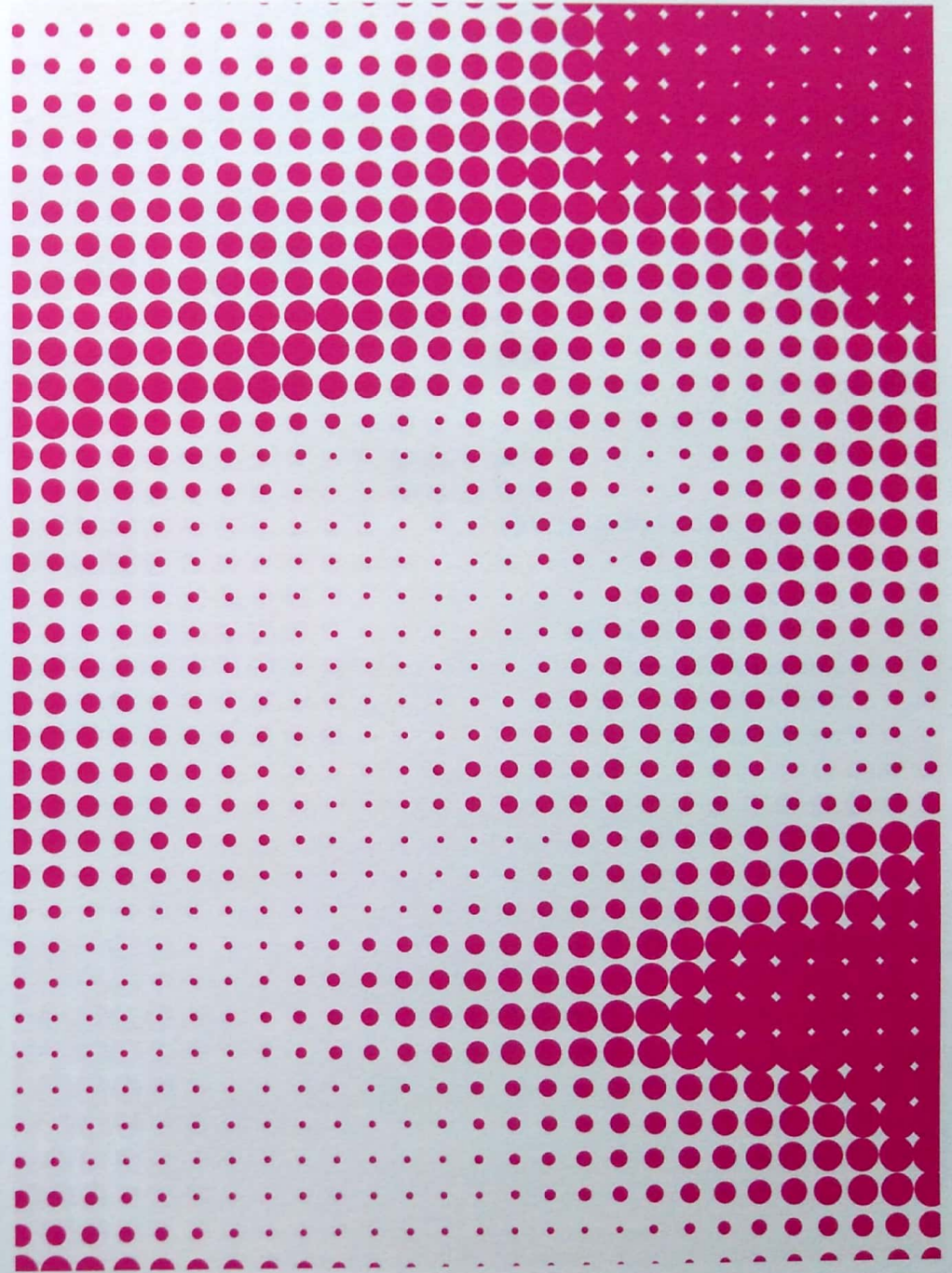
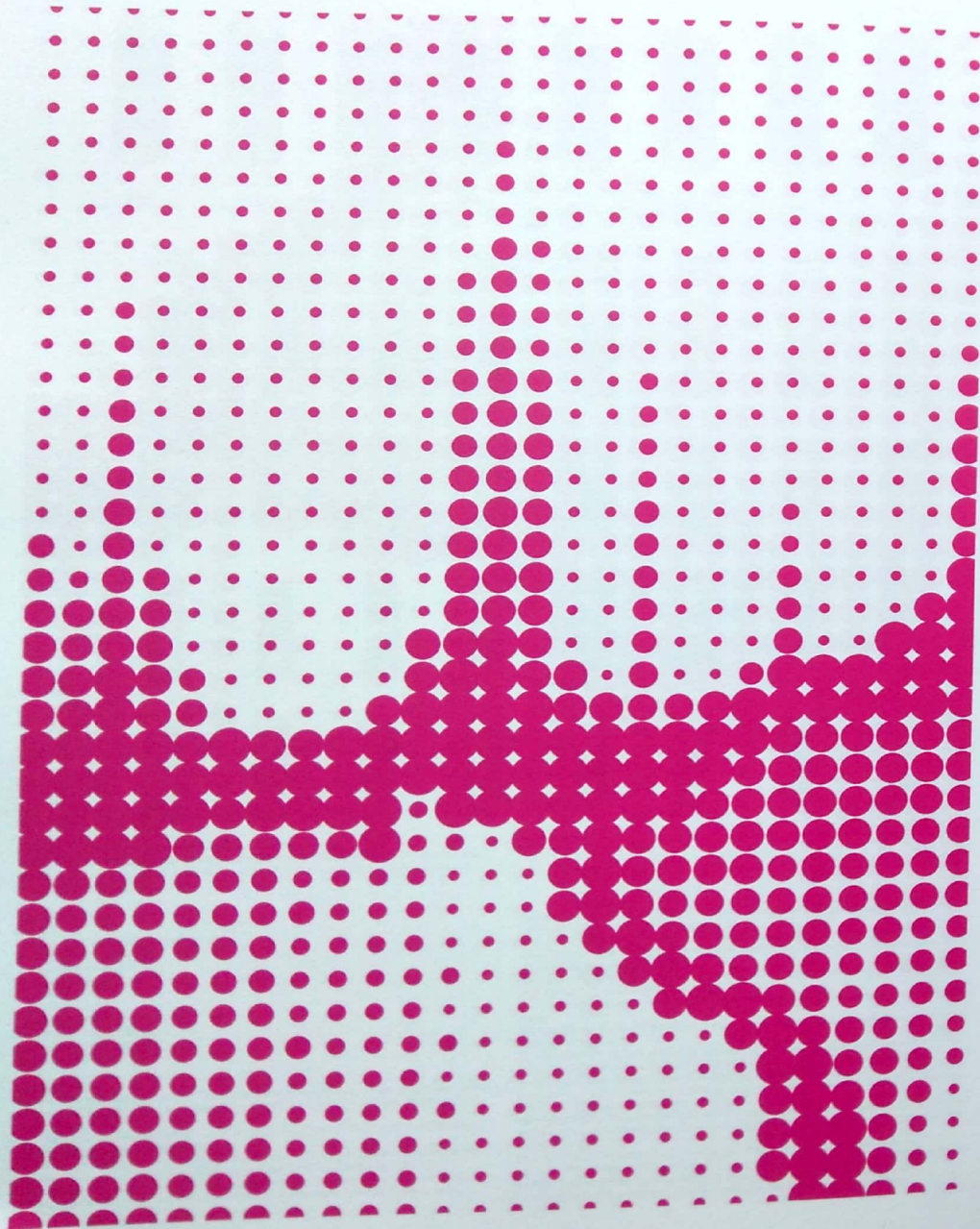


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# IKEA Disobedients

Andrés Jaque + Ana Peñalbá

*An Experiment on the Political Activation of  
Domestic Urban Assemblages*



IKEA Disobedients is an archive-making and situation-construction project that aims to offer an overview of individuals and groups who have organized their domesticities not as a depoliticized and disconnected environments, but as the very center of their vinculation to the collective and to the conflicts that are part of it. Home for them is the architectural and associative device to engage in the construction and discussion of the commons. Their domesticities provide a response to the 'Welcome to the independent republic of your home' famous IKEA's motto. Their domestic environments are not enabling them to 'forget about the world' but, rather deliver them opportunities to change it, make visible their reaction to it and be part of networks meant to challenge the way it is currently organized. In the systematic recount of these domesticities, the IKEA Disobedients project presents itself as systematical, natural and socially distributed reaction against IKEA's command to understand domesticity as a sphere disconnected from the politics. In June 2012, the IKEA Disobedients project was acquired by MoMA to be part of its collection. On the occasion of this acquisition, an extension of the project was made adding a new configuration of Ikea elements according to the interactions between performers and spectators intended on this second performance series.

IKEA Disobedients is composed by an archive of 19 study cases of politically activated domestic environments, a video-manifesto, a material installation-made out of piles of Ikea furniture undisciplinarily architecture-like set, and a protocol to produce an available communal space out of activities found in the 19 study cases. The manifesto states: "IKEA delivers societies. IKEA is a purveyor of social structuration. 98% of the people depicted in the IKEA catalogue are young. 92% of them are blond. They all have some sort of family life. They are either children, or busy having children. Everything IKEA manufactures is aimed at turning the sphere of domesticity into a sunny, happy, apolitical space inhabited by contented, healthy, young people. The sense of a home or a household life, however, may also be constructed from day to day in quite different fashions. Not all of us are healthy. Not all of us are young. Not all of us are into having children. A depoliticized ordinary life is encouraged wherever the domestic and the public are segregated. The home has often been imaged as a space of disconnection from public strife and disputation; as the location where one can forget the rest of the World; as the site where we encounter only what is familiar to us: The Independent Republic of Our Home. A different way of construing ordinary life may be conceived, however. Namely, one where the home is a site for confrontations and encounters with all that is different, unfamiliar or under dispute. Deciding, for instance, whether or not we are on the pill; how domestic chores are to be assigned; or to what extent we want to take responsibility for garbage separation; through all these processes we emerge as politically activated citizens from the privacy of our homes. Disobeying IKEA's injunction to contain social interactions within sunny apolitical home-enclaves is what we propose as an urban counter-notion of the domestic; not a neutral space, but one installing controversy and disagreement precisely at the site

where affections may also emerge."

The project was experimented as a performance for the first time in November 2011, at Tabacalera Madrid. At that moment 10 disobediens had been selected as a study case. Each of them was presented by means of a short description of the way his or her domesticity was like. The texts were published in a number of magazines and presented in the very space where a communal area consisting of a stage, a kitchen, a gym and a making up desk had been produced out of piled Ikea furniture. The description texts are the following:

*For the last two years Aurora has been living in Ethiopia, Cambodia and Turkey, working as a volunteer in cooperation projects. She now lives with her girlfriend in Madrid where they share a downtown apartment with four more people. During all this time she has never lived in the sort of environment that might fit conventional descriptions of familial space, and yet she's been part of different forms of domesticity shaped by the flows of affection and reciprocity between people not joined by a common past.*

*Daniel lives in an apartment next to Sol Square in central Madrid. He spends an hour at the gym every day. A number of websites allow him access to friendship, affection and sex. His home-space is jointly constituted by his flat, the gym and a tangle of online-managed relationships, in a continuum where he may encounter competition and misunderstanding, but also security and support.*

*Berta lives in a squat with a community of lesbian women. Occupying the property afforded them an opportunity to develop a project based on principles of communal economy and self-management. Taking care of material needs is not the only issue they see as a common concern to be managed collectively: contributing to the emotional and professional empowerment of each member of the community is also seen as everyone's responsibility.*

*Candela lives with her three daughters, her grandchildren and six dogs, in an old apartment in the Lavapiés district of Madrid. A number of elderly male neighbors living on their own regularly have dinner at Candela's place. Social networks based on solidarity flourish at such gatherings.*

*On average, Carlos and Marina devote more than eight hours a day to playing music, both at home and at the music school where they study. For them, playing are both an intensely personal experience and a dimension of collective bonding both as an expression of individual sensitivity, and a form of connection with wider networks of people sharing a similar passion for music. Playing music is therefore the activity on which the articulation of both their private and their social lives hinges. For them there is no divorce between the domestic and the public, as both domains are interwoven within the same activity in their daily lives.*

*Manolo lives with his wife in an apartment in Vallecas. He works as the editor of an independent magazine whose publishing costs are*



1. Performance view at Tabacalera Madrid (above)  
2. Performance view at the MoMA PS1 (facing page)

*defrayed by an association devoted to supporting different forms of activism. From his studio-like work-space at home, Manolo edits the publication's political content. His home is not an 'independent republic', but a site granting him access to public debate and participation.*

*Nayana came to Spain looking for a job and for education opportunities. Her getting married was not meant as an expression of the love and commitment she shared with her partner, but was intended rather as a means to obtain a legal status facilitating her professional projects. Her domestic life was therefore shaped by the way interpersonal relationships are officially construed.*

*Toñi lives on her own in an apartment in Vallecas. Together with Manolo and other locals, she is a member of a chirigota an amateur group which sings satirical songs. They call themselves Los de siempre y uno más ("the usual ones plus one more"). With her fellow chirigota members she plans trips and dinner parties and it's with them that she celebrates her birthdays. Although they are not related, when they are together they say 'feel at home'.*

*Paco lives with a friend in Las Tablas. He has no children, and never intended to start a family. On weekends he spends time together with*

*his buddies playing the guitar at a public park.*

The experience, and the debate it produced in the media, fueled the arena for a disciplinary reaction in both general newspapers and architecture magazines like DOMUS which dedicated its December 2011 front-page to the project.

On April 25th 2012 MoMA Acquisitions Committee decided to acquire IKEA Disobedients to be included in its collection. As part of the acquisition the museum decided to make the commission for a new phase of the project to be developed in Queens with New York Disobedient to be performed twice at MoMA PS1 in September 2012. The project will also be exhibited as part of the exhibition curated by Pedro Gadanho '9+1 Ways of Being Political. 50 Years of Political Stances in Architecture and Urban Design'.

This new commission and performative action of the project have released an extension in the boundaries that surrounded the theoretical manifesto inducing a new way to understand the project through the interaction raised between performers and visitors. On this occasion the performance took 120 min each allowing for visitors to understand the performance, not just as the representation of a punctual scene but as a productive state



where the domesticity of the performers were melted with the public action brought by the spectators. An unexpected situation was created by this fact, and two performances were running simultaneously. The debate created by the spectators wondering about their associations (or dissociations) to those domesticities and the content of the debate brought by the performers, creating even a third one, when both parties interacted into a deliberation of spontaneous interchanges.

The material installation produced for both performances was made up with a set of Ikea furniture, where their spatial configuration challenged the conventional approach to understanding the rules that govern the way to place (and use) the furniture within the field of Architecture. Not pretending to create any kind of object-based design theory, an experimental assessment of "spatial dis-obediences" is created through the exploration of new possibilities that a second lecture of the pieces of furniture bring up to design conceptions, structural tests and communal space relationships.

The account of the complex boundaries in which public and private spheres negotiate its mutual interdependency, brings under the spotlight of how architecture can also be thought of as the management of relational constructions built from associations. Alliances produced in a number of selected domestic environments are brought into an uncertain collective space in which intimacies and affections get to interact with the making of the public. The project shows how architecture can also be used as a research tool that does not pretend to modify the nature of the social facts but to account, empower and enhance the richness it contains.

A politically active space made of social contents is created, not attempting to invent new urban needs but enhancing the existing ones, showing its hidden impact on the way cities and homes are currently configured. Not having a final product, the project aims to represent the possibility of architecture made up of intermittent states acting as a window of what surrounds us depending on the city where the project is being held. Being an

open experience a diversity of confronted interpretations, and not accountable by direct moral evaluation, a positive debate is created through the structure of social networks and human interaction to approach critically and protectively contemporary urban phenomena like the ones described.

The two performances made in New York were participated by 9 dis-obedients (6 Ikea Dis-obedients cases) selected after an analysis of a big number of candidate study cases in New York City. The selection was made through the detection of homes where intimacy and public domain is connected through the way those dis-obedients use their domesticity as the location where both spheres interact. The project is conceived as an opportunity to make visible the existence of this "politicized homes" where their vinculation to the collective makes them an example of how the dis-obedient and their close network of friends and relatives do not inhabit "the independent republic" of their homes.

The communal space for the installation, a piling of hacked Ikea products, was composed so it could include something similar to a stage where Danish was playing his sarod, a kitchen where Mama Gianna was cooking pasta and meatballs using some of the greens that Rael was planting in his aquaponic structure. Corentin, Maja, Donnie and Greg fulfilled the space of an atmosphere where open controversies were floating, while Frank invaded the collective space with "things that are art and no art" and Moddy cut the hair of tens of visitors in her moveable hair salon. The description texts of the New York dis-obedient, distributed in the very space where the experience took part, are the following:

*Rael Michael Clarke rents an apartment in Queens and is the place where he carries out his extensive research and invention work on aquaponics, a self-regulated system to produce food. A series of experiments in which hydroponics are combined with the way fish are raised in aquaculture. He can afford the cost of these experiments by letting others use the lab space for celebrations. His apartment is not the place where reality renders itself familiar, but the very location where Rael encounters the uncertain.*



3+4\_Performance view at the MoMA PS1



Greg Newton and Donnie Jochum, and Maja Leonardsen Musum and Corentin Bohl, form a two loving-couples home. Greg and Donnie collect books as part of their plan to open, in the near future, a LGBT orientated-bookshop. Their kitchen is a place where they get to interact and share some intimacy with non familiar relatives. It is also the place where they emerge as citizens committed with a position on public concerns and open controversies. Their home is an arena, from where contributions to the commons are produced out of confronted intimacies.

Mama Gianna remembers being raised in the kitchen of Manducatis, the restaurant her parents still own on Jackson Avenue. She now runs Manducatis Rustica, less than 6 minutes from there. Her children spend most of their time in the restaurant playing and surfing the net on the computer she installed next to the kitchen as well as talking to clients and staff after school. They refer to the restaurant as home due to the amount of time they spend there. Her apartment, her parents' apartment and the two restaurants compose a fragmented domesticity inserted in two city blocks. In their life there is no easy distinction between the intimate and the communal. Their domesticity is not an 'independent republic' but an urbanism constructed out of fragmented spaces that become connected by the way they are performed in daily.

Frank Traynor brought an old wooden shack from upstate and set up camp in a rare garden, belonging to two designer girlfriends, squashed between existing buildings in Brooklyn. The designers are happy by the way he keeps the garden beautiful and makes it a lively place by entertaining all sorts of easy going acquaintances. The attractive garden draws passing people into his shop where he sells all sorts of things that he collects. He pays no rent with money, but instead delivers contributions to improving others' daily lives. Comfort does not come out of familiarity, but from the possibilities of association, resulting from the encounter of the difference.

Moddy Harding lives with her husband in a Long Island suburban home. She transformed the tv room into an informal hair-dressing shop, where she cuts and combs a number of locals' hair. The communal bubble created by this shop is the center of her home. Her family life is organized around the shop, and it is from here where she has brought up her two sons and taken care of her dog Chuey and her cat Michini. The house acts as an interaction point introducing neighbors to visiting relatives from Europe who come to improve their English. It is a space which is both homely and publicly available. The center of the communal life in the neighborhood is not the squares or the streets but bubbles like Moddy's shop, something that is reflected in the suburbs, where people go inside to find others and more so to find the unfamiliar.

Denish Kinariwala occupies an apartment left to him by a friend, during his summer holidays. The rest of the year he lives in an International House, a students hall of residence. His home is not a place, but the possibility of making decisions on how he wants his life to be like, in each moment. When asked "where do you feel at home?" he answered: "playing sarod in the park". The redundancy of the city provides him with the possibility to move from one place to another. The inefficient availability of possibilities is where he finds the comfort he pursues. Home for him is not a well designed fixed enclosure with views on the outer urban, but the feeling of being provided with a resiliency of available options. No final conclusion is expected from these experiments more than the positive and uncertain debate created around the possible connections between public and private spheres, considering

the creation of social polemics through architectural construction as a strong position of an architecture that aims to contribute in the exploration of the ordinary understanding that it could be defended, that no less than many other things, "ARCHITECTURE IS THE MAKING OF SOCIETIES".

Images of Ikea Disobedients credited to Andrés Jaque Architects / Office for Political Innovation

#### Project Details

##### Ikea Disobedients

Architects: Andrés Jaque Architects / Office for Political Innovation

With the special collaboration of: Corentin Bohl, Maja Leonardsen Musum, Donnie Jochum, Greg Newton, Gianna Cerbone-Teoli, Rael Michael Clarke, Denish Kinariwala, Frank Traynor, Moddy Harding.

Production: Ruggero Agnolutto, Roberto González García, Michal Just, Jorge López Conde, William Mondejar, Daia Stéevová, Claudia Suárez, Silvie Talackova, Javier Vidal

Sociological Investigation: Silvia Rodríguez

New York Research Director: Ana Peñalba

Voice: JM Pen

#### Notes

1. "Welcome to the Independent Republic of your Home". Commercial not developed for Ikea's international advertisement by Barcelona-based agency SCPF, Barcelona 2007.

2. The performance was reviewed in the main Spanish news papers like El País: Gosálvez, Patricia: Dos mundos que fuman juntos. Madrid. El País. Edición impresa. 12 de noviembre de 2012. Disponible online <http://elpais.com/diario/2011/11/12/ma>

# Baseball, Politics and the Rise of the Architecture Atheists

Jason S. Johnson

