

Lucy & Jorge Orta Look to the Future from the South Pole

In the first New York exhibition of the work of Lucy and Jorge Orta, the husband and wife artists propose Antarctica as a way of life.

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Lucy & Jorge Orta
OrtaWater - Antarctica, 2006
Jane Lombard Gallery



Lucy & Jorge Orta
Antarctic Village - No Borders, Drop Parachute, 200...
Jane Lombard Gallery



Lucy & Jorge Orta
Life Line - Survival Kit, 2008
Jane Lombard Gallery

In 2007, Lucy and Jorge Orta traveled to Antarctica to find a makeshift village of 50 “Dome Dwellings”—silver tents with stitched-on skins of flags and clothing. Antarctica is hardly inhabited, though more and more countries are building outposts and jockeying for political and industrial prominence—the result of a limited global supply of commodities (oil, water). Climate change is gradually making the tundra less of a terror. Still, it is the only continent without a native human population, and its brutal weather conditions and unparalleled remoteness have largely kept the developers at bay. That, and policy: the 1959 Antarctic Treaty, signed before the escalations of the Cold War over the next decades, established that the territory would be “used for peaceful purposes only,” and that scientific discovery would be its export. To date, 41 additional countries have joined the 12 that originally ratified the treaty. In 1998, an environmental protection protocol went into effect, which banned everything but scientific use of Antarctica’s mineral resources for 50 years.



Lucy & Jorge Orta
Antarctic Village - No Borders, Dome Dwelling, 2007
Jane Lombard Gallery



Lucy & Jorge Orta
Antarctic Village - No Borders, expedition diary, 2006-2007
Jane Lombard Gallery

This winter the Ortas's artworks, inspired by the Antarctic expedition, are installed at Jane Lombard Gallery in New York. These sculptural works illustrate the couple's core concerns: scarcity and excess; development and preservation; ecological and human vulnerability. Their work is unabashedly idealistic, imagining a world in which people consider the origins of their food, water, shelter, and other essentials as well as who (and what) might be at risk because of they have such things. Antarctica, itself endangered, naturally aligns with these interests.



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In addition to one of the “Dome Dwellings,” the show features several pieces in the artists’ “Life Line” series: various lifesaving implements haphazardly hang from flotation devices in a manner that evokes Native American dream catchers. The Ortas call these assemblages “survival kits,” where each tethered object remains intact and discrete, arranged as a sort of inventory. The obvious functionality of the works from “Life Line” contrasts with the “Epicerie Vitrine” series, also on display, which sees familiar items cast in aluminum and painted, preserving their form but confusing their purpose.



Lucy & Jorge Orta
Antarctica World Passport Delivery Bureau, 2016
Jane Lombard Gallery



Lucy & Jorge Orta
Antarctica World Passport, Mobile Delivery Bureau, 2008
Jane Lombard Gallery

Visitors to the gallery pass through the *Antarctica World Passport Delivery Bureau*, a kiosk of reclaimed materials and found objects that operates as a nongovernmental agency, issuing individually numbered Antarctica World Passports. More than 55,000 have been handed out since the bureau's first appearance in 2007. The bureau grants documents to those who pledge adherence to the project's core principles: action against climate change and peace toward others. One can imagine the passport as a credential for the individual in the 21st century, a one-size-fits-all ethics that can be practiced anywhere, through any means. The *Dome Dwellings* on the desolate southern continent were temporary, as all things built there must be. But with the passport, the pair seek a sense of permanence.

—Zack Newick

"Lucy + Jorge Orta: Antarctica" is on view at Jane Lombard Gallery, New York, Jan. 20—Feb. 20, 2016.