

Saçımı Süpürge Ettim (Made My Hair Into a Broom)

by

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Abstract

Saçımı Süpürge Ettim is a performance-based thesis that investigates domestic labour as an inherited emotional, cultural, and embodied structure. Rooted in my experience as a Turkish-Canadian immigrant woman, the project explores how everyday gestures such as sweeping, washing, and wiping can function as methods of artistic inquiry when relocated to a gallery environment. Drawing from performance art, feminist theory, sociological studies of domestic labour, and arts-based research methodologies, the thesis examines how care practices are transmitted through intergenerational memory and embodied repetition. The exhibition consists of three performances, *Sweeping*, *Wiping*, and *Washing and Drying*, which recontextualize domestic gestures within an installation environment constructed from personal and culturally significant materials, including crocheted doilies, coffee grounds, a washing basin, and inherited garments. Through these performances, the project investigates the unstable relationship between care, sacrifice, love, and obligation within domestic labour. Although the work initially aimed to examine inherited labour through feminist critique and cultural memory, the performance itself revealed a more personal dimension. The act of performing these gestures exposed my own internalized understanding of associating love with sacrifice. Through installation, performance, and reflection, the thesis demonstrates how performance can function as a form of research capable of producing embodied knowledge. *Saçımı Süpürge Ettim* proposes performance as a method for examining domestic labour not as a fixed symbol of oppression or devotion, but as a contradictory emotional structure shaped by culture, gender, memory, and personal experience.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my grandmothers, my mother, and to all the women whose love has been expressed through labour. To the hands that cleaned, cooked, washed, carried, and kept life moving, often without rest, recognition, or return.

For the quiet repetition that shaped my understanding of care. For the gestures that became tradition. For the bodies that turned endurance into a language.

This work is for you, because of you, and thanks to you.

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Introduction

My artistic inquiry begins not in a studio but in my grandmother's kitchen, where everyday gestures such as washing, cooking, and crocheting revealed the rhythms and devotion embedded in domestic labour. When I came to Canada, I felt disconnected from the arts community because I felt that I was behind in technical training, and my family did not engage in visual art making as a professional or academic practice. Rather than seeing this as a lack of artistic lineage, I came to recognize a different form of inheritance: a lineage of gestures, movements, and embodied knowledge through which my grandmother and mother passed on a language of care. I began to reconsider domestic gestures as meaningful practices rather than routine tasks. Many principles valued in artistic practice such as repetition, process, transformation, and emotional resonance were already present in these domestic gestures.

My thesis exhibition, *Saçımı Süpürge Ettim*, investigates domestic labour through performance, installation, and embodied research. The title translates from Turkish as “made my hair into a broom,” a phrase commonly used by mothers to express the depth of their sacrifice for their children and families. The phrase carries pride, devotion, exhaustion, and guilt simultaneously. It describes a form of love that is expressed through labour and endurance. Growing up hearing this phrase shaped how I understood care and responsibility. Domestic labour appeared both meaningful and expected, both loving and burdensome. As I developed this project, I became interested in how the gestures of sweeping, washing, and wiping carry emotional histories and cultural expectations within them.

Initially, I approached the work as a feminist attempt to make invisible domestic labour visible within the gallery. I was inspired by Beauvoir's writing, "few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition" (1959, p. 451). By relocating household gestures into an institutional art space, I hoped to expose the cultural and gendered structures that shape domestic responsibility and its weight. However, the performance itself complicated this framework. Once I moved through the gestures in front of an audience, the work revealed something more personal. I began to see that my relationship to domestic labour was not purely analytical. I had also internalized the emotional logic of sacrifice embedded in the phrase *saçımı süpürge ettim*. This thesis therefore unfolds across three stages of understanding: the conceptual framework developed before the performance, the embodied experience of the performance itself, and the reflections that emerged afterward. The installation and performative actions allowed domestic gestures to become sites of inquiry rather than merely representations of labour.

Through this process, the project asks several key questions: How can performance function as a method for investigating domestic labour? What happens when private household gestures are relocated into a public gallery environment? How do inherited domestic movements shape bodily memory and emotional identity? What contradictions emerge when care is understood simultaneously as love and obligation? By examining these questions through performance, *Saçımı Süpürge Ettim* proposes that domestic gestures contain complex emotional and cultural knowledge that cannot be fully understood through theoretical analysis alone. Instead, these gestures must be performed, inhabited, reclaimed and reflected upon in order to reveal their layered meanings.

Literature Review: Early Conceptual Frameworks

My approach to research and writing is inseparable from community. I do not see my thesis as an isolated investigation; rather, it emerges from a web of relationships that have shaped how I think about domestic labour, care, lineage, and performance. My work is grounded in lived experience, my grandmothers' gestures, my mother's routines, but also extends outward into the communal histories and cultural practices that inform those gestures. The repetitive domestic acts I perform do not belong only to my family; they are shared across cultures and generations. In this way, my research becomes relational, acknowledging that knowledge does not originate in a vacuum but is collectively and historically formed.

Community also includes my peers, mentors, professors, and the broader artistic community and beyond. My performances invite others to witness and reflect. When I wash or sweep in a gallery space, the audience becomes part of the work through their presence. Their reactions shape the meaning of the performance. My responsibility, then, extends to those who enter the space with me. I am accountable for their interpretations, discomfort, and empathy. I owe my audience honesty. As long as I am staying true to my practice, beliefs and feelings; I am fulfilling my responsibility.

At the early stages of developing this thesis, I turned to academic and theoretical literature to help articulate the questions emerging in my artistic practice. Reading feminist theory, sociological studies of domestic labour, and texts on relational and maintenance art provided important conceptual entry points. These readings helped me understand how domestic

gestures could be interpreted within broader social, political, and artistic frameworks. However, as the project evolved, it became clear that these texts functioned primarily as contextual anchors rather than primary sources of knowledge. The most significant insights of this thesis ultimately emerged through the embodied experience of performance itself.

In this sense, the literature review represents an early research method within the project. Reading these texts allowed me to situate my work within existing conversations about care, labour, gender, and relational art. Yet the performance process later complicated many of these theoretical frameworks, revealing emotional and bodily dimensions that could not be fully captured through reading alone.

Relational Aesthetics and the Question of Encounter

One of the first theoretical frameworks that informed my thinking was Nicolas Bourriaud's concept of relational aesthetics. Bourriaud describes relational art as "a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context" (Bourriaud, 1998, p. 113). Building on earlier performance practices that sought to dissolve the boundaries between artist, environment, and audience, relational aesthetics shifts focus toward the conditions of encounter and interaction. In this framework, art becomes less about the production of objects and more about creating situations in which relationships and interactions can occur. This idea resonated strongly with my early thinking about performance and domestic labour. Many of the gestures in my work like washing

and sweeping, are inherently relational. They are performed for others, around others, or in spaces shared with others.

Initially, I was interested in how my performance might embody the breakdown between artist and audience by bringing domestic gestures into a shared space of experience. Bourriaud's statement that "art is a state of encounter" (1998, p. 18) helped frame this intention, positioning the work as a site where relationships and interactions could emerge through presence. This approach was more explicitly explored in an earlier performance I developed in Turkey, *Let Me Clean That For You*¹, where I invited participants into a social environment and designed the work to encourage direct interaction. In that context, the audience became active participants in the unfolding of the work, and the boundaries between performer and participant were deliberately blurred. However, in my thesis exhibition, this relational framework did not unfold in the same way. During the performance, I became more aware of the distance that remained between myself and my audience. While they were present and witnessing, they did not intervene or participate; instead, they occupied a position closer to observers of labour. Rather than dissolving the boundary between performer and audience, the work began to mirror the dynamics of domestic labour itself, where one body performs work for others who watch, benefit, or remain peripheral to the act. In this sense, the performance revealed a gap between my initial intention to create relational encounters and the actual conditions of spectatorship that emerged.

Claire Bishop's critique of relational aesthetics helps to articulate this tension, particularly her argument that participation does not inherently produce equality or critical

¹ This work is further explained on page 22.

engagement, and that relational works can reproduce existing social hierarchies rather than challenge them (Bishop, 2004). This was evident in the power dynamics of my performance: I occupied the role of the labouring body, continuously working, while the audience remained largely passive, observing without obligation or intervention. At the same time, by relocating these gestures into the gallery, the work complicates this dynamic. Domestic labour, which is typically invisible, becomes hyper-visible under the conditions of performance, demanding attention in ways that disrupt its usual erasure. However, this visibility is not neutral. In the documentation of the performance, I began to notice resonances with visual tropes from Yeşilçam cinema, where domestic labour is made visible through a particular kind of gaze which aestheticizes or sexualizes the labouring female body. This parallel suggests that visibility itself can be shaped by inherited visual frameworks, and that the act of making labour visible does not automatically escape these structures. The performance therefore occupies an ambivalent position: it attempts to create relational engagement, yet reveals distance; it makes labour visible, yet exposes how that visibility is mediated by power, gender, and cultural representation. In this way, the work does not fully align with Bourriaud's relational model but instead complicates it, demonstrating that encounters within the gallery are shaped by pre-existing inequalities that cannot be resolved through participation alone.

Janine Antoni's *Loving Care* (1993) offers a critical engagement with gendered power dynamics of maintenance labour through the body. In this performance, Antoni uses her own hair, soaked in black dye, to mop the gallery floor, merging domestic labour with artistic gesture and mark-making. As she moves across the space, her actions simultaneously evoke cleaning and painting, collapsing distinctions between artistic production and feminized labour. Notably, the

performance gradually pushes the audience out of the gallery, reversing the typical dynamic of spectatorship and asserting control over the space. This work resonates strongly with my own use of hair as both material and tool, particularly in how the body becomes a site where care, labour, and identity intersect. However, while Antoni reclaims space through exclusion, my performance maintains the presence of the audience, allowing the tensions to remain unresolved.

Maintenance Art and the Visibility of Labour

Another foundational reference for my early thinking was Mierle Laderman Ukeles's *Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969!* In this text, Ukeles challenges the separation between artistic production and maintenance work. She argues that acts such as cleaning, repairing, caring, and maintaining are not merely background activities but essential forms of labour that sustain daily life. Ukeles proposes that maintenance work should be recognized as a form of artistic practice. Her manifesto reframes everyday acts of care as aesthetic and political gestures, insisting that "maintenance is a drag; it takes all the fucking time" while also acknowledging that this labour is necessary for life to continue (Ukeles, 1969/2018). Ukeles's work helped me begin to see domestic labour as something that could exist within an artistic framework rather than outside of it. The repetitive gestures of cleaning and care in my performances align with this revaluation of maintenance. However, my work also differs from Ukeles's approach in important ways. While Ukeles often focuses on institutional maintenance and public service labour, my project centers on intergenerational domestic behaviours within the home and family. Rather than simply elevating maintenance to the status of art, *Saçımı Süpürge Ettim* examines the emotional and cultural contradictions embedded within domestic labour. The gestures in my performance

are not only acts of maintenance; they are also expressions of love, obligation, resentment, and social expectation.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles' maintenance art frames domestic labour as continuous, often invisible work that gains meaning through repetition and institutional recognition, frequently emphasizing the artist's sustained engagement with systems of care and upkeep. In contrast, Margaret Dragu's processual parade-based performances, such as *Cleaning and Loving (It)*, redistribute maintenance labour across participants in public space, transforming it into a collective, visible, and socially activated event rather than an individually embodied practice. Margaret Dragu's performance practice provides an important expansion of feminist approaches to maintenance labour by situating it outside both the domestic interior and the institutional gallery. As a Canadian performance artist known for interdisciplinary and socially engaged work, Dragu has consistently developed participatory and community-based performances that mobilize collective action rather than individual authorship. In works such as *Cleaning and Loving (It)* (2000), maintenance labour is reconfigured as a public, processual event, often structured as a parade that invites others to participate. This redistribution of labour shifts it from an invisible, feminized task performed in private to a shared and visible social action. Unlike my thesis performance, which emphasizes solitary embodiment and the internalization of inherited gestures, Dragu's work foregrounds collectivity and public engagement, suggesting that domestic labour can be reimagined not only as critique but as communal practice.

Feminist Refusal and Emotional Contradiction

Sara Ahmed's writing provided another important conceptual entry point for my project. In *Living a Feminist Life*, Ahmed describes the feminist killjoy as someone who disrupts social comfort by pointing out inequalities that others prefer to ignore. Her work highlights how emotions circulate through social structures, shaping expectations about gender, care, and responsibility. Ahmed's idea that "survival can be protest" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 237) resonated with my exploration of domestic labour as a site where endurance and resistance coexist. Domestic gestures such as cleaning or caregiving can be read as expressions of devotion, but they can also carry exhaustion and suppressed anger. My performances attempt to inhabit this emotional contradiction rather than resolve it. Domestic labour can be an act of love, but it can also be a response to expectation and pressure. However, as the performance unfolded, I realized that my relationship to these contradictions was not purely theoretical. I had internalized the emotional logic of sacrifice in ways that reading alone had not revealed. The performance made visible how deeply these beliefs had shaped my own understanding of care. I struggle with being Ahmed's figure of the feminist killjoy, who refuses the happiness scripts that sustain normative expectations. In this context, refusal appeared more difficult than I had previously understood; the performance revealed how deeply embedded these expectations are within the body, making resistance not simply a conceptual stance but an embodied challenge. While Ahmed frames survival as a form of protest, my performance complicates this idea by showing how survival can also involve the repetition of the very structures one might seek to resist. The embodied knowledge produced through the performance both aligns with and extends Ahmed's framework:

it affirms her emphasis on the persistence of feminist resistance, while also revealing the limits and tensions of refusal when care, love, and obligation are entangled within lived experience.

This expanded understanding of feminist performance is also supported in “Caught in the Act: An Anthology of Performance Art by Canadian Women” (2004) by Tanya Mars and Johanna Householder, which documents a wide range of practices that engage the body as a site of cultural, political, and social meaning. Householder herself is a key figure in Canadian feminist performance art, working since the late 1970s across performance, writing, and curation. As a founding member of the feminist performance collective The Clichettes, she developed works that used humour, parody, and lip-sync to critique media representations of women and expose the constructed nature of femininity. In relation to my thesis, her anthology provides an important framework for situating my work within a broader lineage of feminist performance practices, where personal experience and the body are mobilized to reveal and challenge cultural norms surrounding gender, labour, and identity.

Domestic Labour, Marriage, and Feminist Critique

Simone de Beauvoir’s chapter “The Married Woman” from *The Second Sex* offers a structural critique of domestic labour within marriage. Beauvoir argues that marriage historically confines women to repetitive cycles of maintenance and emotional service. She writes that marriage represents “the destiny traditionally offered to women by society” (Beauvoir, 1949/2011, p. 415), positioning women within systems of unpaid labour and dependency. Reading Beauvoir helped me recognize parallels between her analysis and the experiences of

women in my own family. The domestic gestures I perform reflect the repetitive labour Beauvoir describes. Yet my practice also complicates Beauvoir's framework. While she often presents domestic life primarily as a site of oppression, my experience of intergenerational care is more complex. The women in my family performed domestic labour not only as an obligation but also as an expression of creativity, resilience, and cultural continuity. My performance *Washing and Drying*, for example, engages with inherited crocheted doilies. These objects embody labour, but they also contain histories of skill, patience, and a care for aesthetic concerns in domestic spaces. The act of making a home beautiful through objects like doilies, textiles, and decorative arrangements can itself be understood as a form of care for others, even though this labour is often dismissed as unnecessary or selfish, or overlooked entirely by those who benefit from it. As bell hooks suggests in her essay, *Black aesthetics: Strange and oppositional* (1995), the creation of beauty within the home can function as an act of agency and imagination, opening up possibilities beyond constraint. My work holds both realities at once: domestic labour as both constraint and cultural knowledge.

Sociological Perspectives on Gendered Domestic Labour

In addition to feminist theory, sociological research on Turkish domestic labour provided important context for my work. Studies such as *Sharing and Spending Time on Domestic Tasks: A Turkish Sample* and *Everyday Gendered Performances at Home: Masculine Domesticity?* examine how “domestic tasks in Turkey remain highly gendered” (Copur et al., 2010, p. 90). These studies show that even when families express support for gender equality, the distribution of domestic work often remains uneven. Women perform the majority of everyday household

tasks, while men's participation tends to occur in more visible or symbolic forms of domestic activity. Masculine domestic labour in Turkey can sometimes function as a public performance of generosity or virtue such as cooking for guests or helping during special occasions, while women's labour remains normalized and largely invisible within everyday life. "Domestic labour continues to be a central site where gender identities are performed" (Eslen-Ziya et al., 2021). As a Turkish-Canadian artist, I navigate two different cultural frameworks that shape expectations around care and labour. My performances do not attempt to document these sociological realities directly, but they engage with the bodily routines and cultural expectations that such research describes.

From Literature to Performance

While these theoretical frameworks provided valuable starting points, the development of *Saçımı Süpürge Ettim* ultimately moved beyond them. Reading helped me formulate early questions about relationality, maintenance, feminist critique, and gendered labour. However, the performance itself became the primary site where these ideas were tested and transformed. Through installation, gesture, and bodily experience, the project began to reveal emotional and sensory dimensions that could not be fully captured through theoretical analysis alone. Pain, rhythm, memory, scent, and physical repetition generated insights that emerged only through action. For this reason, the literature reviewed here should be understood not as the foundation from which the thesis directly derives its conclusions, but as a conceptual landscape within which the project initially situated itself. The performance ultimately complicated, expanded, and sometimes contradicted these theoretical frameworks.

Methodology

This thesis adopts a practice-based research methodology in which artistic performance functions as the primary mode of inquiry. Rather than treating creative work as an illustration of theoretical arguments, the project approaches performance as a form of knowledge production. The research process unfolded through overlapping stages such as conceptual development through reading and writing, embodied experimentation through performance, and reflective analysis following the exhibition. This methodological structure aligns with art-based research approaches that understand artistic practice as capable of producing forms of knowledge that cannot be fully articulated through conventional academic methods. Patricia Leavy (2015) argues that art-based research provides access to “emotional, embodied, and relational knowledge that might otherwise remain hidden or inaccessible” (p. 3). Performance functions not only as a form of representation but as a method of inquiry in my thesis. While domestic labour can be understood as a cultural structure shaped by gender roles, expectations, and social norms, it is also lived and sustained through the body. This distinction matters because cultural analysis alone cannot account for how these movements are learned, and internalized often without conscious awareness. Performance allows me to engage with both dimensions simultaneously: it situates domestic labour within broader social frameworks while also activating its embodied and affective experience. By performing these gestures myself, I am not observing them from a distance but inhabiting them, paying attention to the responses of my body and what feelings and thoughts they trigger.

While theoretical readings informed the early conceptual framework of the project, the most significant insights emerged through the physical act of performing. As a result, the methodology of this thesis does not rely solely on textual analysis. Instead, it combines artistic production, embodied experience, reflective writing, and audience interaction as interconnected forms of research.

Art-Based Research and Research-Creation

This project can be understood within the broader field of research-creation, a methodology widely used in interdisciplinary arts research in Canada. Research-creation integrates creative practice and scholarly inquiry, treating artistic production as both a research method and a research outcome. Within this framework, artistic work does not merely illustrate research findings; it actively generates them. Knowledge emerges through making, performing, reflecting, and revising. The installation and performance of *Saçımı Süpürge Ettim* therefore function as both the subject and the method of the research.

This approach also aligns with art-based research methodologies described by Leavy (2015), who emphasizes that creative practices allow researchers to investigate questions that involve affect, memory, identity, and lived experience. Because domestic labour is deeply embedded in emotional relationships and cultural traditions, it requires a research approach that can engage with these complexities. The gestures explored in my performance are not abstract concepts but physical actions learned through observation and repetition. These gestures carry histories of care, discipline, and expectation. By performing them within a gallery context, I was

able to examine how these everyday movements function as cultural knowledge passed across generations.

Autoethnography and Community-Based Inquiry

This thesis incorporates elements of autoethnographic inquiry. Autoethnography examines personal experience as a way of understanding broader cultural phenomena. Rather than positioning the researcher as a distant observer, autoethnography acknowledges the researcher's own life and body as part of the research field. My work draws directly from personal and familial histories of domestic labour. The gestures performed in the exhibition were inspired by memories of my mother and grandmothers, whose everyday actions shaped my understanding of care and responsibility. Objects used in the installation such as crocheted doilies, inherited garments, and the basin carry personal and cultural histories that inform the performance.

This research was also shaped through ongoing conversations and reflective practices that formed part of my autoethnographic methodology. During my visit to Turkey, I engaged with stories and reflections about care, domestic labour, and inherited gender roles. Some of my friends shared their admiration of their mothers' devotion, others described domestic labour as oppressive or draining; some discussed fathers who contributed to household work, complicating simple gender narratives; others described rituals of service that felt loving but obligatory. Rather than treating these exchanges as formal interviews or analytical data, I approached them as relational encounters that allowed the research questions to evolve through dialogue. These

conversations deepen my thesis by showing that domestic labour cannot be reduced to one meaning. It is shaped by class, culture, migration, and personal history. I also arranged an experimental performance called *Let Me Clean That For You*² which intentionally disrupted the cultural norms of hospitality and cleanliness. The reactions to the disruption evolved in three stages: discomfort and resistance to participate, active participation and playfulness, and normalization and disappearance of my performance. This work was one of the early experiments of my thesis that was integral to the creation of the final version. It differed in audience participation and reaction. My final performance constructed distance between myself and the audience because it was in a gallery space and my gestures mostly remained visible and recognized throughout. Alongside this performance, I created a video documentation of myself cleaning and preparing the house for the guests before the evening of the performance. In the video, I perform in solitude in contrast to the social setting of the evening. These two works function as complementary experiments. While *Let Me Clean That For You* foregrounds relational dynamics and the social absorption of care, the video piece emphasizes the internal, durational, and bodily experience of domestic labour. Together, these works acted as methodological templates that informed the development of my thesis exhibition. They allowed me to test how domestic labour shifts across contexts, between visibility and invisibility, performance and habit, presence and disappearance.

Additionally, during the period in which this thesis was developed, I attended regular personal therapy sessions. While these sessions were not conducted as structured research

² *Let Me Clean That For You* is a durational performance that took place in my childhood home in Ankara, where I prepared and cleaned the space for a social gathering and invited my guests to discard sunflower seed shells onto the floor while I continuously cleaned after them throughout the evening.

interviews, they nevertheless contributed to the reflective dimension of the project by providing a space in which I could examine inherited beliefs about care, sacrifice, and responsibility. These conversations helped me recognize how deeply certain values had been internalized through family dynamics and cultural expectations. As Sara Ahmed (2017) notes, feminist theory often emerges from lived experience and from reflecting on how everyday life reveals broader social structures (p. 10). In this way, the research process extended beyond the studio and the gallery, unfolding through relationships, reflection, and emotional inquiry that informed both the conceptual development and the performance of the work. My thesis argues that observation alone cannot capture the context, positionality, and embodied meaning these gestures carry. One has to embody the labour themselves to be able to provide a knowledgeable perspective.

Performance as Embodied Inquiry

The central methodological component of this thesis is performance itself. By performing domestic gestures within the gallery space, I was able to investigate how these actions shape bodily experience and perception. Performance theory offers a useful framework for understanding how meaning can emerge through action rather than representation. Unlike written archives, these forms of knowledge exist within the body and are learned through repetition and observation. Many of the gestures in my performance operate in this way. The movement of tying a headscarf, the posture of squatting while washing, or the bending required for sweeping are not consciously choreographed actions. They are inherited bodily routines that emerge naturally when performing the task. During the performance, I became aware that certain movements were dictated not by deliberate imitation of my grandmother's gestures but by the

physical logic of the task itself. For example, tying my hair to a stick to form a broom required a specific hand gesture. Anyone attempting the same action would inevitably perform a similar movement. In this sense, the choreography of domestic labour is often embedded within the tools and materials themselves. This realization reinforced the idea that domestic gestures function as forms of embodied cultural knowledge. They are transmitted through practice rather than instruction.

Material Process as Method: Objects as Cultural and Emotional Archives

Materiality functions as both method and evidence within this research. My practice begins with the movement of hands, but it is sustained through objects that carry cultural memory and personal history. I treat materials as archives, containers of intimacy, inheritance, and domestic ideology.

In *Washing and Drying*, the red bucket is not merely a prop: it is a vessel of memory. It was the basin I was washed in as a baby by my grandmother and mother, and in performance, it becomes a site of ritual, repetition, and care. The doilies I wash and starch are traditionally feminine objects that represent the intricate labour of women's hands, the patience, time, and devotion embedded in domestic craft. By reshaping them through sugar water, I am not only preserving their form in a traditional sense, but reanimating their histories.

In *Sweeping*, coffee grounds function as material research. Coffee is sensual and mundane at once. It references hospitality, aroma, and relational intimacy within Turkish culture,

while also carrying expectation of performing duties assigned to gender roles. For example, the bride making and serving coffee for the groom and his family in engagement ceremonies.

Although it is a kind gesture of hospitality, it foreshadows the power dynamics of service in the later stages of the marriage. Another example is gossiping and fortunetelling culture around coffee. While this is an intimate fun community activity, it reinforces women's place as house even for entertainment.

When I sweep coffee with a broom made from my own hair, the body is transformed into the tool of labour, making visible how care and sacrifice become entangled. The residue of coffee remains in the space, revealing how domestic labour leaves traces even when the act is completed. Material process is therefore not decoration or staging; it is the method through which memory becomes visible, and gesture becomes sculptural evidence. The objects and remnants in the exhibition operate as documents of time. They show what was done, how long it lasted, what the body endured, and what was left behind.

Exhibition Space as Research Site: The Gallery as Testing Ground

The gallery is not a neutral container in this methodology. It is an active condition of the research. In this thesis, the exhibition is not designed to recreate a domestic interior. Instead, the gallery is treated as a testing ground. Familiar acts of domestic labour are stripped of their original surroundings and examined as gestures carrying emotional weight, cultural inheritance, and feminist meaning.

The decisions about the way space was used in the exhibition shape the research outcomes. For example, *Washing and Drying* is installed in a tight corner to reflect how domestic labour often occurs in constrained physical environments. *Sweeping* requires open floor space so that the residue of coffee can spread and be gathered repeatedly. *Wiping* positions a hanging window installation high enough that I must climb a ladder, echoing the precarious physical labour of window cleaning practices in Turkey and foregrounding the risk embedded in everyday tasks.

By installing the performances as stations that viewers encounter over time, the exhibition reveals a contradiction central to my research: domestic work can become invisible even when it is performed in front of others. Except for the first day of my performance, visitors rarely watch the entire duration; they enter and leave in fragments, mirroring how domestic labour fades into the background of daily life. This dynamic produces knowledge not only through my actions, but through the audience's shifting attention.

Writing and Reflective Thinking: Translating Sensation into Language

Writing functions as a complementary method that gives shape to what emerges through performance. Through journal entries and reflective notes³, I translate bodily sensation and emotional resonance into language. Creative writing allows me to pause, map contradictions, and process the complex emotional textures that performance activates: longing and fatigue, devotion and resentment, pride and grief. My thesis began long before I could put it into words. It began

³ See appendix A and B for examples of creative writing as products of thinking and reflection throughout this thesis project.

when I witnessed my grandfather complain about the dinner my grandmother had spent all day preparing. Writing becomes the space where I return to that beginning, not as nostalgia, but as reflection. It allows me to articulate why domestic gestures are not only personal memories but histories that hold context, wider cultural meaning and intergenerational knowledge.

Exhibition Installation

The setting of *Saçımı Süpürge Ettim* was central to the work. I did not treat the gallery as a neutral container for performance, but as an active structure which positions me as an artist. The installation developed across three walls and several low sculptural zones, and it was only through inhabiting this arrangement with my body that I came to understand how the work functioned as a whole. The gallery space was organized around three primary performance areas: the coffee-ground floor area, the washing-and-drying installation, and the window-wiping area. These zones were visually distinct but materially and conceptually connected. Together, they created an environment that was domestic without becoming a literal reconstruction of a home. Instead of building a theatrical set, I assembled fragments, objects, and gestures that carried domestic histories into the institutional space of the gallery.

One corner of the gallery was dedicated to the coffee grounds. I spread the grounds directly onto the floor in an area that extended outward from the back left corner and reached close to the middle of the exhibition space. The footprint was roughly six by six feet, though the material was not rigidly contained. I wanted the coffee to feel expanded, loose, and slightly uncontrolled, as if it had spread beyond its expected boundary. This mattered to me both visually and conceptually. The coffee grounds created a dark, earthy field on the floor that was at once tactile, fragrant, and unsettling. They occupied the ground as something between hospitality and dirt, between ritual and residue.

In the back right corner, I installed *Washing and Drying*. I mounted several rods along the back wall and the right wall, then connected them with strings stretched horizontally between the rods. Connecting rods were installed at the same height, but the spacing between others varied. I did not want a perfect grid. I wanted something slightly off, asymmetrical, and a little chaotic. This irregularity was important because it resisted a polished, decorative reading of the space. The suspended strings suggested laundry lines, balcony hanging systems in Turkey, and improvised domestic structures, but they also created a network through which the doilies could be arranged, dried, and transformed. Beneath this suspended system, in the tight back corner, I placed the red plastic basin. Several people commented that they had also been washed in the same kind of basin as infants, which made me realize that the object carried not only my own memory but a wider cultural familiarity. It connected private memory to shared domestic history. I filled the basin with a sugar-water mixture, which I used throughout the performance to dip, soak, wring, and reshape the crocheted pieces. Beside the basin, near the back wall, I placed a low plinth close to the ground. On this plinth I arranged the collected crocheted doilies that I had gathered from my mother, my grandmother, and from others in my community after putting out a call for donations. The resulting collection held a mix of styles, sizes, and personal histories. These pieces came from different homes and different women, and that mattered. I also had previously worked with them in another piece.⁴ I wanted them to carry not only the trace of domestic labour but also the weight of many hands, many interiors, many memories. On the same plinth, I also placed the small wooden clips I used to hang the wet doilies onto the strings.

⁴ *Çocuk* (Child) is a sculptural installation piece created with a child's shoes buried in Turkish coffee under a table that is covered with the crochet doilies my thesis reanimates. Inspired by my grandparent's marriage story, *Çocuk* exposes the generational traumatic experiences in its concept while bringing traditional art objects into the contemporary space in practice.

In the middle of the gallery, I placed another low plinth, also close to the ground. On top of this plinth I positioned a handmade window frame I had attempted to build myself. I had used a chisel to carve grooves in the wood to hold pieces of plexiglass, but one of the plexiglass panels was the wrong size, and the structure ultimately fell apart. Although it failed as a functional object, I could not remove it from the exhibition. I had invested too much labour into it. Keeping it in the space allowed that labour, and that failure, to remain visible. For me, it came to represent failed structural integrity, but also emotional attachment to labour that does not succeed in the way it was intended to. Above this failed handmade window, I suspended a second window from the ceiling. This one was commercially produced: a black-metal-framed window that I purchased online after realizing my handmade version could not be hung safely. I suspended it with airplane wire so that it hovered above the failed window below. This created a vertical relationship between the two: the failed handmade object at ground level and the functional but emotionally distant purchased object above it. Beside the hanging window, I placed a small step ladder borrowed from the gallery. On one of the ladder steps, I placed a bucket and a microfiber cloth I had brought from home. Inside the bucket, I mixed water and vinegar to clean the hanging window during the performance.

Also in relation to this central area, I placed a short wooden stick on the same plinth as the deconstructed window. This was the stick that would later hold the two cut braids of my hair and transform them into a broom. On that same surface, I also kept the scissors, my grandmother's headscarf, and the elastics that I used to attach the hair. In this way, the plinth around the failed window became a site of preparation, transformation, and bodily alteration.

Across the gallery, I installed several additional plinths of varying heights. Taller plinths were positioned closer to the right wall, while the wider, shorter plinth was placed closer to the left wall. These served as surfaces for the hardened crocheted forms once they were removed from the hanging strings. I used them to display dried and stiffened doilies as temporary sculptural objects. Their placement throughout the room allowed the washing process to extend beyond the corner and into the wider exhibition space. The doilies moved between basin, string, and plinth, shifting between softness and hardness, process and display.

At the back of the gallery, behind the hanging window, I projected a video of myself wiping the windows of my family home in Ankara. The projection landed on the back wall partly through the hanging window itself (see figure1), so that the live and recorded gestures occupied the same visual field. This layered the Ignite Gallery's west space and the Ankara home, even though the material and emotional relation to each space remained quite different. The video had sound, but it was minimal and unedited to reflect the solitude and focus embedded in domestic labour.



Figure 1

The overall installation was therefore composed not as a polished simulation of domestic space, but as an arrangement of fragments, memories and objects in tension with one another. This setting mattered because it held possibilities, but its meaning only became clear once I moved through it. Each area asked something different of my body, and each material

responded differently to touch, repetition, and time. The exhibition setting was therefore not simply where the work took place but it was designed to direct movement (see figure 2).



Figure 2

The Performance

My performance began only once I was inside the installation and seated within it. Although the exhibition had already been carefully arranged, the meaning of the work was not fully available to me until I moved through the space with my body. What follows is the sequence of the performance as it unfolded, along with the sensations, realizations, and shifts that emerged in real time.

I began seated on the floor in the middle of the gallery, directly in front of the deconstructed handmade window. I wore a fitted black long-sleeved top with a low square neckline and loose, pajama-like black pants that were soft, flexible, and comfortable enough for extended movement similar to what Turkish women traditionally wear at home. On my feet, I wore brown socks knitted by my grandmother on my father's side, who had passed away two months earlier. My hair was parted into two loose ponytails, one on each side of my head, tied with small elastic bands.

At the beginning of the performance, a few members of my family were present in the audience: my parents, my sister, and my cousin. Their presence was emotionally significant. I asked my mother if she would braid my hair. I had not originally planned that interaction, but in the moment it felt necessary. She came toward me, squatted down, and braided both sides of my hair. She retied the ends with the elastics. This was an intensely emotional moment. I realized as she touched me that we had not shared that kind of intimacy in a long time. Her gesture of braiding felt loving, but it also felt like preparation. She was, in a way, preparing me for

destruction, because I was about to cut the braids she had just made. She kissed me on the cheeks after finishing and returned to where the audience stood outside the main performance area.

After that, I stopped looking at the audience. I had seen them just before I sat down, but once the performance began, my attention turned almost entirely toward my own hands, my hair, the floor, and the objects in front of me. I did not make eye contact with the viewers in any direct or sustained way until the end.

Once my mother stepped away, I gathered the objects I needed from the plinth where they had been placed: the scissors, my grandmother's headscarf, the wooden stick, and the small bag of hair elastics. I laid the objects in my lap and began cutting each braid. I cut both sides above the point where the braiding had started, roughly two fingers above that line (see figure 3). As I cut, I thought about artists such as Marina Abramović and Yoko Ono, and about cutting, subtraction, control, and bodily limits. But even while I was thinking about these references, I also knew that my gesture was different. I was not surrendering control to someone else. I was

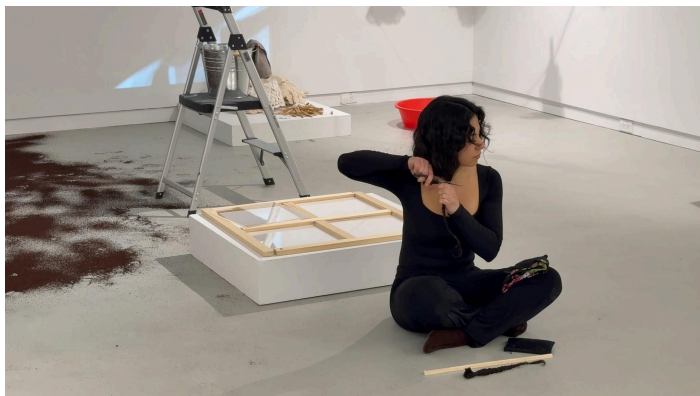


Figure 3

cutting my own hair. I retained agency over the act, and that distinction mattered deeply to me. I was choosing to cut my hair and turn it into a broom in an act of care towards my late grandmothers.

Once both braids were severed, I took the wooden stick and tied the braids onto it, one on each side, fastening them with the elastics. While doing this, I noticed something I had not

anticipated: the movement of my hands felt compulsory rather than expressive. To wrap the elastic and secure the hair, my hands had to move through a specific sequence. The movement was not stylized on purpose, but it resembled a kind of hand choreography or dance. It felt romantic, though unintentional. I became aware that anyone tying a braid to a stick with an

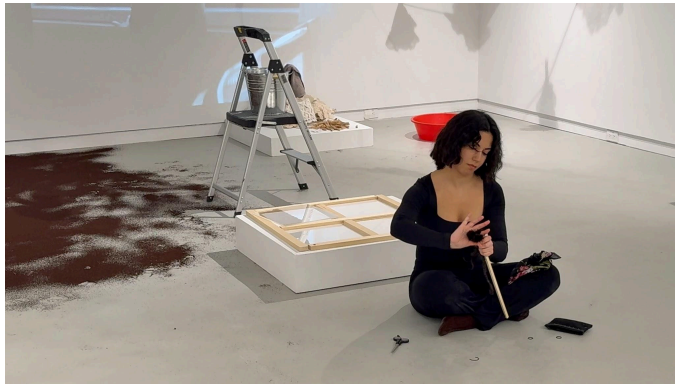


Figure 4

elastic would have to move their hands in a similar way. The gesture was built into the task. This realization led me to understand that some movements are inherited while others are affordances of objects.

Once the hair broom was assembled, I placed it on the floor in front of me. Then I unfolded my grandmother's headscarf into a triangle and placed it over my head. I crossed the ends behind my neck, wrapped them around my head, and tied them on top so the scarf sat tightly and securely. This was my mother's mother's scarf, and she had worn head coverings like this every day. For her, it was not religious; it was cultural and practical as it is for many women living in the rural parts of Turkey. It was a gesture that marked the beginning of domestic work. I had watched her do it countless times. Here again, I realized that



Figure 5

the movement was not something I was merely mimicking in an expressive sense. To achieve the same result, to make the scarf sit in the same way, I had to move through the same sequence of

gestures. The result required the choreography. The body passes through the movement because the task demands it.

After covering my head, I picked up the hair broom. Because it was very short, I could not stand upright while using it. I had to bend over and slouch. I moved toward the back left corner of the gallery, where the coffee grounds had been spread across the floor, and I began sweeping. My movements were initially small, careful, and gentle. I looked downward the entire time, focusing on the coffee, the broom, the floor, and the area immediately around my hands. Very quickly, the posture became physically painful. I felt the strain in my back and legs. That pain made me think about my grandmother and her repeated habit of bending down to pick things up from the floor, not all at once, but one by one, across a room, over and over.



Figure 6

As I continued sweeping, my body changed. The slowness began to feel excessive. The area felt too large, the broom too small, and the labour too prolonged. At one point, I needed to support myself by placing my left hand on my left knee while continuing to sweep with my right (see figure 6). I remained bent over. The coffee grounds, however, became pleasurable to work with. Their aroma became more activated as I moved them. The material began to feel almost like sand. I could clearly see the difference between the spaces I had swept and those I had not, and the grounds formed visible lines, marks, and shapes. At a certain point, I started to play

with them rather than clean them. I made random shapes and patterns instead of directing the

coffee toward a corner (see figure 7). Then I caught myself and thought: get back to work. I resumed the sweeping with more intentionality toward cleaning, although even then the gesture remained mixed with sensation, play, and self-correction. I also thought about why I had chosen coffee as a material. For me, coffee is deeply tied to domestic life in Turkey: to conversation, marriage customs, hospitality, women's breaks between chores, gossip, and fortune telling. It is part of house life, and also part of rest within house life. I realized, while sweeping, that perhaps part of why I was enjoying moving the coffee was because I was trying to make the labour more entertaining or more bearable for myself. The coffee held both burden and pleasure.



Figure 7

Once I felt I had spent enough time sweeping, I set the broom against the wall and moved toward the ladder and hanging window. Projected through the hanging window: a video recording of me wiping the windows of my family home in Ankara the previous summer, when I had spent two weeks alone in the house for the first time in my life and deep-cleaned it extensively.⁵ I recorded the whole process, but the only footage I chose to project was of window wiping. Window cleaning in Turkey is culturally specific, and for me it carries both admiration and fear. Windows often open fully inward, allowing women to lean out and clean both sides, sometimes from dangerous heights with no safety equipment. I have always seen this as both normalized and extreme.

⁵ This process was part of the *Let Me Clean That For You* happening.



Figure 8

To begin this section, I took the bucket with water and vinegar from the ladder step, dipped the microfiber cloth into it, wrung it out, and climbed the small step ladder. With one hand I held the hanging window steady, because it was unstable, and with the other I wiped it. My intention had been that the projected image of myself wiping windows in Ankara and my live action in Toronto would be in conversation. I wanted the domestic window and the gallery window to speak to one another across place and time. But while performing, this section felt very different from the sweeping. It did not feel organic or emotionally revealing. It felt awkward, unstable, and strangely inauthentic.

Part of this was material. The hanging window I had bought was metal and glass, unlike the windows I was used to in Turkey. It felt cold and unfamiliar. Part of it was structural: instead of holding onto a stable window and cleaning it, I had to hold this one in place just to wipe it. The labour relationship was reversed. I could not form a bond with the object. This phase remained short because I did not want to stay in that gesture for long. While using the cleaning bucket, I also noticed that the vinegar and water mixture was rusting the inside of the metal bucket, turning it slightly red and producing dirt inside something meant to clean. That made me think about the strange logic of cleaning: how a cloth can be dipped into dirty water and still be used to make a window clean; how what cleans is never fully separate from what dirties.

After ending the window wiping, I climbed down, hung the cloth on the side of the bucket, returned the bucket to the ladder, and moved to the *Washing and Drying* corner. I approached the low plinth and basin area and began working with the crocheted doilies. I took one doily from the low plinth, placed it into the sugar water, and squatted down beside the basin. My squat was informed both by memory and practicality: I remembered my grandmother washing laundry in the bathroom while squatting, and because I was working with sugar water I also wanted to avoid soaking my clothes against the floor.



Figure 9

At first, I moved the doily in circular motions through the water with my right hand, almost like the motion of a washing machine. I lifted it, dipped it again, lifted it again, and listened to the sound of the water dripping. The sound was calming. The gesture, however, initially felt purposeless in a different way than sweeping had. I was not actually washing the doily clean with soap or detergent. I was using sugar water to stiffen it. For a moment, that made it harder for me to believe in the action. I kept going anyway. I tried different movements in the basin like back-and-forth motions, lifting, wringing, dipping, and agitating the fabric. When I wrung the doily, the sound of the dripping became louder and more intense. Splashing entered the rhythm.

Then something shifted. At one point, I realized I had been moving the doily much more aggressively than I consciously intended. I was pushing it through the water strongly enough to create waves, and those waves were splashing water onto me, onto the ground, and into the space in front of me. I did not become aware of this immediately. When I did notice it, I did not stop. I kept going for a while because it felt like my body needed it. The gesture was not fully unconscious, but it was not fully directed either. It emerged through the task, through my body in relation to the material. Eventually I slowed down again and returned to the more circular motion. After wringing out the first softened doily, I clipped it onto the hanging strings using a



Figure 10

small wooden clip. I was not concerned with the aesthetics of the hanging pieces. I was rather interested in the aesthetics of the hardened sculptures they turned into. I considered function: how the doily might stiffen, whether it needed to bridge two strings (see figure 10) in order to hold shape, whether it would collapse flat if I hung it another way. I continued repeating the process with more doilies and table runners. At one point I took a previously dried and hardened piece from one of the display plinths and placed it back into the sugar water, allowing it to soften and dissolve again. Once it was pliable, I reworked it and rehung it. In exchange, I took another hardened piece from the hanging system and placed it on a plinth as a sculptural object.

As I kept moving through this washing-and-drying cycle, I shifted between states of calm, concentration, and being lost in thought. Sometimes I felt deeply inside the work; at other times I felt nowhere, outside thought entirely. I was concerned at several moments that I was

taking too long, that the audience might be bored, or that I might lose them. My own experience of time was distorted. The gestures felt extended, meditative, almost endless. I believed far more time had passed than actually had.

Eventually, feeling that the sequence had gone on long enough and knowing I would be emotional, I picked up the printed sheet of text titled *A Few Words*⁶. This marked a distinct transition in the performance. For the first time since the beginning, I looked directly at the audience. By then the crowd had grown significantly. My mother was crying. A few other people were crying as well. I was crying too. The moment felt cathartic. I began reading the text aloud. I had to stop frequently to breathe. In those pauses, I allowed myself to cry, to breathe, and to observe the people in front of me. Their emotional response felt comforting rather than overwhelming. I felt understood.



Figure 11

Once I reached the end of the text, that became the conclusion of the performance. The audience applauded. I made a small bow of the head, though I remember hesitating in that split second because I did not want the work to feel theatrical in a conventional sense. I accepted the applause, but I did not feel that I had done the work for applause. The most important realization I had in that moment was that the performance was not for my audience, not even primarily for my grandmothers or my mother, though they were profoundly part of it. It was for me. I had not fully understood that until I was inside it.

⁶ *A Few Words* is available for the reader after the “Conclusion” in this document. (p. 50)

After the clapping ended, a friend came into the middle of the gallery and hugged me. That was the moment I let myself cry fully. Then I went to freshen up, returned, and accepted congratulations. Many people responded emotionally. They understood what I had meant, shown, and done. My mother was especially emotional. When someone asked her how she felt about me cutting my hair, she joked that she had wanted me to cut my hair short for a long time anyway, but then added that she hoped I would never have to cut it again to make it into a broom. That comment meant a great deal to me. Beneath the humor, what she was really saying was that she did not want me to keep giving parts of myself away to become a tool for others. It made me feel that she understood me, and being understood became my measure of success.

Looking back on the performance sequence now, I understand it not as a neatly planned set of symbolic actions, but as a process through which the meaning of the thesis revealed itself. The sequence moved from preparation and cutting, to bodily pain and play, to failed relation, to rhythmic washing, to spoken reflection and recognition. What I had planned conceptually before the exhibition changed once I lived through the gestures in front of others. The performance sequence was therefore not simply the structure of the artwork. It was the structure through which my understanding of the work transformed.

Post-Performance Reflections

The most significant insights of this thesis emerged only after the performance concluded. While the installation and actions had been carefully planned, the meaning of the work was not fully available to me until I moved through it and then reflected on it afterward. Conversations with audience members, observations of the space, and my own bodily memory of the performance reshaped my understanding of what the work was doing. These reflections revealed several themes that had not been fully visible during the planning process: power dynamics between performer and audience, the emotional contradiction between rage and love within domestic labour, the instability of time during durational performance, and unexpected associations related to voyeurism, sound, and material relationships.

Witnessing, Labour, and Power

One of the most striking realizations after the performance concerned the relationship between the audience and the work being performed. Throughout the performance, the audience stood outside the primary performance area while I remained inside it performing labour. They watched me sweep, wash, wring, hang, and wipe. In this arrangement, a familiar domestic structure appeared: one person performs the work while others witness it, however, the audience was present and stood intently watching the performance as a ritual rather than housework. In domestic life this labour rarely receives explicit recognition. There is usually no applause at the end of washing dishes, cleaning floors, or wiping windows. In the gallery, however, applause did occur. When the performance ended and I finished reading *A Few Words*, the audience clapped.

That moment highlighted the difference between the gallery and the domestic interior. The gallery made visible the labour that normally remains unacknowledged. At the same time, the dynamic of observation remained recognizable. The audience watched while I worked.

This realization helped clarify why it felt important to perform these gestures publicly rather than privately. I could have carried out every one of these actions at home. I could have swept coffee grounds, washed fabric, wiped windows, and cut my hair alone. But performing them in front of others allowed the gestures to communicate something that language alone could not express. The audience's presence transformed the labour into a form of communication. It allowed the gestures to be witnessed, interpreted, and felt collectively.

Audience Responses: Rage and Love

Audience reactions after the performance further complicated my understanding of the work. While I was installing the exhibition before the performance began, I overheard two visitors describing the space as resembling a “rage room.” I had never thought about the installation in those terms before, but the comment resonated with me. Domestic chores can sometimes function as moments where anger is released or processed. Sweeping, scrubbing, washing, and cleaning can become physical outlets for emotional tension. Later, another visitor summarized the work differently. After hearing about the installation, they simply said: “So it’s about love.” These interpretations seemed contradictory which supported my argument of domestic labour existing precisely within that tension. In this sense, the audience’s responses

helped articulate something I had already been feeling in the work: the performance was not only about sacrifice or care individually, but about the unstable space where rage and love coexist.

Hair, Inheritance, and Expectation

Hair became one of the most emotionally charged elements of my performance, not only for me but for those who witnessed it.

After the performance, my mother told me that my young cousin had been watching closely, worried that I would be sad as I cut my hair.

Her concern revealed something that I had not fully articulated before: the deep and often unspoken relationship between women and their hair. Even at a young age, she understood that hair is not just material. It carries meaning, memory, and identity.



Figure 12

For many women, hair is treated as something sacred. It is a site of pride, tied to beauty, care, inheritance, memory and cultural expression. It holds traces of time, of growth, of personal history. Hair can be styled, maintained, and preserved as a reflection of self, but also as something that is seen and judged by others. At the same time, this sense of sacredness can become a form of constraint. The value placed on women's hair often comes with expectations: to maintain it, to protect it, to present it in ways that align with normative ideas of femininity. Cutting my hair within the performance therefore carried a dual significance. It was not only a transformation of material, but also a disruption of these expectations. The act raised questions about what it means for a woman to alter or lose her hair. Short hair, or the absence of

hair, can be read in multiple ways: as liberation, as loss, as resistance, or as vulnerability. These interpretations are not neutral; they are shaped by cultural values that link femininity to appearance and bodily integrity.

Coffee, Culture, and Domestic Symbolism

Another reflection concerned the material of coffee itself. During the performance, I swept coffee grounds across the floor as though they were dirt. This act created an unexpected tension for me after the performance ended. Coffee is something we drink; it is something we place in our mouths and share socially. Seeing it scattered across the ground, under my feet and under the broom, made me question whether I had treated it disrespectfully. At the same time, coffee holds strong associations with domestic and social life in Turkey. It is central to engagement rituals and marriage customs. Turkish coffee is often served during marriage negotiations, where the bride-to-be prepares coffee for the groom's family while the groom's father asks the bride's father if they can get her.⁷

By placing coffee on the ground and sweeping it like dirt, I was perhaps also challenging those traditions. Coffee can symbolize hospitality and marriage, but it can also carry those concepts' expectations about gender roles and domestic responsibilities. Through sweeping the coffee, I was both engaging with and subtly resisting the cultural meanings attached to it.

⁷ The word "get" here is used both in place of "buying/owning" which was the case for my grandparents' marriage, and "welcoming to the family" which is how it is usually used in the contemporary engagement ceremonies.

Perception of Time

The experience of time during the performance was dramatically different from chronological time. While performing, I felt as though I had spent a very long period working through the installation. The gestures felt slow and extended, and I became concerned that I might be losing the audience's attention. At one point I believed that nearly an hour had passed.

However, after the performance ended and I checked the time, I discovered that the entire sequence had lasted approximately thirty minutes. This discrepancy between perceived time and actual time revealed something important about durational performance. The emotional and physical intensity of repetitive labour can expand the subjective experience of time. Within the performance, each gesture carried layers of sensation, thought, memory, and physical strain. As a result, the half hour I spent performing felt much longer than it actually was. This altered sense of time reflects the temporal experience of domestic labour itself. Household tasks often feel extended, repetitive, and continuous even though practically the social structures only allow for a limited period of time for them in a day.

Material Relationships: The Made Window and the Purchased Window

Another reflection that emerged after the performance concerned the relationship between two objects in the installation: the handmade window and the purchased hanging window. The handmade window frame, which had failed structurally during construction, remained deeply meaningful to me because of the labour I had invested in it. Although it could not function as intended, I still felt a strong emotional connection to it. For this reason, I placed it

on a plinth in the center of the gallery as an object representing failed labour and broken expectations. In contrast, the purchased window that I used for the wiping performance functioned perfectly well as an object, but I felt almost no emotional connection to it during the performance. While wiping it, the gesture felt awkward and distant. The material itself was unfamiliar to me, and the window was unstable, forcing me to hold it in place with one hand while cleaning it.

Reflecting on this afterward, I realized that the handmade window represented one type of failure: a failure of structural integrity. The purchased window represented a different kind of failure: a failure of relational connection. One object held emotional attachment but could not function, while the other functioned but lacked emotional meaning. This contrast highlighted the importance of relationality within performance. The emotional resonance of a gesture depends not only on the action itself, but also on the performer's relationship to the materials involved.

Food Materials as Artistic Tools

Another realization that emerged after the performance concerns the repeated presence of food-based materials across the three actions. Coffee grounds covered the floor during the sweeping sequence, vinegar and water were used while wiping the hanging window, and sugar dissolved in water structured the washing and drying of the crocheted pieces. I did not consciously plan this connection before the performance, yet these ingredients; coffee, vinegar, and sugar, are all common materials found in domestic kitchens and everyday household routines. Their presence unintentionally linked the three gestures through smell, texture, and

cultural familiarity, reinforcing how domestic labour often unfolds through ordinary materials that move between nourishment, cleaning, and care. Recognizing this pattern afterwards suggests a possible direction for future exploration, where food ingredients and sensory materials might be further investigated as carriers of memory, cultural practice, and embodied knowledge within domestic labour.

Sound and Environmental Influence

Sound also played an unexpected role in shaping the experience of the performance. The video projection of me wiping windows contained minimal sound, and I had not designed a separate soundscape for the installation to maintain its rawness. However, an exhibition across the gallery⁸ included an audio component consisting of a deep, indistinct low pitch voice repeatedly speaking, almost whispering. I could not clearly understand what the voice was saying. It sounded something like “Who are you?” or “How are you?” but the words were not fully discernible.

During the performance, this sound became part of my environment. Rather than distracting me, it contributed to the meditative atmosphere of the work. The constant, ambiguous voice created a sonic background that helped sustain the rhythm of my gestures. I did not consciously analyze it while performing, but it helped stabilize my mental state and allowed me to remain within the repetitive flow of the actions. This experience opened a new question for

⁸ Zhizhe Yan’s exhibition called *In Between* exploring liminal space between reality and dream.

my practice: how sound might function intentionally in future performances as a way of shaping attention, rhythm, and emotional atmosphere.

Yeşilçam and the Sexualization of Domestic Labour

Another unexpected reflection emerged later when I reviewed a video recording of the performance taken by an audience member. In the video, the camera was positioned behind two tall plinths placed in the foreground of the frame (see figure 13). Through the space between these plinths, my body could be seen squatting beside the basin while washing the crocheted pieces. Because of this framing, the camera angle resembled someone secretly observing the scene. My body was partially hidden, and the viewer looked through the plinths toward my movements. I was squatting, my clothing had shifted slightly, and my cleavage was visible.



Figure 13

Watching this recording reminded me of scenes from Yeşilçam films, the classic Turkish cinema of the mid-twentieth century. In many of these films, domestic labour is sexualized through the male gaze. In films such as *Selvi Boylum Al Yazmalım* (1978), *Sultan* (1978), and *Vesikalı Yarım* (1968), female characters are frequently depicted washing, cleaning, cooking, or serving within the home while male characters watch them from nearby positions. These scenes frame domestic labour as both a marker of femininity and a spectacle of observation, where gestures of

care and household work subtly expose the female body to the viewer through the male gaze.

Although I had not intended to reproduce this visual structure in my performance, the video recording revealed how easily domestic gestures can be framed in a sexualized way. This observation introduced a new layer of interpretation to the work. Domestic labour, particularly when performed by women, has historically been subject to both invisibility and if visible, eroticization. The realization does not yet have a fully resolved place within my thesis, but it suggests another direction for thinking about how domestic gestures are viewed and interpreted.

Intergenerational Presence

Throughout the performance, I was wearing pieces of clothing connected to my grandmothers. I wore socks knitted by my paternal grandmother and a headscarf belonging to my maternal grandmother. These objects created a physical connection between them and me during the performance. Reflecting afterward, I began to think about this connection as a form of care and protection. From head to toe, I was wrapped in materials they had made or worn. In a sense, they were present in the performance through these objects, supporting me and accompanying the gestures I performed. This realization reinforced the intergenerational dimension of the work. The performance was not simply about representing the labour of the women before me. Their presence remained active within me and the clothing.

Embodied Memory and Healing

Finally, the performance led me to consider whether embodied memory can function as a form of healing. By reenacting gestures associated with my grandmothers and mother, I was physically inhabiting and reclaiming them in my current context and position. The experience was emotionally intense, but it also felt meaningful and affirming. Performing these gestures allowed me to process the contradictions I feel toward domestic labour: gratitude, admiration, frustration, anger, and love. I do not claim that the performance resolved these tensions. Instead, it created a space where they could be acknowledged and shared. This possibility raises further questions for my practice about how embodied memory and performance might contribute to processes of reflection, understanding, or healing for others.

Conclusion

The performance of *Saçımı Süpürge Ettim* transformed this thesis from a conceptual exploration into an embodied investigation of domestic labour. While the project initially sought to critique and reframe inherited household gestures, the act of performing these gestures revealed deeper personal implications. The work did not remain a purely analytical study of gendered labour traditions; instead, it became a process through which I confronted my own relationship to sacrifice, care, and cultural inheritance.

Through the installation and performance, domestic labour became visible not only as a cultural structure but also as an emotional inheritance. The gestures of sweeping, washing, and wiping carried memories of my mother and grandmothers while simultaneously confronting my own internalized understanding of sacrifice. These gestures were not simply representations of labour; they were physical experiences that shaped my body during the performance. Pain, slowness, repetition, and sensory interaction with materials such as coffee grounds, water, fabric, and hair created forms of knowledge that were not accessible through theoretical analysis alone.

The exhibition demonstrated that performance can function as a research method capable of generating embodied knowledge. While academic literature provided essential conceptual frameworks for understanding domestic labour and feminist critique, the most significant insights emerged during the act of performing. The body revealed contradictions that had remained abstract during the planning stages of the project. Sweeping exposed physical strain and discipline, washing created moments of meditative rhythm and release, and wiping the

hanging window revealed the importance of emotional relationships with materials and objects. Audience responses and post-performance reflections further expanded the meaning of the work. Observations about power dynamics between performer and audience highlighted parallels between the gallery space and the domestic interior, where labour is often performed for others who witness it but rarely acknowledge it. Audience interpretations describing the work as both a “rage room” and a gesture of love revealed how domestic labour simultaneously holds frustration, devotion, resentment, and care. These responses reinforced the central premise of the project: that domestic labour cannot be understood through a single emotional or political framework.

Rather than resolving these contradictions, *Saçımı Süpürge Ettim* allows them to remain visible. The work suggests that domestic labour is not simply oppressive or nurturing; it is often both at the same time. It can embody affection and resentment, pride and exhaustion, obligation and personal agency. By slowing down these gestures through performance, the exhibition makes it possible to witness the emotional complexity embedded within everyday acts of care.

Beyond its immediate conclusions, this project also opens several potential directions for future research and artistic development. Possible directions for further research include the role of sound in performance environments, the relationship between domestic labour and visual framing in other mediums, the therapeutic and communal possibilities of embodied memory, and investigation of how artistic practices might reframe other forms of undervalued labour such as caregiving, service work, and other maintenance practices that sustain daily life but remain culturally invisible.

Finally, *Saçımı Süpürge Ettim* contributes to ongoing conversations about research-creation methodologies within contemporary art practice. It does not offer a definitive interpretation of domestic labour. Instead, it proposes performance as a space where inherited gestures can be examined, complicated, and reimagined. By performing these acts in a gallery setting, the project invites the performer and the audiences to reconsider how domestic labour shapes cultural memory, gender expectations, and emotional identity.

A Few Words on *Saçımı Süpürge Ettim*

I would like to say a few words.

“Saçımı süpürge ettim.”

It means “I made my hair into a broom” usually followed up by “senin için” meaning “for you.” It’s something many Turkish mothers say to express how much they have sacrificed, how much they have endured for their children and their families.

As a child, I heard pride in it. Strength. Devotion.

But I also heard something else.

I heard exhaustion.

I heard guilt.

I heard an expectation.

Somewhere along the way, I learned that love meant endurance. That to care meant to give until there was nothing left. That suffering quietly was a kind of virtue.

When I started this thesis, I thought I was only honouring the invisible domestic work of my mother and grandmothers while also critiquing it through a feminist lens. I believed I could hold both clearly.

But the longer I worked, the more complicated it became.

I realized how deeply I romanticize hardship as a way to cope with it.

Today, as I perform, I feel both anger and gratitude.

Anger toward my belief that love must hurt, and that sacrifice proves worth.

And gratitude for the resilience, the discipline, the strength that were also passed down to me.

Both live inside me.

I am not standing here healed. I am not at peace with these contradictions.

But performing gives me a place to sit with them. To slow them down. To look at them directly.

This work is not a resolution. It’s an ongoing conversation with my family, my culture, myself, and with the context I inhabit today.

Thank you for being here with me in this space.

Thank you for witnessing this process and sharing this experience with patience, openness and care.

Appendix

A. Hava Açılınca İçim Kapanıyor

Hava açılınca içim kapanıyor
Ne lanet day bu
Kendimi görmem için karanlık gerekiyor
Ama ne karanlık
Güneş ışığı bir sızdı mı
Gözlerimi alıyor
Birazlık bile fazla geliyor
Kedimi unuttuğum
Ne durdu saucü aydınlık yuvam olsaydı
Olacak elbet
Ona uğruşuyorum ya ~~benim~~ de
Işıkları söndürmeden kendimi bulabilmeye
Aydınlıkta da ışığım kayboluyor ama
Karanlıkta daha güzel parlıyorum
Ben sanırım güneşi kışkırtıyorum
Onun görevini üstlenmek istiyorum
Ama insanım ben
Aydınlıkta bir neyim ki bir yerleri
biteri için
bir şekilde?

22.11.25 0

When the sky opens (clears), something
in me closes.

What kind of curse is this?

I need darkness to see myself
but what kind of darkness?

The moment sunlight slips in,
it blinds me.

Even a little is too much.

I lose myself.

What would it be like

if brightness were my home?

It will happen, eventually.

I'm working toward it

trying to find myself

without turning off the lights.

But in brightness, my light fades.

In darkness, I shine more beautifully.

I think I'm jealous of the sun.

I want to take on its role.

But I am human

can I really illuminate anything,

for anyone,

in any way?

B. Tren (Train)

If it were before, I would sit facing the opposite direction of the train's movement. Trees, tall buildings, graffiti-covered walls, tiny people and cars would suddenly appear beside me, then slowly shrink away. As they moved further, I would observe them, I would think. First I would be surprised, then I would settle. First I would experience, then I would analyze. I loved reacting without judgment, learning through reaction. I would get away with what I learned only for that moment, because something new would always replace what faded the shrinking buildings, the clouds, the excitements, the hopes. These days, my neck hurts. I turn my head backward to see what is coming next. I want to be prepared. To think first, then draw near... To watch things slowly, calmly grow... Most recently, I sat facing the direction of the train. There was less excitement, less surprise... But things stayed with me longer. I came to know the crack on the wall more deeply. I watched people's faces. As they approached, the trees revealed more detail. I had time to read the graffiti. I slowly deciphered their codes. I understood. With what I learned, I judged what came next. I am not regretful that I once sat facing the opposite direction. It showed me what I had been missing, what I needed to look at. But now, I no longer want to watch what has passed. I want to slowly savour what is coming.

03.03.2026

Önceden olsa yüzümün trenin gittiği yönün tersine gelecek yere oturdum.
Ağaçlar, koca binalar, graffiti duvarlar, minik insanlar ve arabalar birden yanımda belirir, pttikçe küçülürdü.
Onlardan ~~uzaklaşırken~~ uzaklaşırken müledim, düşünürdüm, ~~sonra~~ ~~etkilen~~
Önce şaşırı, sonra sakinleşirim.
Önce tecribe eder, sonra analiz ederdim.
Yargısız tepkiyi, tepkiden öğrenmeyi severdim.
Öğrendiklerim hep yanıma kalırdı,
Çünkü hep bir yenisi gelirdi yerime küçülen binaların, bulutların, heyecanların, umutların.
Şimşiklerde boynum ağrıyer.
Kafamı arkaya çeviriyordum sıradaki geleceği görebilmek için.
Hazırlıklı olmale istiyordum.
Önce düşünüp sonra ~~gözet~~ yaklaşmak...
Yavaşça, salınca büyüdüklərini izlemek...
Yüzümün gidiş yönüne gelecek yere oturdum en son.
Heyecanı yektu çok, sürprizi de...
Ama daha çok kaldılar benimle.
Daha iyi tanıdım duvardaki çatlakı.
Yükeleni izledim insanların.
Yaklaştıkça detayları arttı ağaçların.
Graffitedeki ~~yağ~~ yazdıkları okumaya zamanım kaldı.
Şifrelerini yavaş yavaş çözdüm.
Anladım.
Öğrendiklerimle yorgunladım sıradakini.
Pişman değitim şimşikye kadar ters yöne oturdüğümün.
Kağırdıklarımı, nelere bakmam gerektiğini göstermişti bana.
Ama artık pesenleri izlemek istemiyordum.
Geleceğin tadını çıkarmak istiyordum yavaş yavaş.

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