

What can be said about this project that the project itself hasn't already said? It's a book to beguile the tedious hours, filled with images in a state of sullen self-absorption. A dire monotony of bookish idiom that leads us to smile a smile of exquisite urbanity. Surely these texts and images form a strange compound of contradictory elements. A stream of easy talk!

Across these pages, Parisian apartment interiors are seen dreaming about their own isolated existence. Meanwhile there is a steady babble of talk and laughter going on, permeating these deserted rooms, expressing a thousand evanescent memories of happy days. The source of the voice(s) providing such a sudden gleam of insight is unknown. Rather, there are just these abandoned remnants of speech, paired to images that are likewise abandoned: orphaned photos from a real-estate catalogue, snapped by ever so many unidentified photographers. In its self-talk, this project becomes a prophecy of itself. A tangle of ugly words.

Texts and images look as though they are quite established on their pages, and in a healthy relationship toward each other. This soon proves false. Each element seems to be speaking for itself. A tragic futility, as the scripts do not function as descriptions. A crop of disappointments, as no knowledge is gained from the information gathered. Inevitably, sense seems to strike up at times, but the development of a narrative is cut short on each page. Empty rooms. Empty phrases that find most of their identity in the alphabetical order they are in. A detached segment of life.

Elisabeth Tonnard, 2009

Sources. The images are taken from a disposable real-estate catalogue: *Paris immobilier*, no 67, July 7th - September 22, 2008.

The texts were found in the “literary phrases” section of Grenville Kleiser’s *Fifteen Thousand Useful Phrases*. New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1919 (5th edition). This book is a marvelous showcase of language cut loose from an actual referent.

[As Sven Spieker notes: “nothing enters the archive that is not in some sense destined to be there from the moment of its inception”. *The Big Archive. Art from Bureaucracy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008.]

Literature has connected itself to Parisian apartment buildings in many ways. I’m thinking of the iconic Proust apartment, bedroom lined with cork, and of the early 19th century *tableaux de Paris* and its subgenre, the *physiologies*, and later Balzac’s novels—all of these reading the city in terms of social types and seeing the Parisian apartment as a space both public and private, open to be viewed. Georges Perec’s *La Vie mode d’emploi* of course also comes to mind. Sharon Marcus provides insight in Parisian apartment literature in her study *Apartment stories. City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Chris Burnett’s *Domestic Philosophy*, a self-published artist book from 1982, showcases the idea of a shifting home through its depiction of convoluted interior spaces that were created by reconfiguring (interior pages of) interior design magazines. I’d like to thank Chris for being a constant light and for his important work which surely influenced me.