

PRESS CLIPPING
THE NEW YORK SUN

[David Grosz](#)
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David Grosz, New York Sun, July 1, 2004

Christoph Buchel's latest installation is more than merely *on display* at the Swiss Institute. It has taken over the entire gallery, converting a SoHo exhibition space into a facsimile of a dirty, uninviting apartment. While some may mock the work's "transformative" pretensions, Mr. Buchel's faux-apartment is intellectually provocative and playful.

The installation tells a story of division, a fact announced at the front door, which is bisected by a 4-inch cinderblock wall that winds through the entire apartment. The wall separates a path that leads to the right - through a messy bathroom with half a tub - from the path to the left - which winds past a spare kitchenette, a dark, depressing bedroom and an unbearably narrow study to the other half of the bedroom and tub. In some places, this creates spaces so cramped that Manhattan studios seem luxurious in comparison.

But this is not the work's primary dichotomy. For there is a second, outer apartment that wraps around the inner apartment's side and back walls in a giant U-shape. This second apartment, accessed through a passage under the bathroom sink, or by scaling the cinder block wall, contains an inviting bed, a more comfortable living space, and a kitchen full of modern appliances (as well as a healthy collection of Budweiser). As a bastion of suburban comforts, it stands in sharp contrast to the depressively Spartan inner space.

Mr. Buchel has intentionally withheld an artist's statement and title from his double apartment, leaving us to conjecture on our own about its meaning. Is this an allegory of an impossible roommate situation? A before-and-after story of a suburban adolescent become a post-collegiate life as struggling artist? A gloss on "The Road Not Taken?"

Symbolic interpretation may be the wrong approach for this installation; unlike most, it is far more fun to experience than to think about. The work is most challenging as an urban obstacle course: It requires you to walk sideways through the apartment's narrow hallways, duck into the bathroom opening, slither through the closet space that links the two apartments, hop onto the second apartment's bed, wind your way around its L-shaped living room, and climb over a half-wall to arrive at the second kitchen. Should you make it this far, feel free to reward yourself with an ice-cold Bud from the well-stocked fridge. As a frat-house-worthy pyramid of cans attests, you will hardly be the first.



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