



MY LITTLE CORNER OF THE WORLD: ANNE MOURIER

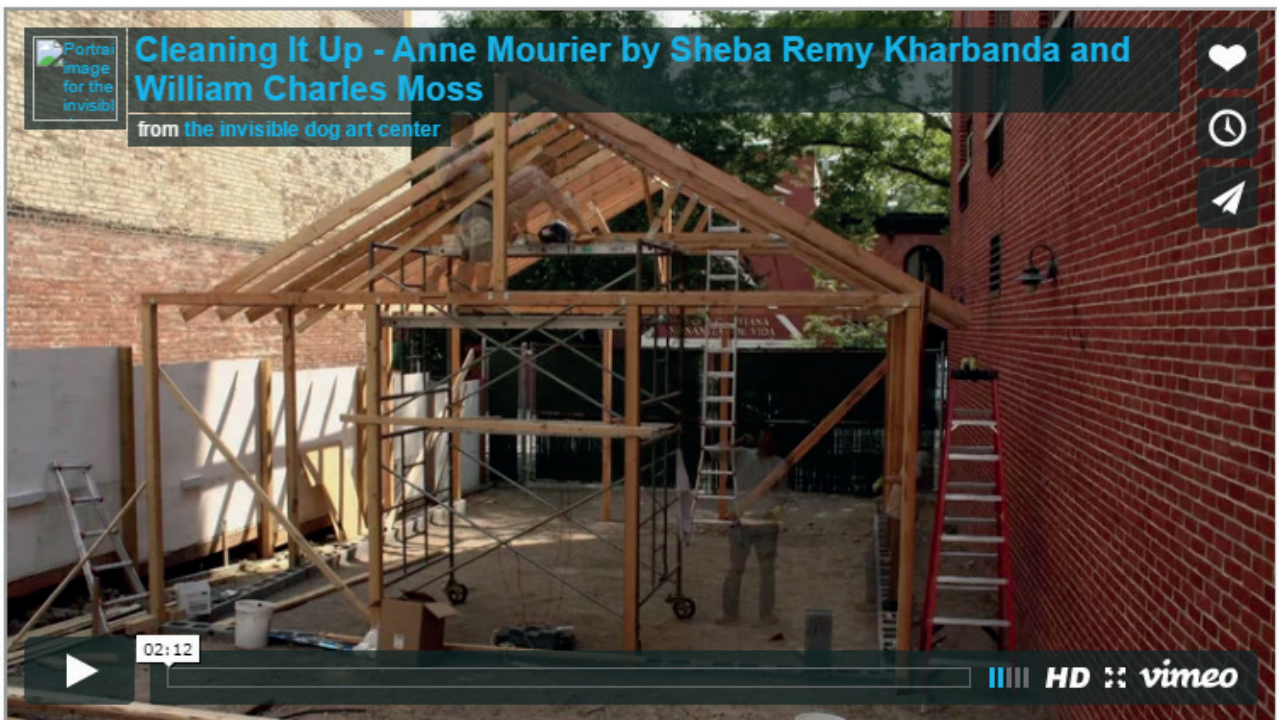
JEN HARLAN × NOVEMBER 15, 2013

Anne Mourier likes things neat and tidy. The Brooklyn-based, French artist works in photography as well as mixed media, sculpture and collage, playing with themes of domesticity, the home, family and particularly women's roles in these spheres. But don't be mistaken—while many of her works feature dolls and miniatures dressed up in soft pastels, these deceptively charming pieces are not child's play, engaging instead with darker themes of sexual identity and heteronormativity. In the dollhouse, nothing is as it seems.



© Anne Mourier, "Cleaning It Up 8"

Mourier just closed her first solo exhibition, a mixed-media show titled "Cleaning It Up." For the show, Mourier and her compatriots at the [Invisible Dog Art Center](#) built an intimate gallery space, designed with Mourier's work in mind. With its "little house" frame and inviting glass walls, patched together from found windowpanes, the space is immediately engaging, inviting curious passers-by to look up from the sidewalk and wander in. The center hopes to use the space for future exhibitions, with a focus on female artists, who traditionally have not played a prominent role in the main, more industrial, permanent exhibition space.



In her artist statement for “Cleaning It Up,” Mourier writes, “The past is all around me. I’ve collected it, swept it up, folded it, pressed it, washed it off, pinned it back, sewn it up, tucked it in, dusted it off, and framed it. But it never keeps quiet. It never sits still. It’s never satisfied. And I keep searching. Cleaning is my compass. Scrubbing my way through the details of misunderstanding, it was the pristine precaution that preserved the fabric of my family...I missed a spot...I thought I lived in a little box when I lived in a glass house.” This week, Mourier invites *Resource* to take a peak inside her neat little world.



© Anne Mourier, “Cleaning It Up 7”

You just closed your first solo exhibition, “Cleaning It Up,” at the Glass House, a new custom-built gallery space at the Invisible Dog Art Center in Brooklyn, where you are an artist resident. What was that experience like, both the process of putting together a solo show and the rather unique experience of constructing an exhibition space and christening the gallery with your work?

The experience of my first solo show has been really rewarding.

I was concerned about the fact that the work “will not make sense” and that my message was not coherent (especially because I use so many mediums...it feels scattered sometimes). When you see only pieces of your work in a group show, you don’t really have the big picture! I was so relieved after the opening when I realized that people seemed to get what I was trying to say right away and that they were also praising the homogeneity of the style and palette. I fell for the first time that I had found “My Style.”



© Anne Mourier, "Cleaning It Up 2"

The opportunity that The Invisible Dog offered me to design my own space was amazing, because I was able to design a space that not only accommodated my work pretty well (which is what happens when you are lucky) but also enhanced it!

I wanted the space to look like "a little house" since I am talking so much about domesticity and the idea of the home, and I wanted it to be made of glass as this is a medium I have been using a lot in my work. I feel that glass allows me to feel protected inside the "home," but also to be seen by the outside, which is vital for an artist.



© Anne Mourier, Glass House Exhibition Space

Since the Glasshouse needed supervision, I have been spending a lot of time there, meeting with the public and engaging in conversations about subjects like family, home, the role of woman, their influences, their relationship to cleaning.... It has been fascinating.



© Anne Mourier, "Cleaning It Up 5"

Who taught you to clean?

My mother, grandmother, aunts...

They taught me things that most young woman don't know how to do: iron shirts, polish silverware, cook, etc. I feel like there is an art to all of this, and I am proud to know it...as long as I don't feel forced to do it when I actually have work to do at the studio! I actually did some workshops during the show to teach these crafts.



© Anne Mourier, "Cleaning It Up 6"

My work is based on childhood memories. I grew up in France, raised mostly by women who seemed extremely concerned by the image they were presenting to society (or more precisely how clean and pretty their houses were).



© Anne Mourier, "Cleaning It Up 4"

You work not just in photography but also in sculpture, collage and mixed media. How do those art forms interact for you? Do you approach them the same way?

I studied photography but don't have a formal training in art. After a while, I realized that photography was not allowing me to express certain things the way I wanted. I decided to turn toward mediums that were taught to me by women in my family: sewing, knitting, embroidery, collage. If I was to talk about them, why not honor what they passed on to me?



© Anne Mourier, "White Goods #2 (Pile of Linens)"

I approach all mediums the same way—intuitively—whichever material seems to be the most appropriate for what I want to say and whatever the mood is also. It is boring to me to always work with the same medium. I like to explore.



© Anne Mourier, "Closed Lips"

Much of your work features delicate miniatures, a soft palate, domestic scenes and family themes. Do you think your work has an inherently female quality? What does it mean to be a woman artist?

I am a woman and just don't know how to approach things any other way. Being a woman is at the core of who I am, and I cannot separate it from the way I approach my work or anything else in life. I don't think about it and don't even think it is important; it is just my way to approach things. Now does it have inherently female qualities? Yes, probably, but it is not something that matters to me or that I am trying to push. I don't think being a woman artist is different from being a man artist; it is still about trying to find harmony and expressing your true self.



© Anne Mourier, "Settling Down"

Are you familiar with the work of **Ursus Wehrli** (**Tidying Up Art, The Art of Clean-Up: Life Made Neat and Tidy**)? What do you think of his work? Do you think you approach the idea of “clean” in a similar way?

I know a little bit about his work. I think the only thing that there is in common is the notion of “obsession/compulsion,” and the fact that cleaning in certain cases becomes more important than anything else. I feel like he is talking about this idea in general when I am talking about very specific people.



© Anne Mourier, “White Goods #1 (Little Brush)”

What are you working on now?

I am exploring right now the links between these women in my family so concerned about “being clean” and their relation to their body and Catholicism, which is the root of French culture.



© Anne Mourier, “Cleaning It Up 9”

I am preparing for an exhibition in Venice in February at the French Alliance, which is an ancient casino (or “house of pleasure”) where I will be presenting some nude photography around the theme of “what is hidden.” Were these women trying to prove that they were pure? Or were they hiding some “inappropriate sexual behaviors?” Were they ashamed of their sexuality?



© Anne Mourier, "Self-Portrait"



© Anne Mourier, "Self-Portrait"



© Anne Mourier, "White Goods #6 (Domestic Fowl)"



© Anne Mourier, "White Goods #5 (Sponges)"