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'Home: Dream Home' an edgy exhibit at Praxis

Like 3

Nothing is what it seems in this edgy exhibition of a residential loft



BY BETH DUNLOP
SPECIAL TO THE MIAMI HERALD

Nothing is quite what it seems in the exhibition *Home: Dream Home*, and yet everything is indeed exactly what it is.

A globe-shaped pendant lamp by Ernesto Oroza sparkles like glass. It's actually layers — many layers — of Scotch tape, and at the same time, a fully functioning light fixture. (It's called, whimsically enough, *Little Havana Lampshade*.)

Troy Abbott's canary in a brass, steel and glass bird cage is actually a flash memory drive showing a tiny moving digital image, though you really somehow want to reach in and stroke it. Augustina Woodgate's patchwork "fur" rug is made of stuffed animals (the toy kind), though the result is rather luxe-looking.

There's a TV that's always on in this big Wynwood warehouse transformed, temporarily, into a residential loft filled with curiosities, wonders and delights. The fireplace comes complete with painted "flames." The bathroom features tissue

AT HOME: The Living Room of the "Home: Dream Home" exhibition at Praxis International Art is set with a newspaper sculpture ("Untitled")

If you go
What: "Home: Dream Home;" www.praxis-art.com
Where: Praxis International Art, 2219 NW Second Ave., Miami
When: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, through Aug. 13.

dispensers.

Home: Dream Home, on view through Aug. 13 at Praxis International Art, is a showhouse like no other. Though it's a gallery exhibition, you can touch, sit on or in the case of the "fur" rug — roll around on the art.

Filmmaker Grela Orihuela carefully curated (though she uses the term "assembled") the artist-made works in *Home: Dream Home*. She is co-founder (with her husband and partner Bill Bilowit) of the Wet Heat Project. Together, they have produced short films on an amazing array of some 40 artists, and they have made two highly regarded feature-length documentaries on Miami's Hernan Bas (*Miami Heights*) and Bert Rodriguez (*Making Sh*t Up*).

The short films, shown online at www.wetheat.tv, come as a series called *Studio Drive-By* and offer brief glimpses into the working lives of artists, which means that Orihuela has poked into studios, workspaces and galleries galore.

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In the process, she's seen lots of work. Taken piece by piece, they might be seen as separate, iconic objects. But as time passed, she began to formulate her own "dream home," she's envisioned her own ideal home, one furnished from top to bottom with furniture and objects by artists whose work she admires. Add it up, and there are some 64 intriguing, engaging objects on view in *Home: Dream Home*.

Most of the work on view is edgy, in one way or another. There are layers to peel away, to find the hidden humor, beauty and meaning.

For instance, Laz Ozalde finished his minimalist and elegant desk with the surprise addition of seven bronze castings resembling wads of chewed gum, as if a busy writer had absent-mindedly stuck them under the drawer, on the leg, or even on the top surface.

BooksIII Bischof created a stenciled "wallpaper" that from a distance looks like Baroque flocked velvet; get closer and you will see skulls and syringes (which to the more architecture-obsessed could pass for silhouettes of the Empire State Building) and other creepy imagery. Step back again, and it seems for all the world like purple velvet. He also contributed a new piece, a paper towel roll with the sentence "You Used Me Once and Threw Me Away" cut into it with a laser.

Nicholas Arehart has a strong fascination with objects from IKEA, regular ready-made pieces that he takes apart and reassembles in new (and far more dramatic and interesting) forms — for example, a table with 45 identical legs, or a swing arm lamp with a half-dozen bases but only one light bulb. The work is functional, and yet it's also topical, a comment on the culture of the ready-made.

The "home" includes a living room, family room, dining room, den, bedroom, bathroom and kitchen, furnished right down to the pictures on the wall (painting, mixed media and photography) by Kristen Thiele, Terese Diehl, Jose Felix Perez, Mette Tommerup and Brian Gefen.

Guerra de la Paz — the duo of Alain Guerra and Neraldo de la Paz, who work under the composite name — assembled 10 "archival" prints and put them in an assortment of silver-colored frames that sit on Ozalde's desk as if they were family photos, which of course they aren't. But off in the "family room" you can lounge in a chair of vinyl wood and hay or another that is copper clad (both by Jessica Laino) and watch a video loop by Tatiana Vaughn that is her own family's home movies interspersed with local advertising — and no fast-forward.

The always-imaginative David Rohn is represented by a three-piece living room "suite" of traditional furniture, its upholstery painted with a dinosaur motif. It's his Extinction series, a sofa and two chairs. Emmett Moore's *Fire Engine Table* is made from the wheel of a fire engine. Bert Rodriguez dominates the bedroom with a wood slat bed, a lighted bench and a three-part nightlight, handpainted to tell the story of a black bean fighting with a grain of white rice (bedtime allegory anyone?).

Visual and verbal puns abound. There's a "Love Seat" from Typoe that is two wooden chairs facing each other, tied together. Are the chairs making love? Or is it a traditional love seat?

Loriel Beltran's concrete and plywood bench is split in the middle, as if it had been through an earthquake. The word BANCARROTA is painted on it like typical bus-bench advertising, to comment not just on what you see (a broken bench) but also on the fiscal issues of the day; *bancarrota* is the Spanish word for bankrupt.

Emmett Moore's "Function of Form: Sign Chair" involves a street sign, part of a tree trunk and pvc piping. Brian Burkhardt's *New Crop: Squareberry Platter* (a centerpiece for Emmett Moore's dining room set) poses the idea of square strawberries, and the interpretive possibilities for that are pretty widespread.

Only two of the 32 artists represented in *Home: Dream Home* are out-of-towners: Graham Hudson, who lives in London (but whose wonderful fractured furniture was the subject of a show at Gallery Diet in Wynwood in 2010) and Providence, R.I.-based Paul Myoda. His elegant, interactive *Glittering Machine: Billowy Sconce* (it is an interactive wall-mounted light fixture) was shown at Dorsch Gallery in Wynwood this year.

Indeed, most of what's on view was shown at local galleries (Fredric Snitzer, Dorsch, Anthony Spinello, Carol Jazzar, Christopher Miro, Gallery Diet, Art Modern and Diana Lowenstein) in the last few years (thus becoming part of Orihuela's interior design plan). She did specifically commission several pieces, and a few were surprise offerings of new work. Altogether, there are enough allusions, metaphors, references, jokes, aesthetic gestures and ideas to occupy any homeowner for many hours, to fill any home, even if it's just a dream.

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