

Lighting the way to the future

F.A.T. Village artists combine low- and high-tech in 'Modded'

By Phillip Valys
STAFF WRITER

Leah Brown's gigantic head sure gets around. Not her own head, of course, but the artist's oversize doll-face sculpture crafted from laser-cut foam, which this past spring floated face-up in a drainage canal at the University of Miami's Coral Gables campus as a public-art installation titled "Lady of the Lake." Brown's foam head then migrated north to F.A.T. Village for last month's Better Block Fort Lauderdale, where it was mounted sideways on a wall so it looked like an Easter Island statue covered with mascara.

The peripatetic foam head has undergone another transformation for Brown's most-recent exhibition, "Modded," at F.A.T. Village. "The Dreamer," as Brown has now christened it, dangles from the ceiling face-down, with a cream-skinned mannequin now perched on top, its glassy stare peering into a large dollhouse filled with miniature doors and furniture.

"They're like Russian nesting dolls. A grown-woman doll is playing with a dollhouse, and they're like mirrors pointing at each other. The dollhouse speaks to Freud's idea of the body as a house, the attic, basement and main floor the id, ego and superego," Brown says during a walk-through of the exhibit. "I want to give my artworks their own lives, constantly changing position, modifying their meaning, shifting between high-tech and low-tech."

Brown's "The Dreamer" is premiering (or premiering again, as it were) at "Modded," an exhibition of light- and technology-based works she's co-curating with her husband, mixed-media sculptor Peter Symons, and Broward artists Jonathan Rockford and Ryan Farrell. Symons says the show, running at the Projects - North warehouse gallery through the next F.A.T. Village art walk on July 28, features a series of old, found objects combined with technology to create interactive installations.

"In the 1920s and '30s, people were envisioning the city of the future, the



PHILLIP VALYS/STAFF PHOTO

Leah Brown's "The Dreamer," featuring a gigantic, laser-cut foam head, a dollhouse and a mannequin, is part of "Modded" at the Projects - North.



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Peter Symons and Leah Brown pose in front of their "Piggyback" wood-cut sculpture for "Modded" at the Projects - North. The piece is among a dozen light- and technology-inspired installations on display through July 28.

house of the future. Today, there's no grand goal for the future, and the idea of technology has been replaced by the ease of reproduction," Symons says. "This show is a do-it-yourself response to that. We're a bunch of scavengers bringing outmoded tech

Modded

When: Through July 28
Where: The Projects - North, 523 N.W. First Ave., Fort Lauderdale
Cost: Free
Contact: 347-743-8852 or FatVillage.com

and combining it with new forms and creating a new future."

Symons' "Mist Projections," which sprays jets of mist as exhibitgoers enter the warehouse, was strategically placed near the doorway, among other reasons, because "it's freaking brutally hot in here," Symons says. The other reason: An overhead projector projects video onto the mist, creating an abstract pattern of shimmering color. Another piece on display is the couple's "Piggyback," a massive, 3-D, plywood-cut rendering of Symons giving Brown a piggyback ride. ("That's my big butt sticking out there," she says.)

Also on display is Farrell's "It Takes a Community," an interactive work that resembles a carousel, where participants can pedal 16 bicycles simultaneously to power a series of car headlights overhead; and Rockford's "Report," a piece created from tripods and stenographs that spit out star-shaped paper.