

The New York Times
Art & Design

Art in Review

By THE NEW YORK TIMES
Published: January 8, 2009

JENNIFER AND KEVIN

McCoy

Postmasters

459 West 19th Street, Chelsea

Through Saturday

The husband-and-wife duo Jennifer and Kevin McCoy are best known for installations that use miniature film sets to expose the mechanics of Hollywood. In their fourth solo at Postmasters, they try something new: a twist on the “life swap” reality television genre, in which the couple’s daily obligations are performed by a rotating cast of actors.

In the mostly dull 16-minute video “I’ll Replace You,” strangers dress the McCoy’s children, have coffee with their associates and offer critiques of their students. All of this transpires without much fanfare; the children seem remarkably unfazed; the friends and colleagues don’t miss a beat; and the fake McCoy’s gaze at each other across the dinner table with passable intimacy.

Only in the studio-visit scenes do the actors strain and stumble. “It’s about chaos, but organized chaos; I love it,” says one stand-in, when forced to speak about mediocre student work.

This semantic tension animates a related project called “Artist Talks,” presented as a series of digital videos. Here actors give improvised slide lectures in which they claim the work of famous contemporary artists as their own. One actor describes a de Kooning “Woman” as a portrait of his mother; another interprets a Terry Winters abstraction as a protest against [global warming](#).

In “Artist Talks” and in parts of “I’ll Replace You,” the McCoy’s hit on something: Art-speak is just ad-libbing, except when it isn’t. **KAREN ROSENBERG**