Press Release

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Mastering the Heights
is on view:
28 November – 31 January 2009
Friday & Saturday 12-6 pm
and by appointment

362 Wadsworth Avenue
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Mastering the Heights

NEW YORK - The current incarnation of the peripatetic Martinez Gallery is an apartment in Washington Heights that is more artwork than art gallery. Amsterdam-based designers Kaptein Roodnat have altered the apartment's basic structure, and redefined its integrity and boundaries, slicing into walls, opening rooms into one another and incorporating outdoor spaces. In staging such a dramatic intervention in a rented apartment, the designers have transgressed against private property to create a space for public speech. Just as graffiti seeks to bring art into working-class urban neighborhoods, this new project brings street art indoors, showcasing affordable art in the context of affordable housing.

The space's spirit of transgression, intervention and re-construction has been carried forward in the contributions of a dozen graffiti artists, with several taking on an iconic masterwork of art history. Kez 5 domesticates Rodin while remodeling all doorways, and contributing to the sculptural reliefs of the baseboards of the apartment, always inspired by the French sculptor's seminal *Gates of Hell*. NOXER maps the European continent via the modernist fascination with African art, while vampirizing Picasso, Modigliani, and "supervillains" in his guise as "Blackman." CASE 2 riffs on Pollock, replacing drips with cartoon splashes and patterns on the floor. And, with punk sensibility, BRAIL chops up Aztec art, carving bas relief figures that dance apart from their static surfaces to tunes composed by Wifredo Lam. Even RATE takes on the role of connoisseur, curating a selection of drawings that are displayed in heavy museum frames left leaning against the wall: the drawings are by graffiti writers and kings including TYKE, BRAIL, MÖSCO, EARSNOT, COCO 144, VFR, SKUF, FLINT 707, GIZ, MICO and TRACY 168.

All surfaces and masterworks are either assaulted or re-invigorated by the artists. Nothing is left untouched. And, as result, both in the place and in the artists works, we are gradually exposed to conflicting notions of space and time that reflect the ongoing preoccupations with history and novelty, memory and experimentation, repetition and difference.

This apartment-cum-museum also includes a study center of books by artists and critics. Guided tours are available.

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