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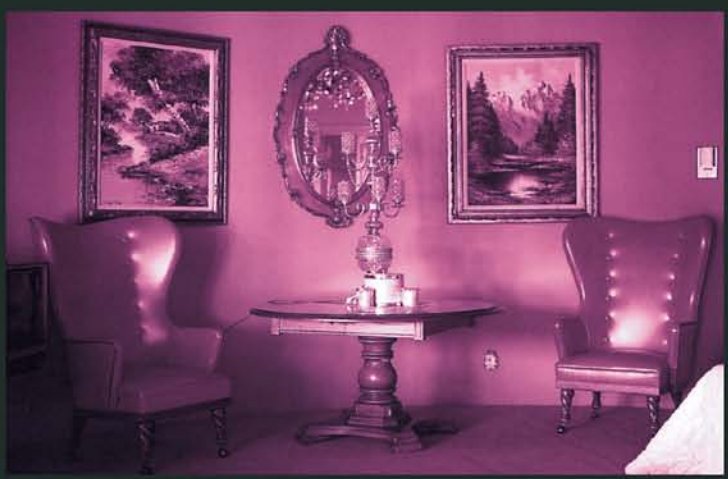
Architext

Gender Space Architecture

An interdisciplinary introduction



ROUTLEDGE

41 Elizabeth Diller

'Bad Press'

from Francesca Hughes (ed.), *The Architect: Reconstructing her Practice* (1996)

PRIVATE PROPERTY

To identify what falls under the category of indecent public exposure for recent antinudity legislation, the state of Florida produced a legal definition of the human buttocks:

> Extract: The area at the rear of the human body which lies between two imaginary lines running parallel to the ground when a person is standing—the first or top of such line drawn at the top of the cleavage of the nates (i.e. the prominence formed by the muscles running from the back of the hip to the back of the leg) and the second or bottom line drawn at the lowest visible point of this cleavage or the lowest point of the curvature of the fleshy protuberance, whichever is lower, and—between two imaginary lines on each side of the body, which run perpendicular to the ground and to the horizontal lines described above, and which perpendicular lines are drawn through the point at which each nate meets the outer side of each leg.[1]

Any exposure of flesh within this rectangular boundary would constitute a legal infraction. Unlike land law where property lines protect the space of the private from transgressions of the public, the property lines that define the socially 'decent' body defend public space from transgressions of the private(s). The play between *property* and *propriety* or the *proper*[2] is particularly intricate in considering the body as a legal site.

But the body has long been a site of uncertain jurisdiction, from Kafka's harrowing inscription of the crime against the state onto the body of the accused to William Buckley's proposal to legally mandate that all homosexuals testing HIV positive have their buttocks tattooed. More common are invisible markings onto social bodies—for example, the bodies produced by disciplinary technologies and techniques of power discussed by Michel Foucault. Here the body is inseparable from the institutional structure, as is the body of the soldier, 'instrumentally coded

at the most minute levels. The articulation of his every gesture, from his marching posture to his penmanship was broken down into its component parts, each of which was assigned a duration and an order of appearance'[3] and invested with as much representational value as the uniform covering his skin. But bodies, as we know, are constructed by subtler mechanisms of control—like the fashionable body produced by popular media. This body is continually being reinscribed by a complex weave of discourses including health, beauty, economy, and geography.

HOMEBODIES

At the end of the nineteenth century, the body began to be understood as mechanical component of industrial productivity, an extension of the factory apparatus. Scientific management, or Taylorism, sought to rationalize and standardize the motions of this body, harnessing its dynamic energy and converting it to efficient labor power. According to Anson Rabinbach, 'the dynamic language of energy was central to many Utopian social and political ideologies of the early twentieth century: Taylorism, Bolshevism, and fascism. All of these movements viewed the body both as a productive force and as a political instrument whose energies could be subjected to scientifically designed systems of organization.'[4]

It was not long before the practice of engineering bodies for the factory was introduced into the office, the school, and the hospital. By the first decade of the twentieth century, scientific management was brought into the home and applied to domestic housework. Time-motion studies developed to dissect every action of the factory laborer, with the intention of designing ideal shapes of movement and, ultimately, the ideal laborer, were imported into the home to scrutinize every movement exerted in housekeeping in order to produce the ideal housewife. (The term *housewife,* which had been in use since the thirteenth century in Europe, required reconceptualizing both 'wife' and 'house' in relation to the servantless, middle-class American household of the 1920s). Scientific management interpreted the body of this housewife as a dynamic force with unlimited capacity for work. Her only enemy was fatigue, and fatigue, in broader terms, undermined the moral imperative of the new social reform—the reclamation of all waste as usable potential.

When Frank Gilbreth raised the efficiency of bricklaying by reducing stooping, Christine Frederick, the earliest exponent of scientific efficiency in the home, asked, 'Didn't I with hundreds of women stoop unnecessarily over kitchen tables, sinks and ironing boards, as bricklayers stoop over bricks?'

> Extract: Pre-cooked foods, made possible by new packaging developments, are a major time-saver for housewives. Notice the difference in time and effort required in the preparation of a pre-cooked, pre-packaged goulash dinner and one fixed entirely from scratch. Lights attached to the cook's wrists show how many more movements she had to make in the 90 minutes it took the long way, compared with the pre-cooked way which took only 12 minutes.[5]

> [Extract:] Reaching with the arms to heights of 46?, 56?, and 72? above the floor, requires an increase of oxygen consumed per minute over simply standing of 12%, 24%, and 50%, respectively. The energy consumed is therefore in proportion to the height of the reach. Reaching up with the arms takes less energy than bending the body. Reaching by means of a trunk bend to 22? and to 3? above the floor, increases oxygen consumption above that required for standing to 57% and 131% of cubic centimeters of oxygen per minute. Reaching by using a knee bend to 3? above the floor, requires 224% oxygen consumption. While this would indicate that a trunk bend requires less energy than a knee bend, the knee bend is believed to involve less muscular strain.[6]

The application of labor-saving techniques from scientific management, in conjunction with the introduction of household appliances, the new 'electric servants,' sought to conserve the physical expenditure of the 1920s housewife. The time and energy saved, according to the rhetoric of efficiency, would release the woman from the home and thus enable her to join the paid labor force.

The drive for efficiency, however, did not fulfill its liberating promise. Efficiency was often taken as an objective in itself. Ironically, it condemned the housewife to an increased workload as the expectations and standards of cleanliness in the home rose to compulsive levels. The discovery of the 'household germ' and the proliferation of germ theory galvanized a link between dirt and disease. Dirt soon became a moral construct yielding sexual, religious, and aesthetic distinctions. The fetishization of hygiene blurred the problem of cleanliness with beauty, chastity, piety, and modernity. As efficiency targeted domestic space as much as the domestic body, the design of the interior succumbed to this paranoid hygiene. The dust and germ-breeding intricacies of the nineteenth-century interior collapsed into pure surface—white, smooth, flat, nonporous, and seamless—under the continuous disciplinary watch of the housewife.

Although the application of scientific management to housework did not liberate the housewife, daily work in the home became increasingly rationalized by the women condemned to stay there. In order to remove the stigma from what was considered to be the service-oriented menial labor of the female, daily housework between the 1920s and 1940s was progressively masculinized and reconfigured into a more comprehensive economic management of the household.[7] The 'home economist' now combined the skills of nutritionist, doctor, accountant, child-care specialist, and informed consumer, among others.

Notwithstanding this new characterization, the actual physical labor involved in housework remained just as demanding and distasteful as it had ever been. The dirt previously absorbed by the body of the servant was now a direct concern to the woman of the house.[8] In the servantless household of the first half of the century, the maintenance of the idealized female body that exhibited no evidence of decay became a project of devotion equal to that of the maintenance of idealized domestic space. Both were dedicated to preventing the corrosions of age and to the daily restoration of an ideal order whose standards and values were produced and sustained in the popular media.

Today, home and body maintenance have found a new conjunction: household chores can be incorporated into a daily aerobic regimen and performed to the beat of a television fitness trainer. No longer socially isolated, the maintainer of the home can perform household tasks with countless other viewers. Even though housework is slowly becoming less gendered and the discrete sites of 'work' and 'leisure' exchangeable, most conventions of domestic maintenance remain unchallenged. Housework's primary activities of managing dirt and restoring daily order continue to be subjected to the economic ethos of industry, guided by motion-economy principles originally designed by efficiency engineers. Take, for example, the procedure for ironing a man's shirt outlined by a 1960s housekeeping manual:

> Extract: Center the back of the shirt on an ironing board with the yoke taut. Lifting the iron as little as possible, draw the iron, with its point facing the collar down the yoke to the rear tail hem and press the box pleat, using unhurried, well-directed, rhythmic motions. To avoid unnecessary manipulation of the garment, rotate the shirt in the following sequence: first, counterclockwise over the ironing surface to expose the left front panel. Press. Pause when pressing each button hole and pocket, allowing the steam to penetrate the fabric facing and inner band. Next, rotate the shirt clockwise to expose the right front panel and press, rotating the tip of the iron around every button. Slide the right shoulder yoke over the tip of the ironing board and press. Repeat with the left shoulder yoke. Lay out the right sleeve with the placket facing up and iron diagonally across the sleeve width from the underarm seam joint to the upper edge of the sleeve cuff, pressing in a sharp crease. Repeat this procedure for the left sleeve. With the rear yoke centered, press the undercollar and collar crease, working the sold plate towards the collar tips. Turn the shirt over with its front facing up and fasten the buttons. Using the Z-method to eliminate unnecessary movements of garment and arms, turn the shirt over. Fold the left rear facet in, toward the center, pressing in a sharp crease from the outer edge of the yoke shoulder, 2 1/2 inches out from the undercollar seam to the tail hem. Fold the left sleeve 45 degrees at the shoulder seam so that the length of the sleeve runs parallel along the length of the rear facet crease and press. Repeat this procedure for the right rear facet and right sleeve. Fold the shirt tail 1/3 of the way toward the collar. Fold 1/3 over again to the yoke, ensuring that all edges are aligned and form ninety degree corners. Using the Z-method, turn the shirt over with its front facing out and press lightly.

With the advent of the electric iron, the task of ironing became progressively governed by minimums, both aesthetic and economic. A minimum of effort is used to reshape the shirt through a minimum of flat facets into a two-dimensional, repetitive unit that will consume a minimum of space. This shirt will exhibit a minimum of creases when worn, particularly in the exposed area between the lapels of the jacket. The standardized ironing pattern of a man's shirt habitually returns the shirt to a flat, rectangular shape that fits economically into orthogonal storage systems—at the site of manufacture, the factory-pressed shirt is stacked and packed into rectangular cartons that are loaded as cubic volumes onto trucks and transported to retain

space where the shirt's rectangular form is reinforced in orthogonal display cases and then, after purchase, sustained in the home on closet shelves or in dresser drawers, and finally, on trips away from home, in suitcases. The shirt is disciplined at every stage to conform to an unspoken social contract.

When worn, the residue of the orthogonal logic of efficiency is registered on the surface of the body. The parallel creases and crisp, square corners of a clean, pressed shirt have become sought after emblems of refinement. The by-product of efficiency has become a new object of its desire.

But what if the task of ironing were to free itself from the aesthetics of efficiency altogether? Perhaps the effects of ironing could more aptly represent the postindustrial body by trading the image of the *functional* for that of the *dysfunctional.*

BAD PRESS (INSTRUCTIONS FOR A DISSIDENT IRONING)

Shirt 1

With the left front panel of the shirt over the ironing surface, pull the iron tip from the outer edge of the shoulder seam in a straight diagonal line down to the fifth or sixth buttonhole, depending on the inner lapel angle of the jacket to be worn. Repeat this procedure for the right panel and press only the area inside the *V.* Press the collar crease, working the sole plate toward the front collar tips. Press the exposed two inches of the shirt cuffs only. Button the front and lightly press a sharp crease into the left and right *V* edges.

> *The English dandies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries introduced the conception of personal cleanliness. The white shirt was introduced as a washable, socially accepted layer of covering between underwear and outer-wear. It represented a new sanitary order. Beau Brummel is said to be responsible for the startling innovation of wearing a clean shirt daily.*
>
> Extract: According to the social gentility of dandyism, the white layer covering the skin always extended beyond the edges of the overgarment at the wrists and neck, serving as a sanitary frame for the obsessively well-groomed hands and head. The detachable collar and cuffs were thus subjected to the most rigorous boiling, starching, ironing and polishing. What was initially meant to represent the new austerity in dress for the man, 'The Great Masculine Renunciation,' turned into a fascination with artifice which transformed the image of sobriety into the image of flamboyant efficiency.[9]

Shirt 2

Press the shirt according to ironing procedure but do not fold. With the shirt facing up, fasten the second button into the first buttonhole at the collar. Continue fastening the buttons in sequence, skipping the fourth buttonhole. The remaining buttons will fall into alignment. Turn the shirt over and press the left and right facets. Adjust for material discrepancy by skewing the shoulder ridge and mid-fold to seven degrees from the horizontal median.

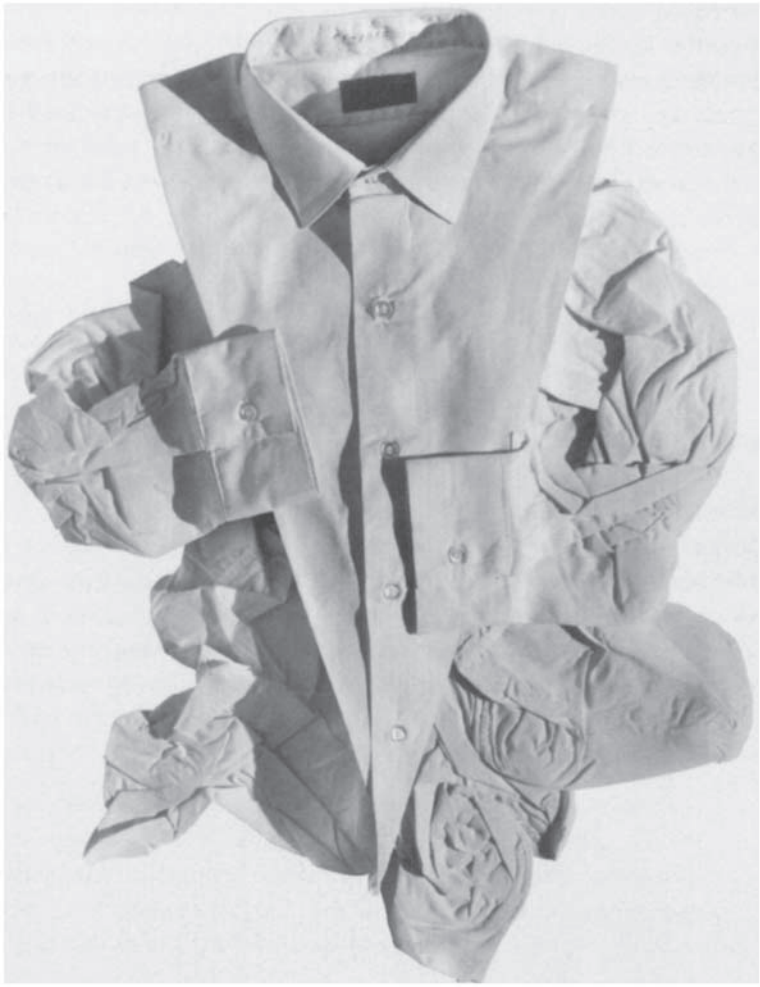


Figure 41.1–6
Elizabeth Diller, 'Shirts 1–6'
Figure 41.1: Shirt 1

Prisoners assigned laundering detail in a state correctional facility have invented a highly developed language articulated through the practice of ironing. Seemingly superfluous, decorative creases pressed into the clothing of other prisoners are invested with representational value understood only to the participants. Like the prison tattoo, another form of inscription on soft, pliable surfaces, the crease is a mark of resistance by the marginalized. Where the tattoo acts on the only possession left to the prisoner, the skin, the crease acts directly on the institutional skin of the prison uniform—a camouflaged defacing. The crease resists appropriation more so than the tattoo in that its abstract language is illegible to the uninitiated compared with the typically pictorial language of the tattoo.

Shirt 3

Press the shirt flat. Keeping the back panel facing up, use standard ironing procedure, folding the right sleeve over the right facet. Keeping the left sleeve free. Continue to press, folding the shirt along the axis of the right sleeve to reduce the shirt to the precise width of the front pocket. Fold the collar forward at a forty-five-degree angle to the shirt. Fold the right sleeve in half along its length and press. Cross-fold and bring the right sleeve up through the collar and, with a crease five inches from the cuff, tuck down into the pocket.

> Extract: When patient 'X' began ironing an article of clothing, she could not stop until she collapsed from exhaustion. The patient would meticulously, and without pause, press out the most imperceptible wrinkles in a shirt, for example, repeating the same areas over and over again. The wrinkles could never be completely removed, thus the job could never be properly finished according to her expectations—as new wrinkles would inevitably be introduced into the garment by the task of ironing itself.[10]

Shirt 4

Press the shirt without folding. Button the cuffs and front panels of the shirt. Push the collar into the shirt from the top and pull it out between the fourth and fifth buttons. Fold the cuffs back on themselves and iron flat. Pull the cuffs through the collar, keeping the crease axis at forty-five degrees. Fold the collar over and down.

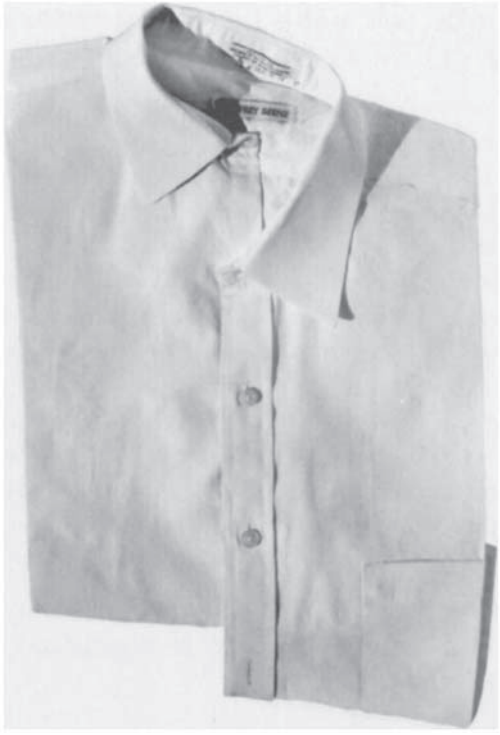


Figure 41.2: Shirt 2

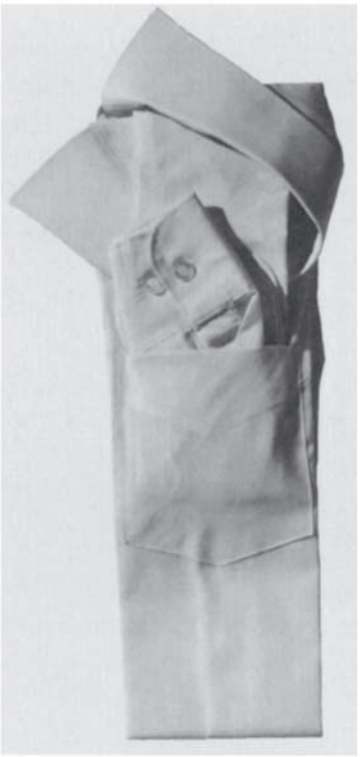


Figure 41.3: Shirt 3

Press the left and right facets and press perpendicular folds before the third button and after the sixth.

> Extract: Manufacturers are hailing the Japanese invention of a non-shrinking, durable press all-cotton shirt as the best new wrinkle in men's wear since the advent of permanent press shirts nearly three decades ago. Shirts represent the ultimate no-iron challenge because they are made of thin fabric compared with most other clothes. When cotton is worn and washed, the hydrogen bridges that connect the cellulose molecules in cotton can break. If bridges break, the molecular chains swell and shift upon washing and wrinkles form. However, when cotton is treated with resins and other reactive molecules, new bridges are formed between cotton molecules which stablize the fabric. Shirt scientists, as it turns out, have a scale for classifying wrinkles, with 1.0 being the equivalent of a withered prune and 5.0 being ideal. The new shirts have a rating between 3.5 and 4.0. In Japan, where domestic chores are still divided largely along traditional gender lines, the shirts are proving popular not only with housewives who hate to iron, but also with salary men, who on business trips can now wash a shirt in the sink, hang it up to dry and wear it the next day.[11]

Certainly the popularity of permanent press miracle fabrics among Japanese businessmen is maintaining the image of labor expended by their wives.

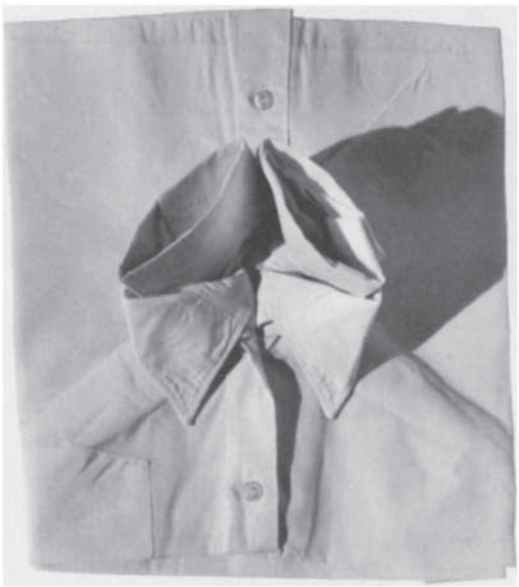


Figure 41.4: Shirt 4

From the popular game show *Family Feud:* Master of Ceremonies: 'Listen carefully to this question. We asked one hundred married men, "Name one of the first warning signs that a marriage is going on the rocks." The top six answers are on the board: Constant Arguing, No Communication, Stops Cooking, Lack of Sex, Stops Ironing, Infidelity.'

> *Perhaps with the advent of miracle fabrics, ironing will continue to linger as an expression of affection.*

Shirt 5

Press the right sleeve with a crisp crease down the center. Turn the left sleeve inside-out. Press and pull the sleeve through the buttoned collar. Extend one hand through the inside of the right sleeve at placket end and grasp the shirt bottom at the front bands. Gather the shirt completely into the right sleeve until the collar meets the underarm seam. Align the collar and cuff with the vertical crease of the sleeve.

Two speculations on the Deleuzian fold:

> Extract: John Rajchman: One cannot say that the 'fold' or 'pli,' is traditional to philosophy, though etymologically it is parent to many fold-words, words with -plic and -plex, like explication, implication, multiplicity and, perplexity, complexity or perplication and complication. The fold involves an 'affective' space. The modernist 'machines for living' sought to express a clean, efficient space for the new mechanical body; but who will invent a way to express the affective space for the new multiplicitous body?[12]
>
> Greg Lynn: Culinary theory has developed a definition for three types of mixtures. The first involves the manipulation of homogeneous elements. Beating,

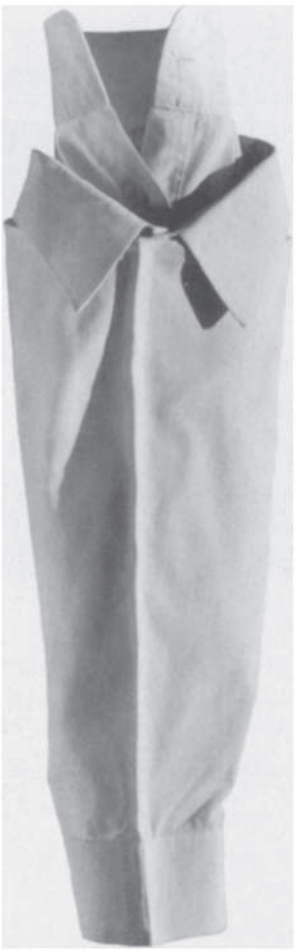


Figure 41.5: Shirt 5

whisking and whipping change the volume but not the nature of a liquid through agitation. The second mixes two or more disparate elements. Chopping, dicing, grinding, grating, slicing, shredding and mincing eviscerate elements into fragments. The third, folding, creaming and blending mix smoothly multiple ingredients through repeated gentle overturnings in such a way that their individual characteristics are maintained. If there is a single effect produced in architecture by folding, it will be the ability to integrate unrelated elements within a new continuous mixture. A folded mixture is neither homogeneous like whipped cream, nor fragmented like chopped nuts, but smooth and heterogeneous.[13]

Shirt 6

Turn the shirt inside-out and center on the ironing surface pulling plackets taut. Evenly divide the back panel length into twenty sections. Fold each section over accordion fashion and firmly press. With the entire shirt back folded and pressed, roll it back into the collar, leaving left and right front panels extending from the

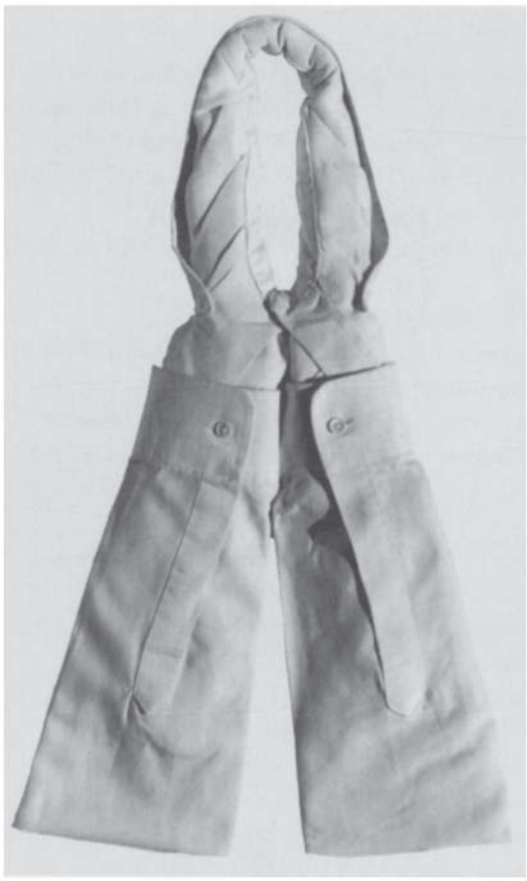


Figure 41.6: Shirt 6

collar tips. Fold the collar over compressed shirt back and fasten the collar buttons. Reverse the inside-out sleeves over remaining side panels. Fasten the cuffs and press.

> *The fold has been a useful metaphor for the discourse of poststructuralist architecture, because it consolidates ambiguities, such as surface and structure, figure and organization. One of the prime attributes of the fold is that it is nonrepresentational. The fold also implies reversibility—if something can be folded, it can be unfolded and refolded.*
>
> *The crease is a more compelling metaphor because it presents a resistance to transformation. The crease has a longer memory than the fold and it has representational value, in the nature of an inscription. The crease is harder to get out Its traces guide their continual confirmation—until a new order is inscribed, with the illusion of permanence.*

Project assistants: Brendan Cotter, Heather Champ and John Bachus, Linda Chung, Paul Lewis, David Lindberg.

NOTES

1 Steve Marshall, 'Bottom Line on Buttocks,' *USA Today,* March 19, 1992.
2 This assemblage has been eloquently presented by Catherine Ingraham in The Faults of Architecture: Troping the Proper,' *Assemblage 7* (1988): 7–13.
3 Robert McAnulty, 'Body Troubles,' in *Strategies in Architectural Thinking* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992).
4 Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
5 Hazel Thompson, *Thresholds to Adult Living* (1955).
6 Esther Bratton, *Oxygen Consumed in Household Tasks,* Bulletin 873 (Ithaca: New York State College of Home Economics at Cornell University, 1952).
7 Paraphrased from Phyllis Palmer, *Domesticity and Dirt: Housewives and Domestic Servants in the United States, 1920–1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984).
8 Ibid.
9 Paraphrased from Zvi Effrat, 'The Unseemliness of the Fashionable,' *Architecture: In Fashion* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994).
10 Case citing schoolteacher under treatment for obsessional-compulsive disorder in the *Journal of Behavioral Research.*
11 'Low Iron 100% Cotton Shirts Expected in the US by Father's Day,' *New York Times,* December 30, 1993.
12 Paraphrased from John Rajchman, 'Out of the Fold,' *Architectural Design,* no. 102, 'Folding in Architecture' (1993): 61–3.
13 Greg Lynn, 'Architectural Curvilinearity,' *Architectural Design,* no. 102, 'Folding in Architecture' (1993): 9.