

Shifting cultures and motivations: Transforming identity through modifying interior worlds

Abstract

Attending to the fabric of the house through maintenance or modification, and accommodating the shifting desires and requirements of family is a life-long commitment to home making that many people make when buying property. Several generations may witness the life span of the same family home, accommodating them through changing eras and changing economies. These domestic buildings age and morph and intertwine with the changing lives of the inhabitants, the successive fashions in home décor and increasing pressures to remain efficient and functional, such as accommodating new technologies.

When there is no practical need for a homeowner to reconfigure their physical environment, such as requiring additional space to accommodate an expanding family, other shifting cultural and behavioural pressures can provoke action. This paper will draw on a current doctoral research study to explore aspects of personal and social motivation underlying the changes we make to our homes, and our lives.

Key words: Transformation, identity, home improvement, architecture, Do-It-Yourself (DIY)

Introduction

There are many reasons for altering the fabric of the home, varying from the personal satisfaction of do-it-yourself (DIY) as a ‘serious leisure’ activity in its own right to a perception centred on constant renewal to increase real estate value.¹ Some homeowners make improvements in the belief that making a physical change in the home will overcome a personal sense of inertia; hoping that by improving their immediate surroundings, the quality of their ‘internal’ (psychological, emotional and physiological) lives will also improve.

Research into the less visible aspects of home improvement and the impact of home alteration on the day-to-day lives of the inhabitants has proved challenging to orchestrate and document, such as the transient emotional undercurrents and barely perceptible habits that make up a ‘way of living’. Direct observation and interview dialogue are often insufficient to uncover aspects of behaviour or context that are undergoing constant but barely visible incremental change. The subject of study, home renovation, is a practice that disrupts daily patterns and household rituals, introducing different routines and eventually a new pattern of living.

This paper will firstly reflect on the changing facts relating to real estate industry and the housing development as promoted via the media. Secondly, a brief look at the changing minds of both the participants and the author through their experiences with home renovation; together with the many shifts in location, style of home and life stages that map personal journeys over several decades. Next these lived experiences will be located within the changing worlds of home renovation, hardware retail and DIY in the post-war period.

Finally, while acknowledging the human condition is about change and adapting to change, the paper will reflect on the nature of transformation and identity through the choices people make with renovation. Following Winston Churchill's much quoted "we shape our dwellings and afterwards, our dwellings shape us", it may transpire that people are changing their home environment for a better individual future but a worse collective and global one.²

Changing Facts

Most design professionals like me are faced with the challenge of time travel in their work; reflecting on past solutions, analysing current trends and making predictions about the future – the wants, needs and desires of others (see Figure 1). Architects participating in this study are engaged for bespoke home design projects, and work from a client brief listing spatial requirements and aesthetic preferences of the moment. It transpired in interviews that cascading project deadlines rarely allowed the consultants to broaden the brief, addressing possibilities for ongoing transformation once the initial building design was considered complete.



Figure 1 New homes and cities created by urban designers, planners and architects. Photo: Nicola D Smith 2010.

The current trend in home 'makeovers' contributes to the constant cycle of building fabric renewal and wastage, the average kitchen for example has a lifespan of around seven years.³ While dwellings built

for greater longevity would provide environmental benefits, neither the house buying public nor the architecture profession, has enough of an influence on the domestic housing market. More significant is the influence of the ‘dream sellers’ – the media, large-scale developers and real estate industry.⁴ These market oriented industries focus on volume of sales not sustainability, and therefore have no interest in building into the design sufficient adaptability and flexibility to allow for multiple successions of inhabitants, and their individual dreams and memories and changing desires.

With home renovation completed on a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) basis, the homeowner as hybrid client/designer/builder is dealing with his or her own wants, needs and desires, building their dreams and laying down memories. Through DIY people engage in re-writing the past through rebuilding or amending existing fabric and adding new built elements, fixtures and fittings. As they remodel the work of previous builders, they set about shaping their future home life or that of a subsequent owner.

A DIYer has been described on the Urban Dictionary website as someone who “avidly practices the art” of DIY, indicating someone with a level of artistic vision, craft ability or perception of aesthetics.⁵ According to participant accounts in both my study and findings from other research work, some DIYers are ‘frustrated artists’ who see DIY as a vehicle for self-expression and creativity.⁶ Other reasons for self-engineered home modification include the distrust of tradesmen and belief they will do a better job, the economic reality that using tradesmen is beyond their budget, and that a building needs to be personalized before it feels like home. The irony here is that many DIYers are seeking a home with the same modern aesthetic as their friends, the stylish images in magazines and the standardized ‘look’ of display homes. Many participants browsed home, garden and style magazines for ideas and instructions, and watched television shows such as ‘Grand Designs’ and ‘Better Homes and Gardens’ for inspiration as well as entertainment. This de-personalized, image-based and media-led source of inspiration is of most concern where it directs the choices we make about how we live and the way we achieve it.

Media ecology

One of the most significant influences on the self-made process of change at home has been the infusion of the media into every corner of our lives, including digital, broadcast, published, and social and mass media. In the contemporary economic climate supporting “wealthier lifestyles... of self-conscious and self-focused consumption”, the Australian desire for the good life has led to an almost insatiable need to engage in constant re-invention.⁷ The dangers of technological progress are highlighted by Georges Friedmann, who believes our passive acceptance of the pressures placed upon us to conform to the ‘capitalist’ system, are evidenced through continual patterns of ‘mindless’ consumption:

One of the most alarming of these dangers seems to me to be *the failure of human beings to participate* in an environment which they can now control from outside by means of increasingly efficient, autonomous and widespread techniques. Needs and desires, capacities and aspirations, which are an essential part of man, remain unused and run to waste. He is present, and listens more or less absent-mindedly... being influenced more and more by a 'press-button' attitude.⁸

Given the significant physical, media-related (television/radio) and on-line presence of hardware stores, home decor and furniture retail stores, homebuilders, painters/decorators and DIY information; Australians appear intent on making practical and aesthetic changes to the home. Updating our homes on an almost continual basis in order to meet market trends as steered by the real estate, retail and building/development industries (see Figure 2), it could be said that our contemporary society has developed a material culture addiction and media fuelled obsession with chasing the perfect life.⁹



Figure 2 Typical real estate 'for sale' sign boards selling better lifestyles, Cottesloe, Western Australia. Photo: Nicola D Smith 2010.

The influence of the media on consumption in relation to seeking the ideal home and home life is both powerful and diverse. Televisions, radios and computers broadcast ideas, 'how to' and 'make over' instructions and product information directly into your home, turning audiences into consumers.¹⁰ Printed matter arrives on a regular basis in the letterbox urging us all to consume, move and improve. The broad scope and pervasive impact of media on the way we relate to our domestic environment reflects the landscape encompassed by the study of 'media ecology', defined as:

[Looking] into the matter of how media of communication affects human perception, understanding, feeling, and value, as well as how our interaction with media facilitates or impedes our chances of survival... The word ecology implies the study of environments... [Each being] a complex message system which imposes on human being certain ways of thinking, feeling and behaving.¹¹

The concept of 'home' is no longer simply a physical structure containing essential tools, materials, utilities, and providing shelter, security and privacy. The home is now a mobile collection of concepts

and personal paraphernalia, easily packed up, relocated or stored; houses are temporary vessels for all the detritus of modern living. The buildings we live in have become a complex web of systems and networks, most often electronic, digital and technological, imposing multiple non-human relations and interfaces with the outside world.

Dream sellers

The media environment surrounding the housing industry both reflects the changes taking place in global markets, and contributes to the generation of local markets. The Great Australian Dream of owning a piece of land and free standing home, and more recently to experience a continual increase in standards of living, has been fuelled by political and economic media driven agendas, particularly since the early 1980s.¹² Alongside this has been increasing pressure to continually renew, reconfigure and reinvent our way of living, to seek our highest aspirations and to transform our environment into the 'dream home'. This dream lifestyle is both unreachable and unsustainable and for large population numbers in the long-term, and pressure for resources and space is creating a nightmare for the environment.

The desire for somewhere bigger and better makes for an easy sales pitch for the real estate and development industries – your aspirations are their market; your dream home is their product; the highly cultivated lifestyles of the rich and famous are for sale in every suburb (see Figure 2). Taking into account the descriptions on the ubiquitous real estate marketing signboards, the image of the perfect home and lifestyle dominates the facts (size and configuration of rooms, suitability of building materials, efficiency of indoor climate control); the vision appears to be the main commodity. The message is clear - buy a new home and you will buy a new life; “a millionaire lifestyle awaits you”.¹³

For those Australians without the means to purchase a ready-made dream home, or at least one that offers what might be perceived as a better lifestyle, the alternative is to modify their current home in the belief that it will improve the way they currently live.

Changing Minds

The origins for the study from which this paper has developed, the interest in home modification and transformational behaviour, began several decades ago with my own forays into home making and gradual discovery of DIY possibilities. Initial explorations into home improvement took place in my childhood home, assisting parents with gardening and decorating, though at times undoubtedly hindering rather than helping through inexperience and the eager carelessness of youth.



Figure 3 Participants working as a team on DIY projects. Photo: Nicola D Smith 2005, 2011.

Subsequently, leaving home to live in a series of temporary accommodations provided the opportunity for experimenting with home making practices through collecting and arranging furniture, draping fabrics and hanging pictures and painting walls. Becoming a homeowner twelve years ago finally afforded the opportunity to do more than temporary cosmetic alteration; this marked the beginning of a series of major property renovations with input from friends, family and tradesmen as part of the change-making process (see Figure 3).

Changing locations and aspirations

Typical of many young professionals, ‘home’ for me was anywhere comfortable and convenient to live while studying or working; the changing locations reflected changing aspirations. The sense of home emerged in various rental units and houses in London, a port-a-cabin on a German life-camp in Nigeria, high-rise apartments in Hong Kong and Queensland, and later traditional weatherboard and brick houses in Brisbane and Perth respectively. Activities and conversations within and about these homes have often included threads that weave my life story with those of my participants, and with their homes.

Important to context specific nature of my investigations, the research interviews took place in participant homes. Over a two-year period, thirty participants completed an ‘Everyday Cultures and Lifestyle Survey’ and were then interviewed face-to-face. Single interviews took place in Ireland, United Kingdom, Hong Kong and Brisbane (Queensland), whereas multiple interviews were possible with participants living here in Perth (Western Australia).

Practicing design consultants, including previous work colleagues, were invited to take part along with other friends and family members. The intention was to study a network of linked participants, both

with and without formal design training but with a spread of DIY competence. The latter provided some generational links in areas as skill transfer, familiar environments and class mobility, with narratives tracing patterns of change with home making from childhood through to adulthood.

The interviews yielded information about the participants' role as change-making agents in their own homes, and frequently used photo albums to help describe DIY projects and illustrate their narratives (see Figure 4). Looking through the photographs, memories were refreshed and the sense of transformation renewed. Despite these reminders, people were often less clear about the exact timelines and tasks than they were about the provocation for action, the dramas and disasters, and the sense of achievement.



Figure 4 Participant's kitchen renovated in 1980. New fixtures, old ornaments - a mixture of nostalgia and anticipation. Photo: Nicola D Smith 2010.

Where Baudrillard tells us that “Architecture is a mixture of nostalgia and anticipation, the co-existence of history and vanguard”, I was interested to find out from participants whether re-modelling their homes had actually re-modelled their lives.¹⁴ Looking at the photographs, the ‘after’ images were simply a blend of past and present, the anticipation of ‘future’ lost in the intervening years; the once new kitchen, now tired again and awaiting an upgrade. Actively seeking and bringing about change places great pressure on the DIYer to interpret future needs, and to be aware of their capability and

limitations (time, skill, money). It also requires the stoicism to accept any visual or intellectual disappointment in the outcome.¹⁵

While most participants felt there were marked improvements to the level of convenience, comfort and aesthetics after the work was completed, modernizing existing rooms often made little change to the actual way they lived on a day-to-day basis. More significant were the emotions attached to the changes still desired, but for several reasons still unmet. One participant, Domino, frustrated with the layout of her home, had linked it with a sense of inertia leading to periods of depression. During one interview, she was clearly overwhelmed with the prospect of major renovation, feeling it would become so extensive that it may lead to an entire makeover of the house. The participant realized what she desired was a prohibitively expensive proposition, and therefore the changes were unlikely to happen:

“It’s never worked for us, it’s *never* worked for us, from, I think when we came in... What I find *really* uncomfortable though is the flow of this extension area because currently we don’t have a dining room... [and] it hit me one day why I have not enjoyed cooking at all, it is because the kitchen is a really unpleasant environment to be in, where the benches are very small, and so you think ‘okay, well shall we redo the kitchen?’ Go to IKEA and get a new kitchen, but it seems a bit wasteful to do anything like that until you do all the bigger picture, so that’s a problem.”¹⁶

Remodelling home and the self

The practice of home transformation, both intended and actual, was central to the study, and I felt it important to reflect not only on the experience of my participants, but my own transition, both in terms of skill and expectations. I began to explore the influences, motives and changes that took place in my own first major DIY project, including ideas about what a house should and could provide in the way of changing lifestyles. The ‘vision’ was to completely remodel a 40-year-old house in Queensland located on a Broadbeach Waters canal, bringing it in line with the expectations of the home buying market, and by default, the ‘dream selling’ rhetoric of the local real estate industry. The intention was to spend two years living in and working on the house, and then sell it and move to Perth.



Figure 5 Living in a building site brings daily renegotiation in habitual ways of living. House at Broadbeach Waters, Queensland. Photo: Nicola D Smith 2000.

A drastic re-design of the building layout aimed to ‘modernize’ both the look and performance of the property; adding large windows and patio doors, providing built-in-wardrobes; changing surface finishes such as ceramic tiles to travertine, re-working the wet areas, and so on (see Figure 5). By moving walls and openings it was possible to drastically alter the way it would accommodate inhabitants, and a total reconfiguration was planned. Changing the layout helped rationalize the circulation, views were enhanced and rooms opened out; real estate agents were adamant that homebuyers ‘expected’ open plan.

Since the start of that first renovation over a decade ago now, immediate family and relations have been involved in their own home modification activity in some way or another. Friends and acquaintances, the more energetic of whom had been remodelling their homes, have popped up in the social landscape and shared progress reports on their own projects periodically, knowing they will find a sympathetic or helpful ear.

Home modified then modifies us

Like many of the participants, my partner and I recorded our renovation activity. Our major projects have been documented in photograph albums, plans and elevations, sketches and scribbles, spreadsheets and notebooks. The enthusiasm for capturing each step of the journey was akin to that of the first time overseas traveller, mapping and photographing each new site of adventure. Looking back through the files of information, I realized that while the planned and actual changes to the building are evident, the multi-sensory experiences that changed us on a daily basis are not. For my part, the noise, dust, personal fatigue, heat and distinctive smells such as damp plasterboard and cut timber, are lost in the silent depths of the images (see Figure 6). The ephemeral moments of improvisation, laughter and audible despair escape capture, and yet those who have shared a similar experience can relate to the dynamic site of chaos the photographic images can only suggest.



Figure 6 Do the changes we desire - really change our world? Images recording progress of kitchen renovation in Perth. Photo: Nicola D Smith 2005.

My personal experiences of home making and the development of relationships with people who are now my participants has extended to life in communities across the globe, and as far back in time as my childhood. The various DIY adventures have gained validity over time, allowing for scaffolding of skills with projects of greater complexity, and serving as conversational common ground with others, helping generate friendships with people now my participants. The experience gained through actively remodelling both homes and by consequence the altered pattern of living; provide a tactile and contextual understanding of life in many different situations from a tiny city apartment to a sprawling bungalow or a two-storey timber house. Essentially our individual narratives of home over the years trace the interior world of the same person through different spaces, different locations and different ways of living.

Capturing transformation

While the inhabitants can communicate their story, the house cannot speak for itself; its autobiography often masked or overpowered by that of its current inhabitants. Tools do not recount their role in projects; materials rarely tell you their providence, layers of paint silent about how they got there. Photographs lie still in albums or boxes with quiet histories of the way things were (see Figure 7). Hardware receipts, often tucked in a long forgotten folder tracing the consumption journey, all gradually fade. Over time sensory memories are flawed, exhausted muscles are rested, injuries long repaired, fatiguing heat replaces winter chills and hair long cleaned of grime and sweat. Tactile events are difficult to re-enact with any accuracy even though repeated storytelling may keep the essence of key moments alive. Signs of industry that once marked the skin and clothes have vanished; paint, dust and

dirt washed away from fabrics, knees, nostrils and nails. The body and house are made new while the energised process of transformation is soon made old, forgotten and silent.

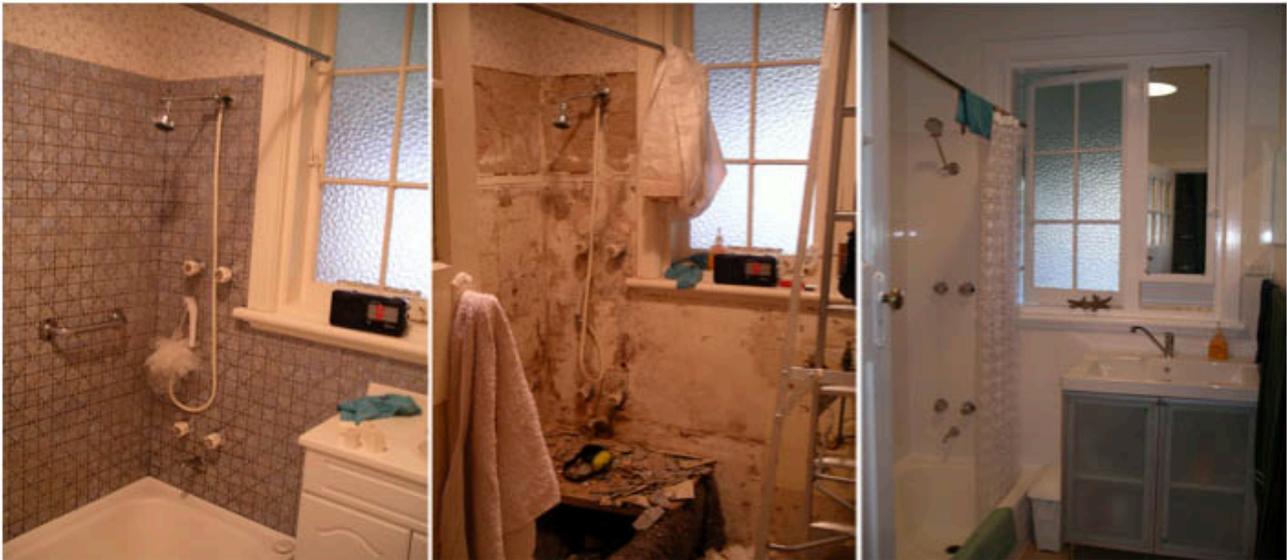


Figure 7 Images recording progress of bathroom renovation in Perth. Photo: Nicola D Smith 2005.

For research, the dynamic process of transformation in a private home is difficult to capture and distil, most especially when this is done on a fragmented DIY basis while the inhabitants continue their routine lives around the sites of change. Participants suggest their decisions were often made on the spur of the moment, over dinner or coffee with like-minded friends, while searching around hardware stores or flicking through magazines for ideas. The DIY activity itself is often sporadic and relatively unplanned, taking advantage of odd chunks of time and the prevailing arrangements governing the household members' free time. The newer projects often overlap with older ones and are interrupted by other tasks of more pressing repair or maintenance, and each stage may take weeks, months, or years; some projects seem abandoned, remaining unfinished with no clear intention of future resolution.

Changing Worlds

With increasing personal mobility and a plethora of technological advances, anthropology and ethnographic practice has developed to embrace the emergence of global cultures and the rise in transnationalism where "large numbers of people whose family and other close connections transcend national boundaries".¹⁷ Regardless of geographical distance, social distance has been reduced enormously through advances in digital communication such as instant messaging options, emails and mobile phones. Over the past decade several participants in this study have relocated, both within a country and to a different country, leaving a trail of redundant contact details in address books, yet all the while have maintained active relationships with me and with each other and their own immediate families.

Tracing back through the decades touched by my participants and their families, and seeking out the popular media influences of the time, the origins of aspiration driven DIY practices, and notions of the ‘ideal’ home or lifestyle long precede us. From choosing the colour of wallpaper and carpet in our childhood bedrooms to choosing how and where we wish to live as adults, we feel in control of our environment and empowered about the choices we make in terms of taste and style, but how much really in control are we now, or have we ever been?



Figure 8 Publications of the 1950s influencing homeowner choices. Photo: BADD4144 (left)/ BADD4064 (right), Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture, Middlesex University 2012.

Notions of taste and style became part of everyday discourse in the post-war period, a time that also saw the growth of the DIY industry and interest in improving the home. The Ideal Home Exhibition advised people on the latest technology as early as 1908, while magazines and books provided images and instructions on ‘modernizing’, decorating and re-styling the home to bring it in line with current fashions. According to Alan Tomlinson:

The Puritan notion of the home saw it as a ‘little kingdom’; the Victorian concept stressed ‘Home as Haven’. The Late Modern Elizabethan concept constructs the ‘Home as a Personalized Marketplace’. It is where most of us express our consumer power, our cultural tastes. And it is this privatized post-war home that home maintenance and d-i-y have flourished as major leisure time activities.¹⁸

The dreams of the early 1940s and 1950s were brought to the masses through ‘how to’ manuals, and later magazines advertising products (see Figure 8). Women became more empowered around the home, and young couples were encouraged to take out personal loans to achieve the configuration of furniture and furnishings they desired. New materials like Formica and linoleum appeared on the market, interiors became simpler and colours became brighter. Magazines catered for the increase in

self-constructed style as it became more embedded in the way people presented themselves through their home environment.

By the beginning of the 1960s, DIY was no longer about undertaking maintenance yourself due to the shortage of post-war labour, material and skilled trades, but promoted as a way to invest in property, be proactive in seeking a dream life and about having fun:

Centrally important here was the decreasing inhibition about design: the dwelling was to be an expression of personal taste, a personalized project... Housing, producing new types of social space, also represented ideals which we would now call elements of lifestyle.¹⁹

Through articles and images in magazines like the 'Practical Householder', 'Homemaker' and 'Do It Yourself', DIY was portrayed as a creative, happy home industry and an opportunity for young couples to work together to transform their home into the perfect 'nest' for their future lives together (see Figure 9). By this time the hard disc drive had been invented by IBM, the transatlantic submarine telephone cable had opened direct communication across the Atlantic, and television broadcasting had commenced in Australia closely followed by the screening of house and garden 'makeover' shows.



Figure 9 The changing face of DIY magazines; *Homemaker* (1959) and *Handyman* (2011). Photo (left): MJ71, Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture, Middlesex University 2012. Photo (right): Nicola D Smith 2011.

The intervening years have seen huge changes in popular choices relating to our role as DIYers and consumers, and the development of the celebrity persona surrounding DIY (see Figure 9). Perhaps echoing Baudrillard's comment that "People have merely become the vehicles for expressing the difference between objects", the current media ecology surrounding DIY focuses on promoting the products and tools used in renovation programmes and in handyman magazines.²⁰ The environment surrounding home renovation has shifted drastically from the resourceful post-war years where materials were scarce, to our careless use of manufactured products or composite tools that cannot easily be mended or patched.

Charles Eastlake's observations on nineteenth century style and taste in domestic design (first published in 1868) makes mention of novelty, laments the mass manufactured furniture and comments on the gullibility of the Victorian public, passionate about self-improvement, under the influence of magazines and books on interior fashions:

The faculty of distinguishing good from bad design in the familiar objects of domestic life is a faculty which most people... conceive they possess... It is ... a lamentable fact that this very quality was until recently deficient... among [even] the most educated classes in this country... Even the simplest and most elementary principles of decorative art form no part of early instruction, and the majority of the public, being left completely uninformed of them, is content to be guided by a few people who are themselves not only uninformed but misinformed on the subject.²¹

As an avid home-making consumer-oriented society, we have stopped relating to quality and longevity and allowed ourselves to be manipulated by more superficial fashions in aesthetics and visible trends. The Industrial Revolution initiated a cultural shift away from valuing carefully crafted tools, the discipline of keeping them maintained and then handing them down through generations. Many of the older participants in the study still kept their father's tools, although tended to work with modern equivalents that were lighter and easier to use. Current generations of DIYers seem more adept at gathering, neglecting and then discarding mass-produced tools than maintaining them. New tools are often cheaper to replace than repair, such as cordless domestic power tools, saws with moulded plastic handles.

Eastlake, in reflecting on the change in our values, focuses more on the implications for mass manufacture on the lack of taste and originality in products, than we might now focus on environmental impacts. He does, however, clearly place responsibility for the de-valuing of art and craft squarely with the manufacturer/producer and the customer/consumer:

The state of things is the fault, not only of the manufacturer, but of the purchaser. So long as a thirst for mere novelty exists independent of all artistic considerations, the aim...[of industry] will be to

produce objects which, by their singular form, or striking combination of colours, shall always appear *new*.²²

Today, we might add the media to Eastlake's list. Popular television programmes such as 'Grand Designs' and glossy coffee table magazines, to include Vogue Living, House & Garden, Habitus, Luxury Home Magazine, Elle Decor, House Beautiful, provide tantalizing images of exclusive grand residences, bespoke architect designed houses, stunning cliff-top or beach side apartments. Even the advertisements devised by home build companies and carried by local community newspapers echo the notion of an 'ultimate lifestyle', offering readers the opportunity to access a life of supreme luxury, elegance and desirability.

Media linked to the housing market offers enticing glimpses of the luxury afforded to a select few, rather than acknowledge detailed facts about the cost, sweat, mess, noise and grind of the building process. These tantalizing peeks onto privileged lives and exclusive homes, together with the now commonplace accessibility of 'designer' fixtures and fittings, and even 'designer homes', provide sufficient motivation and opportunity to fuel the constant renewal of the home environment as a way of chasing the dream life.

Summary

The compression of global distances, rapid advances in technology and improved building techniques, have led to vastly changing social, cultural and physical worlds. The media, building and real estate, hardware and home-ware retail industries, facilitated by new technologies, clearly all have a powerful influence on homeowners and DIY practitioners such as those in the study. While for the consumer it may be about superficial choices of 'designer' fixtures and fittings, it is important to recognize the far reaching implications of seeking to create the perfect home in order to lead the perfect life.²³ When we change our local worlds through renovation, the impact spreads much further than we might ever have imagined. Our 'lifestyle' choices flow into other local worlds and to global communities; damaging the environment through our consumption of resources and appetite for manufactured goods, through the dumping of waste and through the unbridled use of energy in order to maintain our unsustainable ways of living.²⁴

According to Perth Architect Adrian Welke, the Great Australian Dream will soon become the 'Great Australian Nightmare' unless our aspirations and expectations for every higher standards of living, and our home building and furnishing behaviour changes.²⁵ The current trend in development has created sprawling suburbs consuming natural land, has seen houses become larger and consuming more energy. There has been a reduction in the occupation (smaller families per home), an increase in the number of

wet rooms with implications for increased water and resource consumption, and gardens that once provided recreational space, cooling around the house and a site for growing food have virtually disappeared from a block, or now lie under concrete.²⁶

The cumulative influence of political and economic drivers, dominance of developers in the provision of housing stock, the glossy home-oriented magazines, the retailers of interior décor and hardware, lifestyle television programmes and the dream sellers - the real estate industry, has shifted the cultural and social expectations of what a home should be beyond a sustainable model. While those of us who engage in DIY to modify our interior worlds find it a truly rewarding and often 'life changing' experience, the transformation of ideal into real rarely lasts long before new dreams propel us back into action.

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Notes

- ¹ Robert A. Stebbins. *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time* (London: Transaction Publishers, 2007).
- ² Winston Churchill, date unknown.
- ³ Elizabeth Shove. *The Design of Everyday Life, Cultures of Consumption Series*. (Oxford: Berg, 2007).

- ⁴ Nicola D. Smith. "Design Dilemma: Driving a Consumption Obsessed Society into an Unsustainable Future. (Paper presented at the First International Postgraduate Conference on Engineering, Designing and Developing the Built Environment for Sustainable Wellbeing - eddBE2011, Brisbane, Queensland, April 27-29, 2011).
- ⁵ Do-it-yourself (DIY) is now an accepted term for self-directed activity on an amateur basis. Although widely adopted for many forms of self-reliant or non-professional activity, the most common association is in relation to home improvement projects that are completed by the homeowner, without hiring contractors.
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