

Recorded Text to be played inside the sculpture "Bedtime Story"

I observe through my zoom lens, the huge warehouse north of mine in Brooklyn. Out of 200 windows, I count seven dark rectangles, unoccupied on a Sunday evening. I detect hand sewn curtains and clothes hung from hooks. There are make-shift ladders resting diagonally, rising to a loft, where the out of site futon is kept. On the roof sits a water tower acting as a back drop for rooftop barbecues. I live in my "work only" studio along with numerous artists in this neighborhood. Most artists at one dream of building their studios, or stumbling upon a deserted airplane hanger or old fire house to live in. This tribe of nomads I belong to often live in fear ducking the fire Marshall, or eviction for unlawful occupancy but something about the classified section advertising "raw" space gives me a feeling of home.

The first time I witnessed someone living in a warehouse, she was sitting beside a leaky radiator in torn jeans. Jennifer Beals lived in the most amazing space I had ever seen. I watched "Flashdance" coveting her lifestyle, (for it was definitely a life style, not a life) and though I didn't know it then, I was foreseeing my future. I was on the pom-pom squad then, and we performed half-time routines to that movie soundtrack. I was one of many, dressed in blue and white short pleats spinning to "Maniac", like a bunch of fools. I lived in suburbia, in a ranch style brick nightmare. A house with no sense of scale or relationship to the human body. I was uninformed about architecture but I knew that the Ethan Allan-ish globe lighting fixture was not suppose to graze my head when I walked through the dining room. The wall to wall brown carpeting was the color of our zoysia lawn in winter. The picture windows were placed low to the floor with yet a lower awning window hinged to open out so the dog could sniff this dismal landscape. Later I realized our house had the lowness of a Frank Lloyd Wright residence without the spatial prairie feel. I despised this place and when I saw Alex twirling around in leg warmers with her taped up feet in her vast space, I understood why.

Sometime ago, I shared a 100,000 sqft building, in Kansas City with guys from Art School. We immediately felt the power this space possessed; the strength we gained from being in such a vast enclosure within a civilized, yet dying metropolis. We were entering unknown territory, (little did we know this building was condemned) we became Lewis and Clark exploring the Northwest territory; like Amerigo Vespucci mapping unfamiliar terrain.

The guys became overly optimistic and proceeded to knockout all the broken windows, on eleven floors, thinking that with their new found energy, they could replace the openings by winter. That was early April. As Halloween approached we had accomplished closing the gaping holes up to the second floor. Cold weather was threatening and soon the massive space would turn into a winter wonderland. I recall crowding inside an igloo constructed of clear garden plastic containing our couch and a space heater, on the mapped out second floor. The crew gathered with the dogs, all turned toward the television as we watched the Gulf War play

by plays. We huddled together facing the bluish light from the broadcast of Operation Desert Storm wishing we were in the desert as we rooted for our team.

Appropriately, the guys were into hunting. One weekend they went, leaving me to tend to the space heater. They returned with a bountiful killing of three does and one buck. This was to become our nourishment for the winter. The creatures had to be skinned and drained which occurred on the upper floors where unknowingly, we had created a built in meat locker. There the pack hung, and an eerie feel crept through the frost as the dogs wondered up to investigate what creatures hung by their hind hooves from the ceiling rafters. This was urban camping at it's worst, and like true outdoors men we had become, we ate venison steaks and deer burgers till spring

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Since that first raw space encounter, I've learned what to do and more importantly, what not to do. I've learned from other's mistakes as well as my own. These unknown territories, and the people who formerly inhabited these buildings is a curiosity. What has interested me about each space I've confronted is the mind of the "master builder" that previously left. The bizarre plumbing, the unethical rigging of electrical fixture, and why they spent so much time constructing an unsightly archway over a door when they didn't put considerations into the gas lines. Tearing out old walls I find one foot long 2x4s sloppily nailed together spanning the bearing wall holding up the loft. What were they thinking? Why did they cover up the beautiful wood floor with five layers of linoleum? Unearthing each layer we confront different tastes, smells, and a history of shoddy carpentry.

I am a terrible camper. I cannot be at one with nature. I appreciate the finer points of fresh air, sleeping under the stars, and that singular deer drinking from the fresh stream unaware of the campsite hidden by the brush. But urban camping is what invigorates me; the feel of a raw space, neglected by age and the decaying industrial revolution. Stumbling upon these environments, I feel my resourceful mind come alive. I pretend to be the first person to invent shelter for myself, primitive, yet with my opposable thumbs, I become confident in my abilities to create a refuge and harbor for my belongings.

The older I get, I find myself fantasizing about doormen. Will I ever move into a place that doesn't need preliminary fixing-up before I carry in my first box of books? I'd like to think that someday when something breaks, all I have to do is pick up a phone and dial the emergency service who will be at my beck and call twenty-four-seven. Someday I hope a knight in shining tool belt will come rescue my apartment fix-it needs. But till then I dream, and am thankful that I can control where all my walls exist around me.