

“This is my full-time job right now,” says Kasper, a native of northern Virginia. “It’s an ongoing performance every day. In the museum context it becomes a fishbowl, except I invite people to come in and have an experience.”

According to the Whitney, the point of the exhibit is to create “both a theatrical space and a living sculpture.”

But being on display all day is no easy task.

“I’m used to doing something more immediate that gets the adrenaline flowing,” says Kasper, surrounded by Buster Keaton tapes, drums and art books. “This is the hardest thing that I’ve ever encountered because it takes a sustained effort.”

Throughout the day, a steady stream of museum guests stop by the exhibit to speak with Kasper and peruse her things, which can be overwhelming for the artist.

“If there are a lot of people in the space and they are all going through my things I get frustrated,” she says. “Kids especially like to touch things.”

Interactions with visitors range from mere seconds to hour-long art sessions. Most visitors are cordial, but not all.

“I had a heckler once,” says Kasper. “He was booing and calling me a monkey, but I didn’t get rattled.”

She also receives visits from friends.

“My friend Mimi came for a surprise visit and mentioned that I never returned a book she had lent me,” says Kasper. “So we started looking through all my stuff for it. I couldn’t find it that moment but discovered it later.”

Once a week, Kasper also hosts performances, often with invited guests. Sometimes she will project a film on the wall, other times she’ll convert her bed into a stage for concerts.

“Each day is totally different,” she says. “It has to be since there are no windows in here. The air gets stale so we’ve got to keep everything else fresh.”

Not that Kasper is complaining about basically living in a museum, which she calls “an incredible opportunity.” She is already on a first-name basis with the security guards and knows where every bathroom in the museum is located.

In a twist of fate, Kasper’s initial idea for the exhibit didn’t involve her stuff, but her mom’s.

“My mother is a hoarder and I wanted to move the entire contents of her house into the museum,” she says. “The curators loved the idea but my parents got really upset.

Then I thought, well, why don’t I put myself out there. And here we are.”

Despite all her eccentricities, Kasper is actually very conventional when asked which items she values the most.

“If there were a fire,” she says, “I’d probably take my hard drives.”

# The New York Times

## Please, Don't Feed the Artist Dawn Kasper at the Whitney Biennial

by Penelope Green  
April 25, 2012



Dawn Kasper moved the entire contents of her home and studio into a room at the Whitney Museum.  
Credit Robert Wright for The New York Times

ON most days, you can hear Dawn Kasper's installation at the Whitney Biennial before you see it. Bessie Smith or the Beatles or an episode of "The Young Ones," a British sitcom from the '80s, might be playing scratchily on one of her many devices, spilling out into an adjacent gallery and accompanied by a throaty guffaw from the artist, whom you might then come upon sitting cross-legged on a mattress, wearing a Hawaiian shirt, eating a sandwich and entertaining a few strangers.

In late February, Ms. Kasper, a Los Angeles performance artist, moved herself and the entire contents of her apartment-slash-studio into the Whitney, where it and she will remain for the duration of the show (it closes May 27), in a kind of living sculpture she calls the Nomadic Studio Practice.

Though she is only 35, she has albums on vinyl, as well as VHS tapes and cassettes; there they are, in stacks on the floor. This is partly because she has a fondness for old media equipment and partly because she can't afford to upgrade.

Indeed, Ms. Kasper's finances haven't allowed for a real studio since 2008, a common scenario in the life of an artist and one that generated this piece, which recalls the more festive aspects of Relational Aesthetics as well as a party