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Inside the MFAH

## This Artist Brings Her Home into the Museum: Carmen Argote & “720 Sq. Ft.”

By [Kerry Ingram](#)

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*[HOME—So Different, So Appealing](#)* features many variations on the meaning of “home.” Carmen Argote brings a very personal interpretation to the exhibition’s galleries with a part of her childhood home.

The installation may look at first like a large canvas draped over a rack, but *720 Sq. Ft.: Household Mutations—Part B* is the multiroom carpet pulled from the apartment Argote and her family lived in for more than 20 years. Her parents immigrated to Los Angeles from Guadalajara, Mexico, and though her father designed a large family home to build back in Mexico, the family remained in the Los Angeles apartment until the building was sold when she was a young adult.

### **The Transformation**

First, Argote painted the carpet white when it was still installed in the apartment. The brown trim is the original color. Then she removed the carpet to hang in a gallery setting, where it functions as both a painting and a sculpture, as well as an architectural plan and a personal artifact.

### **It's Not There, But It Is**

Any given white square—such as the area that covered the room the artist shared with her sister, or a portion of the dining room—holds many memories, and visible records of those memories. A closer look at the surface reveals stains that have seeped through the white since the carpet was painted in 2010: You can find the dining room easily, with its spills from meals spanning two decades. The kitchen was not carpeted, so, as Argote said, “it’s not here, but it is.”

*See more in [“HOME—So Different, So Appealing,”](#) on view in the Law Building through January 21.*

