

Art Focus

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TRACEY HARRIS

Contemporary
Realism

p. 8



Couch by Rick and Tracey Bewley and Sue Moss Sullivan;
Line Theory Room Divider by Joe Slack;
Coffee Table by Joe Slack, Rick and Tracey Bewley

FUNCTION & DESIGN

Collaborative exhibit for [Artspace] at Untitled showcases accessible art for everyday life

by Susan Grossman

Fiber artist Sue Moss Sullivan patted the space beside her and said, “Have a seat.”

Really?

We’re in the “living room” of [Artspace] at Untitled and it seems, well, inappropriate to *sit* on what is part of the exhibit, *Function & Design*. But here’s the cool thing about it – that’s the point. Everything is accessible. Completely.

Function & Design is the second collaborative effort for the gallery, following the success of *Dinner in the Deuce* in 2008 which featured themed dining tables and settings created by groups of regional artisans. This exhibit expands that concept to incorporate the rest of the home including the living room, dining room, bedroom, home office, media room and an outdoor patio room.

For curator Laura Warriner, the purpose of the project was to create functional, well-designed objects while at the same time showcasing the talents of a large group of diverse artists.

“I believe the artists who worked collectively on each of the featured rooms influenced one another in ways even they may not have anticipated and the results are truly unique,” Warriner said. “The six rooms presented in Untitled’s galleries are certainly diverse and offer a range of possibilities for today’s lifestyles.”

In light of the current economy and changing attitudes towards the environment, Warriner asked the 52 participating artists to give careful consideration to materials used for their pieces. Therefore, a number of pieces and designs feature recycled, reused and repurposed products.

The living room, for example, is composed of furniture and accessories constructed almost entirely of found or recycled products. Rick and Tracey Bewley, Ron Ferrell, Kenneth Fitzsimmons, Birthe Flexner, Amy Jacobson-Peters, Joe Slack and Sullivan created the entire room, from the ottomans and chairs, to the wall hangings and flooring coverings, by reusing materials.

“Tracey and I made the coverings for the sofa, chairs and ottoman with the burlap bags that are used to ship coffee beans,” Sullivan said. “Each of us has a style and we combined them to create this cohesive room.”

Distinctive metal room dividers, furniture frames and book shelves are accented with fiber work by Sullivan and pottery pieces by Flexner. Closer examination reveals lampshades are enhanced with the bottoms of plastic soft drink bottles. A framed window

Bar and Table by Elisa Cossey and Nicki Albright; Glass Plates by Nicki Albright; Flatware by Loren O’Laughlin; Serving Utensils by George Wilson; Glass Sink by Elisa Cossey

panel composed entirely of the same scalloped bottoms, was created by Jacobson-Peters.

“A passion for this type of design and a desire to have fun inspired our group during the collaboration and we hope those who see the outcome will share in this excitement,” the living room artists wrote in the exhibit catalogue.

The dining room team was led by Kyle Golding. They created a modern meets Middle Eastern esthetic tied to a Moroccan-style theme. Of their design they wrote, “Hard surfaces of concrete, stone, steel, copper, glass and raw wood combine with softer elements like leather, cotton, silk and paper” to capture the exotic and dramatic nature of Moroccan décor.

Golding chuckled when asked how it was working with 13 other individual artists to create a unified dining environment. “It was challenging at first,” he said. “Our group had a variety of artists and for some it was the first time they had collaborated. I ended up being the de facto leader and we decided to wrap our work around the Moroccan look with a modern edge. We kept it very loose and casual.”

Although he works in a variety of media, for *Function & Design* Golding created the furniture in the combination sitting and dining areas which feature red and gray calf leather trimmed with traditional Moroccan nail head design. Frank Wert designed the tile and wood tabletop to go with it.

“I was inspired to participate in this project because of the quality of work that is exhibited at Untitled and because of the great experience I had with *Dinner in the Deuce*,” Golding said. “You meet a lot of artists who do what you do and that is very motivating to me.”

A long trip to visit her daughter in Japan inspired the gorgeous colors in fiber artist Diane Coady’s coverlet on the stunning four poster bed in the bedroom exhibit. Using the ancient Japanese art of dying fabric, *shibori*, she created a virtual landscape of colors.

“Our theme for the bedroom is nature and silk is organic in nature,” she said. “During the 14-hour flight to Japan, I was inspired by the changing landscape out the window of the plane. You take this big, bell curve route over North America, Greenland, the Atlantic, to get there. I had taken the fabric for the bedspread with me to Japan and when I started working, I inadvertently picked up all of the colors I saw on my way over.”

Shibori is the Japanese term for a technique of dying cloth by clamping, pleating, binding, folding, compressing or twisting. It’s the precursor to today’s tie-dye. Coady’s spread, thrown across a bed that features curving, swaying posts made of bois d’arc simply beckons you to lie down.

“The wood for the bed itself is among the oldest around and the posts are curved to represent trees as they are in Oklahoma – shaped by the wind,” Coady said. “What I love about this particular bedspread is that you don’t have to ‘make’ the bed and at the same time makes the bed completely accessible.”

The many unique and one-of-a-kind elements that comprise each of the rooms are for sale and range in price from \$100 to \$6,000.

Function & Design is on display at [ArtSpace] at Untitled through March 27. Visit www.artspaceatuntitled.org for more information. ■

Susan Grossman is assistant director marketing and communication at University of Oklahoma Outreach and a regular contributor to a number of local and regional lifestyle and sports magazines.



Origami Globe light fixture by Klint Schor. Dining Benches and Tray by Kyle Golding



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APRIL

**D. J. Lafon
Beth Hammack**

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