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Sleeping on Art at The Kitchen

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Nancy Hwang's 'Meet me at Home'- Keypadless desktop telephone
Courtesy of The Kitchen

Have you ever lied down on a piece of artwork at an exhibit and when the curator passed you it was with an encouraging, satisfied smile? If this fragmented view into an unconventional universe of art intrigues you, you should go to the [Kitchen](#) in Chelsea for its current exhibit, '[The Absolutely Other](#)'. Curated by Miriam Katz 'The Absolutely Other' features the work of seven innovative New York based artists who challenge and reconstruct social parameters using video, photography, installation and performance. Through seven distinct artistic visions and philosophies, Einat Amir, Daniel Bozhkov, Xavier Cha, eteam, Hope Hilton, Nancy Hwang and Dave McKenzie conjoin over a shared desire to shift the context of displayed art, and thereby engage the

spectator in an atypical way. The physical layout of the exhibit requires hydrated visitors, as it weaves throughout the gallery like an artistic obstacle course. Each work invites visitors to doff their observatory uniforms and step into active participatory roles. This results in the opportunity to establish personal relationships with the artists and shift the meaning of the artwork itself by becoming a part of the fluid creative process. Dave McKenzie's *It's a Date*, a Plexiglas box with slips of paper for visitors to leave their contact information, invites a randomly selected individual on a dinner date with the artist. The lottery style system resonates the sentiment of the spirit of the exhibit, as each interaction ignites the possibility to end up in an unexpected, foreign position. Brave the stormy seas with Daniel Bozhkov's Condensed Instruction for *Mutiny*, a display of printed text, video, and Keyway Classic coloring book, which pay tribute to Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. The installation was born out of Bozhkov's chance encounter with a man who believed he had uncovered cryptic messages in the text which foreshadowed mankind's impending doom yet also provided the wisdom for man's salvation. From Melville to Pound and Weisel, Hope Hilton's *When I am Reading I am Far Away* displays a table spilling over with a tempting selection of the artist's most cherished literary works. Viewers are invited to submit their information on a provided laptop, which is used to set up intimate book clubs based off of their literary preferences. *Landcruise* will transport you from West 19th street to a

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small hamlet in Northern Germany, as you sit in a semi-circle of lawn chairs and watch a video documenting a group of German farmers' faux trip to America. After artist duo, eteam, purchased the cheapest set of garden plots they could get their green thumbs on, they attempted with failed efforts to get better acquainted with their native tenants and so resorted to sailing the gardeners to the states. Through a slideshow and digitally –

manipulated photo album, board the grassy ship and share in a colorful voyage filled with musical performances, art auctions, buffeted meals, horse drawn carriages, magic castles, and a few other surprises. When arriving at a small table displaying a red, keypad-less desktop telephone, you have not made a mistake. Nancy Hwang's *Meet Me at Home*, invites visitors to pick up the receiver and chance the possibility of leaving a voicemail for, speaking to, and possibly with the right phone personality, even rendezvousing with the artist. Hwang continues to extend her warm hospitality with *Opus*, a life-scale video projection featuring the artist engaging in conversation with over twenty different individuals, which hangs over a soft, welcoming bed. Surrender to exhaustion and curiosity as you cozy up to an attractive stranger and blame it on the integrity of the raw artistic experience. Einat Amir's *Phase Three* features four video installations that documents three actors' experiences who were hired to improvise archetypal characters in foreign scenarios. These daring and hilarious setups, such as a hysterically crying woman acting as a human altar at a church service, a lip-syncher who interprets Freddy Mercury and George Moroder's 'Love Kills' through a courageous, impromptu dance sequence, and an eccentric actor, who shamelessly promotes his work while touring an art gallery, interrupting the guide a number of times to sing opera, manifest the ideology of tearing through prescribed boundaries and redefining the staged artistic and human experience.

Through these compelling works, each artist elevates the spectator to uncharted creative heights, allowing whoever is bold enough to share in and remold their work simply by engaging in it. Spectator and artist unite and potentially reverse roles as the 'No Touching' sign is replaced with 'Shall we Dine?' and the boundaries we once knew are as blurred and distant as the rolling whaleboats of Melville's fortuitous waters.

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