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March 28, 2012

PRESS RELEASE

“House Arrest” Exhibition Opens at Franklin Street Works April 5 – June 10, 2012

Dozens of Artists Harness Domestic Objects, Actions, and Environs
in an Original Exhibition at Franklin Street Works

Stamford, CT -- *House Arrest* is a group exhibition featuring artists who intentionally challenge assumptions about the comforts of home. Works range from Corin Hewitt's disquieting still life photographs to Elizabeth Demaray's upholstered rubble couch to Martha Rosler's politically charged collages. The result is a crosscurrent of alternative meanings and meanderings that flip the concept of domesticity on its head, exploring the complex relationships between daily life and everyday objects. The exhibition is on view from April 5 – June 10, 2012. There will be a free, public reception on April 5 from 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

House Arrest is curated by Terri C Smith whose approach to the installation will significantly alter the physical qualities of the space's three galleries. It will create living rooms that are informed by the history of Franklin Street Works' Victorian row house buildings, originally working class homes. Additionally, the exhibition addresses issues of domestic transience as evidenced with the makeshift housing situations at recent political protest sites such as Occupy Wall Street's Zuccotti Park. Participating artists are: Hector Arce-Espasas, Francis Cape, Alex Da Corte, Elizabeth Demaray, Stuart Elster, Marley Freeman, Jared Haug, Nate Heiges, Sean Hemmerle, Corin Hewitt, Rachel Higgins, David Horvitz, Jessica Jackson Hutchins, Justine Kurland, ROLU, Martha Rosler, Heather Rowe, Penelope Umbrico, Se Young, and Helen Zajkowski. *House Arrest* also features a curated shop and zine by Talisein and original publications curated by David Horvitz in collaboration with several independent publishers: *andreview*, *Dominica*, *Fillip*, and *Triple Canopy*. The exhibition features a PDF catalog that includes an interview on curating with ordinary objects between Taliesin and Bodhi Landa, an exhibition essay by Terri C Smith, and Lisa A Porter's essay on Zuccotti Park from a material culture perspective.

The theme and structure of *House Arrest* pivots on two essential questions: “How do domestic objects impact and reflect our feelings about home, shared public spaces, and temporary sites such as those of recent protests?” “Does changing the context of an ordinary object bring new meanings that can include critique, alternative value systems, and even revolt?” This exhibition explores the domestic in artworks, including shifting relationships to cultural and social norms both shared and personal. Perspectives range from the nuclear family to bodies of government. With *House Arrest*, the practical and the

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poetic, the private and the public, the familiar and the disquieting intersect through a variety of juxtapositions that include everyday domestic objects like curtains and toys, common materials such as sidewalk concrete, and glimpses into familiar activities such as the family road trip or alternative living situations like off-the-grid train hoppers who crisscross the United States via rail.

House Arrest artist Jessica Jackson Hutchins once quoted a line from George Oppen's poem *Of Being Numerous: Sections 1 - 22* when describing her work. The poet's words also identify the impulse behind this exhibition, "There are things we live among/And to know them is to know ourselves." Like Oppen, the artists in *House Arrest* are aware of the relationships between our "selves" and what we buy, use in our homes, and carry with us. With this approach, the blurring of boundaries between the public and private with domestic objects and actions is inevitable. These opposing realms are meshed via slight of hand with Penelope Umbrico's video *Bed Role*, where a seemingly intimate tour of a bedroom is actually footage of a bedding catalog's pages – a public object is morphed into a private, voyeuristic experience. The converse is true for public gathering sites such as Occupy Wall Street's Zuccotti Park. This phenomenon was thoughtfully written about in Ariella Azoulay's *ArtForum* article "A Civil State of Emergency," where she notes, "Indeed, the very fact of crowds carrying out in the open activities that usually take place in the intimacy of the home – sleeping, doing the dishes, preparing foods, etc. – radically disrupts the relations between these two spheres." Similarly in the realm of photography, Justine Kurland focuses the camera lens on the semi-private existences of the modern nomadic train-hoppers in her series *This Train is Bound for Glory*. She elaborates on the project, "We who are brave enough (or stupid enough) to become explorers today, when all available land has been conquered and occupied, can still be, I believe, the builders of a new world and a new consciousness. The American frontier may have been settled, but America is, in another sense, unsettling rapidly. From our disappointment with decades of broken promises, we are breaking free and running into the industrial wilderness, calling out, "I don't need you, I don't need anybody!"

Through its inclusion of familiar objects, materials and scenes, the mood of *House Arrest* is, like Kurland's industrial wilderness, familiar yet unsettling. The environment is part art exhibition, part domestic space. Terri C Smith adds that like the organic, ad hoc nature of our homes, *House Arrest* is a combination of objects, personalities and perspectives, adding, "While there is a loose thematic structure to *House Arrest*, the exhibition acknowledges what artist Nate Heiges frankly stated to me during the show's planning stages, 'art can't do everything.' I think with an exhibition that posits alternative perspectives on the social structures we create – ranging from our own homes to our libraries, governments, and political protests – its important to not jump to any conclusions or posit a single theory," Smith adds, "In artist Andrea Fraser's essay for the Whitney Biennial catalog, she discusses art's unique position as an enterprise that at once critiques and willingly participates in the very economic and cultural structures it resist." Fraser writes:

From this perspective it would seem that the apparent contradictions between the critical and political claims of art and its economic conditions are not contradictions at all but rather attest to the vitality of the art world as a site of critique and contestation, as these practices develop in scope and complexity to confront the challenges of globalization, neoliberalism, post-Fordism, new regimes of spectacle, the debt crisis, right-wing populism, and now historic levels of inequality.

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If Andrea Fraser is correct, the artists and curators (of show, shop and publications) involved in this exhibition are inevitably connected to the money and social power associated with the art world, yet actively resist and repel its control and authority by using strategies such as humble, everyday materials, ephemerality, and critique to make their art. *House Arrest* is in a not-for-profit art space not in the world, some of the objects it exhibits are borrowed from commercial galleries, and it is funded by private donors. Much like the people in Sean Hemmerle's photo of Zuccotti Park, there is a tension in the mix of a political community and individuality in *House Arrest*. Perhaps an effective shorthand description of the exhibition is that while *House Arrest* cannot escape being "in it," the exhibition features a variety of works that resist being "of it." If Fraser is correct, *House Arrest* -- its artists, curators, and audience -- cannot exist in a utopic vacuum, but art and exhibition are specially positioned to provide unique perspectives of existing systems while also proposing new, imagined approaches to exchanges in our individual and shared environments.

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Franklin Street Works is located at 41 Franklin Street in downtown Stamford, Connecticut, near the UCONN campus and less than one hour from New York City via Metro North. Franklin Street Works is approximately one mile (a 15 minute walk) from the Stamford train station. On street parking is available on Franklin Street (metered until 6 pm except on Sunday), and paid parking is available nearby in a lot on Franklin Street and in the Summer Street Garage (100 Summer Street), behind Target.

The art space and café are open to the public on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday: 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. with extended hours on Thursdays, 12:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Franklin Street Works does not charge for admission during regular gallery hours. For more information call 203-595-5211 or email info@franklinstreetworks.org.