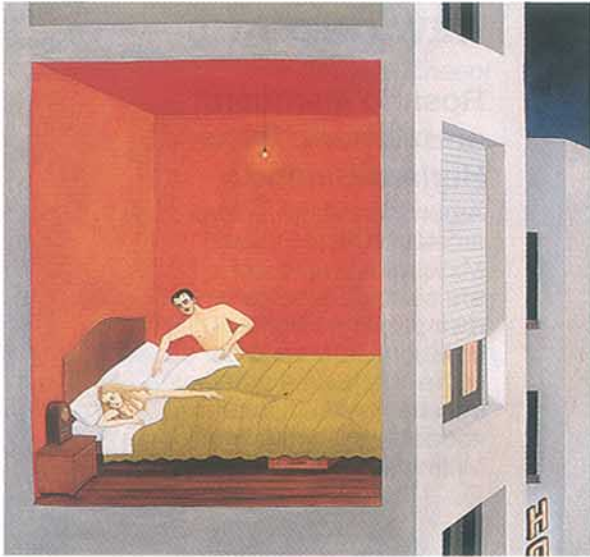


Art in America

January 2004

Rosario Marquardt and Roberto Behar:
Sunday Morning, 1997, oil on linen, 37 inches square;
at Heriard-Cimino.



NEW ORLEANS

Rosario Marquardt and Roberto Behar at Heriard-Cimino

Argentinean-born, Miami-based artist-architects Rosario Marquardt and Roberto Behar are perhaps best known for their public art works. They have collaborated on outdoor projects in the Miami area that have become local landmarks: a 45-foot-high red M, in downtown Miami at the entranceway to the Riverwalk Metromover station; *The Bedroom*, an outdoor mural in Miami's Design District showing a man who sleeps while a demon and an angel engage in a wrestling match for his soul; and *The Living Room*, an oversize cross section of a room open to the street, which transforms an urban space into a cozy domestic setting with a huge sofa, lamp and 40-foot-high expanse of flowering wallpaper.

At Heriard-Cimino, Behar and Marquardt's paintings, made in the last seven years, were exhibited for the first time. They claim to create them collaboratively, although Marquardt is thought to do most of the painting. Flatly painted in oil on canvas with saturated color and often exaggerated perspectives, the paintings are in a faux-naive style. The artists often reference their Argentinean roots: the portraits *Carlitos* (1996) and *Alfonsina* (1998) celebrate two famed Buenos Aires residents. A gamine Alfonsina Storni, a popular tango dancer, demurely clutches a carmine flower at her

breast, while a dapper Carlitos Gardel, a well-known tango singer, outfitted in ascot and blue fedora, enigmatically holds a toy airplane. In the painting *Tango* (1998), a couple dance in the street. A miniature coral pink building sits directly behind the dancers, and a similarly Lilliputian fragment of a yellow wall frames them on the left, making them look giant-size.

Intimate, voyeuristic scenes, seemingly glimpsed through the walls of buildings, make up some of the most interesting paintings. In *Sunday Morning* (1997), a man in a garish red room pulls a chartreuse sheet back to crawl into bed with a waiting woman. The interior and exterior of the room and building can be seen from the bedroom. This time a peacefully sleeping woman is watched by a gaggle of onlookers peering in through doors and windows.

For the most part, the artists' accomplished sculptures and paintings present narratives and spaces that oscillate between public and private, executed at both intimate and monumental scales and treading a fine line between the familiar and the surreal.

[The artists participated in the 2003 Neuberger Museum Biennial of Public Art in Purchase, N.Y., and the 2003 Havana Biennial.]

—Melissa Kuntz