

Messy

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You can't walk four steps without tripping over something. It's been labeled a construction site, the Place of No Return, and—most appropriately—a disaster zone. Non-residents don't enter unless they absolutely have to, and they usually find a way to avoid it. Step through the doorway, pick your way over a mountain of clothes, trip over six and a half pairs of shoes, bang your knee on the computer desk, spin to avoid the bed, leap over a heap of general stuff, and crash into the bookcase.

Congratulations, you've entered my room.

I've been told it's a mess. I find the term offensive. That clutter people refer to are my personal belongings. The mountains and valleys you have to traverse consist of my clothes and other necessities. I mean really, people, it's not that bad. You can even see spots where my grey carpet shows through. The Alisonscape isn't that terrible. It's not like anyone's died attempting to navigate it. Yet.

All that, of course, is beside the point. I am an artist. If I like what I see, who cares what the rest of the world thinks? No one else has to live here with me. What's wrong with my stuff strewn across the floor if I know exactly where everything is? It's a daily test of my photographic memory, which I'd say is improving with every shirt added to the pile. Most days it constitutes my only aerobic exercise: the dancing, the tripping, the stumbling, the regaining of the balance which, by the way, has also vastly improved. It's my own obstacle course, free and constantly changing.

There are other ways to improve your memory and balance, I know. And I could get a gym membership if I were really that serious about my aerobic exercise. The real reason for the chaos in my room is deeper than that, literally.

Hidden beneath the four feet of cumulative disarray, I find inspiration.

I kick aside a blanket, right, looking for my stats homework. What do I find instead? A book of floor plans. I have approximately the attention span of a gnat, so I grab the book, shove pillows off my purple disk-chair, and plunk myself down to flip through some pages. One's bookmarked by a silver ribbon. I turn there. Scrawled in the corner is Alicia's apartment.

This reminds me of a half-written story on my desk. I spring up to grab it, nearly face-planting after tripping over my garbage can. No matter. I land on the chair, lace up my blue Converse All Stars—my thinking shoes, which have magically been transported to opposite corners of my lair—and grab a pen, shoving loose-leaf aside to reveal a composition book. Alicia and I go through two chapters involving spray paint, sleeping in, a breakfast date, and a delicate conversation concerning her almost-truancy. My room, clutter and all, becomes hers. We bond.

I remember my stats homework at 8:27. I could care less: it's been a highly productive three hours and twenty-two minutes, and I owe it all to my memory-game-personal-gym-inspiration-laden room.

It's not clutter. It's inspirational chaos. It's not dangerous. It's a workout. It's not the black hole of all things personal. It's a memory game. My mess, in its own way, is actually kind of neat.