

The New York Times**JULY 17**PRINTER-FRIENDLY FORMAT
SPONSORED BY

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears next to any article. Visit www.nytreprints.com for samples and additional information. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)

May 10, 2009**ART REVIEW**

Symbolic Spaces

By [BENJAMIN GENOCCHIO](#)

While it is often assumed that a wholesale rejection of the art of the past occurred in the 20th century, in fact traditional subjects for artists have persisted to a remarkable extent, albeit in altered form. Sometimes they even emerge reinvigorated. For instance, two exhibitions at [Art Sites in Riverhead](#) draw their inspiration from ideas of home and domesticity, themes that underlie several centuries of still life and genre painting, the latter involving images of domestic interiors and social life.

One of the shows is in the gallery; the other is outdoors on the two-acre riverside property, the artworks scattered among the grass and trees. Both exhibitions were organized by Glynis Berry, the co-founder (with Hideaki Ariizumi) of this plucky little nonprofit art space, which has earned a dedicated local following since it opened three years ago. Though economic times are tough and funding is hard to come by, Ms. Berry says they are committed to keeping the gallery open.

The gallery exhibition features the work of two well-known contemporary artists, [Ted Victoria](#) and [Darlene Charneco](#). It is a big show, titled "[Home](#)," with more than 45 works, most dating from the last couple of years, spread over three rooms. Though the artists use different materials and appear to have little in common with each other, their work is linked by an examination of networks and communities as part of a larger investigation into ideas of home and habitation.

Both make paintings, though not in any conventional sense. Mr. Victoria constructs small, low-tech, animated light-box assemblages with subtle moving images. Ms. Charneco's works are more difficult to describe, though they are essentially collages. She starts with a wood base, painting it with circles, then adding a thick layer of transparent resin into which she sticks nails, clusters of toy houses, miniature fences and trees. They look like social experiments in imaginary Petri dishes.

For me, Mr. Victoria's light box assemblages are the more interesting of the two bodies of work. They look at first like simple tableaus — we see a chair and ball in a living room; a light bulb; a television and ticking clock. It is nothing special. But the scenes are enlivened by movement and clever juxtapositions of scale. Watching the objects slowly spin and turn gives us a sense of space unmoored. With his domestic illusionism, Mr. Victoria turns the mundane into the marvelous.

Born and raised in Riverhead, Mr. Victoria first came to the attention of the New York art scene with installations of images of swimming sea monkeys filling storefront windows. His light boxes are more ambitious, but rely on more or less the same technology — light projections using objects reflected in mirrors. The exception is "Watching TV on LSD #1" (1998), which incorporates a live television image

through the use of concealed antennae.

The outdoor exhibition, “[YC3](#),” which stands for Yurt City 3, is the third iteration of a collaborative outdoor sculpture project coordinated by [Sheila Ross](#) and Laura Ten Eyck, Canadian artists based in New York. Conceived in response to the city’s lack of affordable housing and studio space for artists, it consists of 10 prefabricated tents, yurts and other temporary shelters. Together they serve as a testing ground of ad hoc vernacular architecture.

Some structures are more practical than others. Ms. Ross’s “Junior 1 Bedroom” (2009) is an amalgam of tents in the shape of a one-bedroom apartment with an additional front room. It is surrounded by a white picket fence and a freshly planted garden. It is a tent-city version of the American dream. By contrast, George Schmidt’s “Meeting House” (2009) is a miniature, elevated, blue clapboard structure in the shape of a meeting hall. Viewers can insert their heads at either end of it to see and talk to one another. The confined setting creates an intensified interaction.

Among the most engaging pieces is [Todd Knopke](#)’s “Inside Out and Outside In” (2009), a giant mural landscape made of pieces of scrap fabric sewn together and then turned inside out to create a tent. This forces viewers to enter the tent, to be within the picture in order to view it. Happily, it is very beautiful in there; the fabric glows in the sunlight as if it were stained glass. I had the momentary sensation of sitting in a distant European chapel.

[Jose Krapp](#), Derrick Wilson, Ms. Ten Eyck and an artist known only as Fletch round out the selection of artists, all of whom have contributed interesting, enterprising works. They remind us that home is a symbolic space as much as a physical location. First and foremost, it is a place that we can call our own.

“Home,” through June 7, and “YC3,” through Oct. 18, at Art Sites, 651 West Main Street (Route 25), Riverhead. Information: artsitesgallery.com or (631) 591-2401.

Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)