HOME.

ARTLab/Guerra de la Paz
The Jack Olson Gallery at Northern Illinois University
Visual Arts Building Room 200
February 19 – March 24, 2010

What or where is home in an increasingly global society?

A collaboration between the internationally-renowned artist-team, Alain Guerra and NIU alumnus Neraldo de la Paz—Guerra de la Paz (or “War of the Peace”) as they are known collectively—and the School of Art’s experimental ARTLab* initiative, the installation HOME, with its unlikely and ingenious re-purposing of locally-scavenged and donated materials, is at once functional enclosure and poetic rumination.

Cuban-born and Miami-based, Guerra de la Paz uses discarded clothing and repurposed materials to create lyrical yet sobering commentary on consumption, the environment, and social conflict. Their residency at NIU’s School of Art, February 15-26, 2010 was an opportunity they enthusiastically embraced—to expand their collaborative practice both physically, by working with the 15 graduate students enrolled in ART 680: The ARTLab Seminar, and conceptually, because HOME is a project they proposed specifically in response to ARTLab’s 2009-2010 theme.

Guerra de la Paz’ gesture is an act of uncommon generosity, in that it relinquishes traditional notions of authorship and ego. In an essay on the complications of pursuing collaborative work in an art school context, Mark Dunhill and Tamiko O’Brien observed that, “For collaboration to become a viable mode of operation, there first of all has to be prevalent a conception of art that allows for collaborative practice. That is to say, if you believe art to be about individual creative expression, you aren’t likely to take up collaborative practice, whereas if you believe that art is—for instance—a language of decipherable metaphors whose purpose is to explore aspects of contemporary society, then there is no ideological reason why you should not work collaboratively. .” This is the dialectic ARTLab and Guerra de la Paz have engaged.

*ARTLab is an extension of Northern Illinois University’s School of Art with a focus on the collaborative: working across disciplines to investigate contemporary currents in—and intersections between—art and culture. As an active think-tank or incubator, ARTLab builds research, dialogue, programming, and pedagogy around an annual theme, working towards public presentations of collective research across the NIU campus and in conjunction with partner institutions.

Beginning with such fundamental questions as How do we define tradition? What or where is the local? Is globalization an identity thief or benefactor? ARTLab embarked on a year of “Thinking Globally,” an experience that has unfolded across several platforms. A day-long event, Friday, October 23, 2009, celebrated the diversity of colleagues at NIU working with issues of globalization. The ARTLab Salon, an open forum for conversation and collaboration around issues relating to the annual theme, met alternate Fridays. This spring, ARTLab extended its commitment to collaboration and critique into the pedagogical setting, with ART 680: The ARTLab Seminar, and the Guerra de la Paz residency.

ART 680: ARTLab Seminar is John Benson, Brikena Boci, Natalie Brulc, Kristine Chisamore, Cassie Christianson-Edwards, Steven Hoover, Siew Lian Lim, John Medina, Jenny Ramos, Lindsay Schranz, Ramon Soto, Kyle Turner, Aaron Vermedal, David Willet, Tyler York, with Eric Fuertes.

The ARTLab Committee is Karen Brown, Sarah Evans, Aleksandra Giza, Barbara Jaffee, Jeff Karl Kowalski, Andrew Liccardo, Christine LoFaso, Nina Rizzo, Kryssi Staikidis, and Stephen Vilaseca.

Special thanks to Mary Alice Drain, NIU Energy Specialist, and to the Daily Chronicle!

ARTLab. Be the experiment.

For more information, contact ARTLab@niu.edu or visit our website, http://ARTLab.niu.edu