



# JORGE PARDO

The intersection of art with interior design is even more pronounced in the work of Jorge Pardo. Writing about the work of Pardo in April 2003 one commentator noted: ‘Painters like to complain about insensitive collectors looking for art to go with their sofas. Los Angeles-based artist Jorge Pardo preempts such conflicts—he makes matching paintings and sofas’ {Metropolis, 2002}.

In 1998 Pardo designed a house and its interior on the basis of a commission from the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Emma Mahony notes an important part of his intention was, in his own words, ‘to make a work of art that a museum can’t handle’,<sup>3</sup> but as with all attempts to escape the museum this project could not have been realized without the museum. Mahony reports that ‘MoCA ... contributed a sum of about \$10,000 towards the project, thereby validating it as a work of art commissioned by an art institution. Pardo raised the remaining \$290,000, thereby making it his home’ {Mahony, 2001}.

According to Mahony’s account it was the fact that the museum ‘validated it as a work of art’ that enabled Pardo to raise the funds. This simple but powerful fact means that 4166 Sea View Lane reframes the Readymade. Duchamp claimed that the urinal became a work of art because the artist said it was a work of art. But Duchamp’s statement can be read as



a parody of artistic hubris because he must have been fully aware that he could not have transformed the urinal into a work of art without the gallery. Artist and museum appear to be two sides of the same coin, ensuring that neither can fully dispense with or control the other. And the work of art is the result of a negotiation between these two halves.

4166 Sea View Lane is not a Readymade but it is a house that is historically connected with a museum that is therefore a work of art in a manner quite different from a say a house by Le Corbusier or Frank Lloyd Wright. It is in this sense that 4166 Sea View Lane represents yet another variation on the extremely fertile theme initiated by Duchamp's (most probably playful) inclusion of his *Fountain* at the Independents exhibition in 1917. Elaborating on the problematical aesthetic status of Pardo's house, Mahony notes that:

4166 Sea View Lane raises a number of interesting questions with regard to its role. The first thought that comes to mind is what exactly does it purport to be—a house, a home, a piece of public sculpture, or a museum? If 4166 Sea View Lane is a work of art, what kind of work of art is it? Why build a house as a work of art? What relationship, if any, has it to its location and to other contexts? And what were Pardo's influences in terms of design, architecture and, most importantly, fine art? {Mahony, 2001}



It is these questions and Pardo's awareness of them that make his work an important contribution to the long-standing avant-gardist desire to integrate art and life. The questions outlined by Mahony indicate that whereas Bürger's analysis



requires a resolution of the struggle to integrate art with ‘life praxis’ it is the problem per se and the questions it raises that may be of primary importance. Regarding the question of whether 4166 Sea View Lane is a house, a work of art or a museum Mahony reports that between the eleventh of October and the fifteenth of November 1998:

it was run as a satellite exhibition venue by MoCA. For that period of time it became a museum. In effect, Pardo brought the institution into his own private space. ... The property was policed with uniformed security guards and official museums opening hours were enforced. {Mahony, 2001}

One can take issue with Mahony’s account because this work could not have been realized without the museum. Pardo did not bring ‘the institution into his own private space’ because it would never have been his private space without the museum. Pardo *had* to allow MoCA ‘into his house’. Now Pardo is released from his contract with MoCA it is a functioning house (Pardo’s home) that, according to Mahony, fits well into the local architectural traditions as well as contributing to them. Collaborating with an art gallery to create a functional result also marks Pardo’s project at the Dia Center for the Arts New York, 13 September 2000 to 7 June 2001. Here he worked on an expanded bookstore area introducing stylish seating and extensive shelving, the Dia Centre’s press release adds:

To reinforce the visual connections between lobby, bookstore, and exhibition area, Pardo will introduce mural

paintings at these key junctures. The animating presence of these abstractions, along with the addition of large glass dividers, will call viewers' attention to the differing qualities and functions of each of the ... component spaces while at the same time facilitating smooth visual transitions among them. {Dia, 2001}

Pardo's concern with the way in which interior design affects the human body contributes a practical dimension to the minimal artists concern with the 'phenomenological' involvement of the viewer with the sculptural object. However in Pardo's case the objects are not solely sculptural (which is to say devoid of practical function—the defining feature of 'fine artness' since Kantian aesthetics) they occupy a space in between sculpture and design.