

DOMESTIC THEATRE

(Another Dollhouse - not by IBSEN)

Written By

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PROLOGUE

Pitch:

This not about fiction
this is about society

PAM PAM PAM -

(three beats which
traditionally begin every
French theatre
performance.)

Lights fade on the audience but do not completely go down.

CURTAIN RISES

SCENE #1 / A RE-ENACTMENT OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ORDER

INT. A living room. On the left, a large sofa upholstered in black leather, with pale cherrywood bookcases on either sides, heaped with books in untidy piles. Above the sofa, a mariner's chart would fill the whole length of that section of the wall. On the other side of a small low table, and beneath a silk prayer-mat nailed to the wall with three large-headed brass studs, matching the leather curtain, there would be another sofa, at right angles to the first, with a light-brown velvet covering; it would lead on to a small and spindly piece of furniture, lacquered in dark red and providing three display shelves for knick-knacks: agates and stone eggs, snuffboxes, candy-boxes, jade ashtray, a mother-of-pearl oyster shell, a silver fob watch, a cut-glass glass, a crystal pyramid, a miniature in a oval frame.* Above it, a mirror.

[*Things, G. Perec]

NARRATOR

(SETBACK, ON THE DOWNSTAGE LEFT, HE
INTRODUCE THE PLAY IN VOICE OVER)

The perfect human is a character we
are all trying to be in one way or
another.

We want to control the way others
can perceive us. We care about
their judgement.

Thereby, we organize our entire
lifestyle trying to fit certain
kind of models or, on the contrary
by trying to distinguish ourself
from these models.

This is social representation as it
is further developed in BOURDIEU's
essay: "*Distinction, a social
critique of the judgement of
taste*".

How interesting it is to note the
many apparent similarities between

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the tools and the process of social representation and the ones of theatrical representation !

Especially if we look at the way we relate to the material world.

Where the real world turns into simple images, simple images become real things that motivate hypnotic behaviours.

Here is the society of the spectacle. It is not simply a set of images but social relationships mediated by images.

(G.DEBORD, Society of the spectacle)

A sample of walk-on actors - men and women of various ages, few couples, one family with kids - enter the stage progressively from the right, wander through the space and leave by the left in a continuous flow. As in a department store showroom they look carefully at the furniture. Sometimes they try a seat, sometimes they touch a surface to feel the quality of the material. Acting like potential customers, they turn things around, hesitate, take some distance, come closer again then leave to another one.

NARRATOR

(VOICE OVER)

Objects are instruments and tools through which individuals and groups can define themselves on daily basis.

In particular if we consider the ordinary, the quotidian object.

(see G.PEREC,
"L'infra-ordinaire".)

This kind of object reveals the gesture, the sensibilities, and the

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relationship with the self and with the others - in other words, the anthropological structure of society.

Unlike MICHEL FOUCAULT who saw objects as micro-devices of power imposed from higher orders, here we'll consider how groups and individuals use objects to model their lives and stage their social identities.

We aim to consider how objects, as social signs, are defining the different characters of the metaphorical social play.

The actors present on stage freeze their mime, interrupting the flow to create a still picture - known in the french theatre vocabulary as "tableau vivant". The narrator on the downstage is the only one not subjected to this time suspension. He walks to the downstage centre. As a conductor addressing the kick off of the performance -one hand in his back, the other one in the air-, he formally concludes with a last sentence before turning his back to the audience staring at the stage as if it was his orchestra.

NARRATOR

(LOUDER AND FORMAL)

Let's look at material culture as a reification of social and personal identities;
at the way we relate to objects as a re-enactment of cultural and social order.

LIGHT GOES DOWN ON
THE AUDIENCE

SCENE #2 / CRITICAL DESIGN, THE PART OF THE SOCIAL DESIGNER

The narrator takes a step forward, crossing the invisible border that divide the downstage to the centre stage. He is not an external actor anymore. In one step he became the main character. Briefly exploring this motionless scene, he finally goes back to the centre, facing the audience. His body language hints an evolution of his part.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER
(previously the narrator)

(COUGHING THEN CLEAR VOICE)

I'm the social designer. This is how I perceive the society; this is my mental representation.

Showing the stage in a hand gesture.

Because all that happens on this stage is the direct product of my mind, I can manipulate things. I re-create a situation from what aroused my interest in a social context.

The walk-on actors unfreeze and start again their mime as nothing happened, without noticing the social designer.

To analyse this situation, understand why it questioned me, and share with you the progress of my research, I create new perspectives:

I slow it down;

The walk-on actors suddenly act in slow-motion. Thereafter, they will adapt their play according to the social designer indications.

(AMUSED)

Or I accelerate it.
(MORE)

I rewind the scene and make a freeze frame. I can walk through it and get closer to observe each detail.

The social designer walk through the frozen stage, carefully trying to not disturb anything. He stops in front of one of the walk-on actors, walks around him, observes attentively. He imitates his posture - as well as possible - vigilant to the smallest detail. Following his gaze, he suddenly interrupts his action, crosses the stage with determination in the same direction, stops and grabs something: the jade ashtray.

(TO THE AUDIENCE)

As a social designer, I aim to have a critical look on the structure of society, especially on human behaviours related to the market of goods.

I aim to question the role of the designer, the position of the consumer and the market way of functioning itself.

The purpose of this critic is to guide the look toward a conscious way of consuming, to understand the constant attraction and demand for material things in a society of abundance.

(PONDERING ALOUD)

Beyond the function, what are material things - objects- for?

There are so many options even in the basics. There is no one chair because I need to sit there are thousands.

What are the criteria of my choice, what are the criteria of their choices?

(indicating the walk-on actors with a nod)

(TO THE AUDIENCE AGAIN)

Hidden beyond their functions
objects are social signs. We relate
to them as the mirror of our
identity.

As a theatre play, we stage our
everyday life! Our home becomes a
statement of our identity. Our
material desires are the expression
of the person we wish to be ... Or
at least to look alike in the
mirror.

Still mechanically playing with the jade ashtray, he leans
against the sofa and starts pretending to smoke a fictional
cigarette with the imposing presence of a business man from
the fifties. He looks back at the audience, proud of his
trick.

Not only a piece of glass that
reflects images! but a mirror with
a larger meaning: something that
shows what we cannot completely
perceive from our own point of
view - in a very clear and accurate
way - the social mirror: the
other's eyes.

Social medias - like Instagram -
are the perfect example nowadays of
our desire to communicate who we
are through images of our material
environment and living space.

Search for "#Home" and on your
screen will appear an infinite row
of living-rooms, bed-rooms,
kitchens or bathrooms as many clues
of individual appreciation, of
tastes and distinction searching
for witnesses.

After putting out his cigarette, he puts down the ashtray on
the small law table, clashing the two surfaces (POC). At
this sound, the walk-on actors come alive. Resuming their
mime, they slowly leave the stage.

To help me in my investigation I
(MORE)

need other actors' input to give me the cue.

A Sociologist for instance, who would know everything about the society.

An anthropologist or a philosopher, specialized in understanding human behaviours.

I would also need other designers with an accurate sense of the critic toward the material world. As well as proper playwright to help me re-writing the social script.

And since everything is happening in my mind anyway, why not invite some inspiring fictional characters extracted from literature or cinema.

SOUND OF FOOTSTEP

(EXCITED)

I already hear someone coming!

Stomping slightly on site he finally sits on the couch, legs crossed, elbow on the armrest, head resting on the palm of his hand. Falsely thoughtful, he waits for the newcomer.

SCENE #3 / HETEROTOPIA - SEE OTHER SIDE

Same setting: furnished living room, no walk-on actors, just the social designer - watchful.

In a row, a whole group of actors come on stage. Strangely they are all carrying their own chair, the kind of foldable black wood and textile cinema chair with the actor's name on the back.

They settle on the downstage, in a lightly arcuate row, back to the audience, facing the social designer. On the back of each seat we can read from the right to the left:

PSYCHOANALYST, SOCIOLOGIST, PHILOSOPHER, CRITICAL DESIGNER

// we'll call them: EXPERTS.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

(ENTHUSIASTIC)

I'm so glad to see you all!
I was actually reflecting on the
idea of self-representation and how
we relate to our surrounding as a
reflective surface, a mirror, to
adapt our behaviours.

The psychoanalyst stand up and speak loud. He first
introduce himself - performer's name - recite his tirade and
sit down again. Over this scene they will all speak that
way, except the social designer who keeps playing as he used
to do.

THIS DIALOGUE SHOULD BE PLAYED IN A
DYNAMIC WAY AS THE ACTION IS BASED ON
REPETITION AND THE CONTENT QUITE
HEAVY.

NOTE TO THE EXPERTS: DO NOT HESITATE TO
EMPHASIZE YOUR DICTION.

PSYCHOANALYST
(performed by J.LACAN)

Whatever you consider as a mirror -
generates a process of
SELF-OBJECTIFICATION describing the
formation of the ego .
Observing his own image from
outside, the subject experience a
conflict between his visual
appearance and his emotional being.
His own image permanently catches
and captivates the subject in an
imaginary order - a field of images
and imagination, but also one of
deception.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

Therefore we start manipulating our
own image - using props and goods,
we stage ourselves.

SOCIOLOGIST
(performed by G.DEBORD)

All that once was directly lived
has become mere representation.
History of social life can be
understood as the decline of being
into having, and having into merely
appearing.

PHILOSOPHER
(performed by M.FOUCAULT)

In the mirror, I see myself there
where I am not, in an unreal,
virtual space that opens up behind
the surface. I am over there, as A
SORT OF SHADOW that gives my own
visibility to myself, that enables
me to see myself where I am absent.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

Too preoccupied supervising our
projected image and neglecting our
emotional one, we tend to
disappear...

SOCIOLOGIST
(performed by G.DEBORD)

What we see as self-assertion is in
fact "the ubiquitous affirmation
and consumption of readymade
choices from the production
system."

The spectacle, understood in its
totality, is both the result and
the project of the existing mode of
production. It is the heart of the
unrealism of real society.

With such lack of authenticity,
human perceptions are affected, and
knowledge impoverished, with the
hindering of critical thought.
It's our role TO WAKE UP THE
SPECTATOR who has been drugged by

(MORE)

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
spectacular images.

IMPORTANT TO PUT THE ACCENT ON "WAKE-UP
THE SPECTATOR"

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

How could I do that?

SOCIOLOGIST
(performed by G.DEBORD)

Through radical action. In the form of the construction of *situations*. By *situation* I mean creating moments, characterized by «a sense of self-consciousness of existence within a particular environment or ambience».

I encourage you to use the technique of the DETOURNEMENT, involving the use of spectacular images and language to DISRUPT THE FLOW of the spectacle.

CRITICAL DESIGNER
(performed by DUNNE&RABY)

However, it should stay close to the everyday, that's where critical design's power to disturb comes from. Too weird and it will be dismissed as art, too normal and it will be effortlessly assimilated. If it remains as design it is more disturbing, it suggests that the everyday as we know it could be different, that things could change.

PHILOSOPHER
(performed by M.FOUCAULT)

To create this situation - moment of self-consciousness, close to the everyday and spectacular at the same time - you should bring the

(MORE)

PHILOSOPHER (CONT'D)

spectator in a space of otherness,
neither here or there,
simultaneously mental and physical,
fictional and real: A HETEROTOPIA.

INSIST ON THE WORD "HETEROTOPIA"

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

The theatre of the absurd is a
derivative of the classical form of
representation. A method used to
critic and denounce dysfunction in
societies and human behaviour.

In the same way I aim to re-stage,
re-script and re-play the theatre
of everyday in a disruptive way.

Disturbing and familiar at the same
time, this metatheatre
(mise en abyme)
of the everyday should be what we
need to -

CRITICAL DESIGNER

(performed by DUNNE&RABY)

- raise questions and awareness, to
expose assumptions and provoke
actions, to spark debate and even
entertain in an intellectual sort
of way-

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

- On something we pay little mind:
the daily routine.

Let's start! But first of all let's
make some space. We must start all
over again !

CURTAIN CLOSES

The experts fold their chairs and leave the stage.

END OF THE PROLOGUE.

ACT.1 : STAGE SETTING - A DOLLHOUSE

Pitch:

The domestic space
A stage for social representation

CURTAIN RISES

SCENE#1 / IDEALISATION OF THE DOMESTIC SPACE.

STAGE. Almost empty. On centre stage: a table. On the table: a dollhouse lit with a projector. Under the table few rolls of paper and some tools that look like they belong to an architect. The social designer is there, from the right side of the table, he looks at the miniature.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

Starting from the assumption that society is a play, that we are the actors and the home is our individual stage for social representation, the domestic space must be the context of our play. How should we set it on this actual stage? How should we disrupt its representation?

Three experts come in, as previously, they settle on the left side of the stage. On their seats we can read: PLAYWRIGHT, ANTHROPOLOGIST, CRITICAL DESIGNER.

PLAYWRIGHT
(performed by H.IBSEN)

I wrote a play once, it also happened in a house, I titled it: A Doll's House. The stage was representing an ideal domestic space, with "a room furnished comfortably and tastefully but not extravagantly". It was happening in the 19th century. I was criticizing the social norms as well, especially the part of the woman in society. How she couldn't be herself in her social context empowered by men.

IBSEN's play protagonist: NORA, enter the stage interpreting a short part of the relevant play and exit the stage from the other side.

NORA

"I have been performing tricks for you, TORVALD. That's how I've survived. You wanted it like that. You and Papa have done me a great wrong. It's because of you I've made nothing of my life. Our home has been nothing but a playroom. I have been your doll-wife, just as at home I was father's doll-child; and here the children have been my dolls."

(A Doll's House, ACT.3)

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

Dollhouse... Playroom... here are some inspiring translations of the domestic space already !

ANTHROPOLOGIST

(performed by M.CHARPY)

The dollhouse is also, and first of all a popular toy for little girls, - "already in the 19th century bourgeois household; they were used for the child to learn the meaning of order and how to take care of a home".

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

As a miniature archetype of the domestic space, the dollhouse can be seen as structure dedicated to the child to imitate the basic scenarios of his daily routine in order to understand and assimilate their way of functioning.

However as a toy, it is not only an educational tool, it also evokes the idea of recreation. The dollhouse is a playground for the kid to create his own scenarios, his own norms and behaviours, his own logic of routine.

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ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER (CONT'D)

We can notice that the word "play" is the same for theatre and for the way children relate to toys.

The doll's house is a small scale stage for domestic theatre. Between mimic of the reality and fiction, it's a place where the story takes over the function.

ANTHROPOLOGIST
(LAROUSSE, Dictionary)

Although, dollhouses have primarily resided in the domain of children their collection and crafting also became a hobby for many adults in the last century.

Dollhouses can range from simple boxes stacked together used as rooms for play, up to million dollar structures displayed in museums.

CRITICAL DESIGNER
(performed by TAL EREZ)

I've used the dollhouse structure for a critical design project. The one I made was a simple cardboard box, with a small window cut in the background. Everybody could reproduce it at home. Following my measurements and placed at a right distance from the computer, they could give the illusion that this downscaled stage was their actual living space from a camera point of view.

Everybody is already directors, armed with the tools of making videos. Now, with platforms like YOUTUBE or SKYPE they upload their interiors to the public sphere, inviting millions into their bedroom, their living room.

(MORE)

CRITICAL DESIGNER (CONT'D)

Through this structure they could control its composition, its components, its ability to be fantastic, by filling the stage with any kind of prop or PROPERTIES as I renamed them: objects that exist purely to represent ourselves on camera.

What about you? What kind of dollhouse do you need for your play?

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

(PONDERING ALOUD)

What kind of dollhouse do I need for my play...

Turning around the table he examines carefully the miniature on the table, plays a bit with it. Focused on his own thoughts he does not notice that the EXPERTS exit the stage giving way for new comers. They are two filmmakers this time. To avoid any confusion and exceptionally, they have their performers name written on their chair: LARS VON TRIER and JACQUES TATI.

SCENE#2 / DOOR, WINDOW & STAIRCASE

The social designer finally looks up. He is seems ready to share his conclusions.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

I do like the fact that it is a modular platform and the range of possibilities that it offers from the very simple to the very detailed. However, as my focus is more on the objects as props for social representation, I would lean for the simple. Some key elements should be enough to illustrate the domestic space.

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ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER (CONT'D)

FILMMAKER
(performed by L.V.TRIER)

When i did the movie DOGVILLE, I got really inspired from theatre in order to create the minimal setting. In that way I could draw the audience's attention on the characters and their behaviours. Although I used real props and furniture - and some very few architectural elements - the landscape was illustrated with lines on the floor as a hybrid representation between a city map and architectural drawing. In that way, I gave the audience an omniscient point of view on the story. They could be aware of each of the actor's behaviour, at any time of the story. In a way, I broke the intimacy of the domestic space. On my stage, there was no place to hide from the eyes of the public.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

I see... As well I don't think I need the walls to speak about social representation. However the door is important to represent the border between the outside and the inside.
The border but also the communication: the entrance and the exit; an opening for social interaction.

Grabbing some tools from under the table, the social designer start drawing a 1-1 scale door on the back wall.

ME- SOCIAL DESIGNER

This door could stand by itself, it is something common in theatre
(MORE)

ME- SOCIAL DESIGNER (CONT'D)

settings. I like the confusion it creates.

He also draw the frame of the door and some structure on the bottom maintained with two bags of sand to be sure that it stays stable.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

I would also keep the stairs. Wherever they lead doesn't really matter, they would be stairs for social distinction: the social ladder. Ceiling height and upper floors have always been criteria for space quality, and therefore distinction.

He keeps on drawing the setting element he is describing.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

And last but not least: the window. It must be quite large for the brightness but over all it represent the fourth wall, the one open to the others eyes. The window is the primary element that turn the home into a stage, therefore it needs a curtain! In this way the actor as his own director can manipulate the perception of his audience. He can hide and show, or either blur the picture of his intimate space.

FILMMAKER

(performed by J.TATI)

The window is indeed a fascinating element, especially in modern architecture as I conceived it in my movie PLAYTIME.

From a bystander's point of view what happens beyond a window looks trivial and unreal at the same time because the real life seems reduced to a dollhouse scale.

(MORE)

FILMMAKER (CONT'D)

From indoors while the window is a source of light, the view is also a criteria for distinction. Therefore in PLAYTIME, the famous monuments become reflected postcards that only exist through the window surfaces.

I played a lot with the reflectivity of the glass. Depending on the focus of your glance you can look at it as a mirror of your own environment, or look further and switch to a parallel world where you're not.

Beyond the window is a reality that is not completely yours anymore.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

So that is all for now, door, window and stairs we can already see the dollhouse.

SCENE#3 / STAGED HOME, ORDER AND DISORDER

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

The most interesting point in starting over from the most archetypal form of the house is its modularity. Depending on how these elements are displayed on stage, it provides a different perspective of the space.

Even before filling it with complementary props needed for the narration we can already question the idea of order.

(PONDERING ALOUD)

Should everything be carefully organized in an exaggerated order like the perfect household's house

(MORE)

of H.IBSEN's play?
 The stairs would logically lead to another door, the window would be clean with nicely arranged curtains and the view would be amazing. The door would be closed to avoid drafts... Everything would have a dedicated spot almost like a museum or an exhibition.

While speaking, the social designer in a dynamic behaviour walk through the space as an architect explaining with hand gestures, his own perception of the future settled stage. Sometimes using white chalk on the dark floor of the stage, he indicates the position of things.

ANTHROPOLOGIST
 (performed by M.CHARPY)

Indeed, beginning of the 19th century - at the time of Ibsen dollhouse -, the order of all objects had three dimensions: an aesthetic one (layout); a social one (distinction); and orthopaedic one. There was nothing natural about it - organizing and arranging objects in an apartment as in an international exhibition was a re-enactment of cultural and social order.

Everyday life was based on a taxonomic order. This explains why by the mid- nineteenth century catalogues - themselves a tool for arranging things - were full of storage furniture such as cupboards, chests, sideboards, china cabinets, bookshelves, umbrella- stands, hat-stands, and coat-stands...

This system of orderliness extended to entire houses and apartments as the placement of objects created boundaries between spaces - between intimate and social, between

(MORE)

ANTHROPOLOGIST (CONT'D)

masculine and feminine, and between upstairs and downstairs.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

(DOUBTFULLY)

Hum...This kind of over-organized space is interesting in a way it induces an idea of hierarchy of things. What should be shown or hidden ? What is on the front-stage what stays in backstage? However, so much order doesn't make the space look natural anymore.

Erasing the chalk marks he previously made, he starts re-arranging the space with invisible props for the second time.

Let's see if adding some disorder would make the space seem more inhabited, more real. For instance the door would be slightly open, the curtain neither completely open neither completely closed and a coat could be carelessly left, just here, on the banister.

ANTHROPOLOGIST

(performed by M.CHARPY)

As well, from the 1870s, manuals of etiquette started to underline the need for order to appear 'natural'. The capacity to create a tasteful disorder became in turn distinctive.

While disorderliness was suspect, controlled disorder was to mimic life.

Chairs should be slightly out of place, and some newspapers could lie about on tables and side tables.

Large quantities of industrially-produced fake still-life objects in

(MORE)

ANTHROPOLOGIST (CONT'D)

rubber, wax, and pasteboard lent an air of lived but immobile disorderliness on tables. This controlled disorder was evidence of self-control, and simultaneously proof of a personal touch.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

Fake objects for an illusion of reality... Here is a challenging element. Between display and function what kind of props need to be real and which can stay as a level of a "trompe l'oeil"? Who should know the trick? Traditionally in theatre - as in most kind of representation-, the performer act as an illusionist toward the audience. In our case revealing the tricks might be a useful element for disruption.

The window could be hung from the ceiling... revealing that the amazing view is only a poster taped on the background. As well, the perspective could allow a glimpse of a wooden structure holding the empty shell of a cardboard staircase!

PLAYWRIGHT

(performed by E. IONESCO)

Indeed as a field for fiction, theatre stage - as well as dollhouses - also offers possibilities for a third kind of order, an absurd one. In EXIT THE KING for instance, The setting is generated by the physical and emotional state of the character. During the play, as the king is dying, the kingdom is falling apart.

Order is not anymore the result of a desire to communicate something

(MORE)

PLAYWRIGHT (CONT'D)

about identity, it is the direct result of the identity. There is no distinction between the space and the character himself.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

The home defines the character and the character define the home...
If the space and the character are so closely linked, before thinking of the props, we need to define who is the character of our play.

Lifting the roof of the dollhouse, he plunges his arm, groping a little, he finally gets out what appears to be a small figurine, a doll.

CURTAIN CLOSES

The experts leave the stage.

END OF THE ACT.1

(ENTR'ACTE - 20 MIN)

ACT.2 : MAIN CHARACTER - NORA HELMER

Pitch:

Introducing NORA HELMER

CURTAIN RISES

SCENE#1 - STAR / ANTI-STAR

The setting that was previously draw on the wall by the designer is now physical. On the centre stage right a door stands on itself, on the upstage centre a large window is suspended from the ceiling, on the left side of the centre stage a staircase leads to nowhere. On the top, the social designer is sitting mechanically playing with the figurine. On the centre stage, the table is still standing, the dollhouse on it.

On the expert's side, a SOCIOLOGIST performed by G.DEBORD.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

In order to improve the setting of my dollhouse and define the missing props for a disrupted re-enactment of our everyday behaviours, I need to define the character of the play. To question the audience toward his own life-style, this character should be someone to who we could all relate in a way or another.

SOCIOLOGIST
(performed by G.DEBORD)

In the society of the spectacle the main character is the STAR as the spectacular representation of living human.

A pinup, a cowboy and a rock-star enter silently the stage, strike a pose around the table, with a natural cinematic presence.

The condition of the star is the incarnation of the apparently lived. The STAR is an object of identification for the spectator.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

How does this identification happen?

SOCIOLOGIST
(performed by G.DEBORD)

Because her life is based on appearance; a life without depth that compensates for the productive specialization actually lived. STARS exists in order to represent varied types of life styles and styles of understanding society, free to be exercised globally.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

(THOUGHTFUL)

... By being the incarnated representation of an ideal self, the star might also becomes an instigator of behaviour...

SOCIOLOGIST
(performed by G.DEBORD)

Indeed. The STAR as a symbol of consumption concentrates in herself the attractive image of a better life, a role made illusively reachable by imitation. Therefore the spectacle gets elected by plebiscite as pseudo-power over the lived.

But as the activities of Stars are not really global... they are not varied either.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

(ASIDE)

[By being the one motivating artificial behaviours and therefore social interactions, The STAR is a driving force behind a society of spectacle and image. To disrupt the spectacle, the STAR is not the kind of character I need, it is the opposite.]

From a nod, he invites the three actors to leave the stage.
They do.

Instead of initiating new
behaviours by projecting a heroic,
exemplar or ideal image of the
living-one we wish to look alike,
I need to stage someone who
(unfortunately) would act a bit too
much like we do - and from whom we
would like to dissociate ourselves.

(SPEAKING LOUD)

I need an antihero, an ANTI-STAR.

(ASIDE)

[That is how I aim to question our
actual behaviours.]

SCENE#2 / THE AUDITION

*Four new actors enter the stage, the first is a curious
naked man wearing a crown, he is followed by a young french
couple, the last one is Nora as she previously appeared in
the first act. Searching around they finally see the social
designer, still sitting on the stairs. They line beyond the
table down to the stairs, waiting for the audition.*

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

(ENTHUSIASTIC)

Ah! Some new candidates.
Let's start!

THE NAKED KING
(from The Emperor new clothes,
by H.C.ANDERSEN)

I used to be a glorious emperor...
now people knows me better as THE
NAKED KING. ANDERSEN, my creator,
bestowed on me the sole desire to

(MORE)

THE NAKED KING (CONT'D)

be admired by my subjects.
To satisfy this desire I ordered my tailors to dress my royal person with the most beautiful suit of clothes they could ever create, cut of the most precious material ever seen.

They executed my order, I believed them. The textile they chose for me - extremely rare - had the magic attribute to be invisible to those who are unfit for their positions, stupid or incompetent.
Again, dazzled by my desire to be admired, I believed them; I trusted their judgment more than my own. they pleased me with their compliments, why should I care of anything else ?

It came the time of the parade, my people were voiceless and I was proud, so proud in my new clothes. But suddenly a child cried out -

"HE ISN'T WEARING ANYTHING AT ALL!"

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

Thank you Sir, I like your character. I particularly like how your embarrassing experience is creating new material for the human collective consciousness with the same mythical power as ancient lore. The way you look at yourself through the eyes of others could be an interesting element to incarnate the anti-star I'm looking for, but let's listen to what the next ones have to say.

JERÔME & SYLVIE
(from Things, by G.PEREC)

We are a young parisian couple from the 60's middle class. Our creator
(MORE)

JERÔME & SYLVIE (CONT'D)

G.PEREC probably made the two of us inseparable to avoid creating any distinct personalities independent of our surrounding.

Divided between intense convictions for a hedonic lifestyle and a strong sense of entitlement to the riches and to the world opportunities around us, our life is lead by frustrated material desires.

Looking at the shop front we loved to imagine for ourselves an ideal life convinced of our outstanding sense of style.

Even if some brief periods of prosperity enabled us to afford a fragment of it ...

(JERÔME)

"a nice pair of english leather shoes"

(SYLVIE)

"a beautiful piece of furniture"

...We constantly postponed our life plans, hiding behind ethical excuses. In reality we were scared of the means needed to achieve it.

Lost in our comfortable dreams for future happiness, we forgot to live the present.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

Thank you. Your story was also very inspiring. The way you strive for an idealized life through your material desires and how Perec describes your life focusing on "the ordinary, the banal, the familiar" makes you the ideal candidate to perform the character I need.

I also find your duo used as a tool to blend your personalities within

(MORE)

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER (CONT'D)

your surrounding very interesting.
However we still have another
contender to hear.

NORA HELMER

(from A doll's house, by H.IBSEN)

My name is NORA HELMER, you briefly
met me, I'm the main character of
H.IBSEN's play: A DOLL'S HOUSE.

I was a perfect housewife in a
perfect house. Always joyful,
tenderly naive, child-like and
capricious. I was a caring wife and
a loving mother, keeping the family
house clean and tidy with a natural
delicacy. This is how I was
convinced to fulfil my duties, as a
woman of my time, a woman of the
19th century. This was before all
my world fell apart.

When my proud secret got unveiled
at the end of the Act.II - a
ill-gotten loan to afford
the necessary health care for my
diseased husband - I became fully
aware of my condition.

What I considered as a legitimate
act of love, was considered as a
crime by my husband and the society
around me.

My whole system of values was
misplaced. All that I was truly
believing in was a great wrong.

After this event, everything seemed
different, artificial, counterfeit.
The house itself was nothing more
than a playground, I was a doll
well-behaved and consciousless.
Did I really know what I was doing
all that time, or did I only
pretended to know?
I couldn't stand the doubt anymore.

Overwhelmed, by the feeling that my

(MORE)

NORA HELMER (CONT'D)

whole life was revealing itself as
a performance that I wasn't
leading, nor understanding,
I had to leave.

As I knew so little of myself and
the society how could I be a good
mother and wife ?
I left.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

Thank you, I'm very glad to see you
again.

As well, you seem to match the
profile.

Your behaviour is a construct of
societal norms, led to please
other's expectations. As all
previous candidates you naively
projected your life in an idealized
world of representation. As the
NAKED KING your dream world falls
apart.

As JERÔME&SYLVIE you realized that
by striving to be part of this
fictional world you've "*made
nothing of your life*".

However you distinguish yourself
from all of them.

Your awakening is not a ending per
se - the morale of the story - as
in the other stories. You don't
deny it - as JERÔME&SYLVIE did -,
instead YOU REACT ON IT.

Even controversial, your final act
sounds like a starting point for a
new story more than a ending.

It is very promising!

INSIST ON "REACT"

(ASIDE)

[Her character evolves with her
reality. Nora's childish naivety
suddenly mixed with a strong
consciousness of her foreign
surrounding enables her to oppose
the doctrine of her worldly husband

(MORE)

to test by experience the social hypothesis of norms.]

(TO NORA AGAIN)

In a suddenly reversed reality, an upside-down world, you dive in the unknown, in spite of yourself you open the way toward new perspectives.
Because of that, there are no doubts anymore, you are the one I'm looking for.

However, this is a new play, another dollhouse - not by IBSEN. Consequently we need to re-arrange your script.

SCENE#3 / A SCRIPT FOR NORA'S PART

Jêrome, Sylvie and the Naked King leave the stage. Only Nora stays and the social designer. He comes down from his pedestal, the stairs where he was observing the situation, to go meet Nora. Touching her face, pinching her cheeks, swinging her arms, he manipulates her like a doll, he observes and ponders.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

(ASIDE)

[Who is Nora?]

(TO NORA)

Who are you nowadays?

(PONDERING ALOUD)

She is a theatre character. This means that she is an attitude more than an icon, a set of character traits, a state of mind who needs to be physically embodied by a performer to come alive.

In that sense Nora is a script that can be performed in various ways

(MORE)

depending on the actor. However, it is based on unchangeable elements that make her clearly identifiable in each interpretation.

(TO THE AUDIENCE)

To make a character visually recognizable, a common tool used in theatre is the costume.

An outfit, a mask, a wig or even specific make-up helps the spectator to look at the character beyond the actor's face, as long as it is constant.

If it's defined that NORA is the one dressed in white while all the others are in black, then whoever will wear white will appear as NORA to the audience - without a word.

(ASIDE)

[Wearing a costume is also a statement for the performer, a way to say: "I give up who I am to become someone else".]

(PONDERING ALOUD)

Following the visual identification comes the scenario. It is generally structured in a various number of acts following the key elements of a narration. Focusing on the character the scenario usually describes an evolution of his state of mind.

(TO THE AUDIENCE)

Nora's scenario is defined in 3 acts:

PLAYING THE CHRONICLER HE ANNOUNCES EACH OF THEM.

1# THE COMFORT OF THE ROUTINE.
She represents, for the audience, the reassuring image of someone striving for the casual joy of a clean and tidy life in a familiar environment.

(ASIDE)

[During this first act, NORA creates a bond with the audience, she is an object for identification - not as a hero but as anyone else that could be us.]

(PLAYING THE CHRONICLER)

2# THE MOMENT OF DIZZINESS

The occurrence of a disruptive element brings NORA to another level of consciousness, to look at the ordinary with the eyes of a stranger.

(ASIDE)

[Like the moment of dizziness that happens when the light turns on at the end of a spectacle, or the moment you start questioning the sonority of a word usually familiar.

(TABLE, TA-BLE, TA-B-LE,
|'teIbl,| why does this
sound is associated to
this object?)

During this second act, NORA's behaviour challenges the audience to question its own perception of the ordinary, to redefine the meaning of norm.]

(CHRONICLER)

3# THE CONTROVERSIAL CHOICE

This is the denouement, the outcome. Her sudden level of consciousness brings NORA to face a dilemma: Denying her misunderstanding of social norms toward a casual happiness, or diving into the unknown to reach a better understanding of her position within a social context.

Opting for the second option, she takes the sharp decision to reject all that made her life well-behaved -even her most fundamental duties- and leave the family home.

(ASIDE)

[By acting in such an extreme way, she aims to provoke the critical thoughts of the audience. She incites the spectator to react: "*I would not have do it that way, I would have...*". She provokes him to distinguish himself, to be actor in turn.]

(CHRONICLER)

- STIMULATING IDENTIFICATION;
 - RAISING QUESTION;
 - AROUSING CRITIC;
 Here is Nora's script!

(USUAL BEHAVIOUR)

However the script of a theatre character is commonly known as a written form, objects can also be read as a script through the way they direct and constrain behaviours in specific ways.

An expert, passing by, carrying a chair entitled "anthropologist":

ANTHROPOLOGIST
 (performed by M.CHARPY)

For instance during the 19th century, the bourgeoisie's characteristic items were objects deliberately difficult to maintain, it was a way to distinguish themselves by demonstrating their proficiency of self-discipline in everyday gestures.

The constraint of the corset or the whiteness of linen that shows every little marks are some examples that illustrate this point.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

To work as a script, Nora's props should be objects that lead her behaviour and feelings - and therefore the audience - through the different steps of the

(MORE)

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER (CONT'D)
scenario.

They must seem familiar at the first glance, but paradoxically arouse a confusing feeling. By inducing dilemmas in the use they imply, they would generate controversial behaviours. This is what Nora's props must be.

(LOUDER)

By designing props for attitude, this is how, I, the designer, am the scriptwriter.

CURTAIN CLOSES

END OF THE ACT.2

ACT.3 : PROPS FOR DOMESTIC DRAMA

Pitch:

Props - objects for representation
scripts for behaviour

CURTAIN RISES

SCENE#1 / ARCHETYPES AND MIMESIS TO QUESTION THE
FUNCTIONNING OF THINGS

(Same setting) - Nora is wearing a new dress, less 19th century, more timeless: mid-length and fitted at the waist, cut from white net fabric it matchs with the curtains in the background. She is quietly sitting on the table next to the dollhouse, like a disproportionate figurine. The dollhouse is now open, offering through its cross section the tiny spectacle of a fully arranged set of rooms: bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, living-room and so on. The social designer, impassible, is analysing it's contents.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

(THOUGHTFUL)

A prop is an object for representation; commonly used in cinema or theatre. To the audience, it is a sign, its function is to communicate an idea or an atmosphere. For the actor, it is a tool to enhance his performance, to give the illusion that what will happen on the stage is real.

(TO THE AUDIENCE)

The illusion can be optical like a "trompe-l'oeil" (sham) or even acoustic or olfactory:

For instance, the specific tone of ringing can be enough to communicate the idea that a phone is on stage as well as the familiar smell of chlorine can easily set the context of a public pool.

Thus, if it must be convincing, it does not necessarily need to fulfil the function of the represented object.

That's why it is a common thing to see theatre props made out of pasteboard, or only finished on the visible surface offering from the

(MORE)

back side the spectacle of a wooden skeleton.

From the use of real objects to pasteboard ones, any visual techniques can be used according to the creativity of the stage director as long as it clearly communicates an intended meaning for the scenario.

An expert crosses the downstage, as usual he is loaded with a black chair entitled with his function.

PLAYWRIGHT
(performed by A.TCHEKHOV)

When displayed on the stage, a prop must play a role in the intrigue.

"One must never place a loaded rifle on the stage if it isn't going to go off. It's wrong to make promises you don't mean to keep".

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

In a Dollhouse, props are toys: Tiny furniture, small-scaled household appliances, figurines archetypal of the social structure such as the family classic pattern: mum, dad, children and baby ...

(ASIDE)

[Thus, toys store shelves offer a wide choice of children sized props, such as tableware, cleaning set, gardening and home improvement tools.

If there are those, colourful with rounded shapes, made of wood, plastic or cloth; the toy market is expanding and more and more brands of appliances offer small replicas of their product to the children's department such as the MIELE kitchen, the BOSCH driller, the

(MORE)

PHILIPS iron, or the HOOVER washing machine - and so on.]

(TO THE AUDIENCE)

Whether he acts himself or manipulates figurines:

Up-keeping the domestic space, miming the mum taking care of doll infant, playing the teacher or the doctor, counting money with a cash register, exploring the idea of political conflict with little army men; all these props are tools given to the child to experience the idea of social order and to re-enact it.

NORA HELMER

(POUTING)

But I'm not a child anymore, I do not need miniatures.

ME- SOCIAL DESIGNER

Indeed the scale is not a criteria for your props. However, as a child your aim is to explore what is present in your immediate surrounding in order to figure who you are and how to act in the society to which you belong.

Another expert promptly enter the stage, a Novelist.

NOVELIST
(performed by G.PEREC)

What we need to question through Nora's performance is the "endotic" as opposed to the exotic; the ordinary; that which seems to have ceased forever to astonish us:

bricks, concrete, glass, our table manners, our utensils, our tools, the way we spend our time, our

(MORE)

NOVELIST (CONT'D)

rhythms...

We live, we breathe, we walk, we
open doors, we go down staircases,
we sit at a table in order to eat,
we lie down on a bed in order to
sleep. What? How? Where? When? Why?

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

(TO THE AUDIENCE)

To discuss the specific character
of the everyday, Nora's props must
be archetypal and familiar symbols
of the household like the ones of a
dollhouse: crockery, cleaning
tools, linen...

While speaking, he takes the enunciated props out of the
dollhouse, displaying them on the table.

(PONDERING ALOUD)

However if dollhouse prop design is
adapted to children's criteria - in
matter of scales and materials,
uses and implications;
What are the design criteria for
these props in order to translate
Nora's scenario?

SCENE#2 / WHEN THE FAMILIAR FALLS APART

Fidgeting, Nora who left the table, stealthily exploring her
new setting: passing by the door, looking through the
window, climbing the stairs...

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

In the domestic space, the
equivalent of pasteboard for
theatre props, can be seen as the
basic products stored in every

(MORE)

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER (CONT'D)

home, the generic ones, the ones usually displayed on the bottom shelves of the supermarket.

To these words, Nora descends the stairs heading to the back stage. According to some sound effects we can guess the action: the creaking of a closet door that opens, [frt frt] she seems searching for something, [clac] the door closes in a snap and [tap tap tap] Nora comes back arms loaded of all kind of products that she proudly lays on the table.

NOR HELMER

sugar, butter, flour, oil, soap, washing powder, linen ...

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

As raw materials, they are basics but mostly need to be implemented through manipulation and transformation. As the ingredients of a recipe, they are malleable, shapeable, moldable.

Opening some packets and boxes, he continues to speak while pouring a handful of laundry powder and a pinch of sugar here and there.

HERE IT SEEMS A BIT LIKE A TEleshopping
DEMONSTRATION

Therefore, these materials can be turned into props through the same traditional or industrial techniques, e.g. sugar melting, moulding butter and soap casting, powder shaping by pressure or textile printing.

OPTIONAL: HERE SOME IMAGES OF THE MAKING PROCESS COULD BE PROJECTED ON THE STAGE AS THE PLAY FORMAT DOESN'T REALLY FIT TO ACTUALLY PLAY IT - IN TERM OF TIME AND TOOLS.

Moreover, their familiar smell,
(MORE)

textures and colour will
participate to recreate the
household prosaic atmosphere.

Stage hands promptly enter the stage to pick up the table. Shortly after they bring another one covered in things. The dollhouse and its props get replaced with 1-1 scale household objects manufactured with the materials previously brought by Nora: tableware made of sugar, butter figurines, a cleaning set made of soap, and a collection of bowls from laundry powder.

ME- SOCIAL DESIGNER

Paradoxically, combining familiar shapes and material such as household appliances and basic resources of daily consumption creates a poetic disruption: The routine, the ordinary, the familiar, reassuring in its stability, becomes erratic, vacillating, ambiguous and fragile.

Nora, inquisitive, moves closer to the table to look at these new props.

NORA HELMER

(INTRIGUED)

Wrought with sugar, the tableware looks like glass and porcelain but threatens to break or melt at anytime.

Moulded with laundry powders, how long the basins will hold the water without collapsing? Yet it looks a bit like marble..

And these cleaning brushes are they soap? They looks like ivory... They'll slip out of my hands!

And these butter figurines, should we eat them? How cruel it is! They will melt if we don't.

(AMUSED)

Curiously, they remind me of the main conversation topics of the table: family, economy, politics... But it's not correct to play with the food!

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

(ASIDE)

[The familiar becomes disturbing. Let's see if the dilemma happens?]

(TO NORA)

Nora, How would you use these props? Would you use them for their material qualities or for the use induced by their shape?

SCENE#3 / FACING DILEMMA, ACTIONS FOR CONTROVERSY

NORA HELMER

(ENTHUSIASTIC)

This tableware would look fantastic to receive my friends for the tea... but it would be very impractical!

However, this is way to much sugar to eat at once!

I could break a piece to put in my tea... How funny it would be to break a cup and put it inside another!

But It would be a pity... Oh no I don't want to break it! I would rather not use it at all!!!

This one gives me to much trouble, I know how to use sugar and dishes, but I can't decide on one more than the other ...

Let's see the other ones instead.

(MORE)

Brushes or soap? Is it a brush made
of soap or a soap with brush's
hair?

(THOUGHTFUL THEN ENTHUSIASTIC)

I could rub my hands on the soap
instead of rubbing the brush on the
floor! Am I right ? Oh please, tell
me am I!

And the basins... they looks so
pretty with all those tiny blue
dots ! And they smell of
cleanliness! Should I break them to
use the detergent?

(GETTING UPSET)

Oh! It is the same as the
tableware! You give me pretty props
and then you want me to destroy
everything, that's what you want !?
You must think a fool of me ! ...

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

(AMUSED)

Nora, Nora, don't be mad at me.
You've perfectly followed the
script and did very well.
I guided you to face this dilemma
and on purpose I did not give you
directions to overcome it. I wanted
you to refer to your own judgement
and nothing else, neither a script
or someone else's opinion.

There is no right or wrong way to
use these props; there is only your
way, the one led by your performer.
Here is your script.

You, me, and the entire audience
know the function of the material,
and the function of the object.

Whatever the decision, there will
always be someone who sees the
material before the shape to

(MORE)

disagree with the one looking at
the shape before the material and
vice versa.

That is how - as a scriptwriter - I
aim to spark debates on the very
ordinary.

FABULIST

(performed by J.DE LA FONTAINE)

"Now, follow Mars or love, I say,
Settle in town or in the country
stay ; Be single, married, in some
place or out, People will talk of
it, ye need not doubt.
But for the future, let them blame
or praise, Or hold their tongue, or
pass along, or gaze;
please yourself you'll be wise."

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

The more your decision will be
frank, the more you'll generate
intense reaction from your audience
- consequently, a richer dialogue.

Indeed, the one who would have
acted the same way will feel
comfortable to just look at you as
a spectator; while the one who
would have done differently will
feel the need to stand for his own
opinion - to be an actor instead of
spectator.

It is your part to provoke the
great majority by varying your
performance.

That is why I didn't attributed to
you a specific performer.

You are an attitude to be worn, you
- Nora Helmer - are the
self-affirmation of an independent
decision. You are a mirrored image,
a super-imposed identity, anybody
acting in that way is an
interpretation of your character.

Progressively, walk-on actors dressed as NORA entered the stage, silently they each grab a prop on the table and start to act it: serving tea in a sugar cup dangerously melting, licking a plate, breaking a laundry basin, rubbing the stairs with an upside down brush, playing with butter figurines...

SCENE#4 / SENSITIVE SURFACES AND BODY PRINT, FEEDBACKS FOR SELF-CRITICISM

On the front stage, one of the Nora interpreters is busy ironing a printed linen, through his act the pattern curiously disappears. The social designer is standing next to her.

ME - SOCIAL DESIGNER

Because all these props react and evolve according to each of your actions, you - actor - can also be your own spectator.
Look at it before, look at it after. See your handprint on the brush, see the distortion on your glass, see the birth of new shapes, new patterns. These are the traces of your behaviours, these are your imprints. Look at it, analyse it, be self-critical towards your own performance and adapt.

All the NORA freeze on stage in a last still picture.

Of all norms toward social order, self-criticism and consciousness of our our own behaviours - even and especially the monotonous ones - should be our primal duty, to ourselves, to the other and to the society.

CURTAIN CLOSES

END OF THE ACT.3

ENDING

Only remains standing forward the curtain, the social designer. Becoming narrator again he addresses the audience one last time.

NARRATOR

(CONCLUDING)

Here I've presented you my field of research as a social designer; I shared with you my vision and my references.

To raise new perspectives on our daily behaviours, to disturb the routine and to question the ordinary; I've re-staged the everyday; I've distorted the domestic.

I've created a character as a costume to be wear; A character without a face, to allow identification.

By defining his scenario and his attitude, I've designed props as a script to create incidents and provoke actions in a disrupted reality.

All is set-up for the play to happen.

Will you be a spectator claiming for images or will you stand - and grab these props - to become actor?

Are you NORA HELMER?

Whatever your choice is, I offer you both: images and props, figures and facts.

Thereupon he bows and exits.

LIGHT GOES UP ON THE
AUDIENCE

END.

CURTAIN-CALL

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