

art ltd.

Penelope Gottlieb: “NO \$ DOWN” at Kim Light/Lightbox Gallery
by Allison Gibson
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LOS ANGELES

Depending on one’s personal experience with the current housing market, walking into a gallery where all four walls are lined with images of homes—hung salon-style in bright wooden frames, screaming for attention—can be either thrilling or nightmarish. Penelope Gottlieb’s exhibition, “NO \$ DOWN,” at Kim Light/LightBox is a veritable catalogue of the American Dream, at once so hopeful and so fragile. Gottlieb’s meticulously illustrated colored-pencil drawings of monochromatic houses, ranging from the beach bungalow to the gated estate, may have been inspired by images found in The Los Angeles Times’ Real Estate Classifieds over the past decade, but they truly represent Anywhere America.

One wall of the exhibition space features an installation: a re-creation of the white brick fireplace from the set of “Leave It To Beaver,” which produces faux flames and churns out (probably unintentionally) a rhythmic sound, like that of a fast-paced heartbeat. It is a sound that enters the viewer’s subconscious as he or she

makes the rounds of the gallery, feeling either mounting anxiety over thoughts of potentially losing a house to foreclosure, or excitement at the idea of purchasing a first home. A few of the pieces include catch phrases written under the image, such as “Location Location Location!” “A Handyman’s Heaven!” or “Charm Galore!”—sentiments openly reeking of classic real estate euphemism. Hanging inconspicuously among the sea of house drawings are a couple of Gottlieb’s delicate renderings of shopping carts. Without even knowing that such a piece’s title is No Place Like Home, the viewer easily gets the irony, although the show is curated in such a way that no particular message seems to be preached.

“NO \$ DOWN” is a timely exhibition due to the tumultuous temperament of the current market, but it is also timeless because to own a home has always collectively been the pinnacle of the American Dream. The drawings may be explicitly tongue-in-cheek with titles like Unassuming Facade, and within the vignette of a “home”—fireplace, chair railing and all—but they are also exquisitely rendered. They can’t help but exude a sense of hope, far beyond the representation of simple brick and mortar.

Photo: courtesy of Kim Light/Lightbox Gallery