

How do you live?

List of works

Photoplay 1996-2003 (2023) C-prints taken by mom and other family members

Scab (2023) Floorboards removed from my apartment at Lomvardou 34, wood glue

Man, and Babies Trying to Look at Each Other (2023) Imitation L'Enfant poster, silver gelatin print

Memos (Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Who's the Fairest of Them All? + I know how to wash my teeth all on my own) (2023) Reconstructed memo writing card, memo by mom from childhood photoalbum

Floor (2023) Short story

Floor

I drilled five six-millimeter holes using an impact driver, one in the middle of the room, one in each corner, through the floorboards and what felt like the subfloor, until I hit the empty air between those layers and the concrete foundations, which if I had been patient enough may have made a difference in a month or two, but hadn't by the third day, driving me to bust a larger hole open, which I did using a chisel and hammer, first outlining the shape with a series of shallow cuts, then a few light blows until I got the chisel under the grain at an angle, and started pounding the wood with the straight end of a crowbar. A square segment of the top layer, what I thought was my apartments only layer of floorboards, separated itself quite easily from the material beneath it, which seemed thicker and more firmly attached to the joists below, forcing me to return to the sharper chisel, which I hammered down into the wood for a few minutes until I removed a ramp shaped piece in slices, now spread across my floor and then stopped, realizing that this wood was also floorboards, only thicker. With the chisel now wedged between the first and second layer, I rammed it in with two blows of the hammer, unpairing the two and revealing the wood glue that held them together, which I could tell was applied with a tiling trowel from the ridge-like patterns of dried up glue left behind, and came undone fast and easy using quick thrusts of the crowbars straight edge, one square at a time.

My floor consists of two layers of floorboards and lacks a subfloor.

The second layer, the one glued onto the thicker wood beneath it and what I originally thought was the only layer, is around a centimeter thick, consists of small rectangles ten by two centimeters each, is arranged into squares, five rectangles a piece, laid down in a basket weave pattern, oriented diagonally to the walls, and is held together with a polyester net. The one beneath it, the floorboards put in when the flat was built, are significantly larger, longer, thicker, placed in a herringbone pattern, and nailed straight to the joists.

In the middle of the living room, a bulge, around seven centimeters high, stretching to almost both ends of the room in width and a meter in length, has forced me to start taking my floorboards apart. The second layer of floorboards, I had undone in a shape leading towards the bulge, a bulge I was told by the landlord was probably created by flooding from the balcony the year before, before I had moved in, out of a lack of care from the previous tenants who had either ignored or forgotten his advice to clean out the balcony drain in the winter, which could easily get clogged up with leaves and which the landlord had demonstrated to me, and I assume also to them, should be unclogged regularly with a thin, long iron rod, twisted into a loop on the one end as a handle and left straight at the other, a tool he had fashioned himself and left for us in the right corner of the balcony.

I was hoping that only that layer, the one put in after the renovation had sustained water damage, that that layer had soaked all the water in, been bloated, and tore itself apart from the thicker, original layer, creating the bulge which I could jump up and down on like a trampoline, but it wasn't. Both layers were part of the same bulge.

I told the landlord about the bulge two and half months after I moved in, a few weeks after I noticed it getting larger, after calling him two times without mentioning it despite wanting to, and for the first two months after this, I hesitated to push the matter, since initially, he ignored me, thinking that it was some minor warping I was exaggerating, which was there when I moved in and probably apparent at my viewing if I had been paying enough attention. Five months into the tenancy, after three arduous phone calls with multiple attempts to illustrate in detail the extremity of the circumstances, during which I had explained to him how whatever furniture I had moved in with had to be cordoned off into the sides and corners of the room, and all new furniture I had envisioned and planned to buy had to be pushed into the future as they would have no stable, flat ground to stand on, a reality that led me to propose the lowering of the rent for the months it would take to repair the floor, which provoked the landlord into haranguing me

with sustained effort and unnecessary details of his personal circumstances, the taxes he had to pay, the family he had to feed, the economy the country was in, and various benefits he had to go on, ascending into a stammering ultimatum that I either settle with the current reality or move out. He called me a few hours later with apologies and visited the flat two days later with a contractor, who maintained that the entirety of the floor had to be removed and replaced.

With most of the upper layer of floorboards now removed and the bulge still unmoving, I decided to take a jigsaw to the central hole, after enlarging it with a two-centimeter drill bit so I was able to push the saws blade through the hole and slowly outline a cut following the shape of one of the herringbone boards but was cut short when I hit one of the nails holding the board to the joists and the blade snapped. I exchanged the broken blade with a new one and pulled the broken one out with a pair of pliers, returning to the two-centimeter hole, following the original cuts path just before where the blade had snapped where I veered off to the left and cut around the nail and then back to the outline until the board had come loose along with a small segment of the joists. I placed the chisel between the joists and the remaining segment of board and twisted it until it came loose, grasping it hard with my hands and pulling until just the nail was left behind which I pulled out with the pliers, then came back to the board beside it, first loosening it with the chisel as I had done with the small segment, tugging at it until I could get to the nails, which I pulled out with the pliers and then cutting the joists out with a jigsaw, a pattern I repeated until I had removed three boards in parallel and then another three perpendicular, creating a hole in the shape of a heart.

Through the hole, I expected the concrete foundations, but, in their place, I found an assortment of broken concrete, cut up wires, dust, a drill bit, and various sizes of blue broken tiles, none of which matched any of the tiles found in my home, an assortment that brought me back to an altercation with a contractor who had come to fix the rolling shutters in my previous home, who after trying to replace the mechanism that rolled them up and down had difficulty placing them in the wall due to the dust and broken concrete he had found between the inner and outer wall and had explained to me that during the construction of a building, each step of the way, various trash would accumulate, which under normal circumstances would be removed before the next step progressed but was often left behind for the next guy to clean up, i.e. when the crew would lay down the foundations, all the extraneous rebar and concrete would be left behind for the column casters and the bricklayers to sort out, who would inevitably leave their own new mess of broken bricks and concrete for the plasterers, electricians, and plumbers who would all do the same all the way down to the painters and floor installers who would just shove all of it in the walls and underneath the floor.

After cleaning out the hole, I put my hand down on the cold cement. I could feel the condensation that had been trapped in there. I used my air heater to begin the process of drying the floor out, leaving it face down on top of the hole for a few hours, then removed it, hid the hole, the concrete, and most of the damaged floor with a carpet.

I moved my furniture out of the main living spaces and into my kitchen and bedroom. My floor remained in a state of limbo as the bulge started to dissipate. I dreamt of another apartment with different floorboards. Longer ones, laid down in a brick pattern and undamaged. I wandered from the empty bedroom into the empty living room and stood there for a moment. I heard the bedroom's balcony door slamming shut from a gust of wind. I ran towards the room, where I was met with a large hole in the middle of it and a bunch of floor boards stacked by its side. I crept towards the hole and found a bundle of objects wrapped in cellophane inside it. I took the bundle and examined it. Behind me, mom entered the room and gawked at me, exclaiming, "What have you done this time?" An old man barged in through the balcony doors holding a Swiss army knife. He looked at the hole and then at me. He grabbed me by the collar and held me to the wall at knifepoint with his little blade. Mom looked at me and then the floor. The man screamed, "If you've used my fucking credit card I'll fucking kill you."