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Suburban House Kit

Deitch Projects, 18 Wooster Street, NYC

Through March 27, 2004

A slice of suburbia lurks behind an ordinary garage door in Soho. A bright red Lexus, complete with a license plate adorned with an image of a babe suckling its mother's breast, is parked in front of a modernist prefab house. Origami trees line the stairs leading to the exposed living room with a working fireplace framed by streamlined orange sofas. Welcome to Suburban House Kit, a collaborative project between architect and anarchist Adam Kalkin and artists Jim Isermann, Martin Kersels, Aernot Mik, Tobias Rehberger, and Haim Steinbach. Mik's projection, which spans the length of the storage container that creates the house's second floor, sets the tone of the installation. In Pulverous, a cast of characters moves around a storeroom space, removing bags from shelves, dumping their contents on the floor, ripping apart objects, and building walls. The work was inspired by Native American potlatch, a ritual in which the host shares his feast or destroys valuable items in a display of superior wealth or stature. Mik's attitude towards consumer culture seems to parallel Kalkin's feeling about architecture: it is something to be questioned, critiqued, and possibly even destroyed.

At Deitch Projects, Kalkin presents a version of his Quik build project, an affordable housing solution composed of used shipping containers and inspired by Buckminster Fuller's utopian housing plans of the 1940s. The house is decorated with carpeting designed by Isermann, a kinesthetic sculpture by Kersels, an installation of miniature tubs, toilet, and sinks by Steinbach, and shrubbery by Rehberger. Kalkin has been working with shipping containers for a number of years. The exhibition dovetails nicely with the public's increased awareness about prefabricated building as seen in LOT/EK's built structures, Pre Fab, Allison Arieff's successful coffee table book, and the Dwell Home Design Invitational, a competition in which a similar Kalkin design was a finalist.

Part open house and part art exhibition, Suburban House Kit questions the arbitrary distinctions society makes between art and architecture, life and commerce. You can check out the stainless steel Viking stove, Kohler bathroom fixtures, and speak to an in-house sales representative about purchasing the prefab home of your dreams, art and red Lexus not included.

For more information, visit Adam Kalkin's website:

<http://www.architectureandhygiene.com>.