

Bronx Artist's Gallery is Home Sweet Home

by [Indu Nepal](#)

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Art galleries, like art itself, can sometimes be found in unusual places. But the Bronx Blue Bedroom Project is something very different.

Frustrated at what she said is a lack of exhibition space in the Bronx — where she lives and teaches art — compared with other areas of the city, Blanka Amezkua, an artist, decided to set up the bedroom of her Mott Haven apartment as a gallery and open it to the public.

The Bronx Blue Bedroom Project is now a stop on the Bronx Culture Trolley, and so far, according to Amezkua, 200 people have visited since the gallery opened a month ago.



Artist Blanka Amezkua puts the last touches on the art installation in her bedroom in her Alexander Avenue apartment in Mott Haven, which she has opened to the public as an exhibition gallery.

Photo: Indu Nepal

Artists are “always waiting for the results of an application for a residency, for a show, this or that,” Amezkua said. “So with the help of a committed community of artists, we decided to take matters into our own hands.” Eight artists, she said, are scheduled, each for a month-long solo show in the second-floor apartment.

On a recent visit, the bedroom — which, not surprisingly, is painted blue — had layers of colorful quilts and blankets suspended from the ceiling. The effect was like that of a giant tent, the kind that children like to set up.

“Am I a kid now?” asked a visitor, as he knelt on the floor.

“Do you feel young?” replied Colin McMullan, who is also known as Emcee C.M. and whose installation, titled “Blanket Fort in Blanka’s Bedroom,” is now on display. “Very young,” said the visitor.

This must have pleased McMullan, who said he was “trying to reclaim the themes of childhood.” Amezkua, who is 37 and of Mexican descent, displayed her own work the first month. She still uses her bedroom once the gallery closes, though she said she has begun “to feel more nomadic and less attached to things.”

“I still have all my clothes in my closets and I sleep on the floor,” she said, “so my bed, blankets and sheets are all folded inside my closet in the bedroom.”

Amezkua shares the apartment with Delam Veron, a researcher at Yeshiva University, who said she feels like “a part of the project” and that she is “very proud” to live there. Her landlord, who does not live in the building, has not been told about the gallery.

Multimedia / Video

Blanka Amezkua talks about having an art gallery in her bedroom.

Visit www.bronxbeat.org/cs/ContentServer?pagename=JRN/Render/DisplaySlideshow&slideid=1175374511325 to listen.

Amezku's friends in San Francisco, where she is originally from, have opened up their living rooms for art shows, she said. And so has the Bronx arts collective Spanic Attack. Inspired, she said, by "all of these daredevils," Amezkua thought: "Why not attempt to take it a step further and open the most intimate space in my apartment and see what happens?"

An art teacher at three different Jesuit middle schools in the city, Amezkua moved to Mott Haven two-and-a-half years ago. She said she liked the "unpretentious" Bronx environment, but had difficulty finding exhibition space. In her first attempts to open her apartment gallery she contacted 30 artists from Irving Sandler Artists File, a database of visual artists whose work, she thought, could be shown in her bedroom space. But only one artist was interested, she said, so instead she set up an exhibition schedule using the work of artist friends.

Since the gallery does not have a curator or a dealer connected with it, the emphasis, Amezkua said, is not on the sale of artworks but to offer visitors a unique experience. In the case of McMullan's current installation, she said, the aim is to rethink intimacy and encourage communal feeling.

A visitor last Wednesday, William A. Cavari, said he enjoyed the show because it encouraged the idea of reclaiming childhood. The fact that it took place in someone's bedroom was "a part of the entry," he said. "It definitely led to my interest."

Bronx Blue Bedroom Project: The gallery is at 309 Alexander Ave., Apt. 3A, and is open on Mondays and Fridays from noon until 5 p.m. and the first Wednesday of the month from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Weekends are by appointment. Visit www.blankamezkua.com for more information. For Bronx Culture Trolley reservations and information, call 718-931-9500 x33, e-mail trolley@bronxarts.org, or visit www.bronxarts.com.