

“Home Sweet Home”

In a television documentary, they affirm that all mattresses (including mine) are full of little bugs that biologists call acarus. The macroscopic vision of the camera turns them into monsters that Kafka himself never would have imagined in his worst nightmares. Frightened, I realize that every day I sleep on a breeding ground of those fetuses. I ask myself if in the rest of my house these and other hair-raising beings dwell. My fear worsens when I see *Home Sweet Home*, the environment by Paula Toto Blake. I still don't know why. The installation includes vegetable shapes covering the wall, and some sort of “brains balls” with mouths. What was once a highchair has become a thorny fixture. Paula stages the fear that my own house provokes in me. And I wonder if all the objects around me could become something else. In this environment, what Sigmund Freud called *Umheimlich* is palpable—that is to say, the sensation that the familiar has become uncanny, ominous. The sensual shapes of the plants remind me of the terrible “toothed vagina,” that expression of the dread that the masculine member could be guillotined by the female sex. Suddenly, the innocent plants could bite me.

This environment is like a horror film that exorcises fear.

Confronting fear, that which terrifies us (the Jungian shadow), is a way to know that nothing is ever as serious as it seems. Only if in confront it can we know that it is not as dark or as terrible as we suspect.

The color the Paula chose for this installation is red. Intensity associated with fire, with flame and therefore with transforming power, with the furnace that molds metal, with the bonfire that cooks food. Paula's objects are transfigured, and the red that covers them—bright, intense—exacerbate that shift. Daily objects can become magical or tragic. The shadow can be ally or enemy; fears can serve to hold us back or to discover our heroic potential. If Saint George had not confronted the dragon, he would never have rescued the princess or have been considered a worthy knight.

Home, Sweet Home can be considered an essay on fear. This work stages the dread that nothing stays just as we know. Often, we think that transmutation leads to something dismal. Now I know what soothes me in this installation: I'm capable (we all are) of confronting my everyday fears. And what's more, it is not necessary to fight them with spears, helmets or armor.

This installation contains the fear that everything can become strange, but also the possibility of transforming fears. To do so, Paula uses the most thaumaturgic power available to contemporary man: art.

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