



# Personal Inventories

Toward durable human-product relationships

## Project Background



Investigations into the intimate material ecologies characterizing the domestic domain provide deeply nuanced looks at how things shape human behavior and the nature of relationships that form among humans and products.

This study aims to collect, categorize, and describe the individual personal inventories of domestic technologies in a systemic way. This research reports findings from an empirical study examining participants' orientations toward domestic objects. This knowledge aims to inform the design of future interactive products more likely to become ensouled and result in long-term attachment.

## Research Process

Prior research involving domestic symbols and identity construction as well as multi-sited ethnographic inquires with heavy emphasis on design opportunities form the methodological foundation for this research. Notions of ensoulment and material aesthetics construct the design theoretic lens applied in this study.

During the course of in-home contextual interviews, various questions were posed to probe participants' reflections on their most liked and disliked things, and the reasons behind these attitudes. Particular emphasis was paid to the qualities of some products' durable character and other objects' disposable nature.



## Openness



Humans engage in everyday design activities to produce more preferable states of reality in their daily lives, which is primarily achieved through reflective and creative use of common objects. The design of domestic interactive devices ought to be more open to humans creatively transforming and integrating them within their existing local material ecologies, rather than instituting uniform productions. This may contribute to designs that integrate technology in more unique and alluring ways. Furthermore, this perspective promotes quality, maintenance, and creativity over shifting trends in consumer culture that often result in premature obsolescence.

## Engagement



Devices such as the crank-power flashlight engage participants in sensorial experiences as they directly interact with the core means through which a product achieves its functionality. One participant utilized the crank flashlight's power producing capability to charge other household items—projecting the experience of powering a technological device through intentional determination onto another common digital product. The manually produced electricity powers other devices and, in doing so, endows them with meaning. This type of interaction models a nurturing practice that may lead to the conscious consideration and care for products overtime.

## Augmentation



The typical domestic setting is overrun with technological devices, each with a particular interface and instructions for use. Domestic culture is characterized by familiar routines, interactions, and practices. Technology design should directly build off familiar practices and aesthetics of interaction. Moreover, new ways to augment already existing domestic objects with new functionality should be explored, as opposed to introducing new devices. In particular, subtly integrating dynamic information or computation into commonplace objects may provoke increased awareness of objects in one's life and, in turn, facilitate more long-term attachment and care.