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In the galleries: A towering exhibit offers a new definition of domestic life

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The “QT” in Wickerham and Lomax’s “Domestic QT and the Spatial Anomalies” — a title as jam-packed as their work — stands for “quarantine.” But the Baltimore duo began making these mixed-media sculptural collages before the pandemic dramatically altered daily life. Then it did, “reframing the show as prophetic,” the artists write in an extensive glossary to the references, both personal and cultural, in the Von Ammon Co. exhibition.

Domesticity takes many guises in Daniel Wickerham and Malcolm Lomax’s towering assemblages, which rely heavily on photographic images but also include 3-D objects. Among the homey motifs are pets, TV shows, cocktails and Baltimore places and pals. The assemblages’s see-through portals include a doggy door and intricate cutouts, but some possible passageways are blocked by wooden 2-by-4s or slabs of blank plywood. These barriers suggest containment and isolation, and also provide a breather from the profusion of pictures and items.

Sometimes the duo’s domestic concerns merge, as in several pieces that include silver dog bowls filled with “presentation” (that is, fake) liquid, ice cubes and fruit slices. A plastic mocktail is just one absurdist touch in

an array that offers a rattlesnake as a possible house pet and names half the artworks after people who appeared MTV's "The Real World: Seattle." (The show ran in 1998, the year both Wickerham and Lomax turned 12, an impressionable age.)

The artists are "influenced by queer theory, speculative fiction, human geography and the sociopolitical as it relates to urban space," their biography notes. "Black Vulcan Sleeping Aid," which includes Black Star Trek characters and a playful simulation of the solar system with various everyday round objects, was inspired by a controversial (and thus unproduced) AIDS-themed script for "Star Trek: The Next Generation." Two other pieces, "An Invitation Between the Door and Bed" and "Nathan Blackburn," are symbolic self-portraits of Lomax and Wickerham, respectively.

Without the glossary, "Domestic QT" is hard to read. But clearly legible are the duo's aesthetic hyperactivity, neo-baroque sensibility and simultaneous attraction to and dissatisfaction with digital image-making. If free-associating collages are the equivalent of random Web-surfing, the tidiness of the compositions is offset by surrounding them with found objects, blocks of lumber and strands of beads. Transforming digital pictures into free-standing sculpture, Wickerham and Lomax reveal a yearning to escape virtual reality and live in the real world.

Wickerham & Lomax's 'Domestic QT & The Spatial Anomalies' runs until January 22 2021