

Chicago artist draws inspiration from MOCAD's Mobile Homestead

By Serena Maria Daniels



Photo/Kate Gowman

When the late, legendary artist Mike Kelley constructed a full-sized replica of his childhood home at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit in Midtown, the goal was to create an open house for creative use. Since it opened its doors, it's been a venue for children's community classes, musical performance, and served as an exhibition space for Detroit's Little Free Library movement. Last month, with the installation of *Vintage Voyages* and *Atomic Memories* by Chicago artist Carlos Rolón/Dzine, the house was reimagined in a new way.



Photo courtesy of MOCAD

Rolón drew from Kelley's initial inspiration of recreating a home space and transformed it as his own family's 1970s house on Chicago's South Side. Every detail — from the shag carpet, the beaded seashell chandelier, the psychedelic wallpaper, even his mother's bootleg nail salon at the dining table — was replicated for an immersive, interactive experience.

The various retro decorated rooms will serve as visual backdrop and speak to the many influences of an era when ornate tchotchkes and optic and geometric wallpaper design went beyond kitsch and into modern art.

Viewing the installation as a community service, Rolón says he wants you to feel like a part of his experiences on a tactile level.

“Kids were running around and saying, ‘Can we jump on the bed?’ and that’s really the idea to enjoying the installation,” Rolón told us when he was in Detroit on opening night.

As part of the exhibit, nail artists are on hand each Sunday to create customized nail designs for visitors by appointment.

Rolón’s Mobile Homestead takeover at MOCAD is the latest in his years-long examination of cultural identity — often taking otherwise overlooked aspects of various subcultures and giving them a high-art aesthetic. We first met Rolón back in Chicago in 2010 when we saw photographs of his customized and sculptural bicycles —



Photo courtesy of MOCAD

inspired, in part, by Chicano lowrider and Puerto Rican bicycle clubs you find rolling the streets of Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles every weekend. Since our first meeting, he’s taken his studio practice that often addresses his own story by melding memory with the imaginary.



Photo courtesy of MOCAD

Rolón creates carefully crafted hybrid works that are playfully situated between the contradictory worlds of conspicuous consumption and urban artifact. The bootleg hair and nail salon his mother set up in his childhood home has been brought to a number of venues, including the New Museum in New York, Art Basel in Miami Beach, Art Cologne in Germany, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago.

“I selected Carlos to do a project in the Homestead because of his connection to art that was outside the museum context,” MOCAD executive director Elysia Borowy-Reeder says.

The Mobile Homestead was commissioned and produced by Artangel in association with MOCAD. The structure is a full-scale replica of the 1950s ranch-style home in Westland where Kelley was raised. Its placement — on a grassy lot directly behind the Midtown museum — is representative of the reversal of white flight following the 1967 rebellion.

Vintage Voyages and Atomic Memories runs in the Mobile Homestead at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit through Sunday, Aug. 28.



Photo/Kate Gowman