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Thursday, June 19, 2008

House Art: A Site Specific Outdoor Sculpture by LG Williams

Sasha J. Schorr

Site-specific art reflects economic and global conditions.

Nestled in the valley near the 'Iao Needle in Wailuku lies an eclectic piece of self-proclaimed artwork by LG Williams, a peculiar artist who interprets art where the majority view rubbish.

Amidst a pristine valley sits a beaten up, rundown home that Williams has defined as art. He calls this project House Where the Bottom Fell Out. Originally, Williams said he found people squatting in the area of this forgotten home, and at one time, Williams chose this house as his residence.

"I was going through a hard time of my life when I lived there," said Williams in reference to his embodiment of a metaphor, as the bottom seemingly fell out from under him.

Williams, who moved to Hawai'i last year, has a long history of making site-specific art—art created and intended to exist and be viewed in a specific place. Or, he said, you might simply call it "house art."

Williams' choice of the term "house art" is a pun that spins against house music, a style of electronic music developed for dance clubs in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Additionally, this jest can also ring true when considering that house music was not vital in a house but was played more often in clubs and discos.

Generally, in the last 20 to 30 years, there has been a trend toward creating art within and around the structure of a house. Older examples include Paul Cezanne's paintings of houses in valleys. Cezanne presented a series of paintings of houses and landscapes, such as depictions of Mont Sainte-Victoire from 1880 to 1883 and others of Gardanne from 1885 to 1888. Partially Buried Woodshed is a work of land art created by Robert Smithson created at Kent State University in January 1970, where apparently, Smithson expedited the decomposition process. Gordon Matta-Clark was best known for site-specific artwork he made in the 1970s. He is known for cutting houses in half. His work involved a series of projects in abandoned buildings in which he removed sections of floors, ceilings and walls.

"House Where the Bottom Fell Out is juggling multiple levels of complexity," said Williams. "There are direct references that are introduced within the entirety of the work."

This ironic piece is reflective of the real estate industry in that it is bottoming out. According to The Honolulu Advertiser, on Sunday, May 25, Hawai'i mortgage lenders saw a nearly 50 percent drop in business in the first three months of the year as home sales slowed and lending rules were tightened. Similar to the house in the project, "The industry is bottoming out," said Williams.

Williams said that since you can't actually enter the house, it's also a metaphor for his work as a foreigner—a tourist in a land that can never fully connect with the roots of the native way of life. And he waxes on about how "perceptive materiality and spatiality changes drastically from opaque, semi-transparent and transparent." But there's also the sense of falling, which is the sensation that many get when viewing the house for the first time. "That and the smell of dirt," Williams added.

House Where The Bottom Fell Out evokes a contrast between its location set amidst the natural beauty of 'Iao Valley and the destitute nature of the dilapidated house, further drawing parallels to society's home at-large and our current state of global warming. "The bottom has fallen out from the home that houses all of humanity; in that sense this artwork is a memorial," said Williams.

Williams' sculpture was inspired by and dedicated to the Los Angeles gallerist Merry Karnowsky. Williams draws his true form of motivation for living and heartfelt connection from Performance Enhancement Specialist Katherine Wilder.

House Where The Bottom Fell Out is intended to be experienced over an extended period of time, and visitors are encouraged to spend as much time as possible near the house, especially during sunset and sunrise. To witness the house, visit 2801 Mulliwai St. in Wailuku, or visit www.lgwilliams.com. To contact the artist directly, email info@lgwilliams.com or call (206) 312-8300.

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