

# get down town

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By Ari Simon

“How do you build a vacuum?” performers Jennie Liu and Andrew Gilbert ask repeatedly and in unison in their installation-based performance *House Music: A Residency*. Throughout the nearly hour-long piece, and its accompanying installation at The Mistake Room, they demonstrate “how” to a small number of observers, but the question they most poignantly answer is “why.”

The piece is set inside a simple, wood-built house structure with sliding doors, a stark floral accent, and sound equipment neatly fit into a central pit. Outside the house on the gallery wall is a handwritten Zen-like to-do list. Jennie and Andrew make deep eye contact with each participant, greeting and holding everyone by the hand as they step into the house. Headphones serve as each viewer’s auditory portal to the artists’ music and dialogue, which consist of remarks made with quiet calculated conviction and live covers of selected house music songs performed on guitar and synth. As dialogue unfolds, personal narratives begin to crack through the otherwise harmonized performance. A sliver of disagreement here, an “I love you” there. As if approaching a moment of climax, Jennie and Andrew begin discussing the future of their relationship, sliding the whole performance towards something more raw and vulnerable than its calculated start suggested.

Upon performing a cover of a John Fahey song, Andrew recalls the first time he played the guitarist’s music for his father. Responding to Fahey’s minimalist, unorthodox musical style, his father comments, “Oh but I can hear him messing up.” This becomes a focal point of *House Music* - imperfection amidst discipline. Jennie and Andrew’s strong musical abilities and synchronized movements carry the performance, but it’s their storytelling through a spiritualized space of discipline and precision that make it so special. This, they indirectly reveal, is “why” you build a vacuum - to create a separate, focused space that takes viewers fully out of the realm of daily life and into Andrew and Jennie’s humble honest home.

<http://bit.ly/1TvPqJN>



The ~~Mistake~~ Room