

# BEDTIME

Donna Doherty, Register Arts Editor 07/14/2007

**NEW HAVEN — A hotel room conjures up so many images: the seedy site of an illicit affair, a luxurious get-away-from-it-all, a place where drug deals and corporate deals may be going on side by side, or simply a place for a weary traveler to lay down one's head.**

But given a chance to think about what a hotel room means, or could mean, Brooklyn artist Chris Doyle has come up with "50,000 Beds," an unusual video presentation and collaboration with three state museums that unfolds in three opening nights, starting at Artspace Friday. Filmed by 45 artists or artist teams in 30 hotel rooms across the state — where 50,000 beds are available to travelers — the exhibit has dual appeal to one's sense of voyeurism as well as vicarious longings.

As Doyle says, "It's like you're walking down a hotel hallway and seeing everyone's experiences." Who doesn't peek through the open door when the maids are at work cleaning a room? This exhibit lets you peek behind the closed door to view what the occupants might be up to.

The exhibit is the first collaboration among three of the state's pre-eminent art spaces. It will have successive openings this weekend, first at Artspace, running through Sept. 15, then Saturday from 6 to 9 p.m. at Real Art Ways in Hartford, where it runs through Sept. 23, and a 3 to 5 p.m. opening July 22 at The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield. Doyle will be at all three openings.

The genesis of the project, which has been in the works since August of 2006, came from Doyle's own angst about spending so much time in hotel rooms when he felt he should be working in his Brooklyn studio.

"At the time, I was doing stop-action animation in hotel rooms (the result was 2004's "Sheets," a project for Manhattan's Hotel on Rivington, where bed linens become guests trying to sleep), so I started working in hotel rooms. I started thinking tourists, hotel beds, and turned that inside out and asked others to help."

The three museums asked for proposals from a number of artists. Forty-five artists responded to the call, says Doyle.

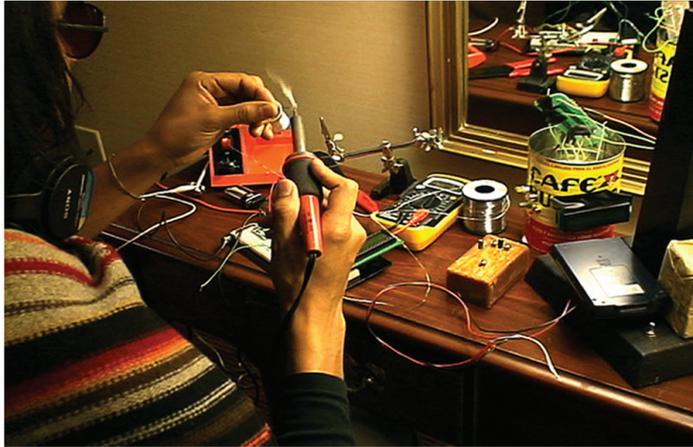
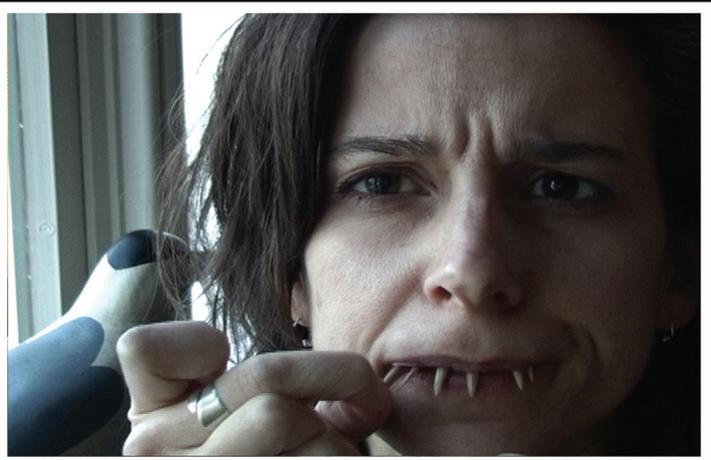
The project budget then was enriched with grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a \$90,000 grant from the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism, LEF Foundation and the J.M. Kaplan Foundation.

"The hotels were carefully selected to be across the entire state," says Doyle, though filming took place only in those willing to donate a room. "When we explained the project to them, people were pretty much game," says Doyle.

The individual hotels are not identified in the videos, to allow total artistic license for the video content without compromising any given hotel or inn's sensibilities, and there are no artist credits. But the list spans economic strata, from deluxe to roadside, including such places as Boulders Inn in New Preston and Homestead Inn in Greenwich, with artists ranging from indie filmmakers and videographers to painters and sculptors.

The area hotels include New Haven Hotel, Three Chimneys Inn at Yale University, Hotel Duncan in New Haven, Spring





Hill Suites in Milford, Clarion Hotel & Suites, Hamden, Shelton's AmeriSuites and Residence Inn by Marriott and The Wallingford Victorian Bed & Breakfast. The complete list of hotels and artists is available on the Web site, [www.50000beds.net](http://www.50000beds.net).

There are 15 videos in each gallery, ranging in length from 45 seconds to one hour, each revealing experiences as mundane as a man in a slow-motion fall into bed to seemingly erotic close encounters to the creepy, such as a guest who appears to be hunting for bed bugs in the sheets. There's a clean freak who may be a guest — or maybe not — and the artist who redesigns the artwork on the walls.

Each gallery's exhibit is self-contained, designed for its particular space, so there is, in a sense, an aesthetic autonomy for the exhibit in each venue. Though the pieces may, as Doyle puts it, "glance off each other," and the hope is to continue the viewing experience and see all of the videos at all three venues, "There was a decision early on that we didn't want people to feel they were missing anything if they only went to one venue," Doyle says. "They're related, but not dependent."

Doyle, a Harvard-educated architect turned renowned multi-media artist, is an admitted control freak, but he

made a decision at the outset to back off in order to free his collaborators.

"I created the platform, set the parameters, and then being hands-off made me crazy," he laughs. "In the beginning I was trying to navigate the fine line between authority and freedom. ... But the artists made the pieces in their entirety and the pieces were inviolable. The only edits I made were for the trailer."

Known for turning everyday events into extraordinary acts that become public-domain art, Doyle says that was part of the appeal of the bed project, only heightened.

For example, "LEAP," a video project in which he asked ordinary New Yorkers what their aspirations were and then asked them to jump, resulted in a video screened on the side of a Columbus Circle building where those one small jumps for man became giant leaps in ascension up the side of the building, almost as if reaching for those aspirations.

"The big difference with '50,000 Beds' is that it's original in such a way that it's much more dynamic ...," he says. "It's like having it begin here and then generate into unmediated public exposure, which is what I search for."