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David Brooks Hits the Roof

by *nicholas weist* 12/07/11

Every year, 20,000 square miles of earth are desertified: plant species are destroyed, the ground turns to dust and life is made near impossible. In David Brooks's Art Production Fund commission, *Desert Rooftops*, an installation on the corner of 46th Street and 8th Avenue, desertification is compared with suburban sprawl.

This chilling sculpture is a near-perfect representation of a suburban house sunk directly into the ground, up to its roof. The deconstructed house covers an entire building lot, with impossible angles and uncanny elevations studding the roof. Its huge expanse is too much to take in at once, but the gates are occasionally open for visitors to wander amongst the gables.



David Brooks Hits the Roof by Nicholas Weist



DAVID BROOKS



[VIEW SLIDESHOW ; ;](#)



Although Brooks worked with professional roofers to ensure a high degree of verisimilitude on the micro level of *Desert Rooftops*, the incongruities of the macroscopic view give it the feel of a cold and desolate landscape. Brooks makes his point here: that desert, defined as a monoculture, isn't just sand and sun. Exurbs and industry can also lay claim to the title.

Brooks has a history of flattening the materials of human growth with complex natural phenomena, as he did with his huge palm tree and concrete assemblage, *Preserved Forest*, on view last year at PS1. "The concrete industry is the third worst emitter of carbon dioxide today," Brooks told *A.i.A.* "It is detrimental, but makes modern life possible."

Last week at Miami's NADA art fair, he showed a herd of life-size, concrete animal sculptures, each of which previously sat in the Florida Keys Wild Bird Center and became encrusted with guano. Its painterly aspect aside, the guano is an important part of the life cycle of tropical forest, and a stark contrast to the thick concrete. Brooks combines these materials to allude to the apocalyptic statistics on climate change: "it's not a question of if we will become extinct," he says, "but when. I make scenarios in which individuals can rely on their own physicality to have a relationship with data."