Elizabeth Diller*

Bad Press

The author analyses the consequences of introducing the effectiveness management of industrial production into housework and asks the question: what would happen if the chore of ironing were to be completely free from the aesthetics of efficiency? In reply, she presents a dissident ironing project.

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Private property

In order to establish what the category of public exhibitionism includes according to legislation against nudism, the state of Florida drew up a legal definition of buttocks:

Extract: The rear part of the human body located between two imaginary lines that run parallel to the ground when a person is standing, the first or highest line is located at the top of the separation between the glutei (i.e. the prominence formed by the muscles that run from the back of the hip to the back of the leg) and the second line is located at the lowest visible point of said separation or at the lowest point of the curvature of the fleshy protuberance, located at the lowest position in either of the two, and between two imaginary lines on each side of the body, which run perpendicular to the ground and to the aforementioned horizontal lines, where said perpendicular lines run from the point at which each gluteus joins the outside part of each leg[1].

Any exposure of the flesh included in said rectangular limit would be an infraction of the law. Unlike the land law, where the boundaries of a property protect the private space from public transgression, the boundaries of property that define the body considered socially proper protect the public space from private transgression. The play on words between property and proprietary or proper[2] is particularly intricate as far as the body is considered as a legal space.

However, the body has been a space of uncertain jurisdiction for a long time, ever since the heartbreaking inscription of the crime against the state on the body of the accused by Kafka at the proposal made by William Buckley to legally order that every homosexual found to be HIV positive should have their buttocks tattooed. The invisible marks on certain social bodies are more common: for example, the bodies produced by disciplinary techniques and technologies of power analysed by Michel Foucault. Here, the body is inseparable from its institutional structure, as is the body of the soldier, instrumentally encoded to the most insignificant of levels. The articulation of each of their gestures, from their walking posture to their handwriting, were broken down into their parts, each of which was given a duration and an order of appearance[3], and they were given as much representational value as the uniform that covered their bodies. However, as we know, bodies are made of more subtle control mechanisms, like the slender body shown by popular media. This body is being continuously reinterpreted through a complex mesh of discourses that include health, beauty, economics and geography.

Home-made bodies

At the end of the 19th century, the body started to be understood as a mechanical part of industrial productivity, an extension of the factory structure. Scientific management, or Taylorism, sought to rationalise and standardise the movements of this body, using its dynamic energy and turning it into effective labour. According to Anson Rabinbach, the dynamic language of energy was at the centre of many social and political utopian ideologies at the beginning of the 20th century: Taylorism, Bolshevism and fascism. All those movements sought the body as a productive force and as a political instrument whose energies could be submitted to scientifically designed organisation systems[4].

Shortly afterwards, the practice of managing bodies for the factory was introduced into offices, schools and hospitals. For the first decade of the 20th century, scientific management was introduced into the home and applied to household chores. Time-and-motion studies for dissecting each of the worker's actions to conceive ideal forms of movement and, ultimately, the ideal worker were imported into the home to examine each movement made in domestic chores and obtain the ideal housewife (the term *housewife*, as used in Europe after the 13th century, required the reconceptualisation of the word *wife*

and the word *house* with respect to the 1920 American middle-class family that had no servants). Scientific management interpreted the housewife's body as a dynamic force with an unlimited capacity for work. Its only enemy was fatigue and fatigue, in the broad sense of the term, undermined the moral imperative of the new social reform: the claim that all waste was potentially usable.

When Frank Gilbreth increased the effectiveness of bricklaying by introducing a less inclined work posture, Christine Frederick, the first exponent of scientific effectiveness in the home, asked the question: Didn't I, like hundreds of women, unnecessarily bend over kitchen tables, sinks and ironing boards like bricklayers bend over bricks?

Extract: Precooked food, made possible by new progress in packaging, saves housewives a lot of time. Consider the difference in the time and effort required to make a precooked, packaged goulash and cooking one from scratch. The lights that are fastened to the cook's wrists show how many additional movements she had to make during the 90 minutes that were required for the longer form of cooking in comparison with the pre-cooked form, which took only 12 minutos[5]. Reaching heights of 116, 142 and 182 cm above the floor with the arms requires an increase in oxygen consumed per minute in comparison with standing still of 12%, 24% and 50%, respectively. The energy consumed is therefore proportional to the height reached. Stretching out the arms requires less energy than bending the body. Reaching heights of 55 and 7 cm above the floor by bending the trunk increases oxygen consumption in comparison with the amount required when standing still by 57% and 131% in terms of cubic centimetres of oxygen per minute. Reaching a height of 7 cm above the floor by bending the knees requires an oxygen consumption of 224%. Despite the fact that this would suggest that bending the trunk requires less energy than bending the knees, bending the knees would involve less muscular effort»[6].

The application of work-saving techniques based on scientific management, together with the introduction of domestic appliances, the new electrical servants, sought to save the physical energy spent by housewives in the 1920s. According to the rhetoric of efficiency, the time and energy saved would release women from the home and allow them to join the paid workforce.

However, the search for efficiency did not meet its promise of liberation. Efficiency was often taken as an objective in itself. Ironically, this meant that housewives had to do an amount of work that increased as cleaning standards and expectations grew to compulsive levels. The discovery of the domestic germ and the proliferation of the germ theory exacerbated the association between dirt and disease. Dirt soon became a moral construct that housed sexual, religious and aesthetic distinctions. The turning of hygiene into a fetish led to the problem of cleanliness being confused with beauty, chastity, piety and modernity. As efficiency focused more and more on the domestic space and on the domestic body, interior design succumbed to the paranoia of hygiene. The engendering complexity of dust and bacteria in the interior spaces of the 19th century disappeared and gave way to the pure surface that was «white, terse, smooth, non-porous and continuous» under the persistent disciplinary gaze of the housewife.

Although the application of scientific management did not liberate housewives, daily housework was rationalised more and more thanks to the women who had to stay there. In order to eliminate the stigma of what was considered as a low-category service provided by women, between the 1920s and 40s, domestic chores gradually became a male affair and were reconfigured as a more global economic management of the home[7]. The domestic economist now combined the expertise of the nutritionist, doctor, accountant, childcare specialist and informed consumer, among others.

Despite this new characterisation, the effective physical effort that was required for domestic chores continued to be as exhausting and unpleasant as ever. The dirt that was previously absorbed by the servant's body was now a direct concern for the lady of the house[8]. In a house of the first half of the century, without servants, keeping the female body idealised with no evidence of decadence became a project of devotion similar to maintaining the idealisation of the domestic space. The aim of both was to avoid the corrosion of age and restore ideal order on a daily basis, with criteria and values that were generated and fostered by the popular media.

Nowadays, looking after the home and the body have found a new point of union: domestic chores can be incorporated into a daily routine of aerobics and carried out to the rhythm of a physical fitness trainer on TV. The housewife, who is no longer socially isolated, can carry out her domestic chores with an endless number of TV viewers. Despite the fact that housework is gradually no longer being associated with one single gender and that workplaces and leisure areas are becoming more and more interchangeable, most of the conventions on looking after the house remain unchanged. The fundamental activities of domestic chores, keeping dirt under control and restoring daily order, are still subject to the economic ideals of industry, guided by the economic principles of the movement that was originally designed by efficiency engineers. Take, for example, the procedure for ironing a man's shirt explained by a domestic chores manual of the 1960s:

Extract: Place the back of the shirt in the centre of an ironing board with the camisole stretched. Raise the iron as little as possible, move it, with the tip pointing towards the collar, from the camisole to the fold of the back tail and press on the board, using slow, appropriately directed and rhythmic movements. To avoid excessive handling of the clothing, turn the shirt as follows: First of all, turn it clockwise on the surface of the ironing board to reveal the front-left part of the panel. Press down. Pause when you press on each buttonhole and pocket so that the steam can enter the fabric on the back and inner strip. Then turn the shirt clockwise to reveal the front-right part of the cloth and press, turning the tip of the iron around each button. Slide the camisole of the right shoulder onto the end of the ironing board and press down. Repeat the operation with the camisole of the left shoulder. Extend the right sleeve with the opening facing upwards and press down diagonally across the width of the sleeve from the underarm seam to the top edge of the wrist, pressing down to make a well-defined fold. Repeat this procedure with the left sleeve. With the rear of the camisole in the middle, press down on the fold of the collar and the inner collar, directing the iron towards the tips of the collar. Turn the shirt over with the front facing upwards and fasten the buttons. Using the Z method to eliminate unnecessary movements of the shirt and arms, turn the shirt over. Fold the front-left surface to the centre, pressing down to make a well-defined fold from the outer edge of the camisole to 6 cm from the underarm seam to the hem of the tail. Fold the left sleeve 45 degrees at the shoulder seam so that the length of the sleeve is parallel to the length of the fold on the rear surface and press down. Repeat this procedure with the back-right surface and the right sleeve. Fold the shirt tail to 1/3 of the distance to the collar. Fold 1/3 again towards the camisole, making sure that all the edges are in line and form 90-degree angles. Using the Z method, turn the shirt over so that the front is facing upwards and press down lightly.

With the arrival of the electric iron, ironing was gradually governed by minimums in both aesthetic and economic terms. Minimum efforts were made to shape the shirt with a minimum number of flat surfaces in one repetitive two-dimensional unit that would consume a minimum amount of space. This shirt would reveal a minimum number of folds when it was worn, especially in the exposed area between

the jacket lapels. The standard model for ironing a man's shirts usually returns the shirt to a flat, rectangular form that fits economically into orthogonal storage systems: at the place of manufacture, the shirt ironed at the factory is piled up and packaged in rectangular boxes that are loaded like cubic volumes onto trucks and transported to save space, so that the rectangular shape of the shirt is reinserted into orthogonal display boxes and then, after it has been purchased, kept at home on wardrobe shelves or in drawers in dressers and, finally, in suitcases when away from home. The shirt has been taught to adapt to a tacit social contract on each scenario.

When it is worn, the residue of the orthogonal logic of efficiency can be seen on the surface of the body. The parallel folds and concise right angles of a clean, ironed shirt have become coveted emblems of refinement. The by-product of efficiency has become a new object of desire.

But, what would happen if the chore of ironing were to be completely free from the aesthetics of efficiency? Perhaps the results of the ironing process could represent the post-industrial body more appropriately by replacing the image of functionality with that of dysfunctionality.

Bad Press (Instructions for dissident ironing)

Shirt 1

With the front-left panel of the shirt on the ironing surface, slide the tip of the iron from the outer edge of the shoulder seam in a straight diagonal line to the fifth or sixth buttonhole, depending on the angle of the interior lapel of the jacket that is to be worn. Repeat this procedure with the right panel and iron only the area inside the V. Press down on the collar fold, moving the iron towards the tips of the front collar. Iron only the five centimetres of the cuffs that are visible. Fasten the front part and press down lightly to make a well-defined fold left to right of the edges in a V shape.

The English dandies of the 18th and 19th centuries introduced the concept of personal hygiene. The white shirt was presented as a washable and socially acceptable layer between underwear and outer garments. It represented a new form of hygiene. The surprising innovation of wearing a clean shirt every day has been attributed to Beau Brummel.

Extract: According to the good social tone of dandyism, the white layer that covered the skin always protruded beyond the edges of the outer garments at the cuffs and collar, standing as a hygienic structure for the obsessively well-cared-for hands and head. Detachable collars and cuffs were therefore subjected to the strictest boil washes, starching, ironing and polishing processes. What initially sought to represent a new wave of austerity in men's clothing, The Great Male Abandonment, became fascination for the artifice that transformed the image of sobriety into an image of extravagant efficiency[9].

Shirt 2

Iron a shirt according to the ironing procedure, but do not fold it. With the shirt facing upwards, fasten the second button in the first buttonhole in the collar. Continue fastening the buttons in order, leaving out the fourth button. The remaining buttons must be appropriately aligned. Turn the shirt over and iron the left and right surfaces. Correct the irregularity by moving the braid of the shoulder and fold it seven degrees from the horizontal strip.

The prisoners designated for washing clothes at state prisons have invented a very elaborate language by practising their ironing. The apparently superfluous and decorative folds that are ironed into the clothing of other prisoners is given a figurative value understood only by those in the know. The fold, another

form of inscription, like a prison tattoo, on soft and flexible surfaces is a sign of resistance of the deprived. In the same way that the tattoo is made on the prisoner's only possession, his skin, the fold is made directly on the institutional skin of the prison uniform: it is a camouflaged distortion. The crease offers more resistance to appropriation than the tattoo insofar as its abstract language is illegible for anyone not in the know, unlike the typically pictorial language of the tattoo.

Shirt 3

Iron the shirt until it is completely smooth. Keep the back panel facing upwards and use the standard ironing procedure, folding the right sleeve onto the right surface. Leave the left sleeve free. Continue ironing, folding the shirt along the axis of the right sleeve to reduce it to the exact width of the front pocket. Fold the right sleeve in half lengthwise and iron it. Fold it into a cross and slide the right sleeve through the collar and, with a crease 13 cm from the cuff, put it into the pocket.

Extract: When patient X started to ironed an article of clothing, she was unable to stop until she collapsed from exhaustion. The patient meticulously and unceasingly ironed the most unnoticeable creases in a shirt, e.g. ironing the same areas again and again. The creases could never go away completely, so she could never finished the work well, according to her expectations; and the chore of ironing unavoidably produced new creases in the clothing[10].

Shirt 4

Iron the shirt without folding it. Fasten the cuffs and front panels of the shirt. Push the collar inside the shirt from the top and pull it out between the fourth and fifth buttons. Fold the cuffs on themselves and smooth them down with the iron. Insert the cuffs through the collar, keeping the axis of the crease at 45 degrees. Fold the collar downwards on itself. Iron the left and right surfaces and make the perpendicular folds before the third button and after the sixth.

Extract: Manufacturers are acclaiming the Japanese invention of 100% low-iron shirts that do not shrink as the best trick in men's clothes since the arrival of stay press shirts almost three decades ago. The shirts represent the ultimate challenge against the iron because, in comparison with most of the other clothes, they are made of fine fabric. When the cotton is worn and washed, the hydrogen bridges that connect the cellulose molecules in the cotton can break. If the bridges are broken, the molecular chains swell up and change when they are washed, which produces creases. However, when the cotton is treated with resins and other reactive molecules, new bridges are formed between the cotton molecules to stabilise the fabric. Scientists specialising in shirts finally have a scale for classifying creases, with 1.0 as the equivalent to a raisin and 5.0 as the ideal condition. These new shirts vary between 3.5 and 4.0. In Japan, where household chores are still largely separated traditionally according to gender, those shirts are widely accepted not only by women who hate ironing, but also by working men who, during their trips, can now wash a shirt in the basin, hang it up to dry and wear it the next day[11].

Indeed, the popularity of the miraculous low-iron fabrics among Japanese businessmen is maintaining the image of devotion shown by their wives.

Taken from the well-known game show *Family Feud*: Listen carefully to the next question. We asked 100 married men. 'Name one of the first alarm signs that a marriage is not going well'. The six most common answers were as follows: constant arguing, lack of communication, stopped cooking, no sex, stops ironing, infidelity.

With the arrival of the miraculous fabrics, ironing may become an expression of love.

Shirt 5

Iron the right sleeve with a well-defined fold in the centre. Turn the left sleeve inside out. Iron it and pull the sleeve out through the buttoned collar. Put one hand inside the right sleeve through the opening and take hold of the bottom of the shirt by the front strips. Insert the shirt completely into the right sleeve until the collar is next to the underarm seam. Align the collar and cuffs with the vertical fold of the sleeve.

Two speculations on the Deleuzian fold:

Extract: John Rajchman: It cannot be said that the fold is inherent to philosophy, although it is etymologically associated with many words (fold, words with –plic and -plex, such as multiplicity perplexity, complexity and complication. The fold implies an emotional space. The modernist term *machines for life* sought to express a clean and effective space for the new mechanical body; but, who will invent a way of expressing the promotional space for the new multiple body?"[12]

Greg Lynn: The culinary theory has coined a definition for three types of recipes. The first implies the manipulation of homogeneous elements. The acts of whipping, shaking and stirring change the volume of liquid, but not its nature. The second mixes two or more different elements. The acts of chopping, dicing, grinding, grating, slicing, crumbling and crushing break the elements up into fragments. The third, which includes the acts of mixing, beating butter and combining, brings together multiple ingredients by stirring them slowly and repeatedly in such a way that their individual characteristics remain. If there is any effect produced by this type of folding in architecture, it is the ability to integrate unconnected elements into a new continuous mixture. A folded mixture is not homogeneous like whipped cream or fragmented like crushed walnuts, but rather smooth and heterogeneous[13].

Shirt 6

Turn the shirt inside out and centre it on the ironing surface, stretching out the openings. Separate the back panel into 20 equal sections. Fold each section like an accordion and press down firmly. With the shirt folded and ironed, roll it up towards the neck, letting the front left and right panels extend from the end of the collar. Fold the collar onto the compressed shirt and fasten the collar buttons. Invert the sleeves that were inside out onto the other side panels. Fasten the cuffs and iron them.

The fold has been a useful metaphor for the discourse of post-structuralist architecture because it consolidates ambiguities such as the surface and the structure, the figure and the organisation. One of the main attributes of the fold is not that it is figurative. The fold also implies reversibility: If anything can be folded, it can also be unfolded and re-folded.

The crease is a more convincing metaphor because it resists transformation. The crease has a longer memory than the fold and it has figurative value, in the form of inscription. The crease is more difficult to eliminate. Its signals guide its continuous confirmation until it is inscribed in a new order with the illusion of permanence.

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