

Space Engraving

by Thyme of the House

Word count: 2452

Posted: April 2026

Let us begin

When we, the House, imagine, we don't see anything. Occasionally, there are flashes and silhouettes, but when we imagine something, it is an internal sense of knowing rather than a perception of appearance. Yet, we as a system have a headspace that has an appearance that we all know and recognize. Instead of relying on images, the people here use touch, proprioception, metaphor, and metaphysics to "establish" and "engrave" our headspace so that we can interact with it and even change it. Maybe these strategies will work for you, too.

An important thing to establish early on, to make things very clear, is that a lot of this looks and sounds like "making it up as you go." That's because it is.

Terminology

Imagine: to perceive spaces and objects in the mind by directing mental attention to them. Despite the etymology of the word, images are not required.

Vessel: the physical body that interacts with the external world. The meat of it all.

Body: the internal sense of body of a specific person. A body may share things with the vessel, such as appearance or sensory experience, but may not.

Person/people: entity contained within a plural collective, regardless of differentiation or distinctness.

Headspace: an internal world that people interact with and access mentally. Not every person in headspace need be engaged in the actions of the vessel; not every person fronting in the vessel need exist in headspace.

Touch: a body part containing something else. Notice I say body part, not vessel part. The thing touched need not be externally tangible.

Proprioception: your sense of body in a space. The movements, the speed, the location. If you close your eyes, it is your proprioception that lets you know where your hands are in relation to your face or whether you are moving or still. This is a fundamental sense like sight or hearing. Not everyone has good proprioception, but most people have

some. You might be clumsy eating a bowl of cereal with your eyes shut, but most people could do it if they tried.

Metaphor: comparison of two things by referring to one thing as another. Our headspace is a house, but it could be a castle or a hotel. The words you use for things affect their truths. The qualities of a thing can be emphasized or downplayed by the use of metaphor. Ours is a house because we live here—a castle might have defenses, and ours does not, and a hotel might have guests, and ours does not. A castle might also be old and cold. A hotel might be luxurious or near an appealing destination. Ours is none of those things. Its best comparison is to a house, so that is the metaphor we use.

Metaphysics: the philosophy of reality. This is our bridge between psychological, spiritual, and physical phenomena. We believe that our headspace exists as part of our individual and collective reality because we experience it. That's an untestable conjecture. You can't prove that our headspace doesn't exist, no matter what evidence you collect. You'd have to fight the subjective metaphysics, and that's impossible. It doesn't matter if our headspace exists in another realm or if it is just the particularities of our nervous system: it exists to us, and therefore it exists.

Nothing, and then not

When I say “establishing,” I mean “making the truth.” Because headspace lives in the domain of metaphysics, the truth is ours to define.

We start with proprioception. Take your sense of self and imagine where your headspace is, or where you want it to be. Where is your body? Not your vessel, but your body, although there may be overlap. Are there others sharing a space with you? How close are they/ Are there any objects dividing you from others? Can you move elsewhere in the space? Can you touch anything? If you move, can you touch anything else?

It took us time to establish answers to these questions, and the answers changed over time (by our own doing or by causes perceived outside of our control).

In our case, our frontiers' bodies are on the front porch of the house. It serves as a halfway point between being inside the house and being outside of it, and it's a perfect metaphor for us. You can talk to people who share a house if they're on the front porch without having to enter the house yourself. We can move and feel the walls of the house and the openness of the porch. What can you feel?

It may help to dedicate specific times to imagining headspace, especially if it's still unclear or empty. A good time may be right before falling asleep. Often, you're relaxed and don't have much else to do with your mental energy—or, if you do, it can be an alternative to anything unpleasant that's keeping you up at night.

Now, the point of “establishing” is that, if you don’t feel like you can feel something, or if you don’t have a sense of space, then you can just... decide to. Construct your subjective reality. Establish that, actually, you are sitting in a chair. Imagine yourself sitting in a chair in headspace. If you want, you can ascribe specific details to the chair: its size, its color, or what it’s made of, for example. Imagine the pressure of the chair’s back against your own or the sensation of wood or metal or plastic under your hands. For details that are purely visual, you don’t have to see them. Just decide them, then they are.

But sometimes imagining isn’t stable. Sometimes you can imagine yourself in a chair, but then a few seconds later it is gone. That happens to us. To resolve that, we “engrave.”

Incisions, and maybe a little hammer

Engraving, literally, is the art of impressing, of carving, of incising. Traditionally, if one was engraving by hand, one would use a burin (a thin pointed metal blade). For soft materials like leather or wood, this would be enough: you press the tip against the material and carve the shapes you want. For harder materials like metal, you’d use a burin with a handle and use a hammer to drive the burin deep enough to scratch the surface. But the key element of “engraving” our headspace is the fact that you often engrave the same line multiple times to achieve the desired effect. For deeper lines, you go over the same line with the same burin over and over. To change the shape of the line, you use different burins.

The way we “engrave” headspace is to repeatedly carve the same objects and spaces until the images are stable, until the design stays. If the chair I was sitting on fades away, I repeat the imagination from the beginning until I feel its stability support me, until I can touch the chair again.

When we engrave, the sense of proprioception is the most important thing to build up first. I must know and feel that I am sitting, that my legs are bent, that if I were to straighten my legs my body would still be supported. If the feelings fade or flicker, I repeat the imagination. I pass the burin over the line again. Then, the sense of touch. Once you are in A chair, establish what exactly The chair feels like. Engrave, engrave, engrave.

This may not be easy. Take it slowly if you need. If necessary, use a little mental force, the little hammer.

When we start engraving, it can be uncomfortable. Sometimes there is resistance. Sometimes the imagining is hard to achieve at all. Sometimes this means we abandon that idea and leave the headspace as it was. Other times, it just means we need to

engrave more often over longer periods of time. That's your call to make. I'd recommend experimenting to find your own boundaries.

Likenesses in the dark

As stated earlier, we don't see things visually when we imagine. For us, establishing things like color can be easier than something like material because it is not actually perceived, but it can still be engraved: I have built a chair under me, I have made it out of imagination and metal, and I have decided that it is black. If I need to engrave it later, I will append the knowledge that it is black. If someone later needs to know what color the chair is, to know if it matches the colors of other chairs, they can know that it is black, too.

We like color, so we find it worth establishing, even if it's not perceived. If you don't find it's worth establishing, don't bother. It's your headspace. You choose its truth.

Everyone everywhere all at once

I've said "I" before in this essay, and I meant it. In our experience, engraving can be done by an individual to establish headspace that we all share. My systemmate Jyliet, for instance, created a sunroom by xyrself. Other times, it's a collaborative effort: I worked with my sibling AJ to create our swamp/bedroom, and all fronters work together to shape the current state of the front porch.

You may find that some people are better engravers than others. Jyliet's sunroom took months of effort, but the initial swamp took only a few days—but you could be faster or slower.

Sometimes, in the act of engraving, surprising things can happen. Something can end up sticking much faster and harder than you intended, or certain details might be harder to engrave than first anticipated. Or, things might stick that you didn't at all: when Jyliet was working on the sunroom, xe accidentally punched a hole in the ceiling big enough that people came toppling out. We never patched it up, so now it stays as a travel point between spaces.

Don't let yourself be constrained by the laws of physics if you don't want. There are plenty of unphysical spaces in our headspace—the aforementioned hole "skips" a floor, allowing direct transportation from the first floor to the attic without passing through the second floor. My swamp bedroom is much larger inside than the room itself. Let feeling, metaphor, and metaphysics be the guiding principles instead.

Aspects of external reality can still be incorporated if desired. You can also incorporate aspects of fictional realities. Gather inspiration wherever. Use your interpretations of other spaces when building your own.

Other distilled sensations

We don't have much sound established in our headspace, and neither taste nor smell. Frankly, we haven't much tried it, as we haven't considered it necessary. If you can employ your other senses, I think the same principles I've described for proprioception and touch would apply: they might still use the imagination techniques of establishing and engraving. Maybe you'll find other senses easier or harder.

Putting it all together

Dedicate space and time for establishing and engraving. If you want to close your eyes to reduce sensory input, do so. If you want to look at inspirational material to facilitate better imagining, do so. Choose between silence, music, soundscapes, or white noise. Find a place to be still or a place to perform repetitive movements that don't require much thought, like walking. Do what works for you to support your focus. If you're getting started, you can start with very short periods of time. You can make initial decisions for establishing in seconds. Work your way up to longer sessions when you want to.

Decide on an object you want to establish. This is the part that can take seconds. "There is going to be a chair in headspace with me." For us, because we start with proprioception, we find it works best to start with large, sturdy objects that don't rely on visual perception as its main interactions: a table, wall, or chair, not a window or television. Establish the relation between your body and the object: lean on it, put your hands on it, sit on it, and feel the difference of your body in the space with the object vs. without. Lean against the table or place your hands on the wall to feel its resistance. Sit on the chair and feel its support. When creating a new basement, we started with the sensation of walking down the stairs.

If the sensations are fleeting, repeat them. Attempts that last fractions of a second still add up if repeated.

Once you have a sense of the object in the same space as you, add movement. Sit on the table, slide your hands against the wall, or kick your legs out in front of you. Feel how your body interacts with the object. This is where a sense of touch can be established as well. Is the table wood or glass? Is the wall an exterior one made of brick or stone or an interior one that's smooth or textured? Is the chair soft with cushions or made of cheap plastic? If touch doesn't work for you, you can decide without perceiving and move on to a different sense.

Once you've engaged a sense or two with the object, you've made the first establishment. Now, engrave. Do it again and again and again. Add more senses. Discover specifics. When building our basement, we walked down the stairs again and again until a space at the bottom opened up.

If it's a collaborative effort, different people can engage with the object with different senses or interact with it from different angles. At the beginning, we find it more effective for different people to investigate the same object or space sequentially rather than simultaneously, but your experience may vary. If there's conflict about aspects of the object or space, you may not need to resolve it immediately. If something's true for one person and something else is true for another, that can be perfectly fine. It doesn't have to mean that any one version is the "real" version.

The point

All of this to say: you don't need to see your headspace to have one. There are other senses.

If you feel that the senses we recommend don't come to you, or if you don't find a sense necessary to your conception of headspace, skip to another sense. We start with proprioception and touch, but you may find sound or scent easier to establish. Be flexible. Be curious. Experiment. It's your headspace.

Even more importantly than the sensory experience, there is metaphor and metaphysics. Reality is the narrative we tell ourselves to understand and live in our world. Construct it to your liking. You can make it up as you go. No one can stop you.