

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

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EXCLUSIVE: ART DUO RANCOURT/YATSUK TALK PRANKS AND URBAN SPRAWL

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Defying strict classification in either the visual or performance arts, two-man collaborative Rancourt/Yatsuk joins Art in General this fall with a new exhibition of their effervescent, socially conscious interactive work. Art in General, a downtown mainstay in the non-profit art scene, commissions individual projects from emerging artists working in multimedia; past recipients of AiG exhibition opportunities include art world luminaries like Rirkir Tiravanija, Leo Villareal, Glenn Ligon, and Sharon Hayes. Joining their ranks is the pair of artists and merry pranksters from Southern Florida, who have been friends since high school and now engage audiences with complex creative projects hatched in their Clinton Hill studio.

Self-billed as “lifestyle artists,” Chuck Yatsuk and Justin Rancourt have based their performance-based interactive pieces on American leisure pastimes: “mixing drinks, motivational speaking, real estate speculation, multi-level marketing, boating, and vacation planning.” You know, the best parts of being American. For *Phase IV*, part of a larger Art in General show titled *Erratic Anthologies*, the pair has constructed a model home based on the modular stucco box so prevalent in suburban sprawl.

“We took a look at several developments in Southern Florida where things had gone wrong — land scams that scammed people or the swampland, or both,” Rancourt explains. “There are huge roads that can’t connect because there are canals everywhere. It’s like a Utopian vision that completely failed.” The creepiest example is Picayune State Forest, where in the 1960s a developer bought 57,000 acres of Everglades to sell as parcels in a subdivision called Golden Gate Estates. Potential buyers were flown over the area during the dry season and pressured to purchase lots sight unseen. The scheme collapsed, though the gridded system of asphalt roads still exists among the swampland — conveniently, the site of Rancourt/Yatsuk’s promotional trailer for the *Phase IV* installation (below).

On two evenings, November 11 and 18, the duo will role play as a maniacal real estate salesman and a host of potential home buyers, all under the looming cloud of a real estate bust. Though it’s still too early to say what will become of the staged prototype, Yatsuk teases, “Probably an initial stint in cold-storage. But we’ve toyed with the idea of getting one of these empty foreclosure lots you can get down in Florida and setting up something a little more permanent.”

Phase IV by Rancourt/Yatsuk will open at Art in General’s Tribeca gallery on October 29 and run through January 9, 2010, as part of the Performa09 festival. Art in General is hosting a fundraiser this Saturday to raise support for the Rancourt/Yatsuk commission and other ongoing projects in 2010. Tickets for Underground Up! are on sale here, and there’s a decent chance the crowd will be festive.

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