

The Reading Room

Christian Nyampeta



a contribution to

**The
Grand
Domestic
Revolution**

**GOES ON
at The Showroom**

September 12 – October 27, 2013
The Showroom, London

The Grand Domestic Revolution GOES ON

Including works and projects by: Can Altay, AND Publishing, ASK! (Actie Schone Kunsten), Domestic Workers Netherlands with Matthijs de Bruijne, Enemies of Good Art, Andrea Francke, GDR Library, Annette Krauss, Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad, kleines postfordisches Drama, Travis Meinolf, Martina Mullaney, Christian Nyampeta, Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, Our Autonomous Life?, Read-in, Helke Sander, Joseph Williams, Rehana Zaman

12 September – 27 October 2012
Wednesday to Saturday, 12-6pm

Exhibition Preview:
Tuesday 11 Sep, 6.30-8.30pm

The Grand Domestic Revolution (GDR) is an ongoing 'living research' project initiated by Casco – Office for Art, Design and Theory, Utrecht as a multi-faceted exploration of the domestic sphere to imagine new forms of living and working in common.

Inspired by US late nineteenth-century 'material feminist' movements that experimented with communal solutions to isolated domestic life and work, GDR involved artists, designers, domestic workers, architects, gardeners, activists and others to collaboratively experiment with and re-articulate the domestic sphere challenging traditional and contemporary divisions of private and public.[1]

Now GDR goes on, evolving in different scales and extensions, taken up and transformed in different cities, sites and neighbourhoods by those who desire to carry on the GDR from their own home base or by those already engaged with it in their local languages and practices.

At The Showroom an exhibition of contemporary and historical artworks and a diverse and growing reference library will form a base for workshops and events that will develop the GDR further, while they will forge connections and affinities with The Showroom's ongoing programme of neighbourhood-based commissions Communal Knowledge.

Exhibited works employ a wide range of methodologies to playfully problematise domestic issues such as work at home, housing rights, property relations, family economies, neighbourhood struggles, and range from the satirical to social critique and activist actions.

The Grand Domestic Revolution GOES ON —LONDON is realised in the framework of COHAB, a two-year project initiated by The Showroom, Casco - Office for Art, Design and Theory, Utrecht and Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm, supported by a Cooperation Measures grant from the European Commission Culture 2007-2013 Programme.

It has been additionally supported by: Mondriaan Foundation, Arts Council England, Outset Contemporary Art Fund, as The Showroom's Production Partner 2012, and The Showroom Supporters' Scheme. Communal Knowledge is generously supported by Paul Hamlyn Foundation, The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and John Lyon's Charity.

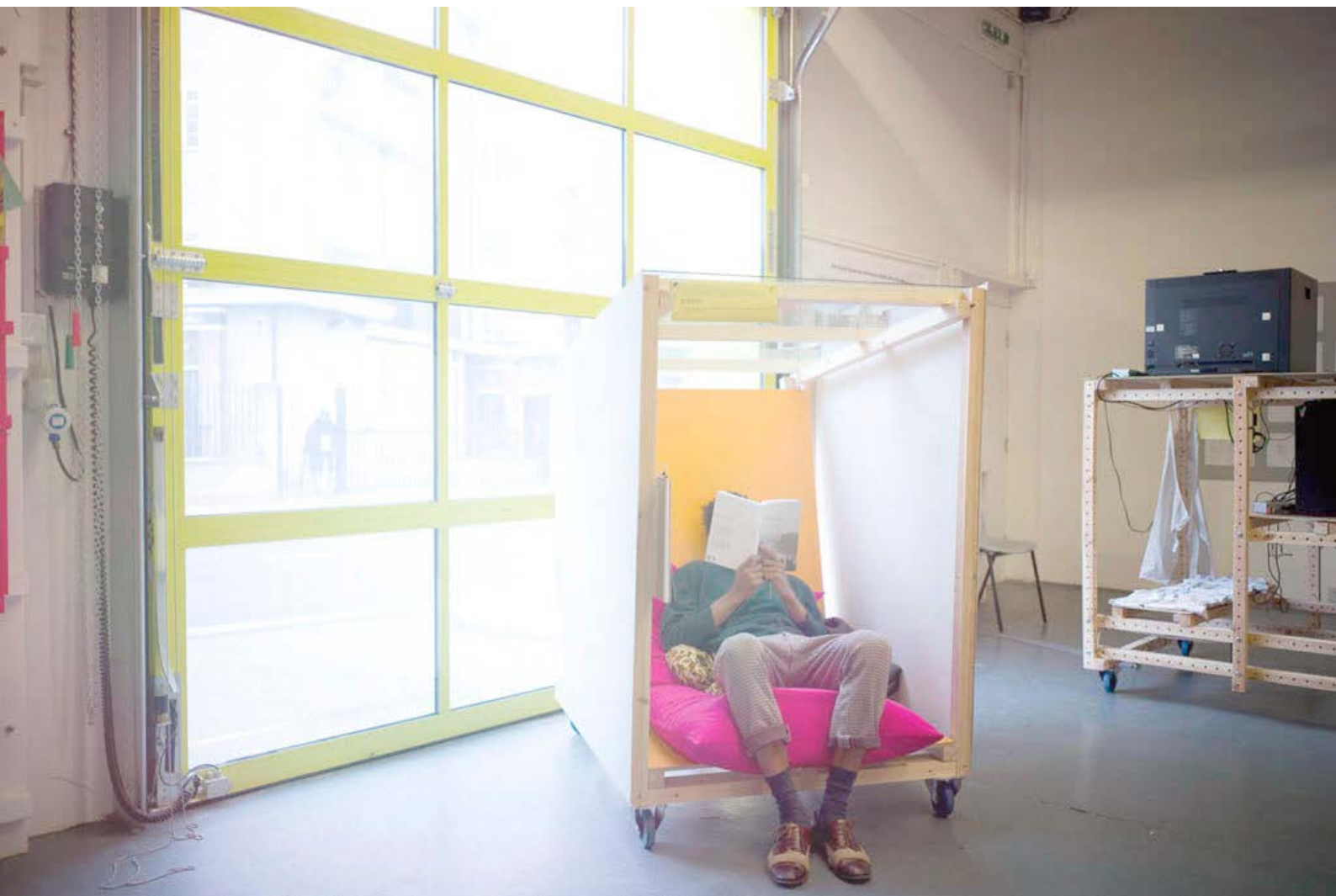
[1] This history was excavated by architectural historian Dolores Hayden in her seminal 1981 publication, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods and Cities*.

From
<http://theshowroom.org/programme.html?id=975,1374>

During the exhibition *The Grand Domestic Revolution GOES ON* at The Showroom, the Reading Room structure functioned as a solitary reading room where it was possible to read out loud in the The GDR Library. The reading was recorded and stored.

On 26 October 2012, the last Saturday of the exhibition, the mobile Reading Room undertook a processional journey around the Church Street Neighbourhood where the The Showroom is located. Selected extracts from the texts in the GDR Library have been read aloud and recorded en route, before returning to The Showroom, where informal readings and recordings continued. There was here an open invitation to select, compile and produce instant zines photocopied from books in the GDR Library.

The Reading Room
MDF, foam, fabric, acrylic sheet, wheels, audio recorder, 2012





During the exhibition *The Grand Domestic Revolution GOES ON* at The Showroom, the Reading Room structure functioned as a solitary reading room where it was possible to read out loud in the The GDR Library. The reading was recorded and stored.

On Saturday 27 July 2012, the mobile Reading Room took a processional journey around the Church Street Neighbourhood where the The Showroom is located. Selected extracts from the texts in the GDR Library have been read aloud and recorded en route, before returning to The Showroom, where informal readings and recordings continued. There was then an open invitation to select, compile and produce instant zines photocopied from books in the GDR Library.



Handing me over to Dorotheus, a Theban ascetic who was spending the sixtieth year in his cave, he ordered me to complete three years with him in order to tame my passions – for he knew that the old man lived a life of great austerity





– bidding
me to return
to him
afterwards
for spiritual
instruction.

But being
unable to
complete the
three years
owing to a
breakdown
in health,
I left
Dorotheus
before the
three years
were up,

for living
with him one
got parched
and all
dried-up.





For, all day long in the burning heat he would collect stones in the desert by the sea



and build
with them
continually
and make
cells, and
then he would
retire in favour
of those who
could not
build for
themselves.





Each year he
completed
one cell.



And once
when I said to
him:

“What do you mean, father, at your great age, by trying to kill your poor body in these heats”?





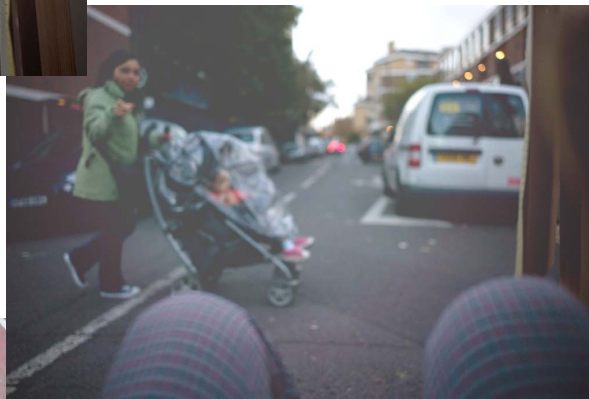
He answered thus:
“It kills me, I kill it”.
For he used to eat
(daily) six ounces
of bread and a
bunch of herbs,



and drink water in proportion. [...] I never knew him stretch his legs and go to sleep on a rush mat, or on a bed. But he would sit up all night long and weave ropes of palm leaves to provide himself with food.



Then, supposing that he did this for my benefit, I made careful inquiries also from other disciples of his, who lived by themselves, and ascertained that this had been his manner of life from a youth,



and that he had never deliberately gone to sleep. Only when working or eating, he closed his eyes, overcome by sleep, so that often the piece of food fell from his mouth at the moment of eating, so great was his drowsiness.

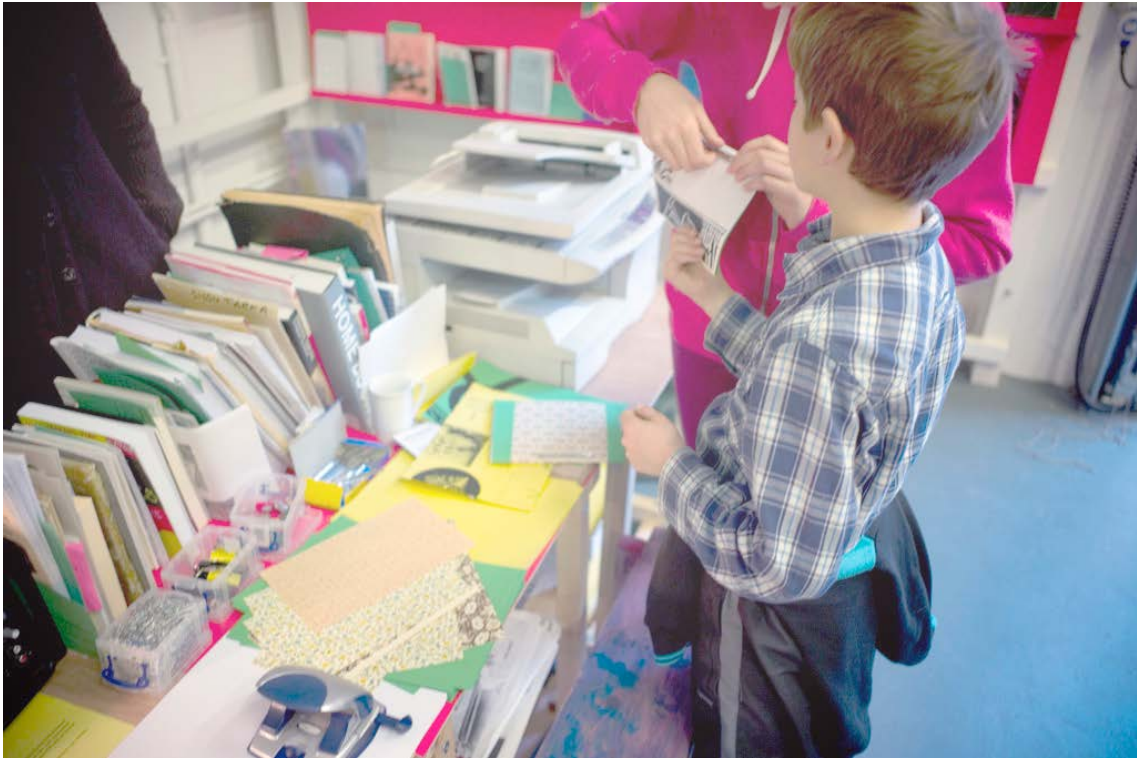




Once when I tried to constrain him to rest a little on the mat, he was annoyed and said: “If you can persuade angels to sleep, you will also persuade the zealous man”.

One day,
at about the ninth
hour, he sent me to
fill the jar at his well
in view of a meal of
that same hour.





I went and saw an asp at the bottom of the well, and stopped drawing water and went away and said to him: “We are dead men, father, for I saw an asp in the well”.

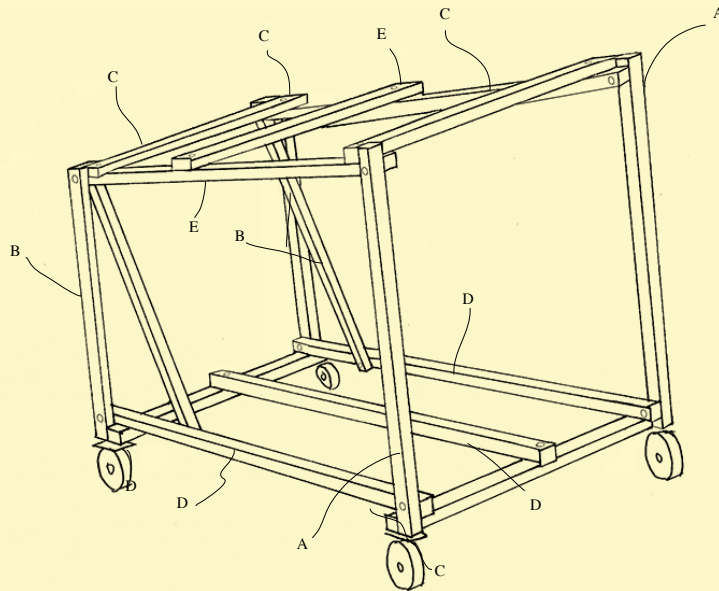
But he smiled gravely and looked at me for a time, and then shaking his head he said: “If the devil decides to become a serpent or tortoise in every well and to fall into our water-supply, will you refrain from drinking for ever”?



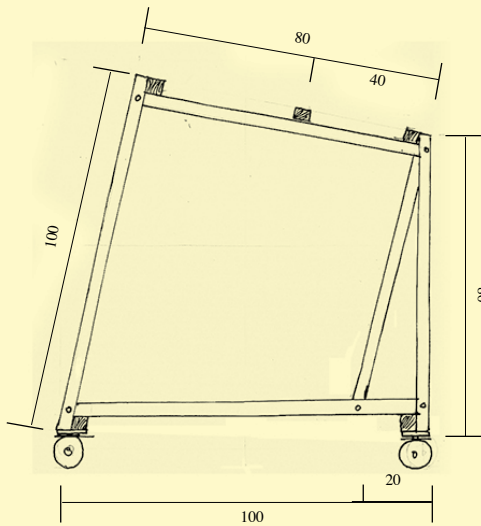
And he went out
and drew the water
himself, and was the
first to swallow some
of it [...].



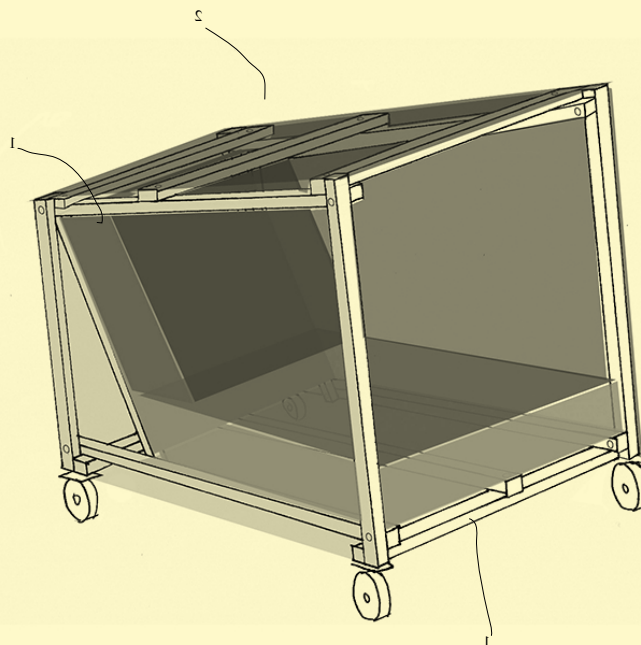
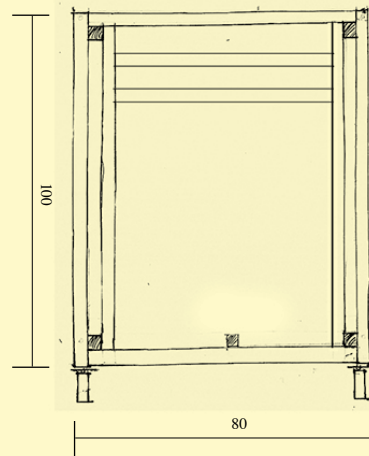
STRUCTURES



- A: (2x) 100cm
- B: (2x) 80cm
- C: (5x) 80cm
- D: (3x) 100cm
- E: (2x) 80cm
- F: (2x) 80cm
- Castors: (4x)



&



BOARDING

- 1: (2x) 100-80 x 100cm
- 2: (1x) 80 x 80

Please consider the material thickness

Alternatively Board 2 could be made of a translucent acrylic

COMPONENTS



Reading adapted
from

*The Lausiac History
of Palladius (ca. 400 CE)*

Many thanks to:

Lawrence Abu Hamdan
The Broadley Street Gardens Communities
The Church Street Library
Church Street Market
Andrea Francke
Lily Hall
Emilie Lindsten
Jacob Strand

Chapter II
Dorotheus

From the corpus
of *How To Live
Together* (1977)
by Roland
Barthes

