

# **A GUIDE TO SELF HELP**

**SUZANNE WU / MAY 2014**

 41  238 I'm literally too lazy to live (self.getdisciplined)



submitted 5 days ago\* by Phoenixed

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# **A GUIDE TO SELF HELP**

## **SUZANNE WU**

“Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of bachelor of fine arts  
in furniture design”

***Rhode Island School of Design***  
**Department of Furniture Design**  
**2014**

STAY ON TRACK! >>>>>



Self help is a paradox that ultimately puts you in the hands of your imperfect fallible self. Self help is dependent on self-diagnosing your own problems and labeling them some version of a deficiency then going in and fixing yourself. It tells you there's a better version of you, and makes vague comparisons between what you could be and how you could do it to be "it". It tells you nobody can change you unless you want to change, and the only thing responsible is yourself. You alone can turn your life around, or light yourself on fire. The shame and sense of achievement comes buy one get one free. It's a kind of self-medication that gives you no accident coverage insurance. It's all on you. So you just have to keep improving until you're ready and *there*, wherever that is.

Thankfully, you are not the problem (at least not entirely). The space and objects that surround you exacerbate certain elements of your behavior, giving you easy access to decisions that are no good.

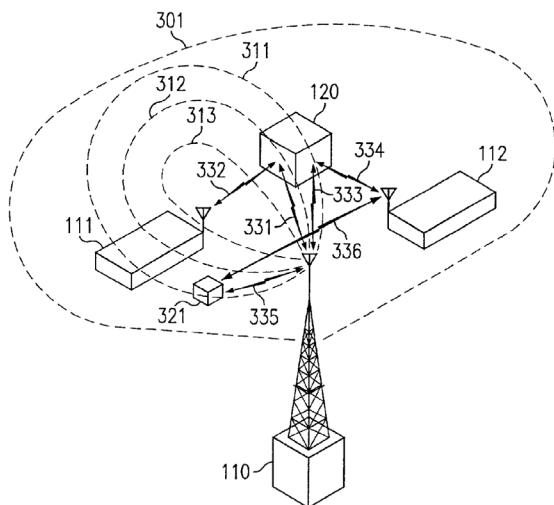
"THE LAST THING YOU WOULD THINK COULD IMPROVE SOMEONE'S FUCKED-UP STATION AND SELF WOULD BE A MORE CONCENTRATED EFFORT BY THE VERY PERSON WHO GOT THEMSELVES THERE IN THE FIRST PLACE. ISAAC NEWTON STOOD ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS; THE SELF-IMPROVED PERSON TEETERS ON THE BACK OF THE SELFISH, DAMAGED MESS THEY USED TO BE."<sup>1</sup>

With this degree project I'm proposing a new kind of self help. It's an object / space-based help. The guide comes from the outside in, by restructuring your life through your environment. First step is optimizing your space. This idealized space keeps everything contained and everything relevant highlighted. Nothing is lost in deep storage, misplaced and forgotten, nor are the things left too active, stimuli alive and buzzing. A person is mobile and always changing, so why should his/her space be still and stagnant? Or even worse, why should our environment be bigger/stronger/more permanent than our agency? When something becomes clearly beyond our control, the actions we affect on the space seems futile and predetermined. As the theory of regression in frustration explains through an experiment, a child who is interrupted during his playtime to move to another space suffers from crippling displacement. The effect of this disruption changed both the child's long-term goals and relationship with the space. The connection between reality and his expectations grows weaker and so does his attachment to investing effort in growing the space.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>THE NEW INQUIRY. "Vol. 22 Editors' Note: Self Help." The New Inquiry. N.p., 13 Nov. 2013. Web. 30 Dec. 2013. <<http://thenewinquiry.com/features/vol-22-editors-note-self-help/>>.

<sup>2</sup>Barker, Roger. *Frustration and Regression. An Experiment with Young Children*. Studies in Topological and Vector Psychology II, University of Iowa Press, Iowa. 1941, pp. 216-219.

The ultimate goal is for the user to be comfortably in control. For the space to be made to a human-scaled living, more specifically, to a user. Of course, this idealized space cannot happen without input from the user. The whole creation of this space is through a constant feedback loop between the user and his/her space. Within the space, its objects are mobile and customizable, the pieces seizing the immediate close relative to me taking ownership of my space. The system integrates within a life, my life. It's part of the physical toolkit to free you from whatever hangups you have with making rough with the things you own. On a bigger level, it's advocating you to truly know your objects and spaces, taking it apart beyond the layers of seemingly magical fabrication manufacturing methods and reclaiming your agency to do.



David Shrigley, "Untitled (You're doing OK)," 2010

# **INITIAL DIAGNOSIS + POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS:**

## **I GET DISTRACTED EASILY**

take away the distractions ; literally remove the options (move to somewhere with no wifi and people so you're less likely to stray)

## **I LACK DRIVE**

find your few curiosities that gets you really excited, don't worry about the ultimate futility of something, just do it

## **I LACK ENERGY**

sleep more, eat better, exercise, vitamins/supplements, get excited about something

## **I'M TOO FICKLE**

find something that renews your excitement and keeps the energy up! stop being so reliant on feeling good - hard work isn't supposed to be delicious; work on automation

## **I'M DISCONNECTED WITH REALITY (IRL APPLICATIONS)**

??? stop indulging in the imaginary world (how???)

## **I HAVE NO SYSTEM**

find your open connections / live wires, analyze the issues, dispose of the unnecessary extensions, restructure, plan and set definitive goals, maintain! (5s systemize your life!)

## **I'M TOO SELF-CRITICAL**

review yourself as you would review someone you're fond of, check your credentials from the outside, if you still suck, then know your issues and improve! we're all rooting for you!

## **I'M TOO RELIANT ON VALIDATION OF OTHERS**

no1curr! seriously! everyone's still trying to figure themselves out, that's why you have to pay people to listen to you (via time/friendship/\$\$); just do you! the opinion of others only matter if you think you're doing your best and wait, it's offensive! you're a blatant racist! stop!; just care about what you need to communicate, and that doesn't always mean all the background deep research you did because again, no 1 has the time 4 that! shit that is cool can stay objectively cool, but it won't mean too much to anyone without you filtering it through your experience and creating new combinations out of it.

## **I'M 2 LAZY 2 LIVE**

what does this even mean?? find it in this DP!

## **I HAVE TOO MUCH SELF-AWARENESS / SELF-CENSORING**

stop caring about what your projected self looks like because no one is watching! be kinder to your fallacies, you're allowed your share of ignorance, just don't be close-minded and allow for adjustment!

#### Brain Lateralization Test Results

Right Brain  62%  
Left Brain  30%

\*results won't usually add up to 100% as this test measures each side separately

Left brain dominant individuals are more orderly, literal, articulate, and to the point. They are good at understanding directions and anything that is explicit and logical. They can have trouble comprehending emotions and abstract concepts, they can feel lost when things are not clear, doubting anything that is not stated and proven.

Right brain dominant individuals are more visual and intuitive. They are better at summarizing multiple points, picking up on what's not said, visualizing things, and making things up. They can lack attention to detail, directness, organization, and the ability to explain their ideas verbally, leaving them unable to communicate effectively.

Overall you appear to be Right Brain Dominant

## MY OPTIMIZED SELF:

I'M VERY ALIVE (YOUTH IDEAL)

I'M ON TIME

I'M SELF-SUFFICIENT

I'M 90% ACCOUNTABLE FOR MY ACTIONS

I KEEP PROMISES

I'M 100% PRESENT FOR THE SHIT I'M INTO

I KNOW WHAT SHIT I'M INTO (PRIORITIES)

DEAD

ALIVE!



(IDEAL HERE)

YOU'RE NOT THE IDEAL YOU. MAKE ROOM FOR YOURSELF

# MY OPTIMIZED SPACE:

3/5

The room has dictated areas of full and empty; each understood bloc has their own accountable capacity. no loose clothing and miscellaneous items without some version of housing unit. the boundaries are drawn in colored tape mapping each function of the spaces.

the ecosystem is a quiet humming infrastructure, the background ritual to the human living inside. strictly decor items are avoided; only functional decorations are allowed - i.e.: rug, curtains, bedspread etc

the room is lived in and formed to be this way because you've arranged it so. the walls should look like a james turrell installation; colors slide into each other, objects peek through transparencies, you can see beyond parts like gazing upon the distance. the room feels spatially big while maintaining modest dimensions - you know every corner but that's not a limitation

the furniture is industrial in the sense that material is metal and pvc and has less material preciousness. the colors a palette of DeWalt orange and fluorescent neons associated with safety and industrial equipment.

things read with a certain contour - marked with the outline, just enough to communicate its role

you pull out a drawer and levels sharpen into focus

----[autofocus]----

everything is archived, pictured in a range of grays, when you're looking to remember - keeps the neon tab on the most recent, most exciting, most relevant.

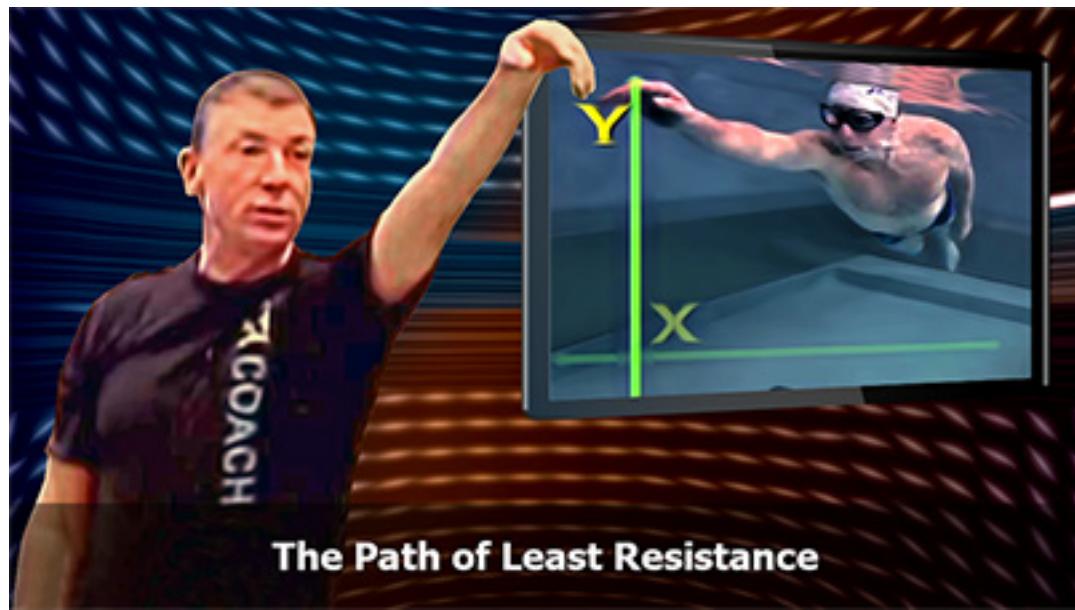
wayfinding is easy when you're given a map that's not always bird eye view

all the parts of the room say "You Are Here" when you engage with it

activity is practiced and aligned on a queue ; all works-in-progress lives chronologically with its half-finished brethrens. they get dedicated a spot in the room where you can't see from every vantage point. the buzz of their potentiality is kept at a low frequency

the trash is everything that is expired and "useless", recycling happens every \_\_\_\_\_. trash disposal is important because not everything needs to live forever in our instant database; alike items camouflage each other but also compare and contrast.

critical information is only urgent when it's in ALL-CAPS, and ALL-CAPS only stands out in a sea of lowercase letters.



**The Path of Least Resistance**

IF YOU STOP, YOU'LL DIE.

## (WHAT MAKES ME HAPPY)

TAKING IT E-Z / COMFORTABLE / POSITIVE  
REINFORCEMENT / PEER RECOGNITION / FUL-  
FILLING CONNECTION / SHARED ACTIVITY /  
PHYSICALLY FIT / FULFILLMENT IN WORK AND  
RELATIONSHIPS / MAKING MEANING / KINSHIP  
/ FILIAL PIETY / KNOWING YOUR PLACEMENT /  
HAVE TRUST IN SOMETHING / STAYING HUMBLE /  
A LEVEL OF LIVING STANDARD / WORK = PLAY /  
ENDORPHINS / A LEVEL OF KNOWING (ENOUGH) /  
WANT & POTENTIAL TO GET IT / AVAILABILITY  
/ POTENTIAL ENERGY / AHEAD OF SOME STAN-  
DARD OR CURVE / > QUANTIFICATION / HAVING  
TIME 2 KNOW AND COLLECT / NEW + THE NOVEL  
/ MICRO-CHANGING THE WORLD / SELF-AWARE-  
NESS / SMALL % OF ACCOUNTABILITY

# SO... GIVE UP WHAT?

TIME

MONEY

~~PHYSICAL COMFORT~~

EMOTIONAL COMFORT

SECURITY

LEISURE

A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

AUTHORSHIP

~~OTHER GOALS~~

SELF IMAGE

~~PARENTAL APPROVAL~~

~~SOCIETAL APPROVAL~~

EXPERT

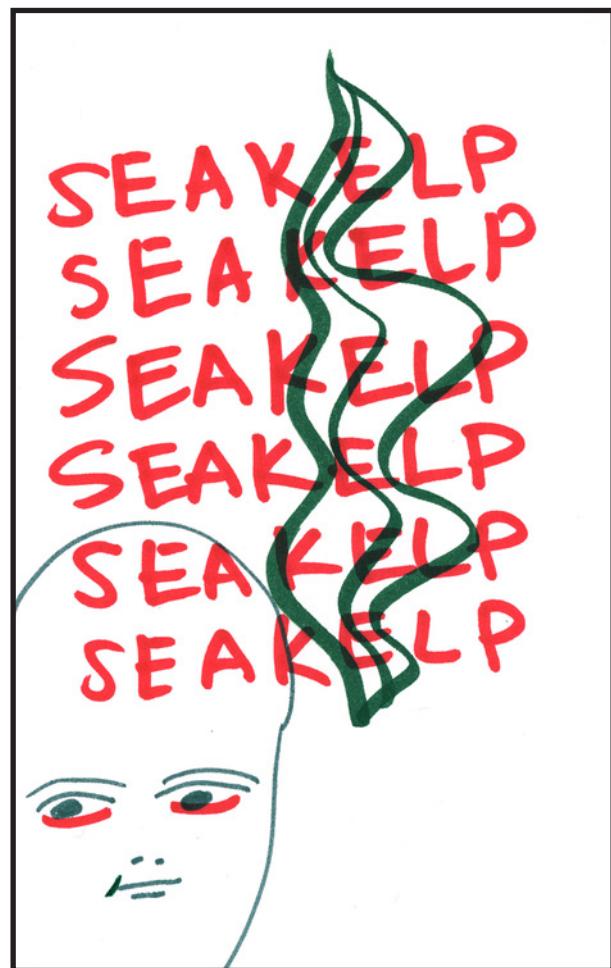
ZERO  
PRESS  
OURNESS

HAVING ONLY ENOUGH SELF-AWARENESS TO KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS



PRETEND U R A ROBOT. FEEL NOTHING. JUST DO IT

JUST ASK!



TO THINK, NOBODY HAS EVER SAID "NO"

## **HOW TO WORK BETTER.**

**1 DO ONE THING**

**AT A TIME**

**2 KNOW THE PROBLEM**

**3 LEARN TO LISTEN**

**4 LEARN TO ASK**

**QUESTIONS**

**5 DISTINGUISH SENSE  
FROM NONSENSE**

**6 ACCEPT CHANGE  
AS INEVITABLE**

**7 ADMIT MISTAKES**

**8 SAY IT SIMPLE**

**9 BE CALM**

**10 SMILE**

**LOOK!**

"new year resolution"

you! you at home, I'm talking to YOU!

what is it going to take to make that CHANGE!

DO SOMETHING

YOU'RE WORTH IT

I MEAN IT

You're here for the right reasons.

**"I FEEL EXTREMELY GUILTY!"**

you're in between two lives. the unhappy, unhealthy life that you used to lead. and the happier, healthier life that awaits you.

THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE

You have the ability to change your life. it all starts here

**"I FINALLY REALIZED WHAT LIFE CAN BE, AND I WANT TO LIVE IT."**

Do you want to be able to pay your credit card bills on time and withhold sex and actually read and try that look without looking like you tried (so normcore) and predict how much longer you have of #foreveryoung? hint: it's 2014 at the end of the world and everyone is singing about right now YOLO and you stay reactive laughing at everything because you're open-minded plus you hear it takes four muscles to laugh and approximately all the muscles in your face to frown though it feels the other way around but hey it's a good default look when you're too tired to put any other face on. you want to project your voice towards the front of the room, it feels far even though you made sure to sit in the second row. why is so dry. take a deep breath, maintain that stamina and bargain your breath it'll reach as you have rights as an American citizen. or whatever backwater fourth world country your parents left behind to give the family a GOOD LIFE with their family and roots and you feel a little bit of both bits and the words you say when you say them sounds not quite like the words that you heard in your head or sounds of numbers when you're doing the multiplication table. you try to convince others just as you convince yourself of your perfect intonations.

practice makes perfect!

Just listen, curb in that tongue making the wrong turns and the wrong gestures giving away too much power for others to be embarrassed by your exposure. follow the instructions on how to craft a perfect thought fall in place in the shape of a formula ending in thank you and sorry. stutter when nobody's watching, abs in tight, it's much easier when you have EXPERTS.

For a fit diet I usually go with a good cup of organic free-range blended herbal fiber vitamin milk solution. give it a vigorous shake. just add half a cup of granulated kelp butter with a real spice medley ginger

wonton cinnamon oregano buns creaming basil cake and savory salts. enjoy it with pulp for 100% concentrate  
fleshy goodness with immune-boosting elements. Juice up the maybe's of today and adjust for the future.

just remember, this is NORMAL. You're at the gone wild part of the perpetual 20-something years-old. anything you do has hardly any introspection you're supposed to be a MESS. This will be ok for you for at least another few years because shit happens and you indeed tried to make everything right and maybe you had the smartass asshole of a foresight that told you it's not worth it (don't listen to the voice!) and spoke for the knowing that yes, you didn't do anything meaningful even though you are surrounded by a cycle of meaningful activity and ended up being paralyzed by the act of doing. Dependency starts early and dangerously pulls you into a neverending cause and effect and at least you're comfortable for the moment

Maintain your posture, keep that back nice and eyes forward. Believe in the New Year resolution to set SELF DISCIPLINE and GOAL-SETTING

believe in MEDIOCRITY

taste that SUCCESS

you need help maintaining the stance, that's ok,

face up, hair down

suck in proxy, breathe

be the best or at least within your age margin

30 under 30

seven, abs in tight,

fake it till you make it!

six, good, keep that head up.

create a start-up

five, yup!

four, whew, so good! i feel that butt SO MUCH, it burns!

three, I know.

two, one more

one, and done!

now bring those abs in, exhale as you pull back.

Happy NEW YEAR!

I believe in you. Do you believe in your self-destruction to be a better you? The countdown has started,

YOU MUST CHANGE YOUR LIFE!



SHIT.



when people help

[SELF HELP]

- Self help [more...]  
• self control, control

when society helps

[SHAME/HONOR-BASED LIVING]

- Management system  
• punishment (shame)

[LANGUAGE]

- parents  
• social relationships  
• communication  
• the ability of doing

when objects help

[TRANSLATION REPRESENTATION]

- translation  
• related with management  
• cognitive representation  
• exchange of information

[FURNITURE]

- desks / keyboards  
• piano / body moving  
• chair  
• floor plan

when spaces help

[ENVIRONMENT]

- role of oxygen ( $O_2$ )  
• mapping  
• rooms - spatial contexts  
• room size  
• exp. comfortable space

[TIME]

- life stage zone (parenting)  
• work  
• work family  
• quantity of time  
• time = value / optional

when we help ourselves

[PHYSIOLOGICAL]

- behavioral science

[COGNITION]

- perception  
• memory

[FOCUS & MEASURE]

- reference framework

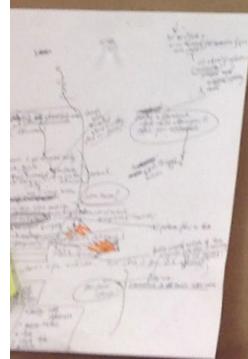
[SELF-REGULATION]

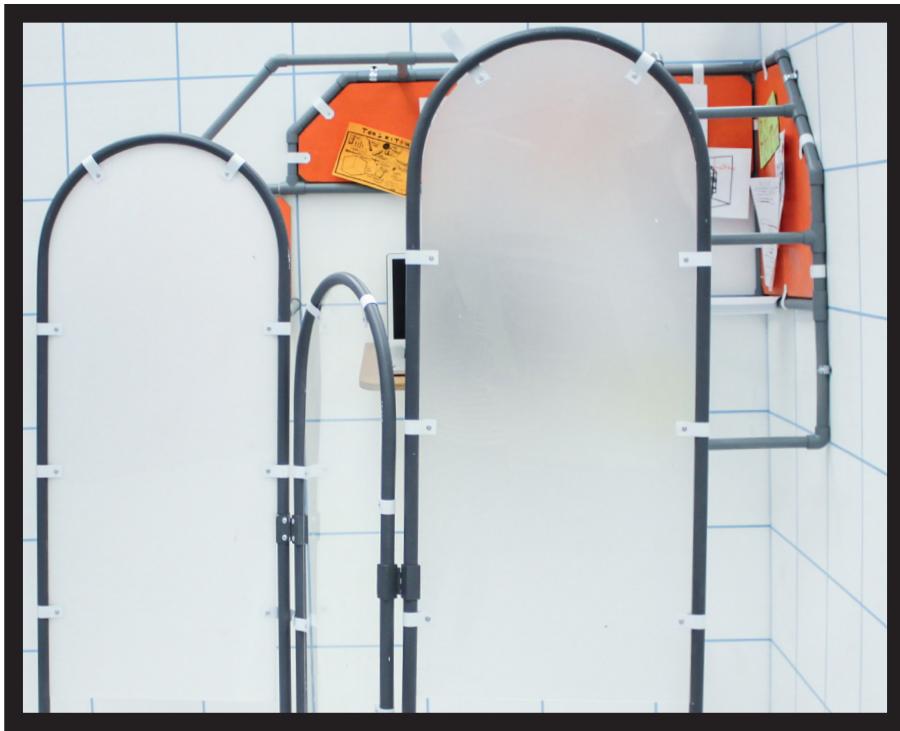
- healthy behaviors  
• self regulation  
• self control  
• self discipline  
• self monitoring  
• self awareness  
• self control

when machines help

[AUTOMATION]

- support personal performance  
• support individual abilities  
• support group performance  
• support organizational performance





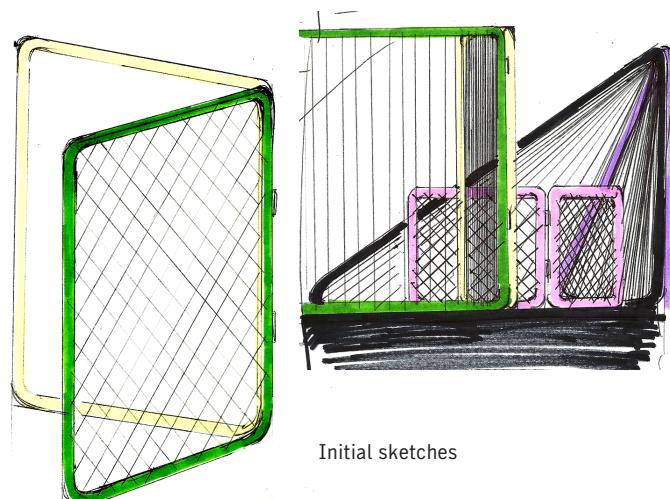
**DIVIDING SCREEN**

# PROJECT #1: DIVIDING SCREEN



This first piece came out of an initial reaction to deal with clutter by visually masking it.

There are three levels of opacity in the plastic screen, one is completely transparent, one that's semi-transparent, and one that's almost completely opaque. This is a level of denial that is aesthetically pleasing and has a varied hierarchy.





**SINGLE-TASK WORKSTATION**

## PROJECT #2: SINGLE-TASK WORKSTATION

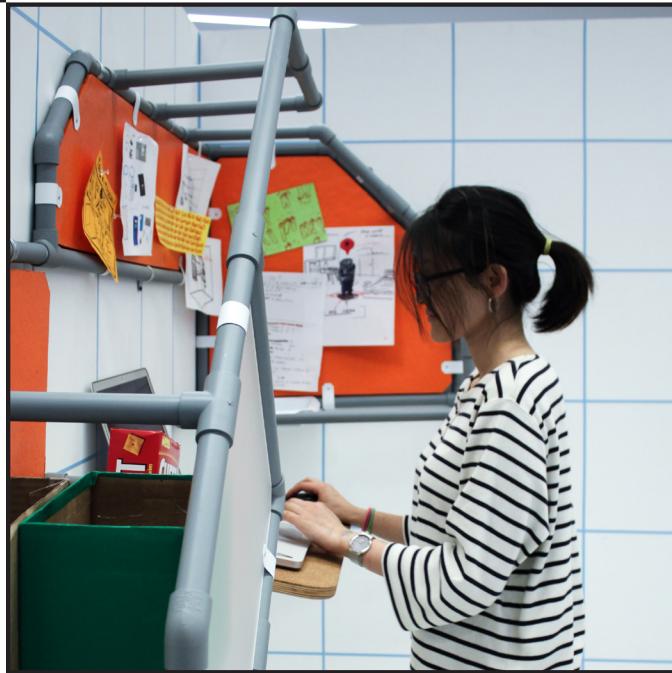
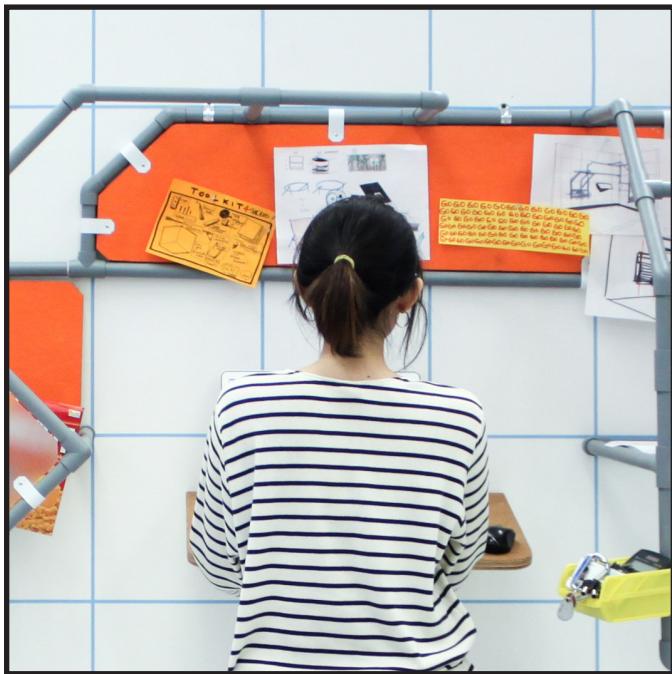
I've come to realize no matter how much surface area you give someone, they will eventually fill it up. To literally cut them off from being a infinitely spreading mess, this wall-mounted desk can only comfortably fit a laptop and mouse, or whatever single task at hand - the limit being a personal sense of overcapacity. By making it adjustable fold-down the table feels more like a transitory engagement and less like a permanent surface for storage.

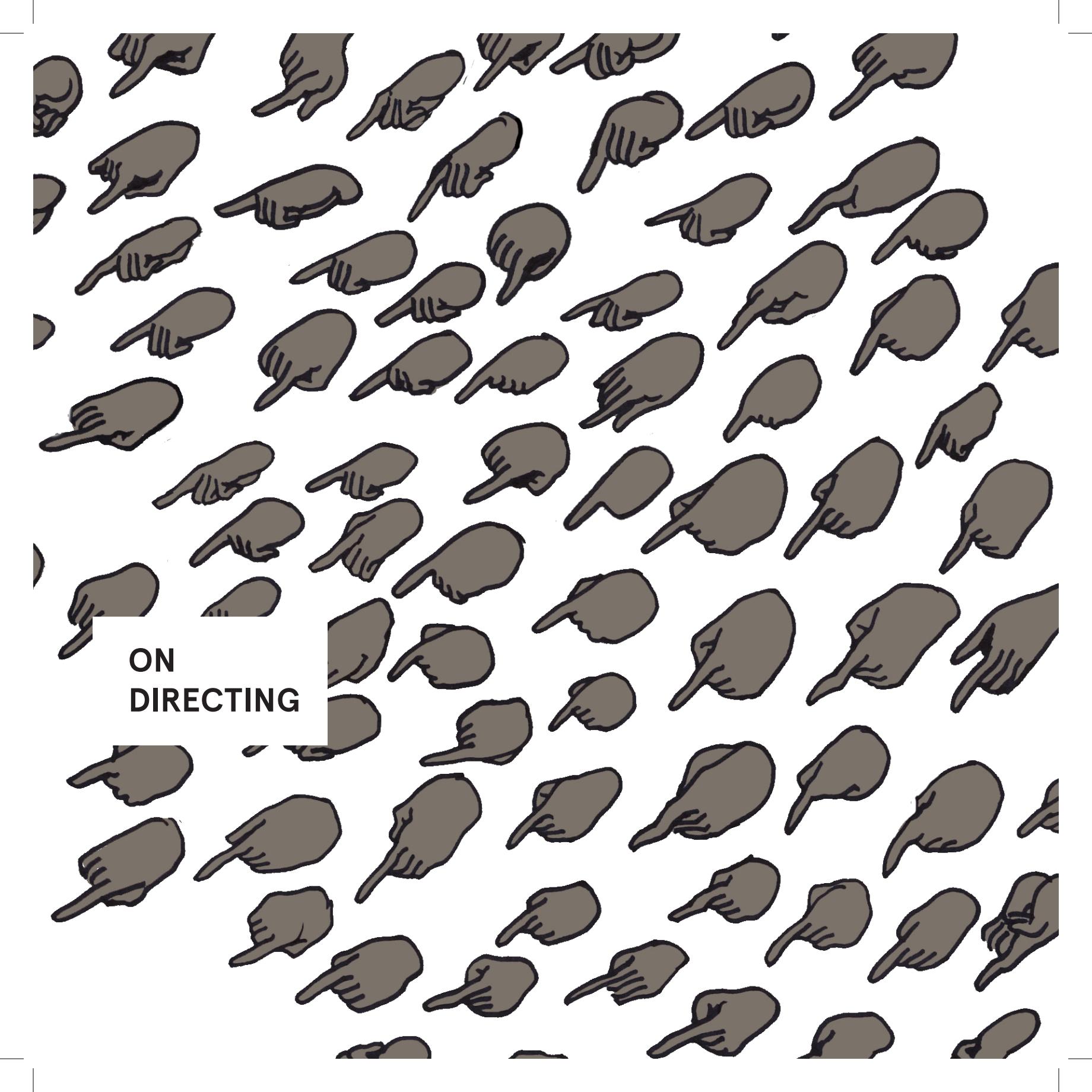
Space scripted behavior



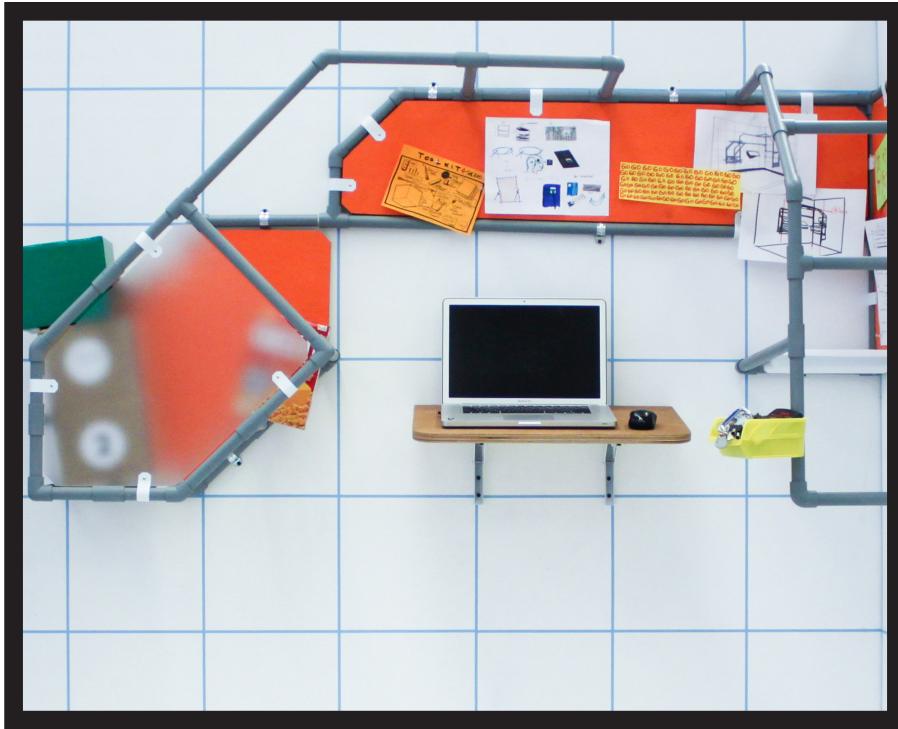
MAKE ROOM FOR YOURSELF

Classroom set-up for autistic kids





ON  
DIRECTING



## LIFE STATION

®



®

can help.<sup>SM</sup> You can do it. We can help.<sup>SM</sup> You can do it. We can help.<sup>SM</sup> You



can help.<sup>SM</sup> You can do it. We can help.<sup>SM</sup> You can do it. We can help.<sup>SM</sup> You



can help.<sup>SM</sup> You can do it. We can help.<sup>SM</sup> You can do it. We can help.<sup>SM</sup> You



can help.<sup>SM</sup> You can do it. We can help.<sup>SM</sup> You can do it. We can help.<sup>SM</sup> You

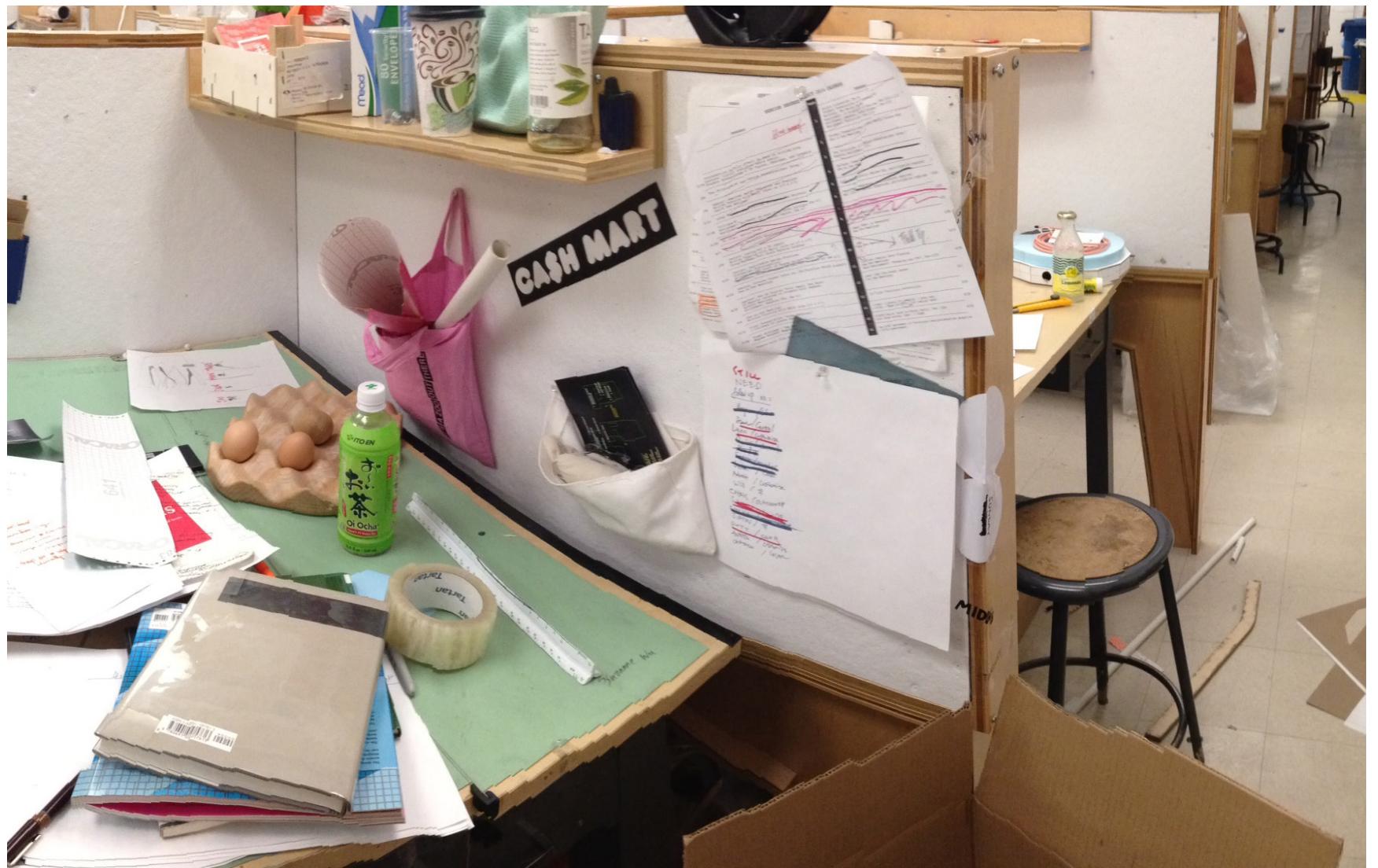


can help.<sup>SM</sup> You can do it. We can help.<sup>SM</sup> You can do it. We can help.<sup>SM</sup> You

# CHANGE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

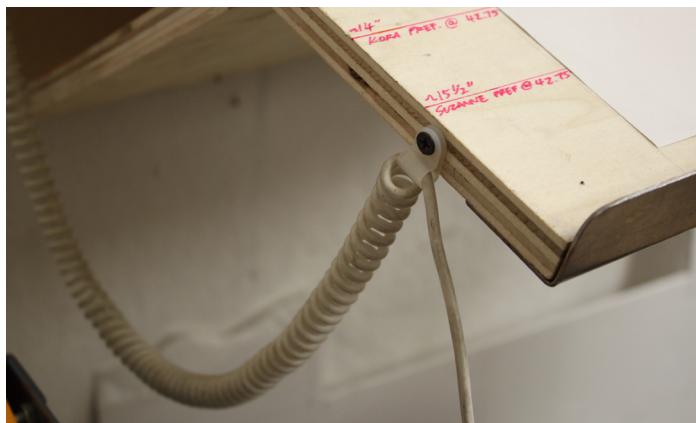
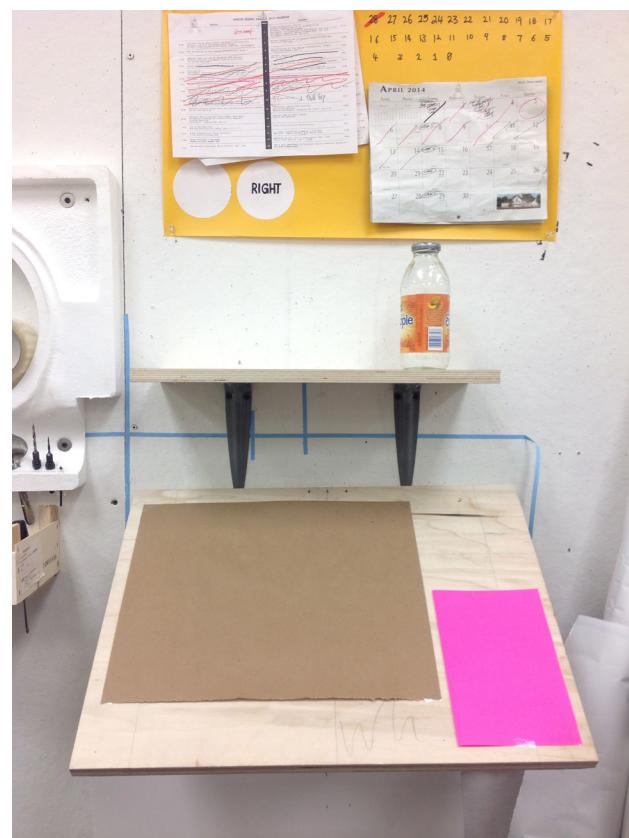
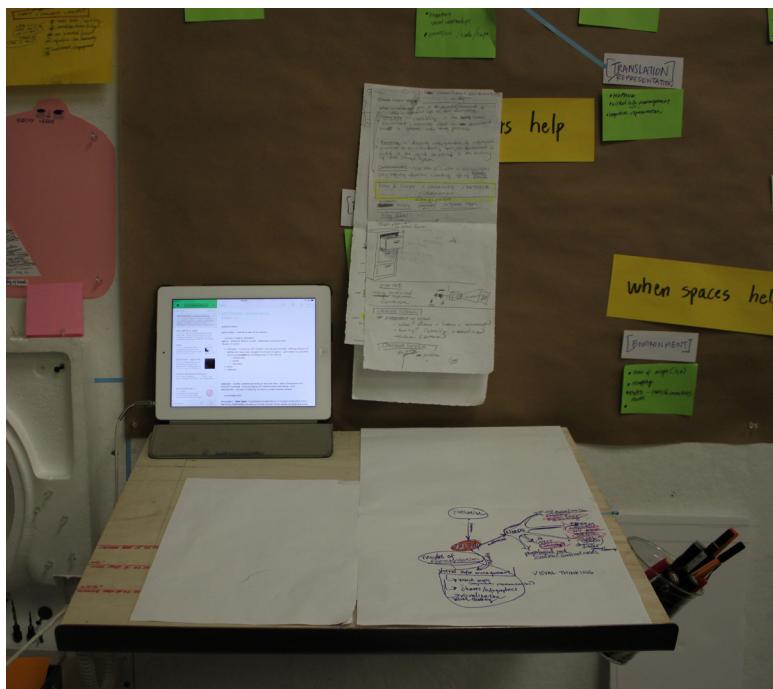


My workdesk at Prov Wash, February 2014

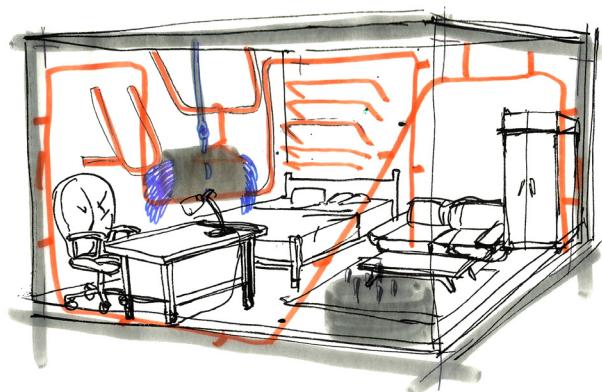


# CHANGE YOUR LIFE!

# OPTIMIZING MY WORKSPACE



## PROJECT #3: LIFE STATION

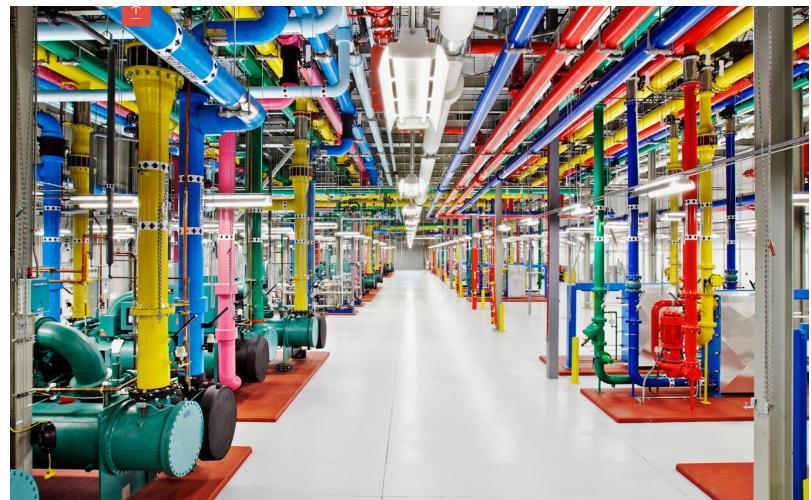


My third project is a life station. It's a home base where you arrange your priorities in order of what is in visual, spatial and mental proximity to you.

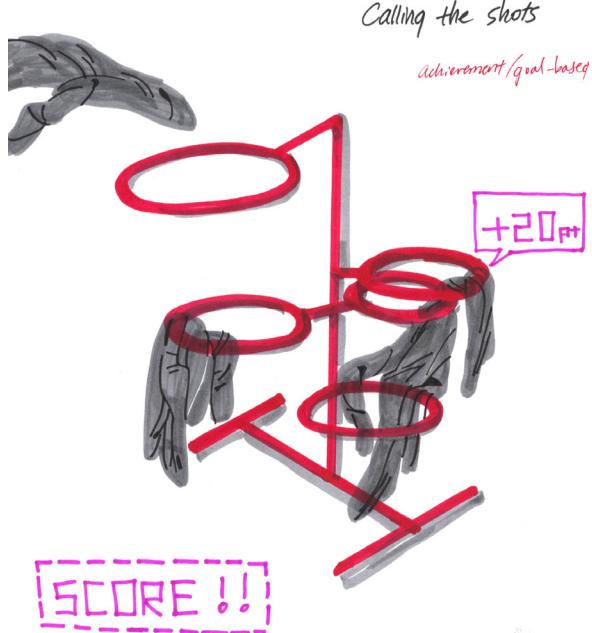
This piece came out of a strong inclination towards a well-established system, and a need to have control over my space.



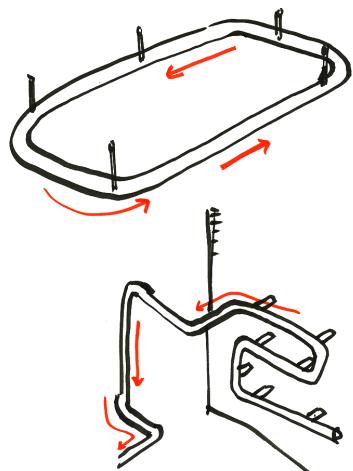
Casey Neistat's self-coded studio



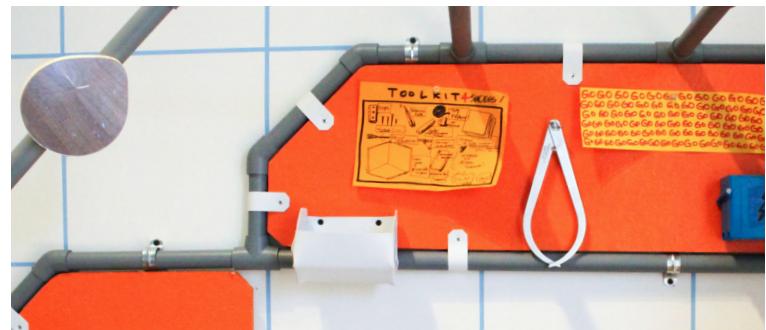
Google's underground color-coded homebase



The structure is made from 3/4" PVC and standard PVC connectors from Home Depot and Lowes. The gypsum boards are connected by plastic tags and rivets. The system's hierarchy lies in its use of color-opacity and flexibility in terms of further editing. "S" hooks hang from the PVC pipes - good for clothing and misc hanging items. Color is used like the orange to bring focus and with the grey to flatten the piece. Semi-transparent plastic sheet is added to obscure moments of visual clutter. The gypsum boards can be used for immediate editing by the user with push pins. More permanent additions can be added via a hand drill and screws.

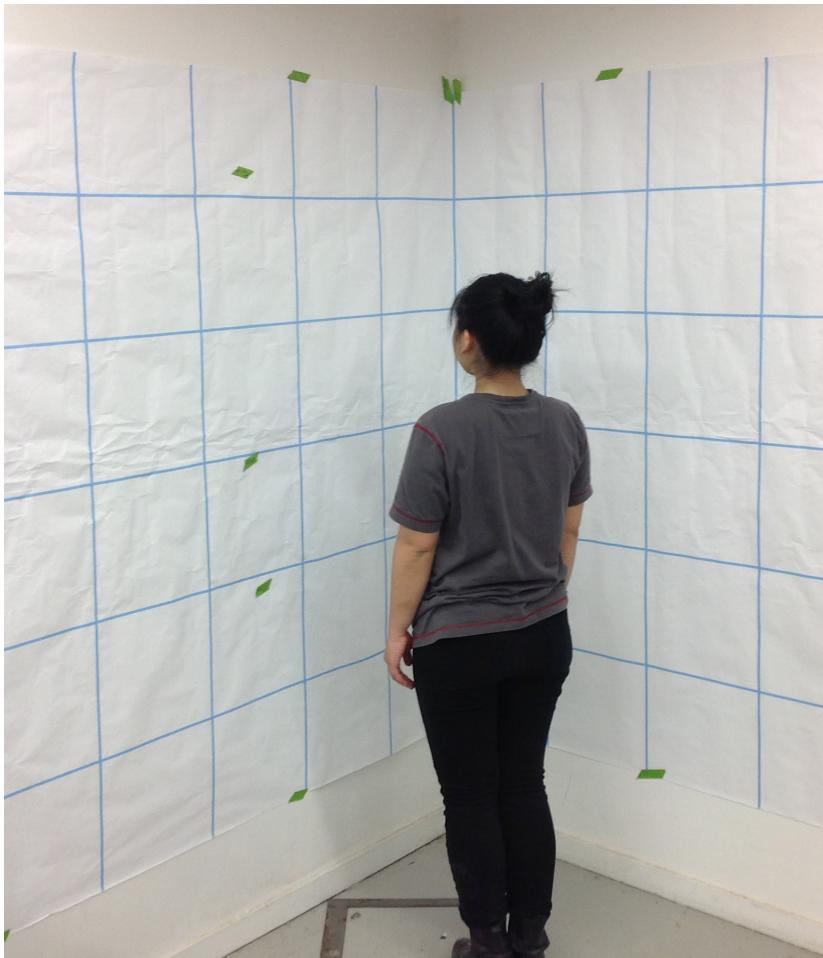


BUT DOES IT BLEND?

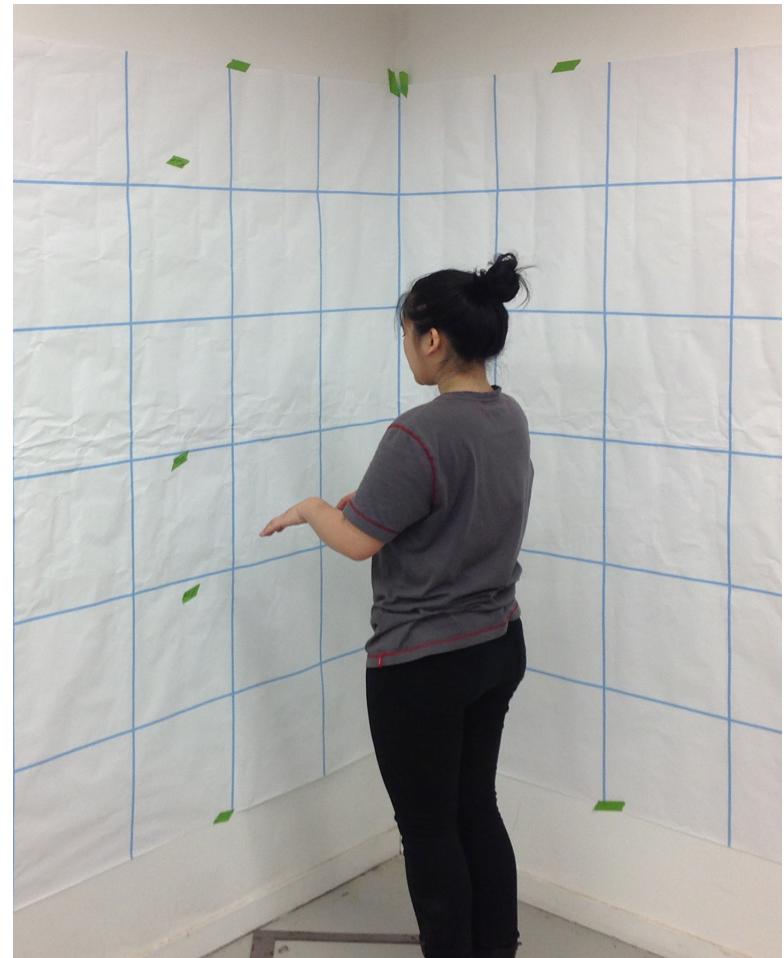


# HUMAN-SCALE TO GRID-SCALE

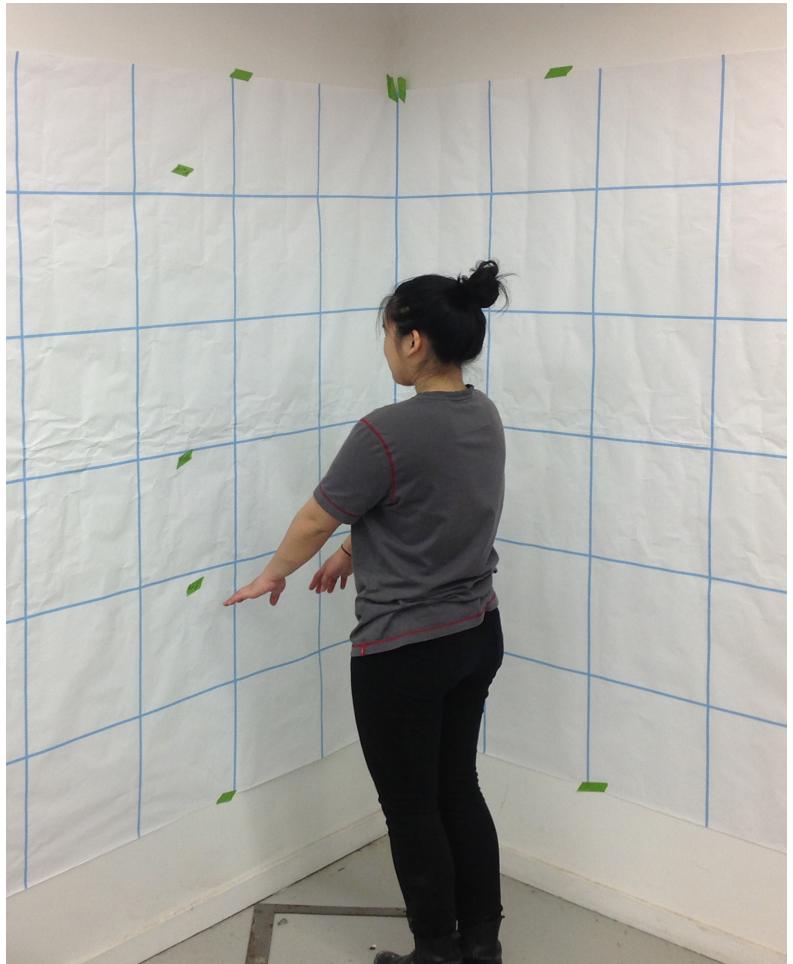
It was important to me that this system stayed human-scaled. Just like the cubit that measures from the tip of the finger to the elbows, the one foot by one foot scale came out of the idea of a measurement that is based on an averaged human foot.



at rest



optimal arm position (4ft)



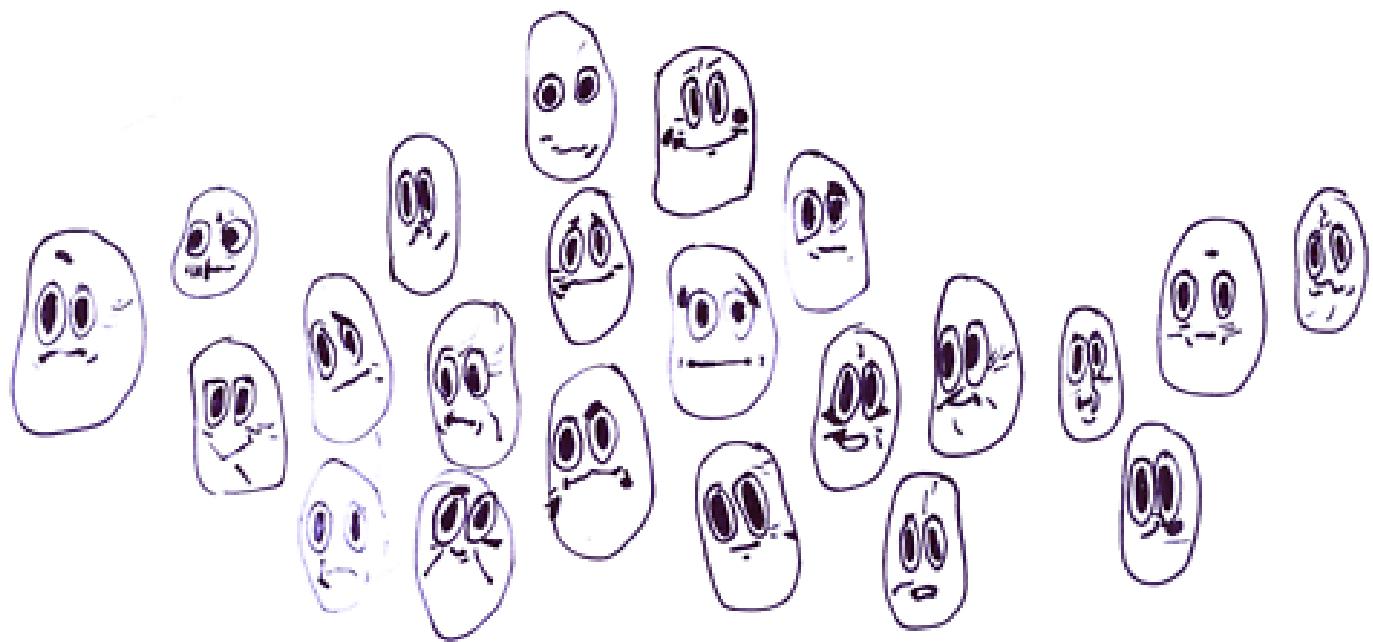
min arm reach (3ft)



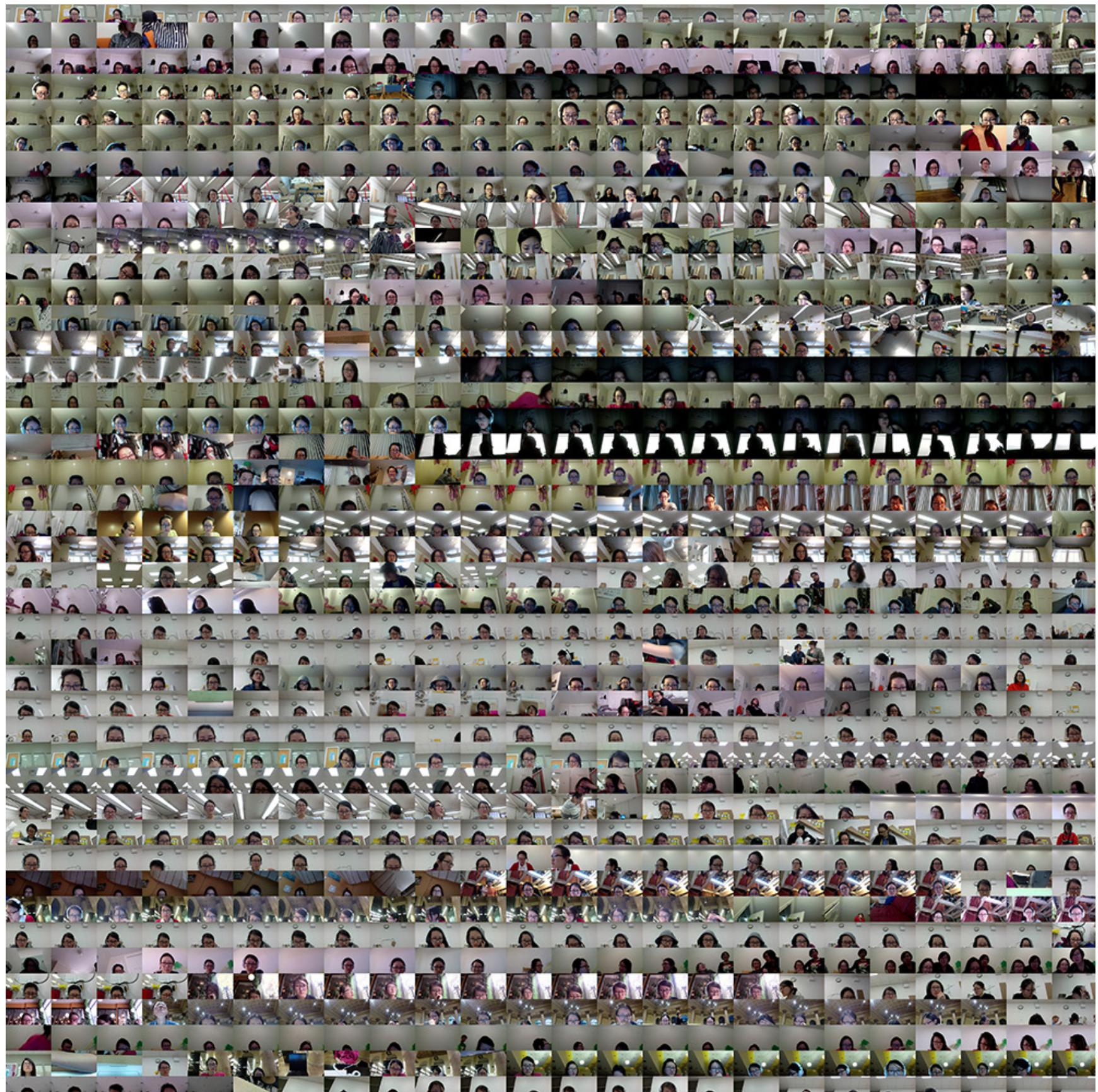
max arm reach (7ft)

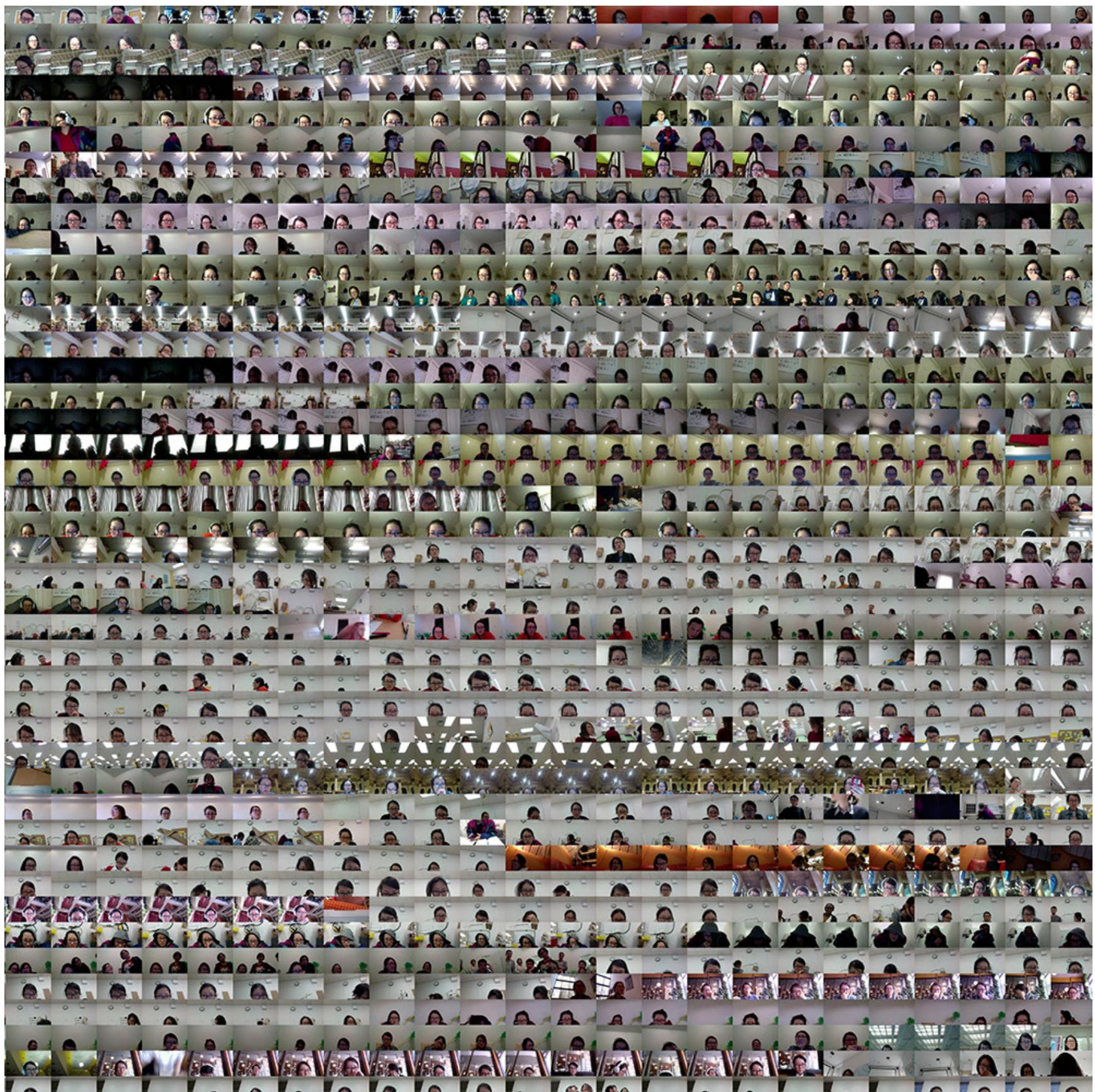
GOOD ENOUGH GOOD  
ENOUGH GOOD ENOUGH  
GOOD ENOUGH GOOD  
ENOUGH GOOD

ENOUGH GOOD  
ENOUGH GOOD  
ENOUGH GOOD  
ENOUGH GOOD



JUST KEEP SMILING





[the good stuff]



YOU ARE HERE.



The implications of this work lies in creating a mental state of mind that would encourage a healthy lifestyle. The pieces were ultimately a part of an instructional toolkit that would enable people like myself to take ownership of my space and overcome my inability to react to the world around me. Just telling people to “deal with it” is not a method of effective repair. We are creatures of comfort, only when we are pushed do we begin to make change. We shape our bodies to the crevices that will fit us only when we know it’s our own or when we have no other choice. Now it’s possible to be in charge of that environment and indeed help yourself.

**Suzanne Wu / May 2014**