

INTERIOR DESIGN[®]

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inside art

intervention

Giving a lecture on Mexican contemporary design, Héctor Esrawe caught the notice of Sarah Schleuning, a curator at Atlanta's High Museum of Art. Schleuning was looking for someone to transform two empty galleries into places for relaxation and contemplation during the run of "Frida & Diego: Passion, Politics, and Painting." So she invited Esrawe and Ignacio Cadena to submit a proposal. (The pair operate both independently, at Esrawe Studio and Cadena + Asoc. Branding, and together as Thinc.)

The two installations captured Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera's complex life in a spare yet powerful vocabulary consisting of two pieces of domestic furniture, a chair and

double lives

a bed, and two primary colors, yellow and red. "These inhabitable spaces translated traditional Mexican design into the present," Esrawe explains. Visitors could sit and climb on the chair installation. More conceptually, it expressed the couple's day-to-day life via an archetypal craft object—repeated 100 times in pine connected by mortise and tenon joints and painted yellow to represent sunshine and happiness as well as insanity and fear. The red bunks, meanwhile, signified Kahlo's pain and suffering. Bedridden for large portions of her life, she continued to paint from a supine position, thanks to a mirror installed above.

—Sharon M. ...