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# Work Karen Ingham ing Materials Table Keeper

If I am a keeper what is it I am keeping? If I collect and curate memories and inscriptions of past events, erased and written anew, how do I keep these ephemeral moments and where do I share and display them? I ponder these thoughts as I sit and write at my kitchen table, scribbling, typing, mark making, creating sketches, graphs and tables of information. Tables on tables. When it comes time for the evening meal I tidy away my work and set the table for the family meal. Settings for tables. Later, I clear away the dishes and crumbs and wipe away the remainders of the food so that the table may be wiped clean, ready for new meals, new meanings. Tabula Rasa. At the weekend, time permitting, I may even polish my table, and if the light is just right, catch an abstracted glimpse of my own reflection on the renewed surface.

The table is a metonym for female domestic space; think of the kitchen table as the symbolic centre of the home, both as an object of unity (the shared family meal) or of strife (the shared family argument.) The table is also key to writing - and for many women the kitchen table doubles as writing desk. The table is palimpsestic, leaving traces and faint inscriptions of previous encounters inadvertently etched into the grain of the wood. In the days I am keeper I will make, mark, wipe, stain, sketch, photograph, film and on occasion, eat and drink at my table. I will invite others to use my table, to leave their marks and traces. I will watch my table change as clear marks and meanings become muddled and layered, much like memory itself, and then I will begin to decode and reinterpret my table as a series of dissolves until the decipherable, discrete messages and marks become a crisscross of lines of absent-minded doodles and purposeful comment. The resultant chaos of mark-making and word craft suggests the relational and interdisciplinary nature of not only the 'keeping' but arguably of lived experience.

Karen Ingham is an interdisciplinary artist, writer, and academic with an interest in the 'agency of objects', which resonates with her recent practice in projects like Narrative Remains (2009 Wellcome Trust).

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She rubbed with the polish to no avail. Too many stains, too many years of late night arguments, spilt wine and tears. She would have to use the hard bristle brush again, to scrub and scour away the blemishes, an attempt she knew already to be in vain. The scratches would recede, the stains fade, but the traces would remain, embedded in the grain of the wood.

