

**Philosophy in the Bedroom**  
Curated by Anne Walsh

Michelle Lopez  
Sandeep Mukherjee  
Marina Rosenfeld  
Alex Slade  
Peter Schuyff  
Marnie Weber

**Pre-script**

(Drafted next to a *Stearns and Foster* "Preeminent Jewel" mattress, Los Angeles, California)

*Philosophy in the Bedroom* is an exhibition whose fulcrum is two extravagant 18th century French beds in the collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. I have invited six young and emerging artists from New York City and Los Angeles (Marina Rosenfeld, Michelle Lopez, Marnie Weber, Sandeep Mukherjee, Alex Slade and Peter Schuyff) to create new works using the *Lit à la Polonoise* (1780) and/or the *Lit à la Turque* (1750), as subject matter, theme, or inspiration. The beds will be present only in their interpretations by the artists.

As part of Or's series of shows grounded in specific cities, this idea takes as its premise two objects that are permanent fixtures in Los Angeles, but historically and stylistically completely foreign to it. Los Angelenos are accustomed to seeing their own streets (or homes) appropriated as movie sets, so the very idea of visiting a museum period room here is just a little bit redundant; give or take a few hundred thousand dollars and several hundred years of history, they're barely a stretch from model homes in Valencia. But the period room is also an uncanny space, it reeks of death come back to life. It's a life-size dollhouse interior, a room for playing at another self. Unnaturally consistent in its décor, the period room always implies a consensus within a given moment about style and taste – there's never anything there that doesn't BELONG.

But aura is aura. Looking at the beds on display in the museum, it's hard to escape the fantasies about power, money, sex, life, death and fashion that they generate. Empty beds are a little like artworks, they're fields for vast psychic projections; highly-elaborated beds like those at the Getty become sets in themselves, proscenium for whatever goes on inside or upon them, flatterers or discreditors to bodies, provocateurs of dreams.

The artists were selected for *Philosophy in the Bedroom* based on their works' conceptual or material affinity with the spirit and meanings "embedded" in the Getty beds. I'm curious to see if the relationships between these contemporary works might produce a de facto description of both style and social mores, just as the period rooms do. I want to find out if a sum of parts could in fact be greater than a whole, i.e. could the combination of works in the exhibition produce an uncanny experience akin to but also inverting the uncanniness of a period room?

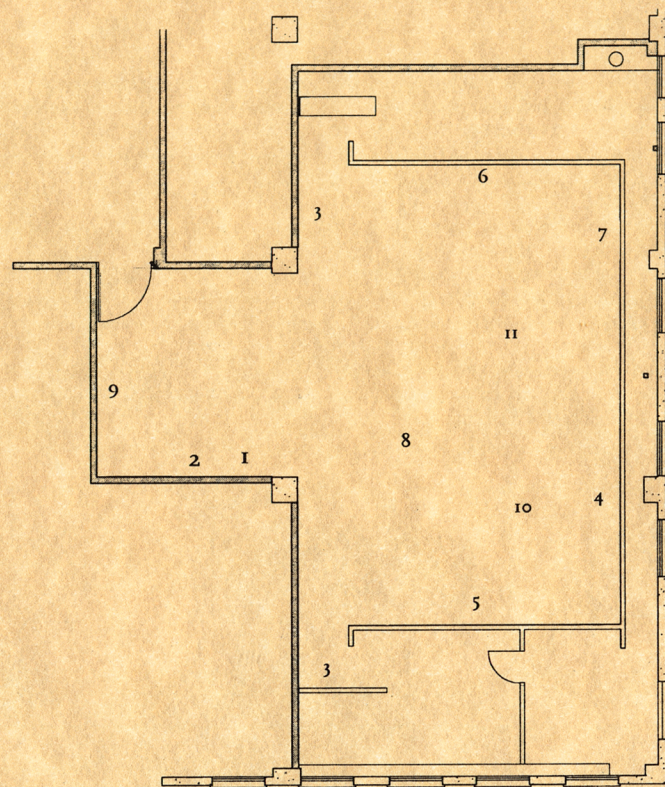
Besides the artists, Donatien-Alphonse François de Sade is present here as the author of *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, a 1795 anti-Enlightenment polemic on social and sexual freedom. Invoked as the patron saint of philosophy based on personal preference (and here, parallels with art-making and curating abound), Sade is also a voice of the era in which the Getty beds were made; the highly class-bound idea of Libertinage belongs to the culture of conventions in taste and display that produced these beds and their users.

**Post-script:**

(Written from my motel room at the Vancouver Airport Comfort Inn where the bed is incredibly comfortable. Its headboard is mahogany veneer on a particleboard plank with an arched à la English Colonial top and simple molding screwed to the wall, and finished in a cum-resistant polyurethane. Pull the mattress, boxspring, and frame unit away and you're left with a piece of wood with symbolic function only. Might as well just paint the headboard straight on the wall.

Thankfully, *Philosophy in the Bedroom* turns out to be a show of works far too heterodox to comprise a stylistic period room. In fact it's a failure as a display of any given style. If it's a display of anything, it's a display of study, of the perennial rewriting of history, and of individual perception. But study and perception (and my taste as a curator) occur in time, so the new question is this: what is the period characterized by these works? It seems like a period in which narratives of desire can still be told, with or without irony, and desire itself can be celebrated as much for its perversions as for its rewards. In this gallery, it's a period in which the first-hand experience of craft may provoke reflection on the fantasy life of the artist or the person viewing next to you, what they think about while working those long hours, what the space they work in looks like, what sort of bed they sleep in, and that it's desire itself motivating both the making and the appreciating of art objects.





1. Marina Rosenfeld  
Untitled (madsce #8), 2000  
Lenticular photograph, unique print  
20 X 16"

2. Marina Rosenfeld  
Untitled (Mona L—...), 2000  
23 minute 13 sec musical compositions,  
2 cd players, headphones,  
microphone stand, mirror ball, lamp

3. Peter Schuyff  
The Anatomist, (parts A and B) 2000  
Oil on found paintings  
30 x 25" and 15 2/4 x 30 1/2"

4. Marnie Weber  
Pink Bed, 2000  
C-print, unique  
43 x 53" framed

5. Marnie Weber  
Blue Bed, 2000  
C-print, unique  
53 x 43" framed

6. Sandeep Mukherjee  
Gushing Fountains, 2000  
Pencil with piercings on acrylic  
on paper  
54 1/2 x 55" framed

7. Sandeep Mukherjee  
Stack of Pillows, 2000  
Pencil with piercings and debossing  
on acrylic on paper  
59 1/2 x 36 3/4" framed

8. Michelle Lopez  
Portrait, 2000  
Dyed elkskin on plaster  
9" variable ovoid

9. Michelle Lopez  
Portrait, 2000  
Dyed elkskin on plaster  
9" variable ovoid

10. Michelle Lopez  
Portrait, 2000  
Dyed elkskin on plaster  
7" variable ovoid

11. Alex Slade  
Diagrammatic Sculpture re: Lit à la  
Turque and Lit à la Polonaise,  
Coll. J. Paul Getty Museum, 2000  
71 x 55 x 94"  
Enamel on steel and fabric

Philosophy in the Bedroom  
May 5 - June 10, 2000  
Or Gallery