withdrawing room (from which we derive our more contemporary drawing room), which acted as a space of reception and semi-private conversation.³⁵ Even to be invited into the antechamber was to be shown some degree of honour, particularly in the case that a superior would join you there for discussion. From this chamber the next set of doors were particularly enticing, for beyond them (in a three-room arrangement, at least) was the room that might be considered the unofficial seat of power in court.

Behind the withdrawing room lay the bedchamber, which was considered the focal point of the private apartment. Not only was the bedchamber used for sleeping but, particularly in the case of palaces, it grew to be a room to conduct important state affairs. The royal bed, usually treated as something of a throne with a grand canopy, was a space from which decrees that effected the entire state were made. As the space in which a sovereign slept, arguably the most vulnerable human state, to be allowed to enter the bedchamber showed a



Figure 2.13 - Samuel van Hoogstraten, *A View Through a House*, 1662

35. One should note that the transition from the term withdrawing room to drawing room mark a significant change in how we thought about and utilized domestic space. The withdrawing room is a negative space, a place of respite from the performative nature of a very social house. The drawing room instead is a positive space, in which one goes to partake in largely solitary or semi-private activities.



visiting individual a great degree of respect. Yet the bedchamber was not the most exclusive room in this series. No, it was a visit to the next chamber, the most private chamber, that guests most coveted a visit to.

You guessed it.

The Closet

Sitting at the end of a long sequence of chambers, the closet (or cabinet, in France) was the most intimate and interior space in its architectural context. Privacy is a luxury for the powerful, as we demand transparency and accountability from those we entrust with the greatest responsibility. This was doubly so the case for the king and queens of Europe, whose homes played host to courtiers vying for their attention, and spreading gossip for their own personal gain; staff who attended their every need from the moment they woke until the moment they went to sleep; not to mention a seemingly endless flow of visiting dignitaries, all of whom typically travelled with a large host of their own curious staff and power hungry courtiers. Living a life in which the domestic was so intermingled with affairs of state, the closet was

Figure 2.14 (opposite) - James Stephanoff, *The King's Closet, Kensington Palace, 1819.*



a haven and retreat for the powerful people who called these places home. It was, perhaps, the only room in the world in which the aristocracy could let their guard down and truly be alone.

Its uniquely solitary nature allowed the closet to house several key programs. In its earliest appearances, it was largely used as a room for prayer, in an emulation of the monastic cell.³⁶ Another common use of the closet was akin to that of the home office or study. The advent of the Gutenberg printing press in 1439 had seen the proliferation of print media, particularly among the wealthy, and closets afforded them the necessary solace to read and reflect without distraction. Closets were also frequently equipped with lockable doors, a rarity in a building playing host to so many people. For this reason, they often acted as vaults for their owners, playing host to a collection of their most valuable possessions.³⁷ Between its three early programs, with a focus on collection and self-reflection, the closet became closely associated with identity, reflecting their owner's sense of self in a way that no other room in the private apartment did.

In particularly lavish palaces and formal houses, private apartments could be extended far beyond

Figure 2.15 (opposite) - Jacob de Formentrou, *A Cabinet of Pictures*, 1659

36. Monastic cells might represent the earliest architecture of pure privacy outside of the domestic realm. Monks, whose title literally translates to “solitary”, often swore oaths of poverty and/or silence, and would live out their entire lives in small rooms in order to become closer to God. At once living rooms and sacred spaces, the monastic cell represents a voluntary self-exclusion that predates even the closet.

37. By the 18th century, a craze around collecting saw many of these Closet collections become so large that new rooms and objects were built specifically for their display. Known as cabinets of curiosity, or wunderkammers, these collections were often themed around a certain area of knowledge, whether that be art, or natural history, or science. Fueled by colonialism, aristocrats and an increasingly wealthy merchant class gathered oddities from around the globe for these collections, which would eventually become our modern day museums.

the basic framework I have described. Additional antechambers, dressing rooms, and salons were commonly interspersed in an apartment, but any number of rooms housing very specific programs could be included. A private apartment may even feature more than one closet, each representing a further sense of interiority and intimacy. In the case of two such rooms, they might be distinguished as a closet and a garderobe (with the garderobe being the more private of the two, often including a privy), but this could hypothetically be extended far beyond a mere pair.

Take for instance, the case of Louis XV, Versailles most notoriously private King. While his father had constructed a “private” apartment complete with several cabinets just off of his state apartment, these rooms were never really treated as truly private. Louis XV’s renovations to his father’s private apartment, on the other hand, were complete with no less than seven cabinets, the most exclusive and remote of which was the Golden Cabinet. It took cabinets upon cabinets for him to feel any real sense of independence from the pressures and prying eyes of court.

With this revelation, it is my hope that the rules



Figure 2.16 - James Stephanoff, *The Queen's Closet, Kensington Palace, 1819.*

of our game have become clear. My Closet is structured as one such private apartment; a suite of closets functioning on an axis of honour.

As we venture forth together into increasingly intimate spaces, I will continue to unpack the purpose of the closet, and also make myself increasingly vulnerable. In doing so, I afford you a great honour. In exchange, you will do me the honour of listening attentively and, hopefully, awarding me a master's degree in architecture.

Does that sound fair?

Good.

Then, without further adieu, let's proceed to the next closet in our itinerary.

STUDIOLO

If you'll follow me we will proceed to my studiolo, the Italian Renaissance's very own iteration of the closet. Proliferating palaces throughout the fifteenth century, the studiolo, like its cousin, was a place for withdrawal, private study, collection, and contemplation – the very space from which we derive our common room title “the study”. Very much imbued with the spirit of the Renaissance, studioli marked their owners as cultured and learned individuals, traits that were highly valued in this period of creative innovation and cultural rebirth.

Oh, how the times have changed.

Though studioli and closets served similar purposes when they first appeared in the late Medieval period, the studiolo actually reached the height of its popularity much earlier, becoming a staple in noble Italian households by the 16th century through its sheer symbolic power. Studioli were invariably lavish and meticulously designed, incorporating artworks into the architecture of the room itself. It was not unusual to see motifs



and scenes from classical mythology play out on the walls of a studiolo, in allusion to their owner's extensive classical education. Greek and Roman gods and goddesses were among the most popular of these motifs, particularly the muses, each of whom personified a different realm of knowledge.

Symbolism in art reached new heights during the Renaissance, as did interest in personal identity and consciousness. As such, it was not unusual to see personal medals, family crests, and other symbols weaved throughout a studiolo.³⁸ This hyper-personalization of the studiolo took the idea of the closet as an architectural simulacrum of the self to new heights. With iconography so closely tied to the personal identity of those they served, walking into a studiolo was almost like walking into its owner's mind – or at least, a highly curated image thereof.

Take, for instance, the studioli of Isabella d'Este, marchioness of Mantova. Referred to by some as the unofficial first lady of the Renaissance, Isabella was a brilliant composer, diplomat, fashion icon, and famed patron of the arts. Educated by some of the greatest minds of her age and voracious for knowledge, Isabella dedicated not one, but



Figure 3.01 (opposite) - Medal of Isabella D'Este.

Figure 3.02 (above) - Titian, Portrait of Isabella D'Este, c. 1534-1536

38. The concept of personal identity was at the front of scholarly mind in the Renaissance, inspiring various new mediums for self expression. The Renaissance medal was one such medium, a coin that depicted one's likeness on one side, and a set of symbols and sometimes words on the other. The medal of Isabella D'Este, which she proudly displayed in her studiolo, depicts a winged woman with a wand, taming a snake at her feet. Above, the symbol of Sagittarius watches overhead, an invocation of her perceived divine favour. Isabella represents herself as a patron for talented artists by incorporating the phrase "benemerentium ergo", meaning "for those who are well deserving".



two rooms in her apartment at the Castello di San Giorgio to private study – her studiolo, and her “grotta” or cave, so named for its cavernous vaulted ceiling. In these rooms, she spent countless hours pouring over books, practicing music, and entertaining the privileged few she allowed to see her inner sanctum. When Isabella later relocated to the nearby Corte Vecchia after her husband's passing, she actually brought her studiolo and grotta with her, ordering they be reconstructed in her new home.

Isabella's studioli are loaded with personal symbolism in the form of crests, mottos, and works of art. The walls of the studiolo, the more understated of these two rooms, are lined with five large paintings Isabella commissioned from the likes of Andrea Mantegna, Lorenzo Costa, and Pietro Perugino. Each of these panels depicts personally significant allegories using figures from mythology and literature. Some scenes, like a depiction of knowledge deity Apollo's residence, Mount Parnassus, are pulled straight from myth. Others are closer to collages of these classical figures, rearranged to create a new symbolic order drawn straight from Isabella's imagination.³⁹

Figure 3.03 (opposite) - Lorenzo Costa the Elder, *Allegory of Isabella D'Este's Coronation*, c. 1505

39. Among the works in her studiolo, the fantastical “Allegory of Isabella D'Este's Coronation” by Lorenzo Costa is about the closest to a true portrait of the marchioness. In it, D'Este kneels in the Garden of Harmony, a place associated with art, music, and poetry, as the goddess Venus and her son Anteros crown her. Other figures present in the garden include Diana, a symbol of chastity, Mercury, the protector of the arts, as well as figures representing the virtues of perseverance and purity. Great flex Isabella.



The highly intricate ceiling of Isabella’s grotta, too, incorporates many symbols. On one side of the barrel vault, a crest bears her personal motto: “Nec spet nec mety,” which translates to “no hope, no fear.” On another side of the vault is a crest bearing a musical notation of Isabella’s own invention - a symbol for silence and time, commonly referred to as “the harmonies of silence.” One can only imagine that, while these symbols of her own cleverness certainly brought her pleasure, they were also designed to portray her in a favorable light to important visitors – and no doubt, to test their intelligence.⁴⁰

Isabella’s grotta also incorporated an intricate set of wooden paneling on the lower third of the walls, depicting icons of her various talents, as well as images of her city. The use of such panels in a studiolo were not, however, the marchioness’ invention. She was inspired by an earlier studiolo, from which my own takes many of its design cues – that of the legendary military leader and diplomat, Duke Federico III da Montefeltro.

Federico III acted as the duke of Urbino from the mid to late fifteenth century and had a reputation as a true humanist and benevolent artistic patron.⁴¹



Figure 3.04 (opposite) - Isabella D’Este’s notation for the harmonies of silence in the alcove ceiling of her grotta in Mantova

Figure 3.05 (above) - Piero della Francesca, *Portrait of the Duke of Urbino, Federico da Montefeltro*, c. 1473-1475

40. In some ways, the studiolo can be seen to be an architecture of performative introspection. While these rooms, no doubt, delighted the patrons that commissioned them, they were as much about showing off how erudite their owners were to friends and dignitaries.

41. While Federico III earned his reputation on his military successes, he solidified his legacy through his cultural contributions, employing a great number of artists and architects over his lifetime. His studiolo is the intellectual product of a collaboration between the duke, a council of court artists and scholars, as well as two architects, Luciano Laurana and Francesco di Giorgio Martini.



Wishing to convert his ancestral home in the city of Urbino into one of Europe's greatest courts, Federico oversaw numerous renovations to his ducal palace, including the incorporation of a studiolo where the Duke could carry out his scholarly pursuits. It was so well received by the duke's guests that Federico constructed an almost identical chamber in his ancestral home in Gubbio only a few years later. These studioli are some of the best preserved examples of this room left in the world, the latter of which has been lovingly reconstructed in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.⁴²

The Duke's studioli are famous for the intricate and illusionistic wood panels that line the lower half of the tall room. This technique, known as intarsia, uses a variety of types of wood to create a sort of wood mosaic in a variety of rich tones.⁴³ The duke's intarsia depict trompe-l'oeil benches, open latticework cabinetry, and bookshelves, lined with symbols of the duke's many talents and pursuits: great works of literature and writing tools representing studiousness, swords and navigation tools representing military prowess, and musical notations and instruments that suggest an interest in the arts, to name a few. His intarsia also depict faux windows, which display pastoral scenes of his



Figure 3.06 (opposite) - Studiolo from the Ducal Palace at Gubbio, reassembled at the Metropolitan Museum in New York

Figure 3.07 (above) - Intarsia depicting the Urbino countryside and the ducal palace in the distance from the Urbino studiolo

42. Unlike a traditional mosaic, the wooden panels that lined the room made it easy to disassemble and reassemble the studiolo, effectively enabling the entire room to be moved. It was relocated to Frescati in 1874, where it was purchased by a German art dealer and moved to Venice. The Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired the Gubbio studiolo in 1939, where they lovingly reconstructed it for public display, and graciously provided high quality documentation.

43. Intarsia is a form of woodlaying in which different types and colours of wood are cut to shape in order to create complex imagery. Once cut, the pieces are laid out on and adhered to a wooden board, which is then attached to the wall. The ducal palace in Urbino supposedly uses more than forty types of wood to achieve a its rich, many-toned illusions.



domain, the Urbino countryside.

Above the warm wood of the intarsia of his Urbino studiolo, the Duke further set this glorified closet apart from others by incorporating two rows of portraits of some of the greatest minds throughout history – gentlemen he referred to as the *uomini illustri*, or illustrious men.⁴⁴ There were twenty-eight total portraits in the Duke’s studiolo, the bulk of which were made up of classical philosophers and writers, as well as Christian saints, though a few more contemporary figures did manage to make the cut.⁴⁵ By including their portraits in this room most intimately associated with his sense of self, Federico drew a direct parallel between himself and these legendary individuals.

This assembly of prestigious figures not only served as inspiration for the ambitious Duke but, in a way, as his trusted advisors. You see, while the studiolo was designed primarily for solitary study, Federico’s incorporation of these portraits symbolically transformed the space into a room for counsel. In the imaginary court of his studiolo, the Duke could call upon his departed heroes for advice, brought to life not only by their words on the page, but given physical form through their likeness on the wall.



Figure 3.08 (opposite) - Federico’s studiolo at the ducal palace in Urbino, featuring his gallery of *uomini illustri*

Figure 3.09 (above) - Intarsia from the Gubbio studiolo depicting musical instruments, tomes, tools of war, and a figure representing the virtue of Hope

44. Instead of a gallery of illustrious men, the Gubbio studiolo instead featured a gallery of allegorical paintings depicting each of the liberal arts as a goddess.

45. The complete list of the Duke’s *uomini illustri* is as follows: Plato, Aristotle, Ptolemy, Boethius, Gregory the Great, Saint Jerome, Saint Ambrose, Saint Augustine, Cicero, Seneca, Homer, Virgil, Moses, Solomon, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Euclid, Vittorino da Feltre, Solon, Bartolus of Sassoferrato, Pope Pius II, Bessarion, Albertus Magnus, Pope Sixtus IV, Hippocrates, Pietro D’Abano, Dante Alighieri, and Petrarch. There are a few too many Christian icons in there for my taste but hey, to each their own.



Political mastermind Machiavelli's writings on his studiolo reveal he shared a similar sentiment, conversing with the dead through their writing, but it was Federico's commission of the *uomini illustri* that made this program explicit within the space.⁴⁶

A final feature of Federico's studiolo that makes it unique from other studioli and closets alike is its location within the ducal palace. Whereas closets and most later studioli were monuments to privacy, typically the last and most secluded room in a private apartment, Federico's studiolo predates the idea of an axis of honour. Instead, the room plays the role of mediator between the domestic and political realms of the palace. The studiolo acted as a transitory space for the duke between his unfiltered self, who only came out in the privacy of the duke's apartment, and the public persona he put on in court. The notion of closets as a mediating space between the disparate selves displayed in the public and private spheres seems almost prescient of the role they would eventually play as an architecture of queer secrecy.

Now that we have familiarized ourselves with several studioli, I believe it is high time you behold my own. You will no doubt notice that while my

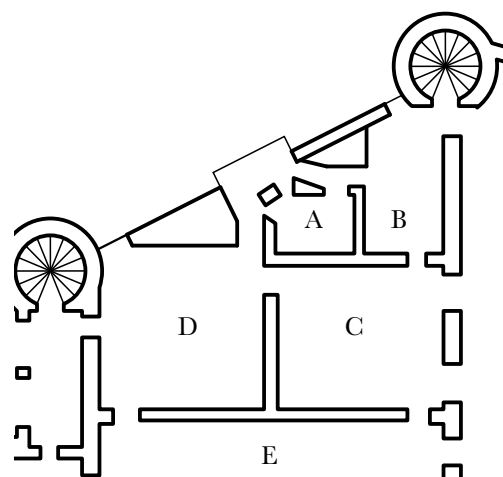
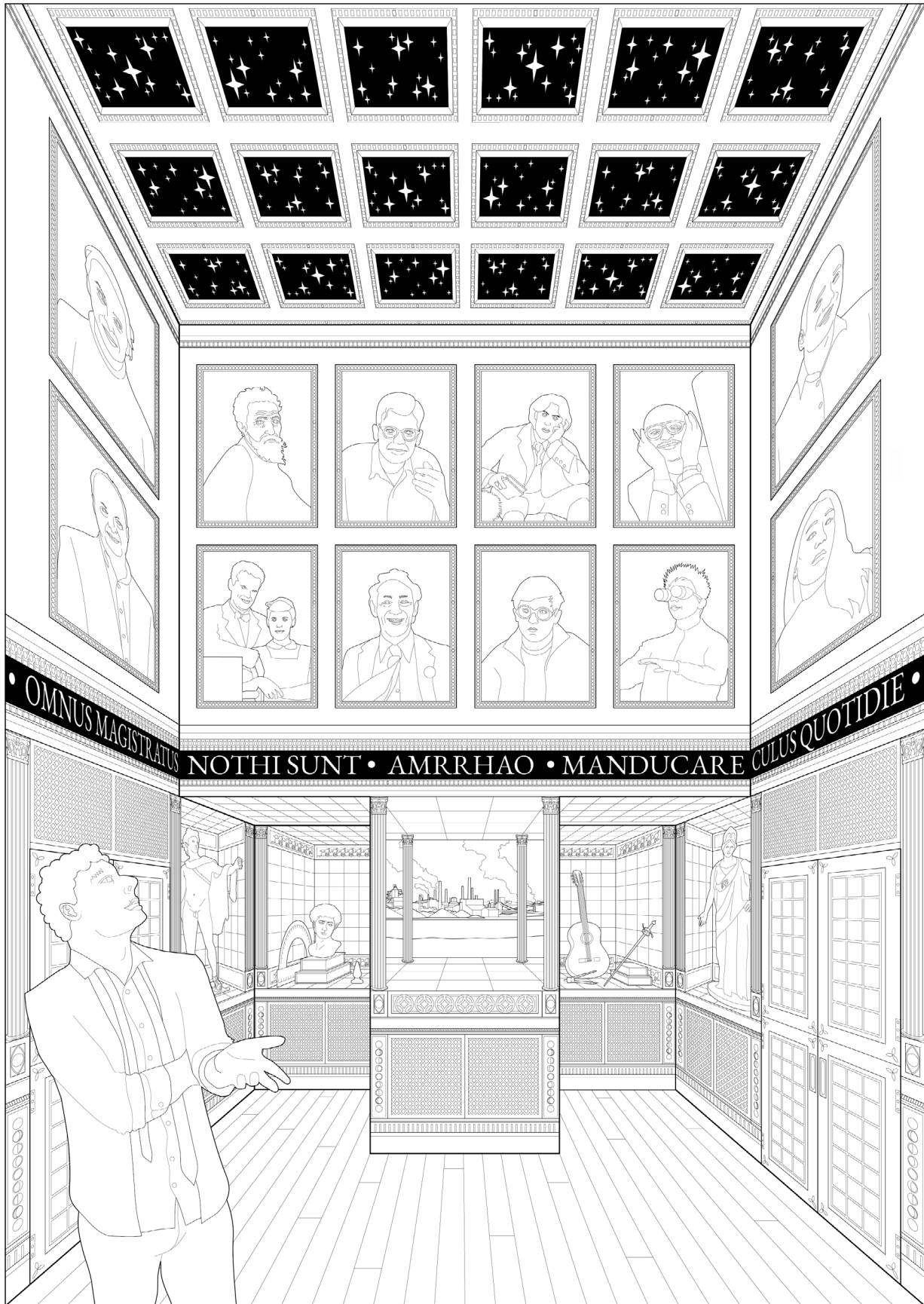


Figure 3.09 (opposite) - Justus van Gent and Pedro Berruguete, *Plato, Aristotle, Ptolemy, Boethius, Pope Gregory I, Saint Jerome, Saint Ambrose, Saint Augustine*, c. 1472-1476

Figure 3.10 (above) - Plan of the palazzo ducale in Urbino showing studiolo adjacencies

A. Studiolo / B. Dressing Room / C. Bed chamber / D. Courtroom / E. Hall of Angels

46. Machiavelli, one of the most brilliant political minds of his age, wrote about his studiolo fondly, as his favourite place to retreat at the end of a long day. He described studioli as “courts of the ancients” in which one could leave the material world behind, and enter the world of the dead.



• OMNUS MAGISTRATUS NOTHI SUNT • AMRRHAO • MANDUCARE CULUS QUOTIDIE •

studiolo is small (nearly identical in dimension to my Hamilton bedroom) it is a regular feast for the eyes. Like the duke, the lower half of my studiolo is lined with illusionistic intarsia, incorporating various symbolic motifs. Above, a very different gallery of uomini illustri hang, the individuals I have called to counsel me.

In the central intarsia one can make out an industrial cityscape billowing with smoke beyond a trempe l'oeil portico, an invocation of the steel town from which I hail. While such a landscape may seem out of place in such a refined room, this scene acts as a reminder that while I have acquired a taste for the finer things, I come from decidedly more proletariat roots. On either side of this landscape, faux wall recesses are loaded with symbols of the skills I have honed throughout the years, including musical instruments, architect's tools, and fencer's foils, to name a few. In an allusion to the classical mythology featured in many studioli, the likenesses of Athena and Apollo, gods of knowledge and wisdom (notably two of my favourite classical queer figures) stand in faux recesses to your left and right.⁴⁷ Incorporated into the paneling of a false set of cabinets are symbols of all seeing eyes and the cycles of the moon, which I have seen fit to

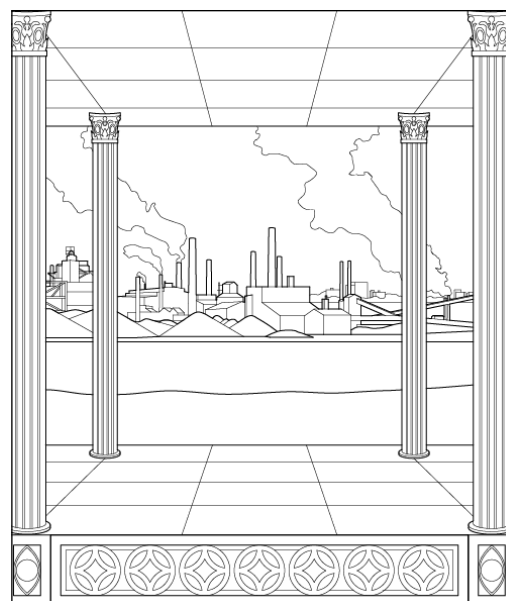
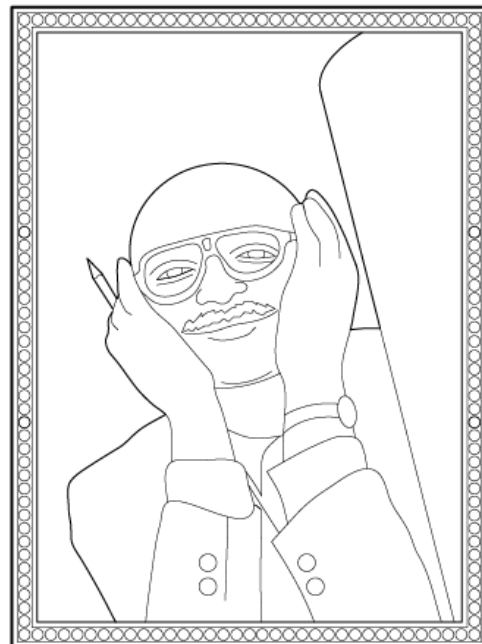
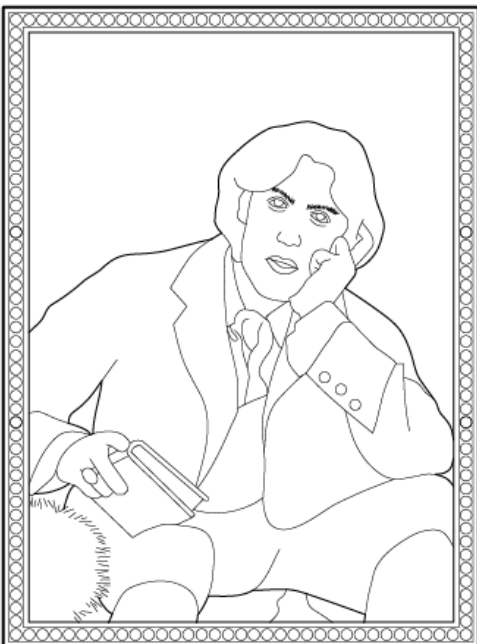
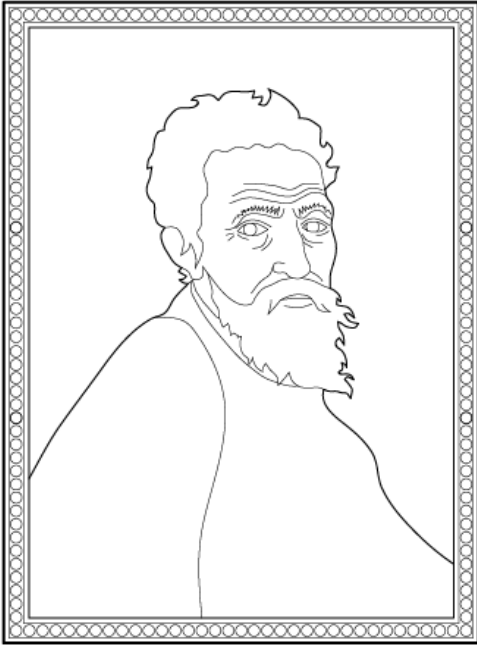


Figure 3.11 (opposite) - My personal studiolo

Figure 3.12 (above) - Detail of intarsia depicting Hamilton's industrial landscape

47. Apollo, god of knowledge and the sun, took many lovers, though it seems he had a slight preference for men. Athena, goddess of wisdom and war, is largely depicted as asexual, and showed a penchant for genderfluidity, often taking the form of a man.



adorn not only my studiolo, but my physical body through tattoos.

Above, I have assembled my own panel of illustrious people to closet with.⁴⁸ You will notice a stark difference in the figures I represent here from those of Federico’s studiolo – for one, my gallery contains considerably more sodomites. Perhaps the one figure who would also be at home on Federico’s wall, Michelangelo, has inspired me since childhood, combining unparalleled artistic talents with architectural practice, and operating as one of history’s earliest gay architects. To his right sits Allen Ginsberg, the subversive poet and writer of the beat literature movement. While I love much of his writing, Ginsberg’s fearless poem “Howl”, is one of my favourites for its almost stream of consciousness style, though the work faced obscenity trials when Ginsberg released it, for its depictions of gay sex. Speaking of obscenity trials, the poet, playwright, and iconic dandy, Oscar Wilde is next. Wilde was not only an agitator of heteronormative society, whose subversive depictions of gay men landed him in prison, but an advocate for an aestheticist interior design philosophy that has influenced much of

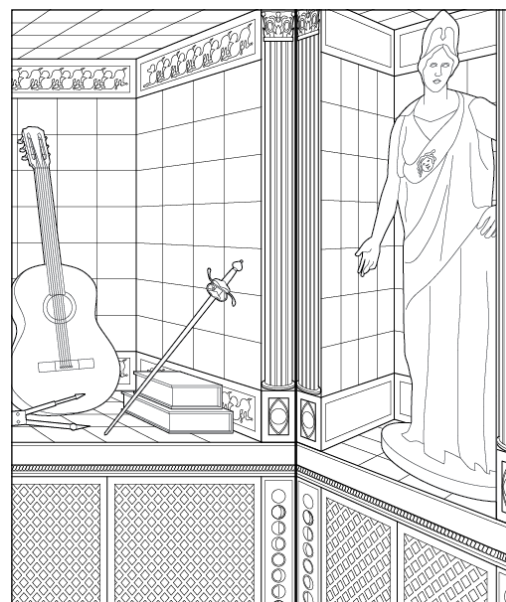
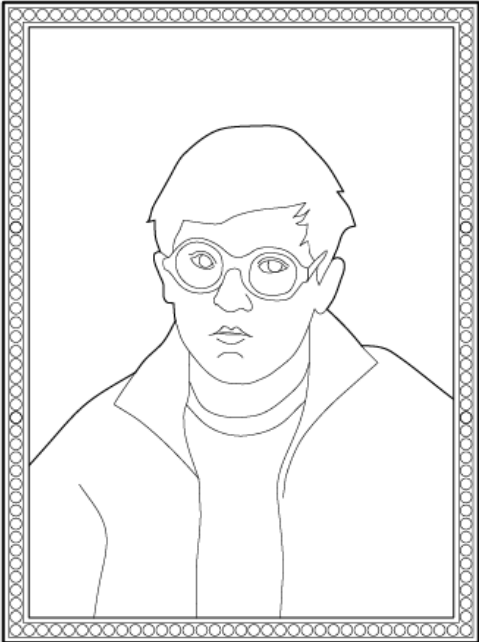
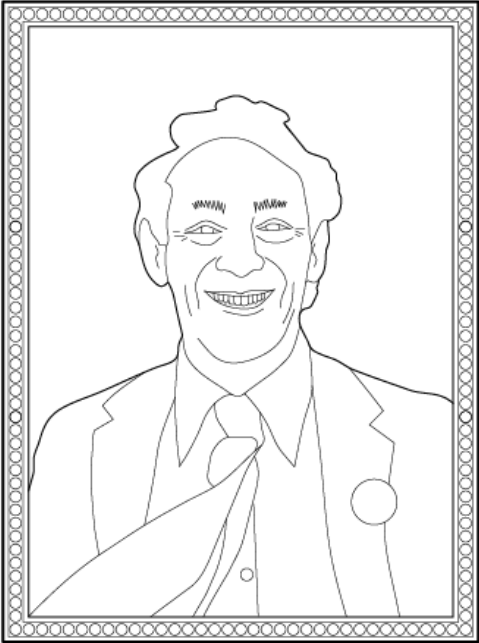
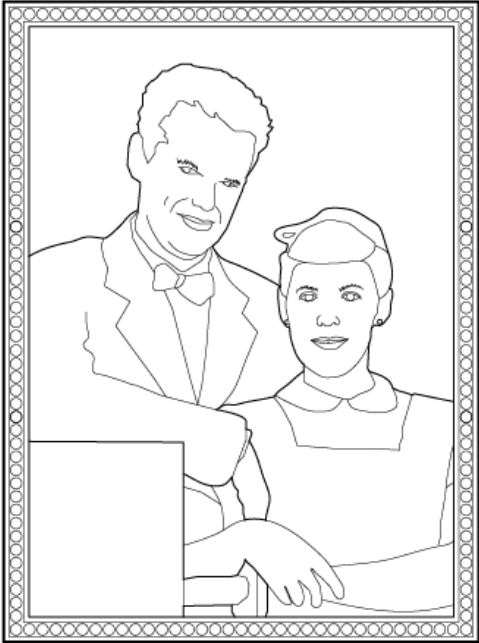


Figure 3.13 (opposite) - The upper row of my uomini illustri

Figure 3.14 (above) - Detail of intarsia depicting symbols of my talents and a sculpture of the goddess Athena

48. When I use the word closet here, it is as a verb, meaning to shut oneself away in either solitary study, or private conference with another.



my somewhat maximalist design philosophy.⁴⁹ Taking the last spot on the upper row is the queer postmodern architect Charles Moore, whose experiments with unconventional and highly individualistic architectural interiors are an early example of queer domestic design. Moore's face hanging over head reminds me not to take design too seriously, and remember that architecture can, indeed, be fun.⁵⁰

The architects and furniture designers Charles and Ray Eames are both depicted on my wall as well, for subverting the gender norms of their time and revolutionizing domestic space by decentering the idea of the family home. Their California residence is one of the earliest examples of a “live-work” space completely divorced from the idea of housing children, an active challenge to the nuclear family structure. Harvey Milk is another of my gay icons, a man who, after spending most of his life in the closet, turned around to become one of the most fierce advocates for gay liberation in history. Milk was eventually assassinated, in large part for opposing police violence, and famously said “If a bullet should enter my brain, let that bullet destroy every closet door,” a phrase which rings in my head each time I think of him. David Hockney sits

Figure 3.15 (opposite) - The bottom row of my uomini illustri

49. Oscar Wilde's theory of aestheticism is based on three key principles: that art is life; that art must be moral, ethical, and positive, and that art (and indeed, life) are completely paradoxical.

50. Moore's architecture features a rather kitsch aesthetic that evokes, for me at least, a sense of childlike wonder. From the strange, freestanding archways of his Piazza D'Italia to his New Haven home, an architectural playground disguised as a regular house, there is a tongue-in-cheek quality to Moore's work that is decidedly queer.

comfortably next to him, an artist whose bold and colourful depictions of queer domestic scenes have been highly influential to both my artistic practice and fascination with queer practices of domesticity. Last but certainly not least, the famed musician, poet, artist, and self declared anarchist, Laurie Anderson. Beyond her impact on me as a storyteller who effortlessly weaves the personal, historical and theoretical, her work designing virtual spaces based on memory and identity was one of the impetuses for this thought experiment.

Finally, two portraits on the left and right hand walls depict the very panel assessing this thesis. If it is you I am addressing right now, know only that I highly value your counsel, and that your place among such iconic figures is well earned.

Viewing these symbols in concert, one begins to stitch together a fairly clear idea of my self image. It is important to remember, however, that the studiolo is only a representation of my ought self.⁵¹ The parts of myself that I wish to put forward into the world are made physical in the intarsia, enshrining this self image while omitting whichever ugly parts I may wish to hide. The portraits hung on high speak to my dreams and aspirations, but

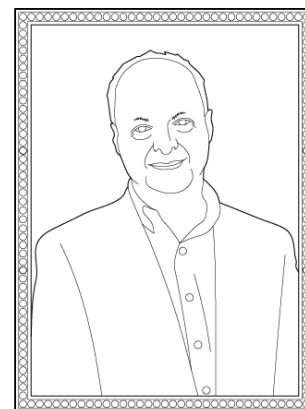


Figure 3.16 (above) - The uomini illustri hung on the left elevation of my studiolo

51. The ought self, a concept originally put forward in psychology professor E. Tory Higgins' "Self-Discrepancy Theory," describes an image of our idealized selves based on social pressures to present and act in a certain way. Disparities between our actual selves and ought selves create a sense of "self-discrepancy", a type of dysphoria commonly experienced by closeted individuals.

also seek to aggrandize me by drawing a connection between us, however intangible. While the space is certainly solitary, these illustrious individuals also bring a sense of plurality to the space, acting as a sort of silent council to bounce my ideas off of. The notion of plurality and authentic self expression, however, is much better embodied in my next closet, which operates as much as a site for socialization and intimacy as an architecture of privacy.

Before we proceed, I would just like to thank you for giving me your rapt attention. I realize that I've been monologuing, and you've been most gracious in hearing me out. It's only because you've proven yourself a worthy and respectful confidante that I invite you to come further down this enfilade with me.

Shall we?



Figure 3.17 (above) - The uomini illustri hung on the right elevation of my studiolo

BOUDOIR

Step into my boudoir, won't you?

Don't worry, I'm not making a move on you. This would, however, be just the place to do so.

The boudoir (or bower, its English equivalent), is the “feminine” counterpart to the “masculine” cabinet (or closet). Unlike the closet, the boudoir did not evolve until the mid 18th century, a period in which the designation of rooms in the house become more and more specific.⁵² This was likely to do with the Enlightenment era's doubling down on ideas of individual autonomy, which came with an increasing need for privacy — in the houses of the upper crust, at least.

Boudoirs derive their name from the French verb *bouder*, meaning to sulk or pout. No doubt it was named by a man who couldn't imagine women having anything better to do than whinge about their decidedly comfortable lives. It's a name rife with misogynistic rhetoric that paints women as creatures of pure emotion, and asks them to

52. The word boudoir does not appear in written accounts until the 1730s, though many believe it was likely a product of the Regency period. It is not shown in architectural plans until the 1760s. Encyclopedias from the time seem to imply that before a gendered title was applied to the boudoir, it was referred to simply as a cabinet.



complain (no doubt about the limitations placed on them in male dominated society) in private. Solitary sulking, in this case, seems to exist in opposition to the ever masculine brooding, which might be said to be one of the main functions of the closet.

However, while brooding may just be one of my favourite activities, I do not subscribe to such notions of gendered action. The very concepts of masculine and feminine behaviour are aesthetic and social constructs, learned through imitation and enforced through violence.⁵³ For this reason, I have decided to create a boudoir of my very own, in which I can sulk, whine, and bitch to my heart's content.

The “feminine” (a descriptor I use here with the utmost irony) activities performed in such a boudoir, according to early encyclopedia entries, included sulking, napping, devotions, and yes, even reading.⁵⁴ Despite this infantilizing image of how women might use the space, the boudoir was nonetheless a major feminist innovation and early example of Virginia Woolf's so-called “room of one's own.”

⁵⁵ In the boudoir, women were given the rare luxury of uninterrupted time to think, Woolf's prerequisite for successful creative and intellectual

Figure 4.01 (opposite) - Pierre Maleuvre after Sigmund Freudenberg, *Le Boudoir*, 1774.

53. Again I invoke Judith Butler and her radical theory of gender performance. There is no question in my mind that gender is socially constructed, and that violent responses to gender non-conforming behaviour come from a place of fear that men might be stripped of their patriarchal power were we to do away with these traditional behaviours.

54. Architectural historian Ed Lilley has suggested that the meek actions ascribed to the boudoir were likely a mechanism by which to structurally disempower women who were gaining more autonomy. The existence of the boudoir allowed women to pursue education in a way that had not been possible before, but to acknowledge this newfound power would be to disempower the male gender. In differentiating cabinets and boudoirs, one could remain a space of patriarchal power and knowledge, while reducing the other to a space for “women's” affairs.

55. In her legendary extended essay *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf laments women's lack of free expression, and states that in order for a woman to formulate her own ideas and write she must have both financial independence and a room of her own. In so doing, a woman frees her mind from outside influences that seek to transform her into a homemaker, and that discourage her from pursuing her passions.



endeavors. In a world that saw fit to police and interrupt a woman's every action and thought, the boudoir offered a rare respite.

Like the closet, the boudoir was typically the last and most secluded room in a private apartment. A typical arrangement of rooms in such a suite would begin with an ante-chamber, followed by a bedchamber, a dressing room, and a boudoir. In the cases of the fabulously wealthy, they may have both a cabinet and boudoir in their private apartment, with the boudoir being the more private of the two.⁵⁶ For the (nonetheless rich) bourgeois woman with a much smaller apartment, the boudoir could also double as a space to dress and undress.

Speaking of undressing, do you mind if I slip into something a little more comfortable? This suit doesn't breathe at all and, as you can see, I've set up a privacy screen for just such an occasion.

Thanks for understanding. Please, take a moment to look around the room while I pull a quick wardrobe change.

My boudoir pays homage to that of history's most frivolous monarch, Marie Antoinette, who



Figure 4.02 (opposite) - Jules-Marc-Antoine Frappaz, *Marie Antoinette's Boudoir*, 1876.

Figure 4.03 (above) Henry Pauw van Wieldrecht, *The Boudoir of Johanna Elisabeth Boissevain*, c. 1902-1910.

56. While the boudoir is certainly a form of cabinet, the inclusion of both of these rooms in a private apartment implies a distinct use for each, and disrupts the notion of the cabinet as a strictly male space. The powerful women who possessed cabinets would have set themselves apart as intellectuals, using the cabinet as a room for study, while the boudoir would function purely as a space for intimate encounters.



kept several luxurious boudoirs across her royal estates.⁵⁷ In her Petit Trianon at Versailles, the queen's very own miniature palace, Marie could retreat from the eyes of court to live out a simpler life. Her boudoir was the centre of this little world, located on the upper floor of the Trianon, which is decidedly more intimate than the formal apartment downstairs due to its low ceilings. The queen's boudoir could be accessed both through her bedchamber and a secret door in her salon, disguised as a paneled wall. An invitation to the Trianon, let alone the queen's private boudoir, was highly sought after; those she slighted at court were known to spread nasty rumours about what went on behind the queen's closed doors.⁵⁸

As you can see, I have taken liberties with ornamentation in this room, distancing it from the modernist (read here as racist, misogynistic, and homophobic) architectural sensibilities so widely touted in architectural education in favour of the room's Rococo roots.⁵⁹ Marie Antoinette's boudoir featured relatively simple boiserie compared to the rest of her little palace, evoking the flowers from the anglo-chinois garden just outside her window. I on the other hand, have played up the level of ornament in the room to make it even more



Figure 4.04 (opposite) - Interior of Marie Antoinette's Boudoir in the Petit Trianon at Versailles.

Figure 4.05 (above) - Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, *Marie Antoinette in a Chemise Dress*, 1783.

57. True to form, the so called Madame Déficit kept a boudoir in her apartment at Versailles' main palace, one in her Petit Trianon, and two at the ancestral hunting lodge and palace of the French aristocracy, Fontainbleau.

58. One particularly ubiquitous rumour involved a secret love affair between Marie Antoinette and her close friend the Duchesse de Polignac, though historical accounts confirm that this was, indeed, just a rumour.

59. Sometimes referred to as "Late Baroque", Rococco architecture is defined by theatricality, elaborate ornament, soft curves, pastel colours, and nature motifs.





sumptuous, my own little act of rebellion against modern sparsity. I do not necessarily believe that ornament in architecture is feminine. I will concede that when it comes to contemporary design, it is largely the patriarchs making up the lion's share of professionals who tend to look down on ornament as lesser. Thanks again for that Loos, you racist old bastard.⁶⁰

My boudoir, like Marie's, is equipped with Venetian mechanical mirrors that can be raised or lowered into the floor to conceal, and conversely reveal, the world framed by the windows beyond.⁶¹ This function serves two key purposes. The first is to conceal the interior of the space from prying eyes outside, particularly in the case that one might be caught in a compromising position. While I

Figure 4.06 (opposite) - My personal boudoir

60. I've said it once and I'll say it again: modernism's explicit ties to Loos' racist rhetoric bring the entire aesthetic sensibility of modernism into question. Right up there with colonial architecture its persistence is, in my mind, a direct expression of white supremacy in architecture. But I digress.

61. These mirrors, also known as *glaces volantes*, were designed by the engineer Jean-Tobie Mercklein. They originally moved using an ingeniously simple system of weights and pulleys, accessed through the servant's quarters below, though their controls have become electrical with recent restoration efforts.



suppose curtains, too, might serve such a purpose, I have opted to take the same route of excess as the queen in order to achieve a spectacular secondary effect.

At night, when darkness would make this small room feel even smaller, the mirrors are raised to create an illusion of infinity. With mirrors on every wall, one feels the space expand forever in all directions. Masters of Feng Shui might be horrified at this design feature, claiming that this extradimensional space acts as a portal for dark spirits, but I am no stranger to the odd demon invading my mind. Bring it on.

I suppose the mirrors, too, could serve a third purpose – one tied to the proverbial elephant in the room. While the previously listed activities may be the “official” program of the boudoir, there is no denying that the word has become synonymous with another activity – sex.

Perhaps no other historical room has been so sexualized as the boudoir, so much so that an entire genre of softcore pornography is named for it.⁶² There are several reasons for the room’s lascivious reputation, including the architecture of the room



Figure 4.07 (opposite) - William H. Rau, *On Her Boudoir: Unstudied Grace*, 1903.

Figure 4.08 (above) - Delphin Enjolras, *In the Boudoir*, Date Unknown (1857-1945).

62. The boudoir photography genre is defined by women wearing the finest lingerie, seductively posed in a highly luxurious architectural spaces. There is often a distinct attempt to convey an intimacy in these photographs, as though you and the subject are sharing a private moment with one another.



itself, its representation in literature, and the actual affairs of the heart that the room concealed from the eyes of the court. By the end of the 18th century, the word had largely been decoupled from its feminine roots, and instead served as a site of erotic pleasure for men and women alike.⁶³

Like closets, boudoirs were rooms most closely associated with the style of their owners. They doubled as spaces to display their often sizeable collections of art and other valuables. The 18th century architect Nicolas Le Camus de Mezzieres described the boudoir as a realm of sensual delight, defined by luxury, softness, and expression of good taste.⁶⁴ Boudoirs tended more toward the ornamental than closets, frequently incorporating elaborate and naturalistic architectural detailing, fine and ornate pieces of furniture, and fabulous fabrics and linens. Flowers, shells, and other traditionally feminine motifs were commonly found in a boudoir's detailing, lending to an air of feminine mystique. The rooms were, in and of themselves, seductive, and invoked a sense of sensual pleasure and excess upon entering that helped numb one's sense of inhibition in such a way to make seduction effortless.⁶⁵ The seductive

Figure 4.09 (opposite) - Louis-Marie Augustin's boudoir from the Hôtel de Crillon in Paris, reconstructed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

63. Though women still made up the majority of those who kept boudoirs, their appearance in the private apartments of men seems largely to do with their use as a space for secret sex. Louis-Marie Augustin's boudoir, another period room meticulously preserved by the Metropolitan Museum of Art gives a glimpse into one such interior. While the room belonged to a man, it's liberal use of hand painted arabesque motifs and plush, rounded curves offer a touch of the feminine, likely for the purposes of seduction.

64. Le Camus' book *La Génie de l'Architecture*, or *The Genius of Architecture* describes the intended sensory experience of various types of architectural space. His description of the boudoir seems to imply that its sensual quality was intended to put those in the room into an amorous mood.

65. Scholar of 18th century France Diane Berret Brown's description of the boudoir in her translation of the French novel *La Sopha*, compares the boudoir to a "temple of voluptuousness" and describes the room as the "indisputable seat of pleasure" in the house. In this chamber of delights, she claims that seduction was all but guaranteed.



nature of this room is made particularly clear when we start to look at representations of the boudoir in literature.

Boudoirs (and, to a lesser extent, closets) have been the sites of countless sexual liaisons in works of fiction, particularly at the height of their popularity. The room's reputation for illicit affairs even earned itself the nickname "cabinet of love" in England, a name they shared with a newfound erotic literary genre.⁶⁶ The intrigue and mystery of what went on in these highly private and exclusive spaces only added to this powerful sense of desire. In early erotic novels such as John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman in Pleasure*, sex regularly plays out in boudoirs, closets, and other small enclosed spaces. Voyeurism is also a common theme in such works, in which closets, as both rooms and pieces of furniture, offered peepholes to view discrete sexual encounters.⁶⁷

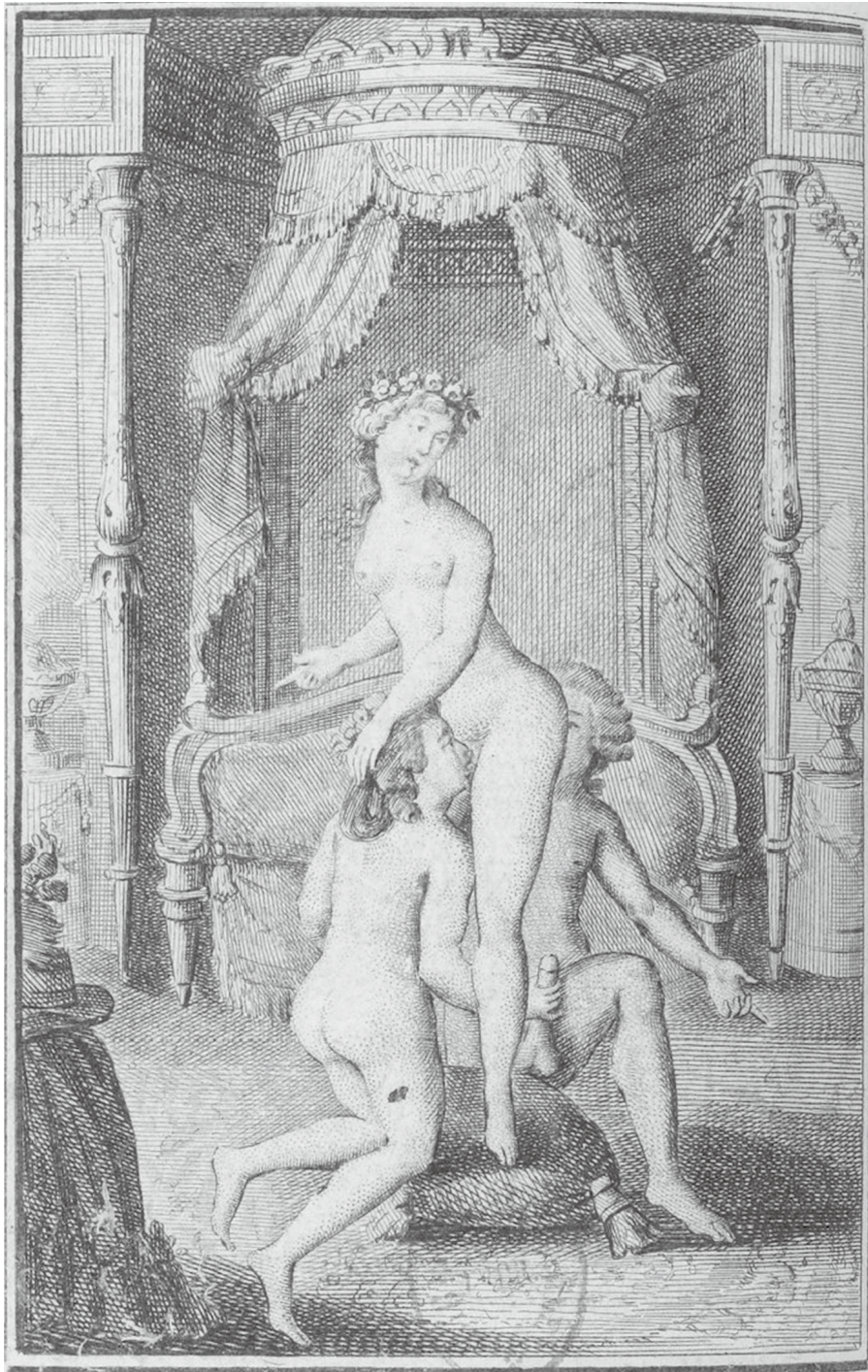
One particularly clear depiction of the boudoir as a space of sexuality comes from Jean-François de Bastide's short story *La Petite Maison*, which recounts the seduction of the young woman Mélitte by the marquis de Trémicour. In this tale of architectural seduction, Trémicour bets Mélitte that she will not be able to resist him once he gives her a tour of his

Figure 4.10 (opposite) - Nicolas de Launay after Nicolas Lafrensen, *The Happy Moment*, 1777.

66. The term "cabinet of love" was not just used to describe a boudoir or similarly private dressing room, but also to describe collections of stories, letters, and illustrations depicting scenes of courtship, seduction, and sex. The "secret knowledge" contained within made these texts especially popular among female readers, who were often kept in the dark about sex until marriage.

67. Cleland's protagonist Fanny Hill, for instance, has her first encounter with sex while spying on her housekeeper and a soldier hooking up from the comfort of a closet.

68. Petit maison is a term used to describe a small second house purchased for the explicit purpose of hosting an extramarital affair. Such estates were not uncommon among the 18th century nobility.



petit maison.⁶⁸ As they venture deeper and deeper into the house, Mélitte is overcome by the sheer luxury of the place, and finds herself especially enamoured with the boudoir, which is depicted as a space of sensory overload. When the marquis reveals a second, even more decadent boudoir behind the first, Mélitte is at a loss for words, as she realizes she is all but done for.

Perhaps no other novel has contributed more to the boudoir's scandalous reputation than the infamous Marquis de Sade's *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir*.⁶⁹ Considered one of his tamer works for its distinct absence of murder (though it does contain threats of murder), the marquis' story of the corruption of a well-mannered teenage noblewoman, Eugénie, transforms her into a full blown sexual deviant and predator uses the setting of the boudoir as the backdrop for her fall. The boudoir acts as an architectural metaphor for the hedonic pursuit of pleasure, encouraging Eugénie and the reader alike to do away with notions of morality, compassion, and modesty, and instead give in to baser instincts. Depicting graphic scenes of group sex, sodomy, incest, and rape, the marquis solidifies the boudoir as the period's dominant site of sexual intrigue.



Figure 4.11 (opposite) - Illustration from Tome 2 of the Marquis de Sade's *Philosophie dans le Boudoir*, 1795.

Figure 4.12 (above) - Illustration from Tome I of the Marquis de Sade's *Philosophie dans le Boudoir*, 1795.

69. The Marquis de Sade, from whose name we derive the word sadism, was a French nobleman and philosopher in the 18th century. His erotic work advocates taking sexual pleasure to its extreme, even at the expense of the wellbeing of others. The marquis was arrested several times over the course of his life, both for the explicit representations of sexual violence, sodomy, and murder in his writings, but also for acts of physical and sexual abuse. While his philosophy is certainly a precursor to the sexual liberation movement, it is undisputed that the marquis took his philosophy to a dangerous and reprehensible extreme.



The literary trope of sexual liaisons in the boudoir (and, indeed, the closet) is supported by many historical accounts of closet affairs. Marie Antoinette herself was known to regularly host her “favourite” Swedish soldier Hans Axel von Ferson, as a guest in her boudoir, filling the role that her sex averse husband, Louis XVI, would not.⁷⁰ Given the nature of political and loveless marriages amongst the nobility, such arrangements were very common. Though such relationships were, of course, the source of much gossip at court, the privacy of a boudoir or closet could ensure that they remained just that – gossip.

The parallel between the boudoir’s ability to conceal sexual affairs, and The Closet as a space in which one hides their sexuality is not lost on me. To that point, it is also worth noting within this queer body of work that the royal favourites who partook in such affairs were frequently members of the same sex.⁷¹ One had a great deal of social capital to gain through a boudoir or closet affair, and an invitation into a boudoir for a little hanky-panky could seal one’s status as a powerhouse at court. Though one must question whether these were true affairs of the heart, or simply sexual favours traded for social capital, there is no denying that

Figure 4.13 (opposite) - Alexis Fay, *Two Women in Boudoir*, 1860.

70. The term “favourite” refers to the extramarital romantic partner of a King or Queen. They often acted as confidantes for their royal counterparts, and fulfilled sexual needs that were not met in their marital bed. Louis XVI, for instance, famously did not consummate his marriage with Marie-Antoinette for seven years, likely due to a medical issue which made sex a painful experience for him.

71. From Edward II who reigned over Great Britain in the 14th century, to Queen Anne, whose sexual relationships with the duchess Sarah Churchill and her cousin, Abigail Masham became the subject of the 2019 film *The Favourite*, there is a rich history of royals with same-sex favourites. The immense power that Sarah Churchill held, in large part due to Anne’s complete disinterest in statecraft, led her to be one of the most influential political figures of her time.

the boudoir and the closet have a history as queer spaces that extend far beyond the metaphor of The Closet.

It is also important to note that while boudoirs and closets allowed sexual relationships to remain in the shadows, the boudoir is decidedly not an architecture of shame. In fact, as I have demonstrated, the room is designed specifically to coax one out of any moralistic aversion to sex. For this reason, the boudoir can and should be perceived as a space of sexual liberation. Privacy, in this case, does not indicate shame over a sexual affair, but instead fosters a sense of agency, empowering one to live out their sexual truth without fear of judgement.

The boudoir also highlights the Closet's greatest currency: that of intimacy. In encouraging one to let their walls down and embrace this space of pleasure, the boudoir could enable all manner of unexpected relationships to crystallize. In many cases, relationships with the powerful people who called these rooms home could change the course of one's life, elevating their individual political power to heights that transcended their social rank.



Figure 4.14 (above) - François Dumont, *OA Physician Taking a Lady's Pulse in her Boudoir*, Date Unknown (1751-1831).

It is my dear hope that, in showing you through these closets of mine that we have fostered a sort of intimacy between us. Dare I say that we have even sparked something of a friendship?

Glad to hear you feel the same.

That being said, I see no reason why I shouldn't allow you to enter one last closet. This one sits particularly close to home because, well, it is my home. As my trusted friend, I would be honoured to share it with you.

Won't you join me for this last hurrah?

CABINET

The closets we've toured so far have existed purely in the realm of imagination so it seems fitting that, having reached the end of our tour, we circle back to a place decidedly more grounded in reality. I have called this final closet on our tour my home for the last year. What's more, unlike the other rooms we've just toured, it is not a solitary space at all. In fact, it's precisely the sense of community I've developed here that's given me a new lease on how we might think about The Closet. Though the space is shared, and grander in scale than your typical closet, its covert nature certainly earns it the title; having once operated as the headquarters a secret society, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows.⁷²

Allow me to set the scene.

The former IOOF Lodge No. 107 sits perched on the east bank of the Grand River in Galt, opposite diagonally from the school of architecture. The three storey red brick building is proudly marked by a belvedere, which notes the date of its

72. The origins of the Odd Fellows are as murky as the aims of the organization itself. It's been said that the order dates as far back as 1066 CE, founded by the likes of emperors Nero and Titus, but there is little evidence to support this claim. In all likelihood the Odd Fellows, much like the Freemasons, were probably founded sometime in the 13th or 14th century, amidst and in response to a boom in tradesman's guilds and fellowships in England. When King Henry VIII left the Roman Catholic Church, he seized all properties of the Catholic-aligned trade guilds, driving the group underground. Odd Fellows lodges began to appear once again in the early 18th century, this time not as a guild, but a quasi-religious fraternal order and social club, dedicated to aiding the less fortunate in their communities, and steadily gained membership. The Odd Fellows spread to the new world in the early 19th century, and followed their country's lead in declaring sovereignty from their British counterpart, forming the IOOF in 1842. The order quickly spread across the United States and Canada, and reached its zenith in late early 1900s, at which point the order boasted over a million American members.

construction, 1890. Its façade is a beautiful (and distinctly Ontarian) take on the Romanesque Revival style. Tall windows culminating in semi-circular stained-glass arches line the east elevation, mirrored on the plain brick elevation facing the riverside. Rusticated stone differentiates a commercial ground floor from the intricate brickwork and ornamental reliefs of the former IOOF lodge above. Grand double doors leading up to this lodge are framed by a stone roman arch, capped by a decorative keystone, from which emerges a round masonry bay window spanning the second and third floor. The building is crowned by a corbel table which supports an oxidized copper cornice and a sculptural brick parapet emblazoned with the name of its benefactor – SCOTT.⁷³

Shortly after its construction the building began operating as the Odd Fellows headquarters, taking on the unofficial title the “Odd Fellows Block.” Up a steep flight of stairs, the second floor apartments played host to parlours, air thick with smoke, where these fellows would drink, discuss politics and philosophy, and gamble away their money at card games. Up another long flight, the third floor hosted the Odd Fellows’ more serious operations, as well as a large room that they held sacred and



Figure 5.01 - The former IOOF Lodge No. 107 in Galt as it stands today

73. Coming from humble beginnings as a butcher from Scotland, John Scott made a fortune in the meat and livestock industry. Seeking to immortalize himself in the architect of downtown Galt, Scott got in touch with a local architect, Frederick Mellish, and contracted him to building him a lodge in downtown Cambridge, dubbing it “Scott’s Block.” While it is unclear if Scott or Mellish were Odd Fellows themselves, the distinctive interior architecture might point to this being the case. Mellish went on to design several landmarks in downtown Galt, including an opera house for Scott in 1899, which would have been visible from the Odd Fellows temple, and the old fire hall. In an ironic twist of fate, it suffered extensive fire damage after just eleven years of operation. It was later razed by the Galt War Memorial committee to create a public park and cenotaph, which sits there today.

used for major events – their temple. It is in this very temple that my dear friend Ali and I would come to build a home together.

How did we come to live in this sacred and secret space you ask? An excellent question.

Like most secret societies, the Odd Fellows numbers dwindled over the latter half of the 20th century.⁷⁴ By 1990 they had a small enough membership in Cambridge that they were forced to sell the Odd Fellows' Block to a local developer, who (somewhat clumsily) converted the upper levels into apartments. Each floor was partitioned into two units. The Odd Fellows' temple, occupying roughly half of the third floor, became a luxurious studio apartment.

The temple eventually fell into the hands of graduate students from the school of architecture who recognized just how special the space was, and hatched a plan to make it theirs. Though the grandiose studio was far too expensive for one student to afford, there was more than enough room to build additional freestanding “bedrooms” within the space. They went about the work of creating several “boxes”, freestanding rooms on wheels that could act as semi-private bedrooms.



Figure 5.02 - Odd Fellows Hall in Washington DC, 1899

74. Though their numbers have continued to dwindle in an era of digital social networks, the order once boasted a powerful network of members, which at various points included prime ministers, presidents, and the odd King.

The space quickly developed a reputation among Cambridge’s architecture students, both as a playground for architectural exploration, and a great space to host parties, earning the moniker by which the student body has come to know it – “The Ballroom.”

The Ballroom was “handed down” to Ali and me by two of these students, Carol and Siobhan, whom we had become good friends with in our final year of architecture school. Over that summer, they showed Ali and I incredible kindness by inviting us into their home, offering us dedicated workspaces, cooking us spectacular meals, and generally taking care of us during the stress of our final deadline. For two weeks, we were a little family, taking care of one another as only a family would.

When Ali reached out to me near the end of our first pandemic summer to ask if I wanted to move into the Ballroom with her, images of our time there danced in my mind. I had spent the last four months in isolation, completely separated from my peers. Not only was Ali a peer, but she would also be working on a thesis that synthesized queer theory and architectural practice. Starved for contact and some sort of social life, it was too good an offer to



Figure 5.03 - The IOOF temple shortly after its 1990 renovation

pass up. I accepted Ali's offer without hesitation, leaving behind my little closet in Hamilton for something new, yet oddly familiar.

Shall we mosey on inside?

Up two steep flights of stairs, an emblem depicting a three-link chain hangs above a door, marking the entrance to the Odd Fellows' temple. The intricate door handle incorporates a camouflaged panel that conceals a second keyhole, so to better secure this sacred space. Beyond this door lies what was once an ante chamber or reception room for the temple, now a sizeable kitchen. A drop ceiling of fluorescent lights (mostly) conceals the original moulding that lines the high ceiling. A bathroom, also part of the renovation, bites into the southwest corner of the room, as well as the space beyond. Above the door to this bathroom, a smaller door leading a mechanical closet peers cheekily overhead. On the south side of the room, through a double door, lies the former temple itself.

The Odd Fellows' sanctum sanctorum is a room out of time, a double height space with dark, dramatic wainscoting and a sculptural coffered ceiling. Bright oak floors offset the stained, formal



Figure 5.04 - Odd Fellows certificate featuring architectural iconography, 1876



looking panelling, a finish associated with an old world that no longer exists. The (nearly) rectangular room is fenestrated with tall windows to the east and west, which provide it with ample daylight at all hours of the day. When the sun is low, coloured light pours in from the stained glass arches at the windows' peaks. In the late afternoon, the light shimmering off the Grand River makes these coloured projections shimmer.

Though the mezzanine on the west side of the room (part of the renovation) sits awkwardly in the space, even going so far as to block the fire escape door from opening all the way, the space retains much of its original charm. The expressive ceiling, featuring 3 sizeable chandeliers, is divided by sculptural beams into 9 distinct zones. The central zone is accentuated by an alcove ceiling lined with coloured lights, controlled by an old switchboard prone to shocking its user. At the centre of this alcove is a medallion that opens into a black expanse beyond, in what I can only imagine is an invocation of a sacred, all-seeing eye. A formal stage, flanked by ornate, built in light fixtures, stands front and centre on the east wall, no doubt the site of many a strange ritual. To the right of this stage sits a locked safe, adorned with Odd Fellows iconography, its



Figure 5.05 - The Ballroom in 2018

Figure 5.06 - The Ballroom in 2018, with alcove lights glowing



encryption key lost to time.

Pretty cool, right?

I knew going into the move that life at the Ballroom came at a cost – one’s privacy. Ali and I would essentially be doing all of our living in one room. While the partitions that made up the “bedrooms” within the large open space offered relative visual privacy, there was virtually no sonic privacy at all. We would have to learn to accept one another’s constant presence in this room, an especially difficult task for a privacy coveting only child such as myself.

Ali and I quickly went about the work of making the space our own. I claimed the mezzanine as my bedroom, disassembling the makeshift set of wood panels and screens that had previously lined it. One of the “boxes”, a modular piece designed by Carol to be easily reconfigured, was then disassembled and reassembled on the mezzanine to create something a little more polished. Ali’s bedroom, a cube on wheels, was shifted and modified to keep its open face towards her studio space, and the east facing windows. Moving the box out from the wall just enough to form a walk in closet helped add to



Figure 5.07 - Moving in day at the Ballroom

Figure 5.08 - Ali attempts to clean the Ballroom’s ornate molding



the sense of this as a distinct and separate room within the space.

While we had inherited the boxes and a few other pieces from our predecessors, Ali and I each came with sizeable collections of our own. Ali is an amateur botanist, and brought with her an entire natural history cabinet's worth of plants with her (something like 60, not including her new propagations), along with a collection of Persian rugs and a gorgeous Victorian couch she inherited from Carol. My collection, on the other hand, consisted mainly of iconic mid century modern furniture, for which I have a soft spot, and a variety of artworks.

As the months passed, we began to settle into our new life. We shared meals, projected movies, and acted as support for one another as we went about writing our queer theses. As we went about our life in this space, and our things increasingly intermingled, the space began to take on an eclectic, but somehow unified character. It became representative of us both, striking an odd sense of harmony.

By the time the winter holidays had rolled around, we had become quite comfortable with the life we



Figure 5.10 (opposite) - Disassembling one of the “boxes” to reassemble in the mezzanine

Figure 5.11 (above) - The modular box reassembled in the mezzanine



shared in this room. Of course we occasionally craved privacy, but the support system we had built here far outweighed our desire to be alone. That being said, when Ali left to visit her family overseas, I was thrilled to have a few weeks in this luxurious space all to myself. This sense of luxury did not last long, however.

The novelty of having such a large space to myself quickly wore off when Ali announced that she would be extending her stay with her parents for a few months. I realized how much I had come to rely on her company and counsel, and that this isolation was not the dreamy situation I had once imagined. Trapped in this space during one of the most restrictive lockdowns we had yet faced, the Ballroom began to feel more like a gilded cage than a home.

Once again spending day in and day out in one room, the new limit to my world, I became intimately familiar with it. It was also around this time, bored out of my mind, that I became acutely aware of the many traces the Odd Fellows had left behind in the space, and began to do a little digging.

Figure 5.12 (opposite) - A fully unpacked Ballroom viewed from the mezzanine



The Odd Fellows are a closeted bunch, to put it mildly.⁷⁵ Their existence is an open secret, a network operating in plain sight, but only visible to those who already know where to look. Not unlike queer communities, the order (and other secret societies like them) frequently employ esoteric symbols to encode their existence in urban space.⁷⁶ While the queer community might flag one another through eclectic and gender non-conforming fashion choices, taking on a “gay” affectation, using community-specific terminology, or literally carrying flags, secret societies flag one another through their iconography. In the case of the Odd Fellows’, dominant symbols include the all-seeing eye, which renders “the fatherhood of god” as a sort of panopticon; the heart in the hand, representing charity towards a “brotherhood of man”, and the three-link chain, representing friendship, love, and truth. This non-verbal communication is a way of letting other members know they are in good company, and can be at ease.

Like most secret societies, the Odd Fellows are notoriously cryptic, but their oath gives us some insight into their mission: “to visit the sick, relieve the distressed, bury the dead and educate the orphan.”⁷⁷ Sounds noble enough, but it certainly

Figure 5.13 (opposite) - Independent Order of Odd Fellows tracing board, depicting symbols of the order

75. The way in which the Odd Fellows encode their existence is not unique to them. Queer geographer Michael P. Brown, has suggested that when the closet extends into urban space, it expresses itself as through inconspicuous signage, a visual language only visible to those looking for it. While sex spaces for their heterosexual counterpart are clearly and explicitly labeled, spaces for gay sex are hidden under the guise of “men’s health clubs” and “men’s spas”, or feature no signage at all. Flagging, a practice originating in San Francisco that involves tucking coloured bandanas in one’s back pockets to signify sexual preference, is another example of a closeted signifier.

76. While the Odd Fellows remain a largely patriarchal Christian organization, in rhetoric at least, they have, in recent years since come to adopt a non-discrimination policy, welcoming all people regardless of race, creed, sexuality, or gender – a proverbial foot in the door into their little cabinet.

77. I must say that the Odd Fellows oath reads something like a prayer in its entirety: “I believe in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man; I believe in friendship, love and truth as the basic guides to the ultimate destiny of all mankind; I believe my home, church or temple, my lodge and my community deserve my best work, my modest pride, my earnest faith and my deepest loyalty, as I perform my duty to visit the sick, relieve the distressed, bury the dead and educate the orphan and as I work with others to build a better world because, in spirit and in truth, I am, and must always be, grateful to my creator, faithful to my country and fraternal to my fellow man; I am an Odd Fellow.”



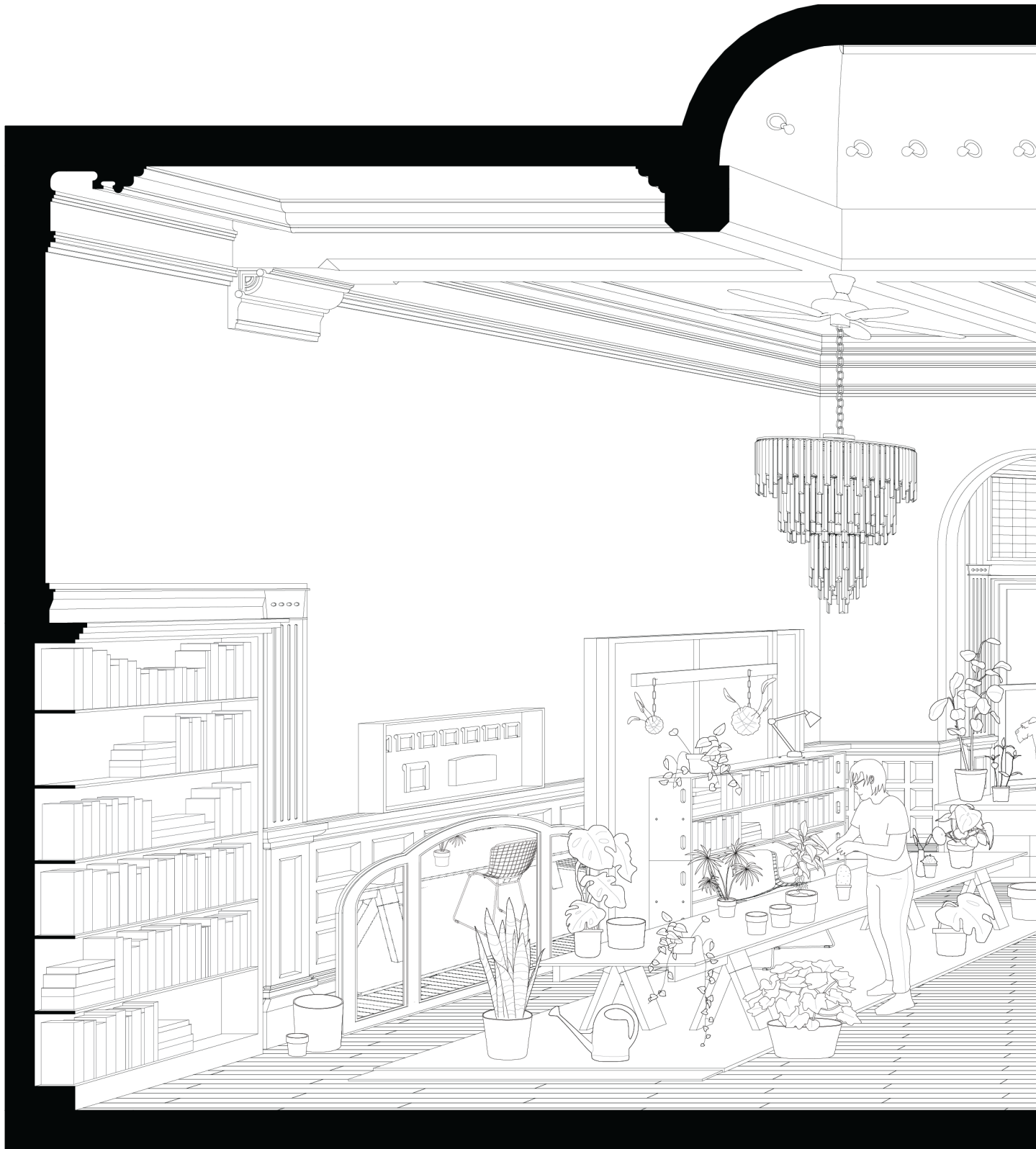
betrays the Odd Fellows' obsession with death. Symbols regarding death and its inevitability, including the hourglass and the skull and crossbones are heavily featured in Odd Fellows' iconography. This necro-fascination goes past mere symbolism, into the realm of religious iconography. In fact, human skeletons have been discovered in several former Odd Fellows lodges, and are supposedly used in their rituals. You heard me right – Odd Fellows, quite literally, keep skeletons in their closets.

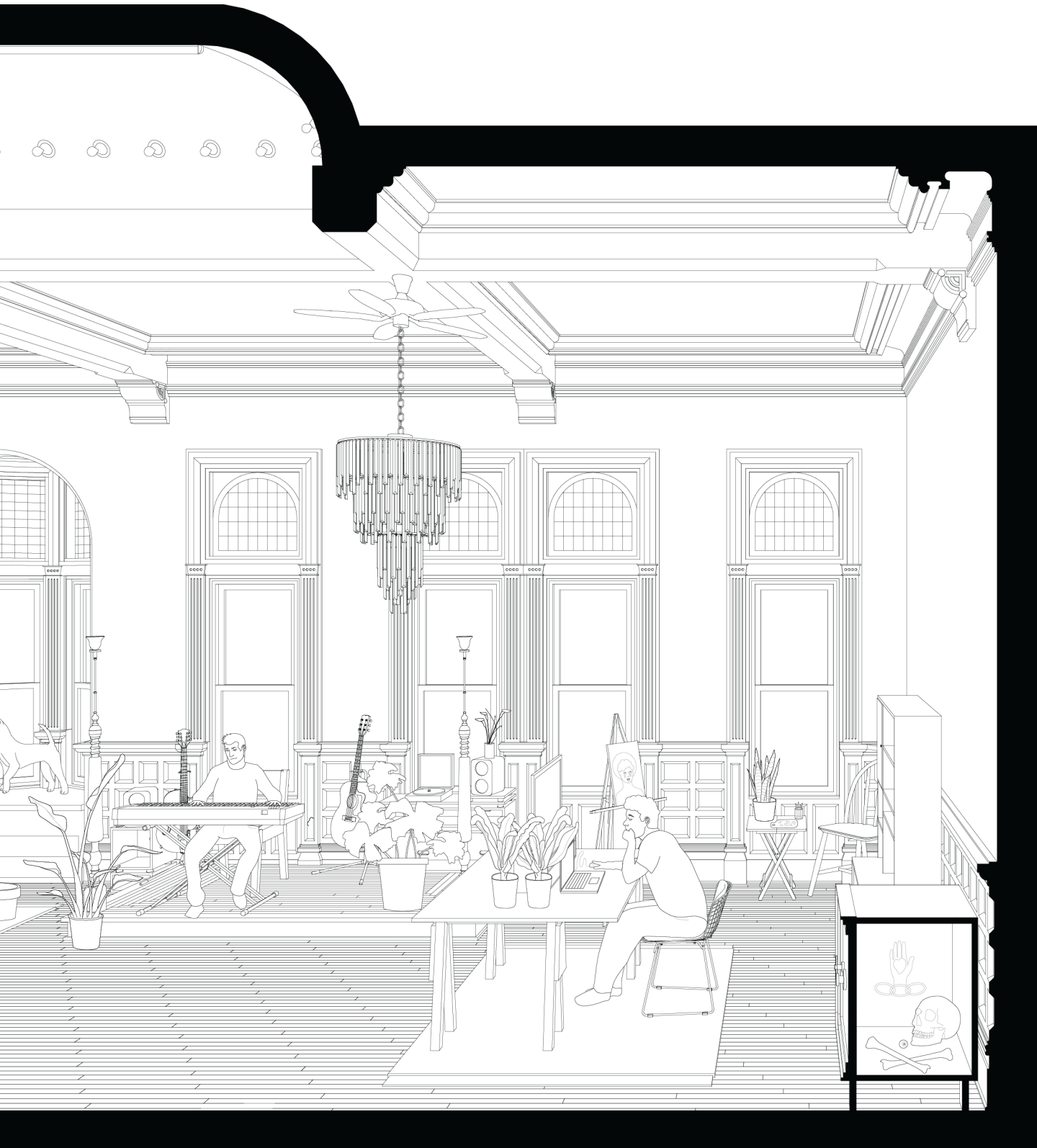
In spite of, or perhaps as a result of, their highly secretive nature, the Odd Fellows maintain a strong sense of community. In fact, one might say that the entire purpose of such a secret society is to create a space in which a sort of “free play” that would be considered strange or subversive to our societal norms and expectations can be shared by its members. Within the secret society, members are able to let down their guard knowing that they are among like-minded individuals. Privacy and secrecy are necessary tools for enabling this sense of free play – only by excluding outsiders without a shared value system and rhetoric can an environment of safety, free from judgement, can begin to form.



Figure 5.14 (opposite) - IOOF papercut incorporating Odd Fellows iconography

Figure 5.15 (above) - Odd Fellows iconography on a gravestone in West Virginia





While the revelation that secret societies were themselves a sort of collective closet, made possible through the creation of a shared private, was certainly present in my mind, I did not yet have the tools to put this lesson into action. Even though I passed those first winter months looking for ways out of the Closet, I felt myself drifting deeper and deeper into my isolation. It was then, about two months into Ali's extended leave, at the depths of my despair, that something amazing happened.

I fell in love.

I met Kyle, a talented artist and musician living in the nearby city of Woodstock, through a dating app of all places. After more than a month of exchanging letter length messages, we finally decided to take the risk and meet. Needless to say it went well, and he quickly became my boyfriend. For the two remaining months of Ali's leave, Kyle all but moved into the Ballroom. We lived out our honeymoon period in the space, content to wait out the winter months in our own little world.

Having gotten quite comfortable operating as a couple in this space, nerves were high about how

Figure 5.16 (previous spread) - Ali repots her massive plant collection, Kyle plays piano, Remy peers out the window, and I continue to work on this thesis

our lives would change upon Ali's return in the spring. When she finally arrived, however, she delighted us by bringing along a companion of her own – her family's miniature schnauzer, Remy.

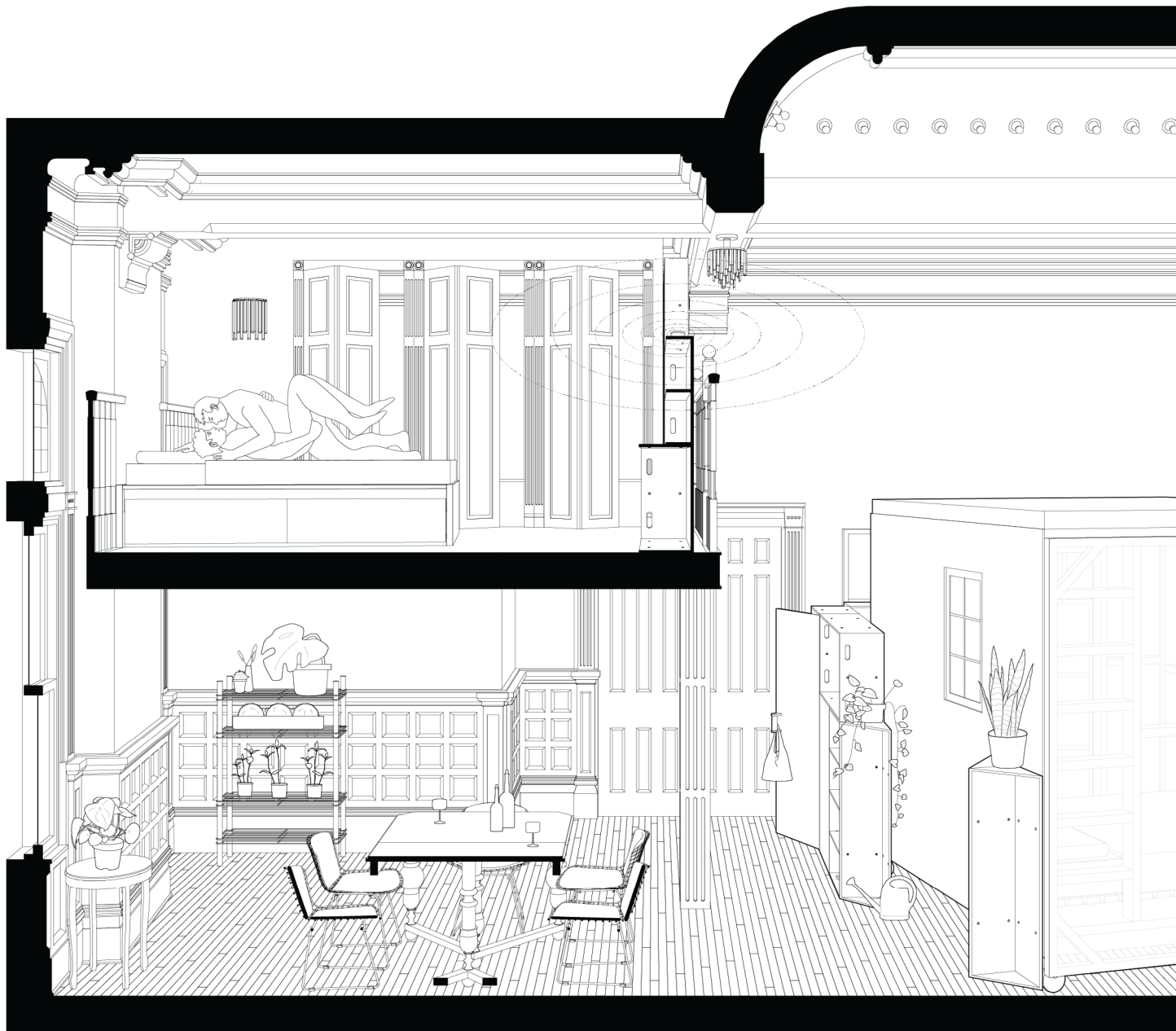
To my delight, Ali and Kyle became fast friends and she welcomed his company, happy to have him as our unofficial third roommate. Though there was certainly an adjustment period (particularly as far as intimacy was concerned) we quickly learned the value of a white noise machine in our home. Remy was a well behaved bundle of joy, and quickly endeared himself to Kyle and I. Over the coming months, we formed a sort of found family together and soon realized that the addition of Kyle and Remy brought an entirely new dynamic to our house; it began to transition from a closet into something closer to its origins as a secret society— a cabinet.

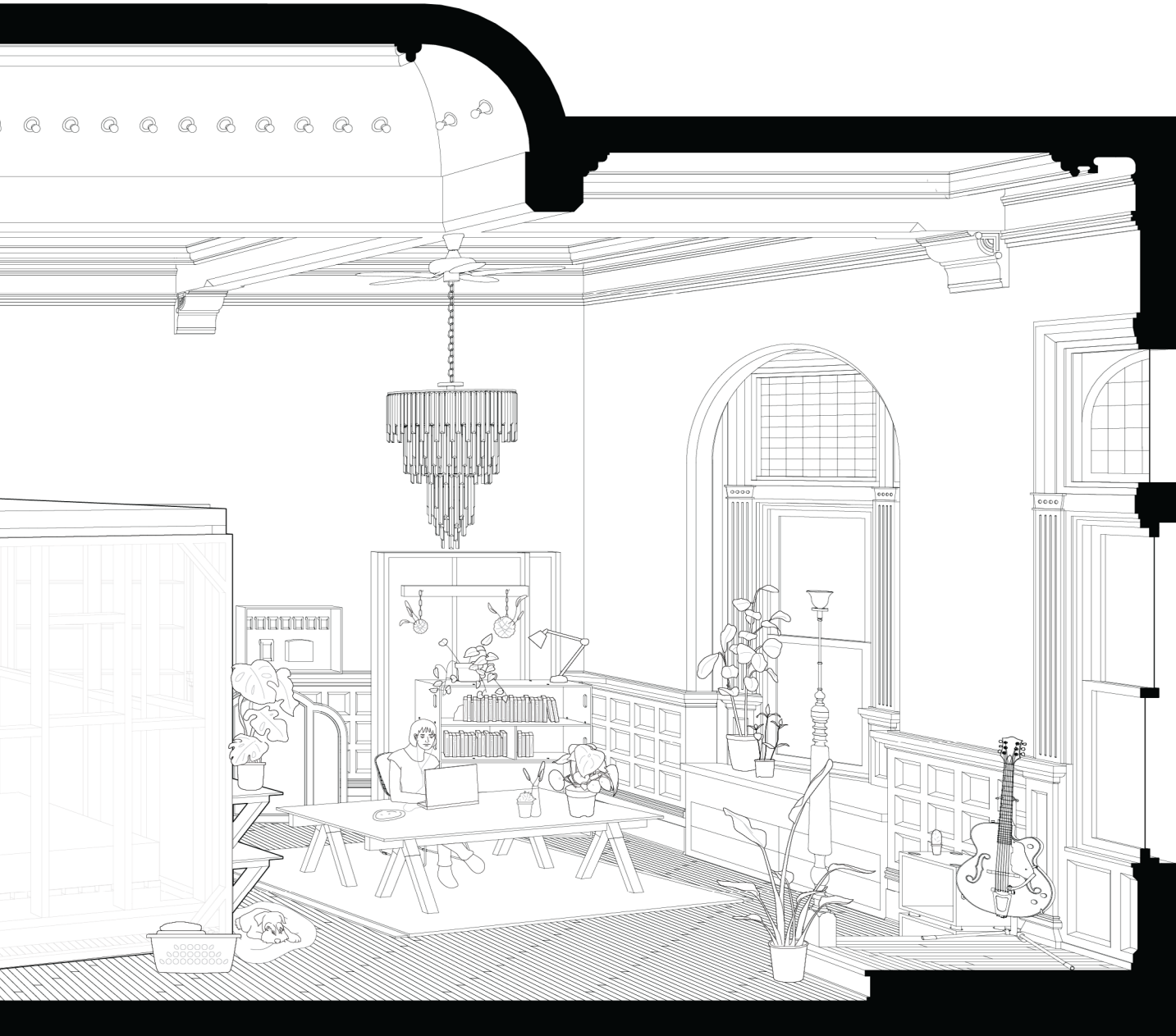
When I use the word cabinet here, I do not refer to any old closet in a French formal house, but of another meaning the word took on in the 17th century. I speak, of course, of the political cabinet: a council of trusted advisors who help to influence a leader's decisions.

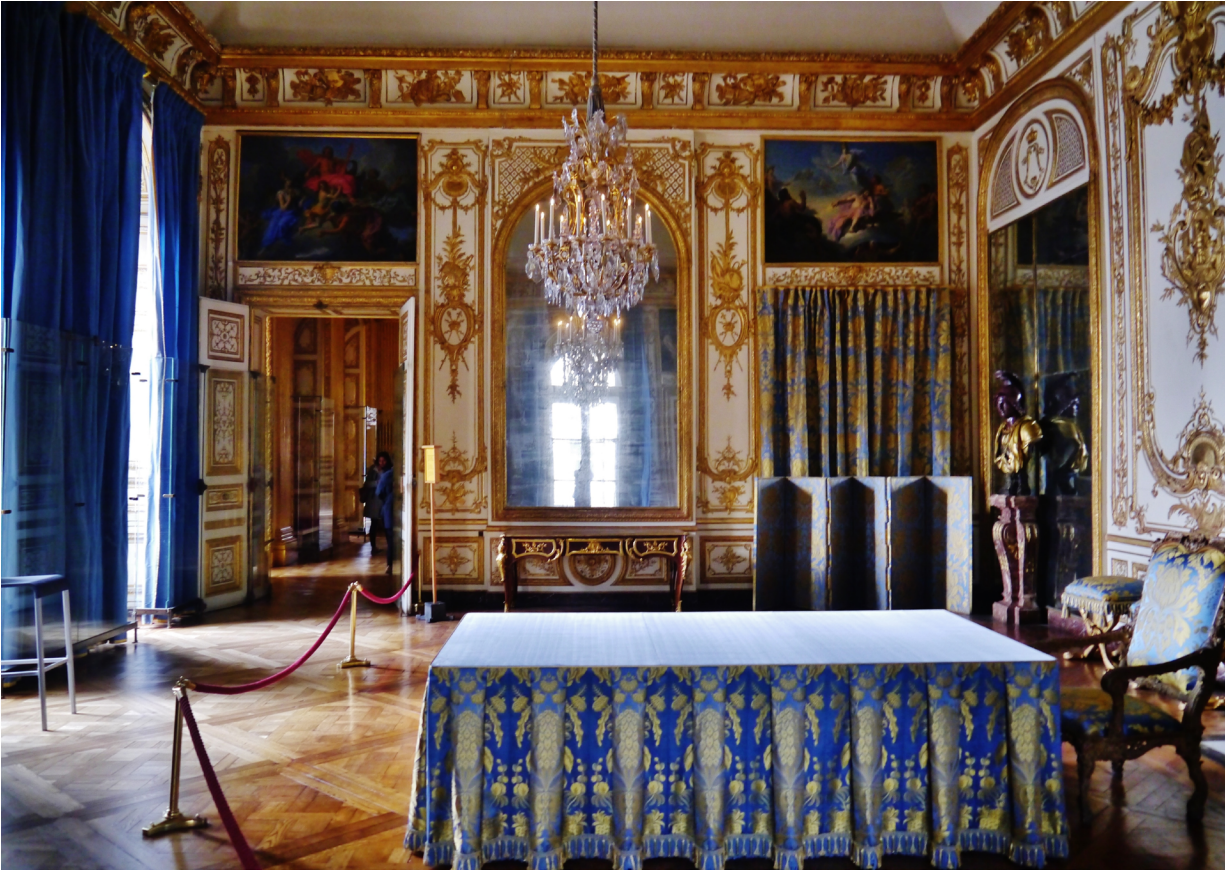
The concept of the cabinet might be seen as the



Figure 5.17 - Ali, Remy, Kyle and I enjoy a day at the park







extension of several closets we've already discussed. The studiolo introduced the idea of the closet as a private counsel chamber through the uomini illustri, though the members of this cabinet were not physically present. The boudoir saw intimacy and companionship become a key feature of the closet, with the bonds formed between its occupants acting as a sort of social capital. In the cabinet, however, we see the development of a truly shared private.

The political cabinet, a title still used by some of the most powerful decision making bodies in the world, comes from the room in which such a council would typically meet in court. At Versailles, this room was referred to as the cabinet du conseil, or cabinet of counsel, and was located in a similar space to Federico's studiolo in Urbino. The cabinet du conseil was directly adjacent to the king's bedchamber, and also led to his interior apartments, which featured his long sequence of other cabinets and closets. At once, it opened to the Hall of Mirrors, perhaps Versailles most public and politically charged space. The cabinet du conseil straddled the king's public and private worlds, acting as a transitional space between these worlds. In this room, the King could consult with

Figure 5.18 (previous spread) - Ali rushes to meet a deadline while Kyle and I have sex, making use of our white noise machine

Figure 5.19 - The cabinet du conseil at Versailles

those he trusted most, and heed their advice before entering the world with confidence in his actions. The members of his cabinet were able to bypass the enfilade of his private apartment, and enter directly into his private space – a great honour indeed.

As the warmer months rolled around, and restrictions eased, we began the work of expanding our little cabinet. Mirroring the spirit of generosity shown to us by Carol and Siobhan, we opened the doors of the Ballroom to our friends living nearby, offering them a sort of open invitation. Over the summer, we welcomed many of our friends as guests in this space. At the Ballroom, members of our little cabinet always had space to work, a bed to sleep in, delicious food to eat, and a shoulder to cry on. The space that had been the site of my depths of my isolation over the winter had again become what it was always intended to be.

When I began my research, I was looking at the architecture of the Closet, both spatially and socially, as a symbol of confinement and isolation. I wanted to see if they could be reimagined as a desirable space, and if architectural transformations could help us to reimagine the



Figure 5.20 - A final look at the Ballroom from the author's workspace

Closet as a space of power, rather than shame. What I didn't expect was to have a closet in its own right, the Odd Fellows' temple, fall right into my lap and act as a case-study for re-imagining private and inevitably shared private space. Over my winter at the Ballroom, it became clear to me that, so long as it's solitary, a gilded closet is still a closet. It was only through opening my doors to Kyle, Ali, Remy, and the other members of our cabinet, that it could become something more; a space where our shared private could become a place of shared power.

It is on that note that our time together must draw to a close. Don't worry though – this isn't really goodbye. Having taken this time to get to know me, I think we can safely call you a member of my cabinet. So please, stop by whenever you like, and feel free to bypass the axis of honour when you do. You can always enter through the back door.

FIN

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Appendix: Notes on drawing

Two previously unanswered questions about my decisions regarding architectural representation in *Closet Architecture* were asked during the defense of this thesis, my answers to which I will reiterate here.

The first question surrounded the concept of queer architectural representation, and how one might approach knowledge production through drawing in a queer way. Certainly there are several modes of architectural representation that might be considered “queer” that I did not employ. The worm’s eye drawing, for instance might be seen to offer a queer perspective, something intimate and unusual, almost as if one is lying on the ground of a space and surveying it from below. I elected not to approach any drawings from a worm’s eye quite simply because, while engaging, I do not think it is easy to glean information from such a drawing. Part of my queer approach to this thesis was in its accessibility, making the work as easily digestible as possible to a broad audience that might not be familiar with architectural terminology or architectural drawing conventions.

Collage as a technique might, too, be seen as a queer style of drawing, though I have shied away from this mode of representation, as it is a traditionally sapphic medium. Moreover, while playing with transparencies of raster images might, too, lean into a sense of layered secrecy in the closet, I feel that the photo-realistic raster has become co-opted by the hegemonic structures of architecture. Instead of showing things exactly as they are, I believe queer design must be rooted in the unexpected and imaginary.

While orthographic drawings might be seen by some as a traditional mode of representation, my approach to them breaks many of the profession's current conventions. The drawings of the imaginary closets in my mind are created with the use of perspective grids rather than the creation of a model, and represent a speculative approach to what my queer mindscape might look like. The act of oscillation between the mediums of drawing and writing were key to this queer process, in which knowledge is generated by moving back and forth between mediums and ways of thinking.

The second question regarded whether my drawings were truly ethnographic and data driven,

or more speculative, which might be more in the realm of an anthropological study. The answer is, quite simply, both. There are three distinct styles of drawing explored in this thesis, each of which have been carefully selected to achieve a specific affect.

The orthographic plan drawings in the introduction are likely the closest to true ethnographic drawings in the thesis. I have deliberately included every object in the room, and carefully observed just how I was living in that small space. Changes in the quality of the room through open/closed doors and the movement of objects to create makeshift furniture are meticulously documented. The detached plan view helps to reinforce the near out of body experience I was having at the time, acting more as an observer, and less as an active participant, in my life. This style of drawing helps to ground the work in the physical world before we venture into imaginary space.

The three perspective drawings I produced for “Axis of Honour,” “Studiolo,” and “Boudoir” are decidedly not grounded in that same reality. I elected to use one point perspective to represent these architectural imaginaries to create the illusion that these spaces exist within the book itself. There

is no wall poche because these spaces are instead enclosed by the margins of the book. In this way *Closet Architecture* becomes the physical site of these closets, and a closet (in the literary sense) in and of itself. Finally, the use of perspective was essential in creating the sense of a horizontal journey through the Closet, as the reader is pulled deeper and deeper into space.

The final set of drawings in “Cabinet” are a set of sectional perspectives of the Ballroom. This last chapter represents our journey back from the imaginary realm to something more grounded in reality, and thus acts as a synthesis of ethnographic and speculative drawing. The section cut represents an accurate orthographic depiction of this space, which I meticulously surveyed and measured, while creating a substantial inventory of the objects contained therein. At once, the perspectival, arguably impossible, projections of this temple continue the journey deeper into space that I establish in the previous chapters. While they are not a perfect representation, omitting some objects in favour of legibility, they represent a substantial effort on my part to document and survey, while communicating the atmosphere of intimacy fostered in the space I came to call home.