



The Goldie Paley House 4200 Henry Avenue Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19144-5497
tel 215.951.2860 fax 215.951.2662 thedesigncenter@PhilaU.edu

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For more information:
Hilary Jay 215-951-2863
jayh@philau.edu

Candy Depew Creates “housing project” in Modernist Ranch House Museum

Philadelphia, PA – The Design Center at Philadelphia University, located in the home of the late Goldie Paley (mother of William Paley, founder of CBS), is pleased to announce the opening of *housing project*, a site-specific installation by Philadelphia-based Candy Depew. The exhibition runs from January 23 – April 3, 2009. A free public opening reception is planned for Thursday, January 22, 5:30 p.m – 8:00 p.m.

Depew is known for her provocative and playful installations that revel in the cultural obsession with collecting objects and decorating living spaces. The former Pew Fellow and Tyler MFA graduate, who earned the title of Master Printer at the Fabric Workshop and Museum, works in a variety of media such as vinyl, bone china, and ink, and methods including silk screening, furniture and jewelry design.

At The Design Center (TDC) – in what had formerly been a dining room, living room and library when the house was built in the 1950s – Depew “plays house,” setting up rooms of extraordinary delight. Combining her own works, including fresh fabrics printed at Philadelphia University’s Center for Excellence in Digital Printing, with elements from The Design Center’s historic textile collection, Depew creates “a crystal cave bedroom” where her hand-made porcelain souvenirs spill all over her furniture. There’s a speak-easy salon with mannequins posed in a conversational style, dressed in garments from the collection, as well as a ball gown of Depew’s own creation; and in an opium den cum library that is swathed tent-like in historic paisleys, it is prints galore with the addition of custom-printed fabrics fashioned into floor pillows. To create wall murals of vibrantly colored, computer-cut vinyl throughout the galleries, Depew borrows liberally from old wallpaper and textile patterns.

housing project is based on Depew’s itinerant lifestyle over the past five years. During that span of time, she traveled throughout the US and Europe, attending artist-in-residencies, as well as professionally house sitting for friends and family. “I had the chance to inhabit and gently alter over 50 domiciles during my travels. I saw how people converted

basic shelter into personalized homes by using their private collections of souvenirs and memorabilia to create a world of their own making,” Depew notes. “Ironically, though, as I tended to the domesticities of others I, myself, did not have a place that I could actually call home.”

It was from the desire to define a place for herself that Depew entered into *housing project*. In a more traditional museological setting, the constantly changing relationship we have to our stuff – the kitchenware, furniture, ornaments that enrich our spaces, even the clothes we wear – often appears frozen, like some ancient amber or religious relic. But, at TDC, the open environment restores the balance of comfort, safety and amusement for the museum visitor.

As Pew reported in bestowing the 2002 Fellowship award to Depew, she “borrows freely from the vocabulary of interior design... and draws an unusual richness from the combinations of color, pattern and historical allusion she employs. This grammar of ornament, Depew's work suggests, can be used to form a rhetoric by which the various dialects of design, decorative, and fine arts may be persuasively reconciled.”

Depew received her B.F.A. from Kent State University, Ohio, and her M.F.A. from Tyler School of Art, Temple University, Philadelphia. She also studied at Newcomb School of Art, Tulane University, in New Orleans, La. Her work has been exhibited at The Clay Studio, The Rosenbach Museum and Library, Samuel S. Fleisher Art Memorial, Vox Populi Gallery, and the Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery of The University of the Arts, all in Philadelphia. In 1999 she received an Emerging Artist Grant from the Leeway Foundation, and in 2002 received a Pew Fellowship award.

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The Design Center (TDC) supports Philadelphia University's extensive design curriculum: fashion, industrial design, graphics, architecture, landscape architecture, interior design and digital design. Each year, TDC mounts nationally recognized exhibitions, as well as administers DesignPhiladelphia, an annual city-wide celebration that unites all the design arts through exhibitions, seminars, booksignings, lectures, open studios and workshops. The Center's library and historic textile collection serve as outstanding resources for scholarly research and provide inspiration to designers, artists, educators, and students and aficionados.

Hours: Monday – Friday 10 am to 4 pm. Weekends by appointment. Free and open to the public. Wheelchair accessible.

Images are available upon request.