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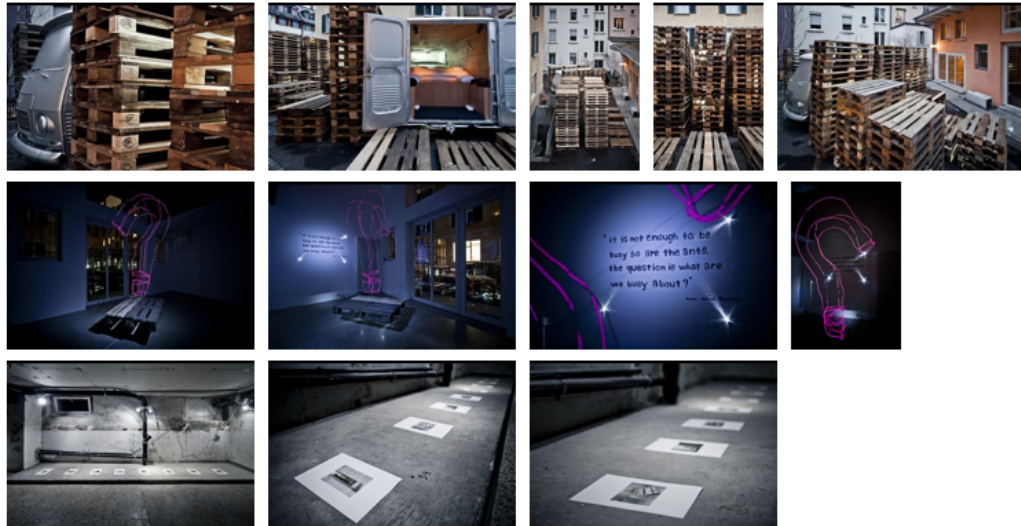
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THE PROPOSAL 2012:02:03

The innovation: Experiential art
The instigators: Jeremie Maret
The project: The Proposal

By Michael Wylie-Harris and Ellie Osborne

It is one thing to stand in a gallery gazing at a painting or art installation, but what if you could fall asleep in the same space? Would it result in a more immersive experience? And would you wake up with a greater understanding of the concept behind it?

The artists behind The Proposal in Zurich believe you would. By combining a gallery space with a bed and breakfast, Proposal founders Jeremie Maret, Lenny Staples and Christian Weber aim to make viewing art more experiential. Visitors to the project, which showcases prototype versions of artwork in order to provoke discussion about the necessity and originality of art, are given the option of staying the night in the hope that they might better connect with the work on display.

Residents in art

According to Maret, giving people the chance to stay the night in the installation gives them a 'first-hand experience' of the concept behind The Proposal. 'Through this combination we give our guests much more time than in a normal gallery to look and talk about art and the necessity of it,' he says. 'The art can be lived in and the visitor can become an active part of the gallery and look behind the scenes.'

Prototype art

Based in a quiet courtyard in the Swiss city, The Proposal opened in November 2011 and will run until April 2012. It will showcase six prototype versions of possible artworks from the realms of conceptual art, architecture and fashion. At present, the project is displaying an installation called What Are We Busy About?, featuring 337 euro-pallets placed around the courtyard in an attempt to raise questions about efficiency, industry and production capabilities. The adjoining bed and breakfast space acts as a contrast to the industrial, overfilled look of the courtyard, and provides a contemplative area where guests can reflect on their own business.

Sleeping on it

Visitors staying at The Proposal find a fresh perspective on the art they have seen, according to Maret. 'They love the experience and are fascinated by the concept,' he says. 'They love the way they can fall asleep thinking about an idea or concept and wake up with new conclusions and thoughts about it.'

Top five take-outs

1. Try to make experiences as immersive as possible. The Proposal focuses on making a visit to an art gallery a truly experiential process.
2. Bring together the unexpected. People would not expect to find a bed and breakfast in a gallery space. Unusual combinations create a sense of intrigue among consumers.
3. Create a dynamic space. The Proposal offers art installations that change from month to month, which means guests will return to experience the new look of the space.
4. Be thought-provoking. The Proposal uses contrasting design spaces to encourage visitors to reflect on their own lives, resulting in a more rewarding experience.
5. Generate memories. The Proposal's immersive, thought-provoking overnight stay creates the sort of memorable experience that means visitors will return.

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