VL: Many of your fabric pieces – from a light switch to entire architectural structures – are replicas of a specific place you once called home and are often described as such with the precise address as the title. Can you describe the place that inspired *Hub, 260-10 Sungbook-dong, Sungbook-ku, Seoul, Korea* (2016), and why you selected to make a fabric replica of this particular structure?

DHS: *Hub, 260-10 Sungbook-dong, Sungbook-ku, Seoul, Korea* is an area of my parents’ home in Seoul, where I grew up. It’s a traditional *han ok* (Korean house) – a 70s copy of the one King Sunjo (1790–1834) built in the early-nineteenth century because he wanted to experience the life of ordinary people. I’ve continued to stay there whenever I’m back in Seoul so it’s the site of decades of memories for me. I think of the fabric architecture works as, in a sense, an act of shedding skin, slipping out of my clothes and packing them quietly away to unfold elsewhere.

The *Hub* sculptures are transitional or in-between spaces – corridors, passages, entryways. This one is an area between the bathroom and the living room/bedroom. Traditional Korean architecture is much more porous than in the West – there is less rigidity to the separation of the rooms, and the outside world is much more integrated: sounds travel; doors or
windows become walls; you feel the temperature of your external surroundings keenly; the spaces themselves are reconfigured throughout the day and night. That porous quality all feeds into this sculpture and it’s partly why the translucence of the fabric is key. I began using fabric partly because of its affinities with those qualities in Korean architecture and *Hub, 260-10 Sungbook-dong* is probably the closest one of my *Hubs* comes to the original structure, because three of the walls are doors and windows covered in rice paper. The transition feels very natural.

The address in the title relates to my interest in site-specificity. The address is an objective fact, tied to a single, tangible space – it has its own data if you like, which I am archiving. The *Hub’s* title behaves similarly to a botanist’s punctilious notes on where and when a flower was retrieved. My fabric architecture pieces are site-specific in that they derive from the particulars of a certain space, but they also challenge the notion of site-specificity because they are transportable. The very notion of presenting an architectural space, in a fabric that communicates the intangible quality of memory, appeals to me because of how it interacts with the museum surroundings. You can still see the building’s architecture through the work because of the material’s transparency. The museum space is invited in, as is the viewer. Both the viewer and existing architecture become part of the work, the subject. The specificity is a device.

I’m also thinking, and not in a didactic way, about how temporal-spatial experiences have been impacted by the rapidity of the (pre-lockdown) global world – the constant movement, the streams of imagery and information. What does locational specificity mean now and how does my experience relate to yours or anyone else’s? How do we (both as individuals and collectively) acclimatise and rebuild, or tackle displacement? The fabric sculptures are survival mechanisms in a way. I’m now thinking a lot about what happens to uninhabited structures, because we are all confined to our homes.

**VL:** Much of the beauty of your fabric works lies in the precision of the details of the original hard surfaces translated into the translucent polyester forms. Can you describe the process behind the making of *Hub, 260-10 Sungbook-dong, Sungbook-ku, Seoul, Korea*?
DHS: The measuring of the space is the first part of the process and it’s so important. I can only make these sculptures from spaces that I’ve inhabited for long periods. It was never my intention to do them for all the different places I’ve lived, but the impulse always becomes overwhelming. The quotidian suddenly becomes infused with this intangible quality or energy and it’s then that I start work.

I took the measurements of this *Hub* by hand and it is a very loving gesture for me. It requires you to handle every corner, every object. Some of them evoke memories, others I may have never noticed before – emotion and form are translated into data by way of my touch, and then into patterns. It’s laborious and there are no shortcuts. It’s the same as with my rubbings – it’s all about touch: a caress, a transference, a translation. There’s something melancholic about it, a gentle mourning.

The precision is actually a bit of a distraction for me. There are differences between the sculpture and the original that bear marks of the process. I want to recreate the space, but it’s inherently impossible to do that in fabric and I always knew that. Even 3D scanning can’t pick everything up. It just has to have a certain amount of data – it needs to be about 90% there to prompt the right feelings in me, to evoke the memories and experience of the place. The dimensions of the patterns differ depending on the fabric and because you have to allow more fabric for the sewing process. I’m not interested in fetishizing the object, room or building. I’m more interested in the quality of porosity and layering. They’re like palimpsests. In this case, the *Hub* is an area that is specific to Korean architecture, which in itself occupies an in-between space between the human and non-human, or natural, world. So again, it comes back to permeability and transportability. Also how we construct...
memory. The details and dimensions are precise enough to disorient, to hopefully take the viewer outside of themselves, but conceptually the works are as malleable as memory or nostalgia can be.

VL: It's only when we pack away our personal belongings and leave a place behind that we start to appreciate its spaces and its details. By making these monochrome transparent structures and features that make a place, in a sense, lightweight and portable, what of these places are you wishing to take away?


DHS: It’s not a literal taking away so much as a translation. Seoul Home/L.A. Home/New York Home/Baltimore Home/London Home/Seattle Home/L.A. Home (1999) (the title expands with the addition of each place it is shown), which was exhibited at the Korean Cultural Center in LA, was definitely about taking something with me from Seoul, and there was something quite literal about that first sculpture – I couldn’t sleep when I was first living in New York and the last time I remembered sleeping well was in my room in Seoul, so I had an urge to literally remake it in my New York apartment. But I’m not continually trying to keep particular spaces with me – I repeat evocations of home because I’m interested in origins, and the original, or what the original is. I didn’t actually experience a huge culture shock when I reached the US. It was more subtle, an uncanny quality. The slightly different height of a light switch for example. These sculptures are about the physical and non-physical, the specific and intangible.
The transparency is complex for me. I find the beauty of the fabric architecture works quite dangerous because it’s so seductive. Particularly because this traditional Korean architecture is actually very rare in contemporary Korea (although it was my experience growing up). I want to avoid fetishizing the ‘Eastern’ elements but I’m also interested in how cultures are translated and colonised, so prompting questions on those areas is good.

VL: Over your prolific career you have created works around home actually in a variety of materials and scales: ie a 1/5 model of your childhood home in Seoul crashing into a model of your home in Rhode Island; 1-1 scale paper rubbings of the interior of your apartment in New York; and the creation of a mobile hotel room in a truck (created in collaboration with your architect brother) that hosted nightly guests. You have dealt with multiple ideas of home, from precious spaces of shelter and protection to sites of transition and conflict. How have materials and scale played a role in your evolving thinking of home(s) and the experiences they engender?

DHS: My subject matter is architectural space so the 1:1 scale is key. Without that, it almost falls apart because our built environment is governed by the body’s dimensions. It’s not always possible to do the architectural works 1:1, for example the *Fallen Star* 1/5 sculpture of the *[han ok]* crashing into my Rhode Island home. I think of these works almost like architectural models. I’m reflecting on it a lot now though, because we’re currently so limited in our ability to experience different spaces.

VL: How has the pandemic changed your studio practice, or is there anything you have become more focused on lately?

DHS: I keep thinking about what it means if you don’t have somewhere to call home. I first started to consider what home meant when I left Korea and I’ve never stopped, so for me it was something that came into focus when it was challenged. So many people must be struggling with that now. Also how borders – physical, political, social – impact our behaviours. I’m a transnational artist and I’ve benefited from notions of a borderless world, the fluid and constantly moving nature of the cultural sector. What happens to that now? They’re such complex areas though. I’m also thinking a lot about what’s happened in the wake of globalisation, and to an extent neoliberalism – all the lost optimism, all the ambitions to build new walls and borders.

In terms of my studio practice, I’m inevitably doing less work on larger-scale physical projects and a lot of thinking around philosophical concerns. Even the fact that I’m spending a lot of time cleaning my apartment – I’m touching and seeing it in different ways and that’s really interesting to me. Looking anew at the objects you unthinkingly interact with on a daily basis. I’m also working a lot with my two young daughters on an ongoing project, but it’s really taken shape during the lockdown. We’ve been building a lot with Legos and whole fantastical worlds of modelling clay. I’m interested in what happens to our psychic space as we age, how the child’s mind works and what imaginative play communicates about how we frame our worlds, how we try and impose order on the chaos and how much better children are at navigating that chaos.

VL: What advice do you have for people as they live life completely now at home?

DHS: I don’t think it’s my position to advise and I’ll also need a lot of time to process the current situation. I’m an essentially hopeful and optimistic person but of course I think we should reflect seriously on the directions we’re going in. Also, just to look at things, to look at the things around us.
VL: What would your dream home be like?

DHS: My dream home is my Bridge Project. I’ve been working on plans for a bridge that connects Seoul, New York and now London for over two decades. The dream home occupies the central point of the bridge. It’s a constantly evolving project and by its nature, unresolved. Borders move or close, our environments and climate changes, families and personal connections grow or shift. The Bridge has many possible outcomes and manifestations. I don’t have a fixed concept of home – it will continue to evolve and I find that both exhilarating and calming.