

ERIN MURRAY, EDWARD MURRAY

## **Dream House**

October 3rd - November 2nd



DREAM HOUSE brings to limited realization a long abandoned architectural dream, surfacing an alternate timeline for a family since fractured.

In a way, a gift to the architect.

In another way, his soul laid bare.

In fact, my soul laid bare.

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It is a fine early spring day that I find myself walking through the weird back halls of the casino to the security office, my boobs aching, not used to being away from the baby for so

long. My dad and I dutifully follow the steps to get him banned from the floor, for life. I have to swear up and down that I am not coercing him to take this step. I am, though. He is living in my pregnant sister's spare room and just blew his entire savings.

Just six months earlier, another rescue. Evicted and broke, he had hopped in his truck and drove to Florida, where he found himself still penniless, so he turned back around towards the only four people left who cared. Meanwhile we dug through the wreckage of a deeply depressed man's home, surprised it had gotten so bad, not knowing his whereabouts, worried. A thick layer of nicotine grime everywhere, the garage so disorderly it looked like a botched robbery. In one closet I found an old tape recorder, and some cassettes. As I drove home, my own voice, 16 years younger, drifted out of the player. My aunt's, offering help. My mom's, hysterical because the movers won't drive down the driveway. She is eager to leave this place. She is divorcing her husband and they are selling the house they built together. He moved out earlier that year but only went as far as the attic above the garage, to the most tiny apartment he built for himself there. As one does.

And apparently, he was tapping our phone line.

I couldn't even get mad. I still haven't told him I found it. The past is behind us and the present consumes our energy. Dad may be a handful now, but there was a time when I believed he could do anything.

Once, I swelled with pride because other people's dads couldn't fix a leaky sink much less build a house. Sure, the house he built was round, and that was a little embarrassing to a preteen but still. The house was impressive, though not the "harmonious whole" most architect's strive for: a pale grey-blue stucco cylinder topped with a short mansard roof, dotted with tall vinyl windows and, oddly, a traditional two car garage jutting off one side. It was a builder's building, less concerned with proportional massing or design than with a mastery of material. Inside though, the walls undulated in an amazing feat of drywalling and a curved glass block wall glowed from the light of the kitchen. One room stretched upward two stories, the walls covered in fake fieldstone to capture the warmth of the southern sun. Not a right angle was to be found. Right angles don't exist much in nature, or in the future, according to the sci-fi set designers of the world. Dad was building for the future. Our future.

In this future, our next house was to be an upside down pyramid, built into a cliff on the side of the Schuylkill river. It would share proportions with Giza and have an infinity pool. On the roof, a helipad, deck, and lots of solar panels. A sunken living room and deep window wells. The views would be amazing. I believed.

This exhibition, Dream House, is a way to bring limited realization to this alternate timeline for our family. In a way, it is a gift to the architect. A way to engage and remember, to heal and maintain. An excuse to trespass together. In another way, a man's soul is revealed; the unrealized plans themselves evidence of a life gone off track. The naive romanticism and naked symbolism, both embarrasses and endears. In fact, the show reveals more than a little of myself; my interest in the embodied information of the built environment, a tendency toward anthropomorphization and melodrama in my work, and my own home's outsized status in my life.

Dad may be a handful now, but I still swell with pride.

I still believe.