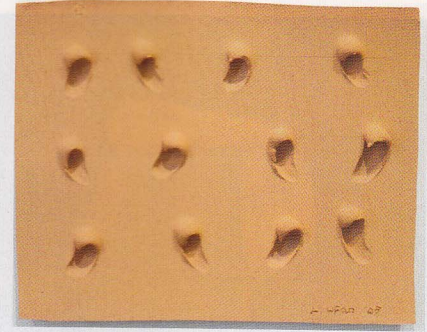


## EXHIBITION REVIEWS



Young Sook Park and Lee Ufan: *Untitled*, 2005, terra-cotta, 16½ by 21 inches; at RH Gallery.

View of Pepón Osorio's installation *All or Nothing*, 2011, video and mixed mediums; at Ronald Feldman.

### PEPÓN OSORIO RONALD FELDMAN

Pepón Osorio is a storyteller of the first order. The Puerto Rican artist, who spent many years as a social worker, builds multimedia installations that address universal concerns while remaining grounded in the real-life narratives of the different communities he engages. In his recent exhibition, Osorio brought together four pieces that locate a profound sense of tragedy within the quotidian space of the family home.

The centerpiece of the exhibition was a rotating life-size diorama built on a circular platform that reconstructs a pair of opposing domestic landscapes: one rich, one poor; one outside, one inside. A tall wall separates the two spaces, which are rife with symbolic objects. On one side, a hospital gurney sits on a lawn, representing the exterior of an affluent family's home. Beside the gurney is a gold-painted heart in a display case, atop which rests

a pocket watch that no longer ticks. The inside of the poor household shows more signs of life, though it is in utter chaos. Kitschy trinkets and disused wall clocks litter the ground along with scattered puzzle pieces and toy police cars. A family is present—a mother and her two children—but they are absorbed in their own activities, existentially isolated. Their skin is composed entirely of Band-Aids. Conceived and created over a yearlong engagement with the communities of Williamstown and North Adams, Mass. (it was exhibited in both of those towns), *Drowned in a Glass of Water* (2010) refers to that stifling feeling one has when life's obstacles seem insurmountable. It's impossible to know the actual story Osorio started with, but the emotional tone suggests struggle and recovery.

Other pieces approach tragedy from the precursory angle of protection or prevention. For *Purifier* (2010), Osorio installed a glass of water just below the ceiling. Exceedingly discreet, it's in the same room as *Drowned* and very easy to overlook. Puerto Rican superstition holds that keeping a glass of water near the ceiling will purify the air and improve the health of those living in the house.

In *Todo o nada* (*All or nothing*, 2011), the gallery walls are covered in aluminum siding like the exterior of a house, but the focus is on a freestanding wall in the center of the space where a video monitor replaces a window. In the video, makeup is applied to the face of a young boy, creating the appearance of a bad bruising. Meanwhile a mother re

counts the day her son came home with a concussion from a beating. Osorio's ever-present attention to contradiction comes through in the disjunction between the illusion of violence on screen and the reality of it in the mother's story.

The tragedy of these domestic situations is, perhaps, the breakdown of communication. Psychological trauma locked in silence cannot be healed, a lesson Osorio knows by heart.

—Charles Marshall Schultz