

HOME: DREAM HOME



Miami-based filmmakers Grela Orihuela and Bill Bilowit established the Wet Heat Project in 2007 to document the gamut of contemporary art exhibition and practice in Miami. They are also avid collectors, and their apartment is filled with work produced by local artists, offering a mini-tour through the last ten years of Miami-made art. If asked, both of them are quick to tell stories about where any given piece in their collection came from, how it relates to the artist's larger body of work, and what the artist is doing now.

Orihuela and Bilowit's idealistic approach is refreshing. In every aspect of the Wet Heat Project, they are guided by a reverence for the artistic process and the one-on-one encounter between a viewer and a work. They are genuinely and personally invested, and in that respect they are not alone. Miami has a remarkably tight-knit community of artists, galleries, collectors and funders, and *Home: Dream Home*, an exhibition curated recently by Orihuela for Praxis International Art, offers a case in point [July 9 – August

13, 2011].

Orihuela literally structured the exhibition like a house, and every room – bedroom, living room, office, dining room, kitchen and bathroom included – was formed by arrangements of work. Many pieces were furniture-like, but none would strictly be described as furniture. A living room was delineated by a couch and two chairs, each hand-painted with dinosaur shapes by local artist David Rohn. The decorations around Rohn's furniture describe relationships between people, animals and objects, recreating the human habit to display meaningful tokens. TYPOE's small sculptural bust, altered with drips of white vinyl paint, sits next to a drawn recreation of a newspaper by Moises Sanabria. Paintings by Mette Tommerup and Kristin Thiele hang on the wall as stand-ins for portraits of the family – including the butler and the dog. An exotic wall-mounted head constructed from various furred and feathered parts by Enrique Gomez de Molina celebrates the conquest of an imaginary animal, and Troy Abbott's video-bird in a cage is a beloved pet that never has to be fed.

On the other side of the gallery, a darkly painted bedroom was illuminated by light-based work by Burt Rodriguez, including an underlit bed-like sculpture and a nightlight object. In the corner of the bedroom, Orihuela also placed shoes and a dress, made by artists Elena Lopez-Trigo and Natasha Duwin respectively. Monstrous mutations of an Ikea lamp and shelves, assembled by Nicholas Arehart, furnished the reception area. His table, supported by forty-five legs, held up the television that played Tatiana Vahan's video work. The list goes on. Many of Miami's established artists are represented in *Home: Dream Home*, along with newcomers just finding their footing and so-called street artists whose work is often relegated to a separate context. And, like Orihuela's personal collection, every piece comes with a story.

A house is, in many ways, the external manifestation of the person who lives there, and *Home: Dream Home* is just skewed enough from life to shed light on the immense emotional and material investments we make in our own domestic spaces. Here is where we present our social aspirations to others, or where we choreograph our family's

movements through space. We save mementos of our past, and hang them on our walls as reminders of who we are. In *Home: Dream Home*, every piece represents some aspect of self-creation – the design of an ideal living environment or the formation of identity through objects.

The logic of *Home: Dream Home* is more than a conceptual motif. It actually changes the work. Broadly speaking, in a gallery, a work is a commercially valued symbol of a point in an artist's career. In a museum, it is an institutionally positioned historical statement. In a home, it is an intimately experienced object whose value and purpose is largely created by the lives that are lived around it. Of these three, the latter is the most unusual one for the average viewer. The power of context may be easy to understand intellectually, but in *Home: Dream Home*, the influence is felt. Viewers are transposed into a collector's perspective, where works are not seen once or twice for a few minutes. A longer time span is implied as we imagine seeing the same object every day. Briefly, we live with the work in the show – we project how certain pieces might feel if we brought them into our space. In that frame of mind, objects and images are as personal as family portraits, and as approachable as a kitchen table. Somehow the impact is completely different, less in the mind, more in the heart.

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