

# At the Mills Gallery, home is where the art is

MARY SHERMAN

## ART

**A**ranged Marriages, Family Rooms and Laundry Detergent: A Project of the Revolving Museum" is a show about the home — that thin veneer of civility where silliness, seriousness and the task of evolving as a human being unfolds in all its manifest forms. It's the site of numerous psychodramas, ranging from the Cleavers to the Mansons, with most household interactions — thankfully — falling somewhere in between.

In the hands of the artists, chosen and teamed into "arranged marriages" for this show, the home literally becomes a walk-through exhibition, not too unlike strolling through the mansions of Newport, R.I., or cruising through the homes of the rich and famous.

The main differences are tone and scale. For although visitors to the Mills Gallery do wander from one artfully arranged setting to the next, instead of mar-

ble fireplaces, elegant furnishings and opulent fixtures, most of the things one finds in this "home" look more like the stuff of a college kid's off-campus apartment.

There are numerous TV sets — albeit one is running continuously on its back in the kitchen sink — while, another in the TV room, designed by Elise Manella and Steven Davis, has been turned into its clichéd role as a household shrine by being literally encased in a mock Asian temple. Then there is a computer in a dingy room, arranged by Tom Cole and Shannon Curry Green, powdered with a questionable pink dust. A child's room, designed by Mauricio Alberto Cordero and Wayne Viens, looks more like a boudoir filled with strangely bound and zipped dolls, along with confessional-like ramblings from a 19-year-old's diary. Outside this room, the hallway, decorated by Bo Lembo and Jeff Hull, is a foray into camp exotica: Paper lanterns and chains hang from the ceiling, whose walls are papered with Oriental-like paintings of dragons.

A lot of humor runs through

---

*A lot of humor runs through this house, but it is Michael Dwyer and Jeff Warmouth's kitchen that offers the largest dose of it.*

---

this rambling house, but it is Michael Dwyer and Jeff Warmouth's kitchen that offers the largest dose of it. Standing to one side is a table shaped like a slice of bread. Then there is a giant spoon and fork poised to dig into a mound of dirt, littered with seed packages, and, best of all, a number of wacko videos that parody food shows.

In one, a chef sputters out imaginary ingredients with the same authority as those TV chefs do, imagining that we all have a ready familiarity with the variety of obscure spices that they often cite.

Not all the work is this silly, however. The dining room, filled

with teddy bears, put together by Susan White and Jenna Powell, is pure sweetness, like something out of a kid's storybook; whereas the master bedroom, by Jim Fossett and Suzanne Stokes, is the show's most elegant and affecting. It is minimally decorated and just as minimally white. Around the room are a number of night lights that backlight time-lapsed photographs of people sleeping.

The same imagery is projected onto a wooden bedlike structure, turning it into a setting for sleeping couples. A narrative is suggested by the use of slightly different scenes of the same subject, but the artists do not let us in on it. More than any other room in this house, in it we feel like intruders and that is because it is the only room that we feel is not exactly a setup. (The only other instance that comes close to this is the journallike writing in the other bedroom, but, still it is an obviously

manufactured text.)

Here, however, it is difficult not to feel as if we have been made privy to another's privacy and domestic bliss. We are made to feel like trespassers, instead of visitors to a curious, sightseeing attraction. And, in this way, we feel we've really entered the home of someone we have never met and can feel just how invasive that can be.

For those of you who prefer trailer parks and seedy motels to the pseudo-suburban setting of the Mills Gallery's "Arranged Marriages," check out the Revolving Museum's other exhibition this month, "Trailer Park Memoirs & Shotgun Weddings" at the Revolving Museum through March 31. Call (617) 439-8617. ||

---

*"Arranged Marriages, Family Rooms and Laundry Detergent: A Project of the Revolving Museum" at the Boston Center for the Arts Mills Gallery, through April 13.*