



## All Over The Place With The Art Guys

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The Art Guys are at it again, but this time they are at it in Huntsville, Texas. After more than three decades of producing art, head scratches, and the occasional controversy, The Art Guys are making their way to the Wynne Home Arts Center to open their gallery, “Scattershot,” with results that are all over the place—literally.

On the west side of the Wynne Home’s Lela Mae Brown Art Gallery is “Adapters,” a piece assembled from 70 or 80 electrical adapters strung together. It extends, snakelike, from the outlet, under wall-mounted art, some of which includes historic photographs altered to produce incongruity—a distinguished 19th century gentleman in black and white, for example, retroactively given a red clown’s nose.

On the south side of the gallery is the work “Get a Handle On It,” which involves “metal handles on various objects.” The objects are bricks, mostly, that were at one point proposed to construct a brick house with named rooms.

The Art Guys, a two-man art team of Michael Galbreth and Jack Massing, approach their art with a wink, and a healthy respect for questioning conventions, societal and artistic. They embrace the illogical—“it seems,” says Galbreth, “to be the structure of everything”—with a nod to the Dada movement of the early 20th century.

This Dadaistic duo cheerfully stray from the confines of the art world, embracing diverse media and disciplines and evoking the participatory journalism of George Plimpton. They have driven the 610 Loop for 24 hours; trekked the longest road in Houston, Little York; sat in a Denny’s restaurant for 24 hours; and swam Buffalo Bayou while wearing suits, the crossing of which they celebrated by drinking a glassful of Bayou water—all in the name of art. They’ve become famous, and even recently staged a book signing. Not having produced a book of their own, they signed other people’s books.

“Our activity,” notes Galbreth, “involves communication, meaning activity in a shared public space, to take the Latin root of the term.” In that sense, the Wynne Home, which serves the community as a meeting place, art center, and venue for participatory cultural activities, is an appropriate location to house art that engages the public.

The Art Guys’ concept of engagement took on a different meaning in 2009 when they announced they would marry a plant. The ceremony was performed in the Lillie and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden and sponsored by the Contemporary Arts Museum of Houston. The marriage produced much controversy— as well as threats to The Art Guys and attacks on the tree, which was soon relocated to a more secure location.

For the most part, however, The Art Guys' work has produced more headshakes, "hmmms," and smiles than controversy. For Cultural Services Coordinator Linda Pease, the piece "How to Get From Here to There," which involves various linkage objects (i.e., hinges, chain links, locks) strung together, prompts both "hmmms" and smiles. "It is a curious work, but I think there is something inherent in us that moves us to like this sort of thing," she noted. "We associate the shape, the space, and the movement with festive activities, and I think it's delightful."

With its emphasis on connection, the piece also underscores The Art Guys theme of engagement, employing a public space to connect diverse objects into a unified whole.

The opening reception for "Scattershot" takes place at the Wynne Home Arts Center on Saturday, January 25 from 4:00pm to 7:00pm, with remarks coming at 5:30pm. The event is open to the public, providing artistic and social engagement opportunities abound— along with the opportunity to hear the No Foolin' String Band. Visitors are encouraged to bring a lively curiosity, leave at home their pre-existing notions of art— and to lock up their trees before they leave.