

CORIN HEWITT AND MOLLY MCFADDEN

1/15/10

RECESS

by *Lyra Kilston*

NEW YORK CITY To enter Corin Hewitt and Molly McFadden's installation, you could have stepped over a threshold into a long, tapering room with a dark wood table, tan carpeting, a chair, some shelving for dishes and a houseplant on the floor. Or you could have walked into another room right next to it that seemed precisely the same, right down to the hobnail milk-glass vases on identical end tables and mirrors in the back that doubled the doubling.

Hewitt and McFadden finished building "Double Room," which suggested a pair of grandmotherly dining areas, in early November, and then began phase two of their project. Working separately, they each made an object and documented it with Polaroids. They then slid the photos under a door that joined the rooms and attempted to make replicas of each other's objects. When their duplicates were complete they switched rooms and began the process all over again. After the first week they added video, filming the more complicated processes (like the sewing of a hat) to guide each other. As the twinned rooms evolved—two framed watercolors appeared on the walls, two mannequins' heads with turbans were placed on the tables—they also began to diverge: the paintings weren't exactly the same, nor were the black turbans. It matters, the artists suggest, that in an age of hyper-documentation and instant replication an original object retains some singularity. Gaps remain in the translation from photo or video to picture or hat—gaps that in the case of "Double Room" became a stage for displaying subjectivity.

Especially in comparison to the polished exactitude of the rooms' construction, the things that Hewitt and McFadden produced and duplicated for "Double Room" were rather crude, an esthetic that recalled *Tantamounter 24/7* (2005), in which the Austrian collective Gelitin made scrappy copies, from cheap materials they had on hand, of things given to them by visitors (keys, a shoe, etc.).

"Double Room" also shared characteristics with the Michel Gondry film *Be Kind Rewind* (2008), the protagonists of which produce crafty, slipshod, no-budget remakes of popular movies. But if Hewitt and McFadden are interested in sustaining the handmade in an age of sleek digital production, they are even more concerned with questions of authenticity and reproduction, mechanical and manual.

Adding yet another layer to their project was their conception of "Double Room" as a kind of drawing: the rooms narrowed dramatically toward implied vanishing points, as did the furniture inside; the tabletops were trapezoids. In its evocation of two-dimensional imagery, it echoed Hewitt's *Seed Stage*, a 2008 installation at the Whitney Museum that also conflated studio, gallery and domestic space. There, Hewitt built a room in the museum's lobby gallery within which he photographed and sculpted, cooked and ate, while visitors watched him through narrow slits in the walls—a perspective something like that offered by a camera's viewfinder. Addressing questions of production, reproduction, collaboration, studio-as-artwork and labor-as-performance, "Double Room" touched on weighty issues with a deft quartet of hands.

Photo: View of Corin Hewitt and Molly McFadden's performance/installation "Double Room," 2009; at Recess.

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