# A Space for Stories

A Photographed Narrative of my Summer at The Haven

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This project explores the way in which I experienced the intersections of place, words and meaning as an intern for the Project on Lived Theology at The Haven. This photo series examines language's role in shaping our experience in and perceptions of a place, and how words, while transient conceptually, irreversibly write themselves into landscapes and scenery. I also study the opposite: how surrounding physical space impacts the words we use and stories we choose to live while occupying any given place. Once wholly unfamiliar, The Haven is now a place I know intimately—yet I cannot know or remember this space without reliving the stories others told, words I spoke, and language that was created while I interned here. This book attempts to capture and describe those experiences.
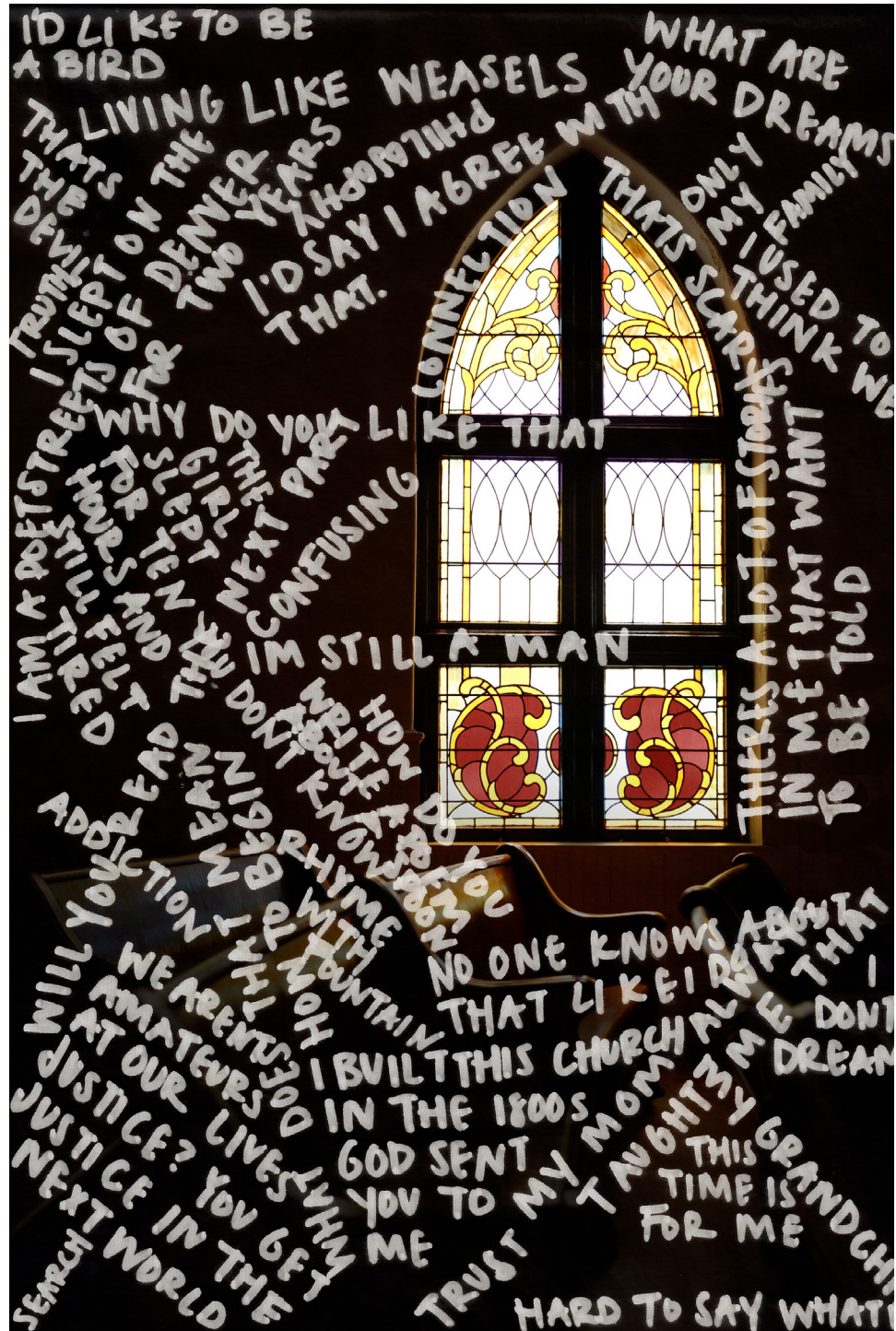
I'D LIKE TO BE A BIRD

WHAT ARE YOUR DREAMS

LIVING LIKE WEASELS

THATS THE DEVIL

I SLEPT ON THE STREETS OF DENVER FOR TWO YEARS

PHILOSOPHICAL

I'D SAY I AGREE WITH THAT.

ONLY MY FAMILY

I USED TO THINK WE

CONNECTION

THATS SCARY

SHOULD

I WANT

WHY DO YOU LIKE THAT

CONFUSING

THE NEXT PART

I AM A POET

I STILL FELT TIRED

WHY

THE GIRL SLEPT FOR TEN HOURS AND

IM STILL A MAN

HOW TO WRITE A RHYME

THERES A LOT OF STORIES IN ME THAT WANT TO BE TOLD

ADDICTION

YOU DON'T KNOW

MOUNTAIN

NIGHT

WILL YOU

WE ARE TOO AMATEURS AT OUR LIVES WHAT

JUSTICE? YOU GET

NEXT WORLD

SEARCH IN THE

NO ONE KNOWS ABOUT THAT LIKE I DO

I BUILT THIS CHURCH IN THE 1800S

GOD SENT YOU TO ME

TRUST MY MOM

TAUGHT ME THAT

I DONT DREAM

MY GRANDCHI

THIS TIME IS FOR ME

HARD TO SAY WHAT

The sanctuary, as a rule, is a place devoid of words. The angry glaring 'EXIT' signs showcase themselves as the only pesky reminder that written language exists in the stillness of this room. An empty place is a malleable place: and each Wednesday morning, our writing group comes to read, write, and create together. Laughter and poetry and questions and prose travel through the air and bounce off the rafters, heard by the same stain glass that once listened to psalms and hymns and sermons and prayers. This space is like the pages of paper I bring to the writing group each week. They begin empty, steady lines guiding the writer towards a sentence, a story. This place remains forever filled with conversations and creations. I enter now in familiarity, expectation, and anticipation.

This magnet hides in a corner of the kitchen, on a side of a warming oven that faces the flour bins. It is not very visible. Its invisibility is very unlike my own visibility as a young, petite, and friendly female at The Haven. This magnet, intended as innocent, mirrors words I experienced this summer that were intended in a very sinister manner. One man in particular became forever associated with sugar: I began the habit of always giving him two scoops of the sweet stuff for his coffee. He would often tell me to "Get back to the kitchen" so that I could provide him his coveted two scoops. Later in the summer, I overheard this same man making extremely sexually explicit comments about me to some other men in the shelter, words that are forever crystalized in my mind. The kitchen became a haven within The Haven for me—it provides less visibility and interaction between myself and the guests, which I sometimes felt necessary around certain guests. I struggled with the dilemma of how to serve and treat with compassion men who threatened me. The Kitchen became a space where I could contemplate these questions in relative ease and solitude—except when asked for sugar.
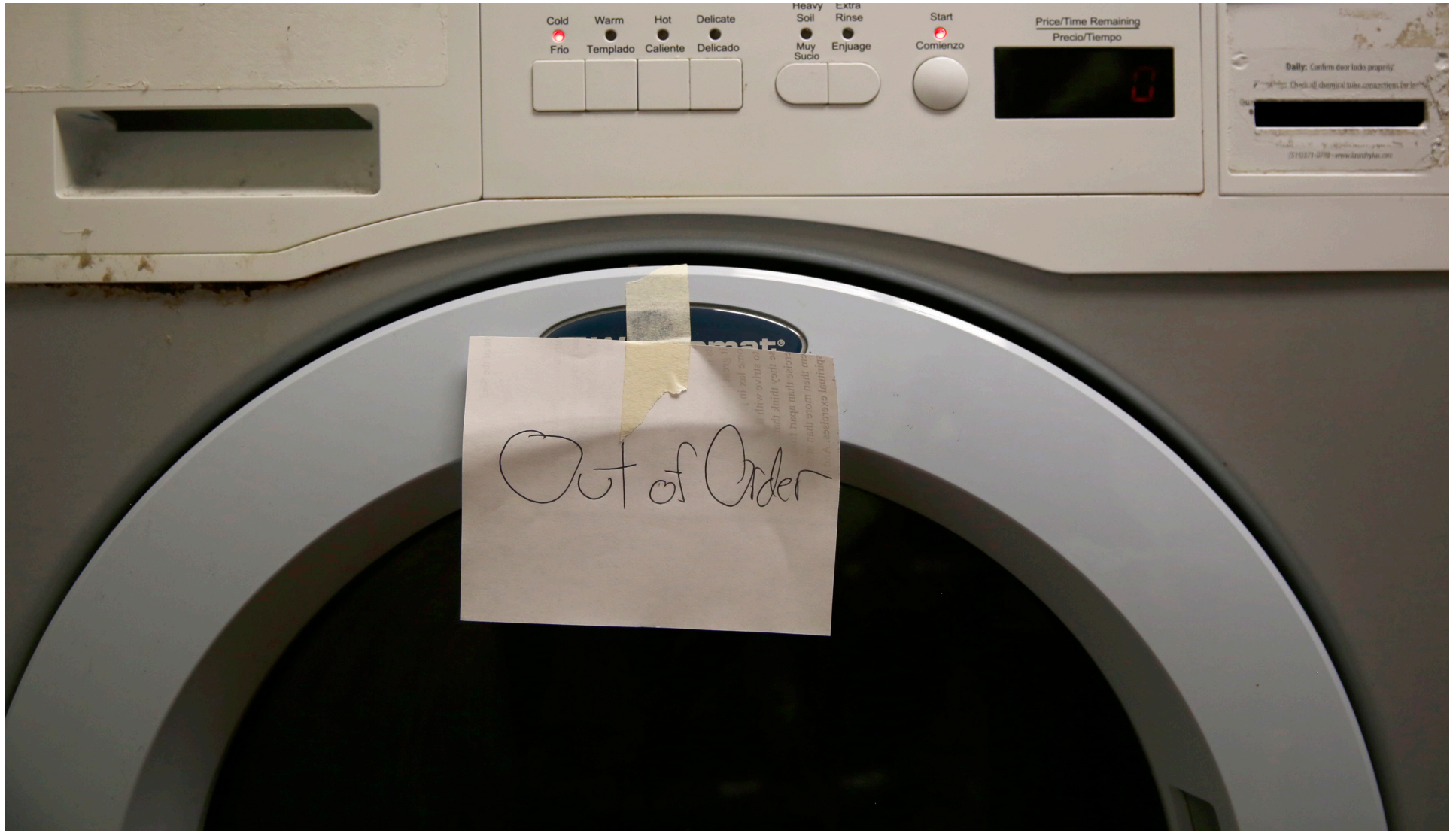
From the minute the Haven opens its doors to the last load of towels and washcloths after everyone has left, the laundry rooms hums with warm energy. This room provides cleansing and restoration for the dirty and weary clothes our guests wear—yet, in the machines very existence, prove the impossibility of forever putting an end to scrubbing ourselves clean. For folks at The Haven, I imagine life, processes of government, and ideals of justice and equality often appear 'Out of Order'. Perhaps it is the lingering irony of this futility that makes the laundry room one
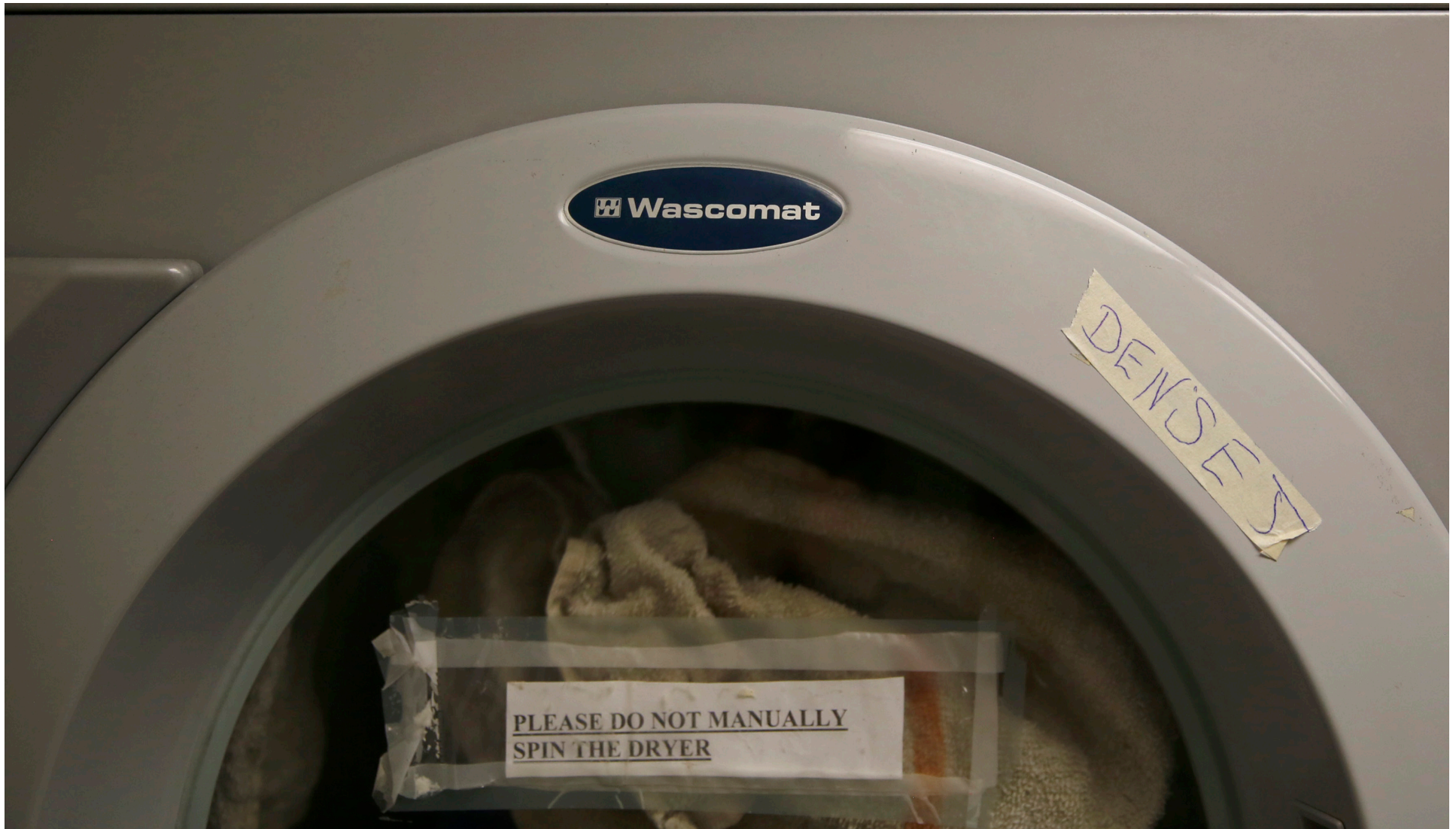
of the most contentious areas of the building. A crucial step of washing clothes at The Haven is labeling the machine with names: if this step is overlooked, arguments begin, fights break out, and critical questions of possession, belonging, and autonomy swirl around the room. Sometimes, this simple naming of a load of laundry places an identity to the totality of one person's worldly possessions. The amount and the quality of services The Haven provides its guests offers hope, vitality and beauty: yet the endless nature of need evokes despair, pessimism and discouragement.