

EXERCISE

Reinvent the Set, the Props



Time: solo 20 minutes, and ongoing yearly



Setup and materials: pencil and a blank notebook dedicated to home if possible. You can use it over time.



Good For: individuals, families, people who co-habit. It can be used for thinking through office spaces, but it's written to do in your home.

Framing:

This exercise is adapted from the textbook Actor for Life. Think like an actor for a moment. When you are at work, you perform on a three dimensional set and you use props to support the action or to give atmosphere to the environment.

In a way, we each live in a variety of sets, our homes and offices and public spaces. We may not make a habit of changing our personal set very often by moving or removing furnishings and props, the things that make up our physical environment. We are more likely to move into a place and live there with the arrangement we settled on when we first moved in.

But since then we have learned something about how we function in our homes. We know which areas are used most often and what regular tasks need to be accomplished. We can imagine (more accurately than when we first moved in) how our spaces could be set up for how we use them.

Steps:

1. Study the architecture of your living space (or your working space.) Notice the walls and windows, the surfaces and lights. Become aware of the objects in the room, their placement and how they shape or influence the space around them.
2. Lay out a circuit that includes every room in your physical space. (If you live in more than one story, walk through one story at a time.) Now decide which direction to go first, then walk quickly through that circuit for five rounds, just looking around.
3. Now, with notebook and pencil or pen, make two more slow rounds, making notes about what stands out, for good or ill. Notice what you love, and there may be things that were you once but that aren't you anymore.

4. Turn around and do the same process in the other direction. Five quick rounds, two slower rounds making notes.
5. Sit down in your favorite place in your home and ponder some questions.
 - What makes this home a place of safety and ease?
 - To what extent does it express who you are?
 - How smoothly does it function?
 - And if you want to get specific:
 - Which props contribute, which distract?
 - If you were to reinvent your space, what props would you remove or replace or relocate?
 - If the sets and props of your daily life were reinvented, how would living in this space be different?

Suggested headers for pages in your home notebook

- To remove
- To move
- To replace
- Ideas to optimize function

You might set up your notebook with either one room or one function per page, e.g., by room, livingroom, kitchen, bedroom or by function, entertaining, cooking, sleeping.