

# Southwest Contemporary

REVIEW / NEW MEXICO

## ***Family Room***

March 10, 2021

*Family Room* exhibition at form & concept in Santa Fe, NM offers a much-needed sanctuary from the new global reality.

---



*Family Room*, installation view, 2021. Photo: Byron Flesher.

### **Family Room**

January 29–May 15, 2021

form & concept, Santa Fe

*The Family Room* exhibition at form & concept in Santa Fe, NM features the work of over twenty national artists and offers a much-needed sanctuary to wallow in grief and find relief from the new global reality. It is a place where one can easily get lost in nostalgia and awe and forget for just a moment about the world outside. The exhibition was planned prior to 2020 as a vessel to examine queer domestic spaces and the concept of “chosen family,” but in reality is far more expansive, mainly because of its timing. The exhibition spans cultural and generational gaps, creating a timeless capsule, which is both comforting and unsettling.

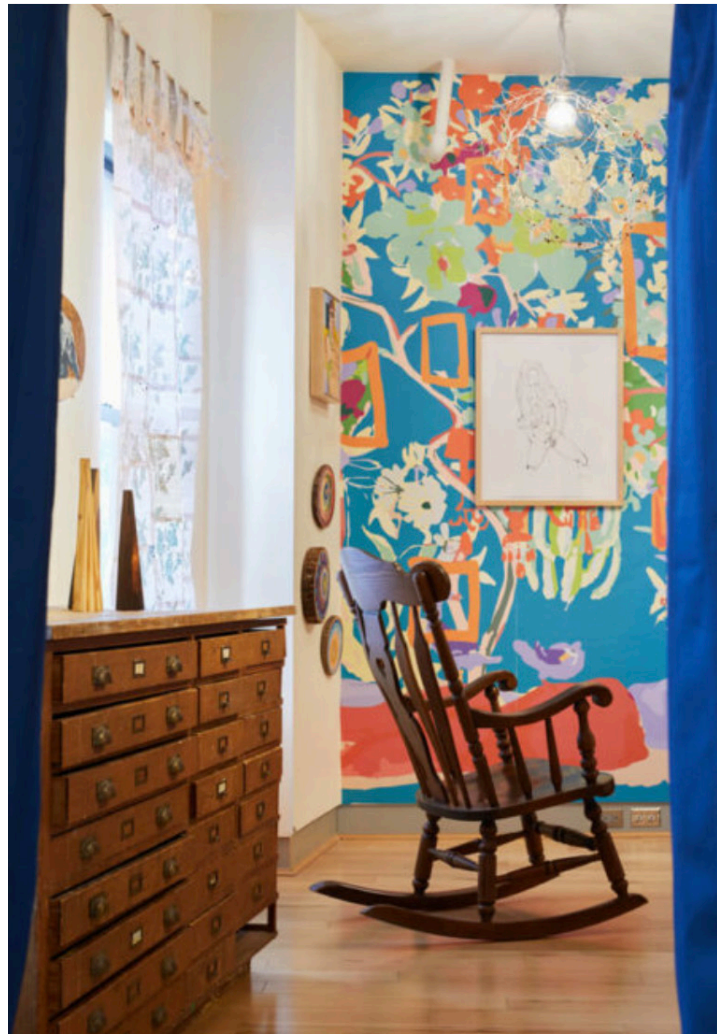
<https://southwestcontemporary.com/the-family-room/>

The closest analogy to experiencing *Family Room* may be the intimate and yet lonely task of housesitting for a good friend and experiencing their things and space without them.

I am adjacent to LGBTQ communities and have had the privilege of being a guest in many queer domestic spaces but have never been embedded in a community where I would call this kind of space home. Therefore, my perspective is one of familiarity, but not personal identity. It was clear to me that *Family Room* represented a queer domestic space, as denoted by certain iconic queer signifiers such as a costume closet (Saints Ball), polaroids and condoms hung from a rainbow-colored coat hanger (Sheri Crider), and even a small installation of gilded mirrors (C. Alex Clark) and a can of Aquanet signed by John Waters. In addition to these overt markers of queerness was an overall attention to artistry that touched every object and piece of furniture in the room. The space was created through the marks of many hands coming together, alluding to chosen family and the collaborative process of homemaking that occurs in many queer domestic spaces. Every pillow, curtain, and piece of furniture is distinctive of either individual design or selection, and yet all of these disparate items form a cohesive whole. When I enter collaborative living situations and specifically the homes of queer chosen families, I never fail to appreciate how these spaces proudly exhibit their collective creation.



Saints Ball, closet items, installation view, *Family Room*, 2021.



*Family Room*, installation view, 2021. Photo: Byron Flesher.

The sense of nostalgia I felt in *Family Room* for the comfort of my friends' homes was overwhelming, as was the nostalgia induced by a few pieces that speak to my generation. Specifically, the cut-paper curtains by Alex Krales and Timothy Jones made from handwritten letters on lined notebook pages, the Converse sneakers sitting next to the entrance as part of the coat hanger display by Sheri Crider, and even the painted skateboard leaning against the bookshelf by Adrian Coffey recalled my youth so strongly. They had this effect in part because they were arranged as if the person who placed them just left the room, which felt more sad than mysterious. Other pieces in the room—the welded hearth by Tigre Bailando, the busts that adorned it by Nikesha Breeze, and the flat files filled with small treasures curated by Tilke Elkins—bring magic, mystery, and beauty to the show. These pieces encourage wonder instead of nostalgia, and brought me a reprieve from my year-long accumulated grief. Visitors will get lost in their intricacies and gifts of discovery.



*Family Room*, installation view, 2021. Photo: Byron Flesher.

Curator Jordan Eddy explained that the exhibition was slated for June of 2020 but was pushed back to 2021 because of the pandemic, which in turn encoded the show with new meaning. It was originally intended to be the site of public programs and gatherings, and now, most visitors will visit alone or with one other person. It is impossible not to think of all of the friends, family, and camaraderie one has been missing over the last year in *Family Room*, and at the same time, it provides a space to be consumed in private awe. *Family Room* occupies a position of being neither a stage set nor a domestic space, and its wonderment saves it from painful nostalgia. Overall, the pieces that make up the *Family Room* come together much like the tapestry of chosen family, which is woven together and made stronger by the threads of individual lives.