Olivia Erlanger

Planet Me

13-17 October 2021

Booth H12

Frieze London

The Regent's Park

London, NW1 4LL

Planet Me

In *Planet Me*, New York-based artist Olivia Erlanger presents nine new sculptures scattered across the walls and hovering above a dark floor. The works - at once minute and monstrous - oscillate between resembling singular atoms and entire worlds. Struck through their glowing core, metallic arrows pierce each planet as if shot back down to Earth from the celestial realm. Much like the weapons of Eros, god of passion, or those that wounded the mortal warrior Achilles in his heel, these pointed darts reflect on the vulnerability of humanity.

Continuing the artist's use of materials associated with basic technology, each sculpture is finished in a mineral found in lithium batteries. Cobalt, copper, sulphur, sodium, graphite and magnesium coat the works' surfaces and initiate the basic construction of this power-generating unit. Vital in storing energy, a battery constitutes one element in a circuit, which in turn essentially functions as a metaphor for a solar system. The system imagined in Planet Me reflects on its own circuitry as Erlanger situates the viewer within an orbit of her own design.

Each work is titled by the latitude and longitude of significant locations from the artist's personal history including former residences as well as the local mall near her grandparents' home in Virginia and her recent vacation accommodation in Greece. Specific yet arbitrary, these locations chart a lifetime of movement across a changing planet, tracing her environments from childhood to a lived present.

Citing references including the Perisphere at the 1939 World's Fair in New York, Buckminster Fuller's geodesic dome and the Flat-Earth movement, the artist exaggerates and undermines the use of the sphere in utopian design. Additionally, Erlanger's non-functioning appliances emblematise a tension between design and decoration in the aspirational middle-class home to extend a project that examines how architecture, infrastructure and engineering frame American dreams and delusions. Rather than offering another escapist alternative to a traditional domicile or cityscape as in previous work, Erlanger reimagines absurdist, unviable surrogate environments and outcomes.

The sculpted surface of each sphere depicts aerial views of sections of New England's first information freeway, the Boston post road, the original commercial artery from which the first American suburbs developed in the mid-twentieth century. For Erlanger, this link between metropolis and suburb generates the same interdependent, energetic connectivity as an electrical circuit. Raw materials, provisions, waste and information all pass through the hierarchy of roadways, plumbing and cabling of any metamodern habitat or built world. Together, this group of works considers how over-consumption as a by-product of radical individualism acts as a topographical influence.

Olivia Erlanger

Olivia Erlanger (b. 1990, New York, NY) lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. Her first institutional solo exhibition will be held at Kunstverein Gartenhaus, Vienna, Austria in early 2022. Recent solo exhibitions include *Home is a Body,* Soft Opening, London, UK (2020); *Split-level Paradise*, Bel Ami, Los Angeles, CA (2020); *Ida*, Motherculture, Los Angeles, CA (2018); *Poison Remedy Scapegoat* (with Nikima Jagudajev), Human Resources, Los Angeles, CA; *mouths filled with pollen*, And Now, Dallas, TX (2018). Recent group exhibitions include *Liquid Life,* Kistefos Museum, Jevnaker, Norway (2021); *Psychosomatic*, Various Small Fires, Los Angeles, CA (2021); *In Situ,* Marianna Boesky Gallery, New York, NY (2021); *Winterfest,* Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, Colorado (2020); *Haunted Haus,* Swiss Institute, New York, NY (2020); *DIS Presents: What do people do all day?* Kunsthalle Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, Denmark (2020); *No Space, Just a Place*, Daelim Museum, Seoul, South Korea (2020) and *For a dreamer of houses,* Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX. Erlanger has presented work at: Galleria Zero, Milan, Italy (2019); Ly Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2019); Capital Gallery, San Francisco, CA (2019); M + B, Los Angeles, CA (2018); Jonathan Ellis King, Dublin, Ireland (2017); CANADA, New York, NY (2017); Pilar Corrias, London, UK (2015); Centre for Style, New York, NY (2015); and Museo di Capodimonte, Naples, Italy (2014). Olivia Erlanger and Luis Ortega Govela co-wrote *Garage* (MIT Press, 2018), a secret history of the attached garage as a space of creativity, from its invention by Frank Lloyd Wright to its use by start-ups and garage bands.

Olivia Erlanger

34.044475879474845° N, -118.64673408513035 ° W, 2021
Cobalt, aquaresin, fiberglass, aluminum, LED lights, transformer, cable
70 × 64 × 37 cm
27 1/2 × 25 × 14 1/2 inches

Olivia Erlanger

40.761266028493 6° N, -73.969936721711 08° W, 2021
Magnesium, chalk, aqua resin, fibreglass, aluminium, LED lights, transformer, cables
81 × 35 × 32 cm
32 × 14 × 12 1/2 inches

Olivia Erlanger

40.71875964843092° N, -73.99129010202795° W, 2021
Sulphur, aqua resin, fibreglass, aluminium, LED lights, transformer, cables
80 × 28 × 20 cm
31 1/2 × 11 × 8 inches

Olivia Erlanger

37.3506664550679 66° N, 23.4646610474934 65° W, 2021
Silicone, aluminium, LED lights, transformer, cables
71 × 25 × 56 cm
28 × 10 × 22 inches

Olivia Erlanger

38.91731002716 27° N, -77.221839077589 08° W, 2021
Silicone, aluminium, LED lights, transformer, cables
76 × 47 × 38 cm
30 × 18 1/2 × 15 inches

Olivia Erlanger

45.484151252919894° N, 9.243747380301704° W, 2021
Silicone, aluminium, LED lights, transformer, cables
40 × 35 × 69 cm
16 × 14 × 27 inches

Olivia Erlanger

34.077634102145 15° N, -118.29586209492896° W, 2021
Copper, aqua resin, fibreglass, aluminium, LED lights, transformer, cables
70 × 24 × 45 cm
27 1/2 × 9 1/2 × 18 inches

Olivia Erlanger

45.50221109355191° N, -122.63449205090876° W, 2021
Salt, mother of pearl, aqua resin, aluminium, LED lights, transformer, cables
60 × 30 × 61 cm
23 1/2 × 11 3/4 × 24 inches

Olivia Erlanger

41.1498045539687 35° N, -73.31752522169846° W, 2021
Graphite, aqua resin, fibreglass, aluminium, LED lights, transformer, cables
82 × 17 × 42 cm
32 × 6 3/4 × 16 1/2 inches

Selected Work & Exhibitions

Olivia Erlanger

Liquid Life, 2021
Kistefos Museum, Jevnaker, Norway

Olivia Erlanger

Liquid Life, 2021
Kistefos Museum, Jevnaker, Norway

Olivia Erlanger

Psychosomatic, 2021
Various Small Fires, Los Angeles

Olivia Erlanger

Mr. Held's Class, 2020
Plexiglass, architectural model, urethane resin, dibond, lichen, charcoal, wood, acrylic paint, artificial snow #15
45 × 30 × 30 in (114.3 × 76.2 × 76.2 cm)

Olivia Erlanger

Winterfest, 2020
Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, Colorado

Olivia Erlanger

Your Presence is Encouraged, 2021
curated by Isabel Yellin
Private Address, Los Angeles

Olivia Erlanger

Your Presence is Encouraged, 2021
curated by Isabel Yellin
Private Address, Los Angeles

Olivia Erlanger

Home is a Body, 2020
Soft Opening, London

Olivia Erlanger

Home is a Body, 2020
Soft Opening, 6 Minerva Street, London

Olivia Erlanger

5:13 PM, 2020
Miniature toilet, bathtub, shower, scale, rubber ducky, succulents, Evian plastic tile, resin, HDU foam, wood, MDF, polyester paint, plexiglass
20 × 20 × 10 inches (50.8 × 50.8 × 25.4 cm)

Olivia Erlanger

11:34 AM, 2020
Miniature bed, dresser, Mac desktop, mic stand, white fender, dirty laundry, mirror, paint supplies, books, snowflakes, resin, HDU foam, wood, MDF, polyester paint, plexiglass
20 × 20 × 10 inches (50.8 × 50.8 × 25.4 cm)

Olivia Erlanger

3:07 PM, 2020
Miniature couch, armchair, knock off Noguchi Table, pink Macbook, dinosaur sculpture, water pail, cactus, cork floor, posters, books, resin, HDU foam, wood, MDF, polyester paint, plexiglass, 20 × 20 × 10 inches (50.8 × 50.8 × 25.4 cm)

Olivia Erlanger

Wyndcliffe, 2020
Aluminium bars
42 x 42 x 42 inches (106.7 x 106.7 x 106.7 cm)
(OE11)

Olivia Erlanger

DIS presents: What Do People Do All Day? 2020
Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, Denmark

Olivia Erlanger

DIS presents: What Do People Do All Day? 2020
Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, Denmark

Olivia Erlanger

No Space, Just A Place
Daelim Museum, Seoul, South Korea, 2020

Olivia Erlanger

Ida, Ida, Ida!, 2020
Silicone, polystyrene foam, MDF, plywood
72 × 24 × 9 inches (182 × 61 × 23 cm)

Olivia Erlanger

For a Dreamer of Houses
Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas, 2020

Olivia Erlanger

Split-level Paradise,
Bel Ami, Los Angeles, CA

Olivia Erlanger

Soft Kiss, 2020
Plexiglass, architectural model, urethane resin, dibond, lichen, charcoal, wood, acrylic paint, artificial snow #15
45 × 30 × 30 in (114.3 × 76.2 × 76.2 cm)

Olivia Erlanger

Roseville, 2020
Plexiglass, architectural model, urethane resin, dibond, lichen, charcoal, wood, acrylic paint, artificial snow #15
45 × 30 × 30 in (114.3 × 76.2 × 76.2 cm)

Olivia Erlanger

Ida
Motherculture, Los Angeles, CA, 2018

Olivia Erlanger

Ida
Motherculture, Los Angeles, CA, 2018

Olivia Erlanger

Ida
Motherculture, Los Angeles, CA, 2018

Olivia Erlanger

Body Electric curated by Attilia Fattori Franchini
BMW Open Work, Frieze, London, UK, 2017

Olivia Erlanger

Body Electric curated by Attilia Fattori Franchini
BMW Open Work, Frieze, London, UK, 2017

Olivia Erlanger

The Oily Actor,
What Pipeline, Detroit, MI, 2016

Olivia Erlanger

The Oily Actor,
What Pipeline, Detroit, MI, 2016

Olivia Erlanger

The Oily Actor,
What Pipeline, Detroit, MI, 2016

Olivia Erlanger

The Oily Actor,
What Pipeline, Detroit, MI, 2016

Olivia Erlanger

Dripping Tap,
Mathew, New York, NY, 2016

Olivia Erlanger

Dripping Tap,
Mathew, New York, NY, 2016

Olivia Erlanger

Dripping Tap,
Mathew, New York, NY, 2016

Olivia Erlanger

Dog Beneath the Skin,
Balice Hertling New York, NY, 2015

Olivia Erlanger

b. 1990 New York, NY
Lives and works in New York, NY

Solo Exhibitions

2022 Kunstverein Gartenhaus, Vienna, Austria (forthcoming)
2020 *Home is a Body,* Soft Opening, London
Split-level Paradise, Bel Ami, Los Angeles, CA
2018 *Ida*, Motherculture, Los Angeles, CA
Poison Remedy Scapegoat, with Nikima Jagudajev, Human Resources, Los Angeles, CA
mouths filled with pollen, AND NOW, Dallas, TX
2017 *Body Electric*, curated by Attilia Fattori Franchini, BMW Open Work, Frieze, London 2017
2016 *Dripping Tap*, Mathew, New York, NY
The Oily Actor, What Pipeline, Detroit, MI
2015 *Dog Beneath the Skin,* Balice Hertling, New York, NY

Group Exhibitions

2022 Museum X, Beijing, China
2021 Del Vaz Projects, Los Angeles, CA
Liquid Life, Kistefos Museum, Jevnaker, Norway
Psychosomatic, Various Small Fires, Los Angeles, CA, *Your Presence is Encouraged*, private address, Los Angeles, CA
2020 *In Situ,* Marianna Boesky Gallery, New York, NY
Escapism, Meredith Rosen Gallery, New York, NY
Winterfest, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, Colorado
Haunted Haus, Swiss Institute, New York, NY
When You Waked Up the Buffalo, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Eigenheim, Soft Opening, London
What do People do All Day? curated by DIS, Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, Denmark
No Space Just a Place, Daelim Museum, Seoul, South Korea
For a Dreamer of Houses, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX
2019 *La Plage*, Galleria Zerio, Milan, Italy
Group Show, AND NOW, Dallas, TX
TOTEMISTS, curated by Marie Heilich, LY Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
We Burn Our Dreams To Stay Warm, Capital Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2018 *Entangled Tales*, organized by Juste Jonutye and Yates Norton Rupert, Vilnius, Lithuania
Annex, organized by Jay Ezra, M + B Los Angeles, CA
2017 *The New Human Agenda*, organized by Cloud Burst Advisory, And Now, Dallas, TX
Wormwood, curated by Todd Von Ammon, Jonathan Ellis King,

Olivia Erlanger

Dublin, Ireland
Yes, I've had a facelift, but who hasn't, 501(c)3 Foundation, LA, CA
a. or fifty thousand, with Luis Ortega Govela, 83 Pitt St, New York, NY
Eric Schmid is an Idiot, Cave, Detroit, IL

2016 *Other People's Things*, Brown University, Providence, RI
Daydream from 2013, CANADA, New York, NY
Huttendaesin, 15 Orient Ave, Brooklyn, NY
Rage Farmer Rage Profiteer, Beautiful curated by Alivia Zivich, Chicago IL
Blackboxing, Room East, New York, NY

2015 *Natural Flavors*, curated by Vivien Trommer, MINI/Goethe Curatorial Residencies Ludlow 38 New York, NY
No Shadows in Hell, curated by Silvia Sgualdini Pilar Corrias, London, UK
Playtime LAX, curated by Pierre- Alexandre Mateos and Charles Tessyou LAX, Los Angeles, CA
Centre For Style U.S. Tour, Centre for Style, New York, NY
Drawings l Fridges, Greene Exhibitions, Los Angeles, CA
Under a Thawing Lake, Dark Arts International, Mexico City, Mexico

2014 *The Go Between*, Museo di Capodimonte, Naples, Italy
Today: Morrow, Balice Hertling, New York, NY
Man v. Evolution, Galerie Hussenot, Paris, France
Far Dolce Niente, Marbriers 4, Geneva, Switzerland AirBnB Pavilion curated by ayr, 14th Venice Architecture Biennale, Venice, Italy
Material Uncertainty, Fluxia, Milan, Italy

2012 *Songs on Conceptual Art*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA

Curatorial

Co- Director of Grand Century, New York, NY

Grants and Nominations

2016 BMW Open Work, Frieze Art Prize, Frieze London 2017 Rema Hort Mann Foundation Nominee, New York, NY
2015 Austrian Cultural Council, with Anna-Sophie Berger, Vienna, Austria, 2016 Rema Hort Mann Foundation Nominee, New York, NY
2011 SAAB Grant, Lewis and Clark College, Portland, Oregon

Screenings

2019 Garage, Dis.art

Garage, Rough Cut Screening and Q+A, ICA London

Lectures & Talks

2019 SVA Art History Department, New York City, NY
SVA Design and Research Department, New York City, NY
2018 Gavin Brown's Enterprise with Felix Burrichter, New York City, NY
Hennessey + Ingalls, Discussion and Signing, Los Angeles, CA
Passionfruit with Marie Heilich, Mother Culture, Los Angeles, CA
2016 Visiting Artist Lecture, Brown University, Providence, RI
Lecture Hate Suburbia with Luis Ortega Govela, Architecture Association
Hate Suburbia with Luis Ortega Govela, Temple Radio\
2015 moke and Mirrors: Staged Arguments and the Legitimation of Artistic Research NIDA Doctoral School, Nida, Lithuania
Stay with Me with AirBNB Pavilion, Idea City sponsored by New Museum New York, NY

Residences & Visiting Artist

2019 SVA, Visiting Artist
2018 Sci Arc, Visiting Artist for Crit
2016 Visiting Artist at Brown University, Providence, RI
2015 Rupert, Vilnius, Lithuania
2013 Anderson Ranch, Aspen, Colorado

Selected Recent Press

Soft Opening, 6 Minerva St, London E2 9EH

Olivia Erlanger: Home is a Body

Artist : Olivia Erlanger
Title : 5:13 PM
Date(s) : 2020
Material : Miniature toilet, bathtub, shower, scale, rubber ducky, succulents, Evian plastic tile, resin, HDU foam, wood, MDF, polyester paint, plexiglass
Website : http://www.softopening.london/exhibitions/home-is-a-body
Credit : Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photography Theo Christelis.

The autobiographical documentary 'Stories We Tell' (2012), opens with the above quote. In it, filmmaker Sarah Polley attempts to map the history of her family and, in particular, the life of her mother, through a combination of anecdotes from her loved ones and found footage of their suburban life in Toronto, Canada. The documentary uses filmmaking—its unrivalled ability to, at once, conceal reality and reveal truth — to explore the ways memory and the stories we're told shape identity and one's sense of belonging.

Artist Olivia Erlanger's work shares a number of common interests with Polley; a desire to uncover the stories which lurk under the polished surfaces of post-war North American suburbia, as well as a curiosity about how identity is moulded by the particularities of this context. Erlanger has explored these ideas through a diverse research practice which emerges in writing, filmmaking and sculpture. Her new exhibition 'Home is a Body' at Soft Opening's Minerva Street space, brings together new sculpture by Erlanger with a recent formal interest in miniatures, having exhibited a series of related snow globe sculptures at Bel Ami, Los Angeles, earlier this year. At Soft Opening, contained within five large polystyrene and plexiglass eyes — their slightly warped corneas protruding from the walls — Erlanger presents a collection of domestic rooms, modelled precisely in miniature: a bedroom, garage/gym, living room, bathroom and garden. The white picket fences and floral bedspreads evoke an image of suburban life that those of us who grew up outside of America will recognise largely through its ubiquity in the fictional worlds of Hollywood films.

Erlanger's interest in the 'American dream' (with its white supremacist, middle-class myths of social mobility and self-improvement) has often focused on the architecture that props it up (in 2018 she wrote a book about the secret history of the garage with Luis Ortega Govela). In this new body of work, she turns her focus to the interiors of the home, which, even absent of their inhabitants, seem to tell a story of their own. This, in itself, tells us something about the complex nature of identity in these spaces, where objects can, seemingly, so easily stand in for the lives they are only supposed to adorn.

Searching for the life that might unfold in each room, you subconsciously ask yourself questions like, "what kind of person would own a floral bedspread?" "Who could own an Isamu Noguchi coffee table?" The plexiglass eyes which enclose them — looking out at me as I peer in — are a reminder of the pervasive system of, what Shoshanna Zuboff has termed, surveillance capitalism. It is a system which asks itself similar questions about who we are and what we buy. Apple products are scattered throughout the rooms; a pink MacBook left precariously on the corner of the coffee table, an iMac abandoned on a bedroom desk next to some art supplies. They reference one of suburban America's favourite fairy tales — Jobs and Wozniak inventing the first Apple computer in Jobs' garage — but they also probe at another interest in Erlanger's work, the impact of surveillance on identity.

Big tech, which infiltrates nearly every part of our lives, understands users' identities through data profiles — information about what we buy/read/watch put through an algorithm to predict what we might want to buy/read/watch in the future. Similarly to these data sets, the objects in Erlanger's rooms feel like nodes of information, a scaffold on which to hang our invented stories about who the mysterious, absent inhabitants might be. In the process of implanting my own story, I am confronted with both the strangeness of my desire to piece a narrative — an identity — together in this way and the impossibility of doing so.

Like Polley's filmmaking, it is the artifice of Erlanger's miniature worlds that reveals the truth regarding the stories we tell about identity and all that they overlook. Erlanger skillfully unpacks the limited way these systems – the socio-political apparatus of the American Dream and the extractive networks of surveillance capitalism – package up fragments of identity and try to sell them back to us as whole bodies. In this way, Erlanger's work reveals the more hidden, unknowable parts of others and ourselves. They are the parts that can't be held by these systems — "a dark roaring, a blindness, a wreckage" as Atwood terms it — and there is power in their refusal to be distilled into a tidy narrative.

Published on 20 October 2020

Frieze, 2020

Olivia Erlanger's Sci-Fi World-Making

At Soft Opening, London, the artist's new sculptures explore the psychic terrain of domestic space in the age of surveillance capitalism

BY **KATE WONG** IN **REVIEWS** | 30 OCT 20

Five bulging eyes protrude quietly from the walls of Soft Opening's new space on Minerva Street. Installed at varying heights and painted in either powder pink or muted grey, each orb is a self-contained scene, modelled after typologies of the aspirational American home. Though each

Five bulging eyes protrude quietly from the walls of Soft Opening's new space on Minerva Street. Installed at varying heights and painted in either powder pink or muted grey, each orb is a self-contained scene, modelled after typologies of the aspirational American home. Though each individual bubble is replete with the usual tropes associated with bourgeois domestic life – generic house plants, designer furniture and literal as well as figurative references to self-care and improvement – these particular depictions are devoid of any real representations of human life. If American suburbia of the 1960s functioned as both a symbol of perfection and isolation, do we find ourselves increasingly lonesome in the age of surveillance capitalism or has human life become disembodied to the point that we now transcend our physical conditions?

Olivia Erlanger, *5:13 PM*, 2020, miniature toilet, bathtub, shower, scale, rubber ducky, succulents, Evian plastic tile, resin, HDU foam, wood, MDF, polyester paint, plexiglass. Courtesy: the artist and Soft Opening, London; photograph: Theo Christelis

Made this year during lockdown, US artist Olivia Erlanger's new exhibition, 'Home Is a Body', is a surreal, spatial exploration of the psychic terrain of domestic life and 24/7 surveillance. Her careful representations of the teenage bedroom, the living room adorned with a prized Noguchi coffee table, the marble-floored bathroom, the home gym and, that pinnacle of American suburban life, the white picket fence – in this case distorted and curling back on itself – act to destabilize preconceived understandings of the home and our relationship to it. Each globular microcosm is an act of sci-fi world-making: a perversion of the paragon of domesticity.

Olivia Erlanger, 'Home Is a Body', 2020, installation view, Soft Opening, London. Courtesy: the artist and Soft Opening, London; photograph: Theo Christelis

Building upon extensive research into the significance of domestic architectures in shaping social, economic and political life (including her 2018 publication *Garage*, co-written with Luis Ortega Govela), 'Home Is a Body' sees a shift in Erlanger's technical practice. Where the analogue aspects of her previous sculptural works were more apparent, here the combination of outsourced fabrication and commissioned dollhouse furniture yields objects with newfound slickness. Each orb is not only a window into someone else's world but also a reflection of our own. A tension is struck between the softness of traditionally feminized domestic space and the cool materiality of human life mediated through two-way screen devices.

Olivia Erlanger's 'Home Is a Body' is on view at Soft Opening, London, until 7 November 2020.

Main image: Olivia Erlanger, 3:07 PM, *2020, miniature couch, armchair, knock off Noguchi Table, pink MacBook, dinosaur sculpture, water pail, cactus, cork floor, posters, books, resin, HDU foam, wood, MDF, polyester paint, plexiglass. Courtesy: the artist and Soft Opening, London; photograph: Theo Christelis*

K

KATE WONG

Kate Wong is a Chinese-Canadian writer and curator living in London, UK.

Flash Art, 2020

• REVIEWS

Olivia Erlanger “Home is a Body” *Soft Opening / London* by Philomena Epps

October 27, 2020

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Olivia Erlanger, *5:13 PM*, 2020. Evian plastic tile, resin, HDU foam, wood, MDF, polyester paint, plexiglass. 50.8 × 50.8 × 25.4 cm. Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photography by Theo Christelis.

The title of Olivia Erlanger’s exhibition at London’s Soft Opening — “Home is a Body” — brings to mind Louise Bourgeois’ “Femme Maison” series, in which the artist depicted the female form as being conflated with the architecture of the home. In her painting from 1947, the domestic environment is rendered as an interchangeable anthropomorphic surrogate, with the shape of a house or apartment building in place of where a head or torso might be found.

Erlanger’s heart-shaped fence sculpture, *Wyndcliffe* (2020), conveys a similar symbolic presence. The iconography is romantic, even cute. However, the coldness of the aluminum material, with the point of each picket sharpened like the tip of a knife, indicates a more sinister analysis. Akin to the work of Bourgeois, this demarcated area of refuge, even love, instead becomes a location of confinement or alienation. Interested in the mythology surrounding ‘the American Dream’, the aesthetic of suburbia — from the distinctive picket fences to flat-pack homes, garages, and laundromats — has occupied much of Erlanger’s practice, often depicting the urban landscape as a space of isolation or estrangement. Earlier this year, in Los Angeles, she presented a trio of snow-globe sculptures, the miniature houses inside trapped and siloed from the rest of the world.

The other five works in the show, each titled after a different time of day — *11:34 AM*; *3:07 PM*; *5:13 PM*; *8:41 PM*; *12:21 AM* (all 2020) —all take the same form. A dollhouse-like room, complete with a selection of miniature furniture and objects, encased by a clear, plexiglass dome, set within a frame shaped like a large eye. When compressed, this concept of "home is a body" is also suggestive of the word "homebody," an individual who prefers to stay indoors rather than venture out. However, in this case, all the 'home bodies' are absent, only able to be represented metonymically through a selection of specific possessions. Erlanger's attention to detail is exacting, and each item is discernible despite its scale. The objects are additionally listed in the materials section of the work's captions, configured as a litany of stuff. Across all the rooms, these include: Mac desktop, pink MacBook, white fender, bench press, dumbbell, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Evian, bicycle, armchair, knockoff Noguchi table, dirty laundry, cactus, books, posters, among other things. There is a sense of accessibility. The items are both familiar (the quintessential rubber duck in the bathroom) and topical (the keyboard balanced on a paint box perhaps indicative of a makeshift home office). Their proximity to current trends — the 'millennial pink' computer, succulents, a particular design aesthetic — allows the potential inhabitants of the space to become an amorphous being rather than a singular individual, in addition to questioning how identity and personal taste is actually led and shaped by consumerism and market influences.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Olivia Erlanger, "Home is a Body," installation view at Soft Opening, London. Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photography by Theo Christelis.

Although the interior of each environment is unique, the serial nature of their exterior can be analyzed through ideas of modularity and mass production, notions which are also commonplace within the history of post-war suburban architecture and town planning. In the introduction to *The Infinite Line* (2004), the art historian Briony Fer writes of repetition: "It is a means of organizing the world … of disordering and undoing … utopian or dystopian … animating and transforming the most everyday and routine habits of looking." In her text "Endless Days," commissioned to accompany the exhibition, Orit Gat perceives Erlanger's constructions as akin to surveillance cameras. This concept of CCTV perhaps supports a far more dystopian interpretation of Fer's "everyday and routine habits of looking": the sinister observance of the state. Like a voyeur, the viewer is free to peek in unobserved, but there is not much pleasure to be derived from this snooping. Rather, the home is packaged as a product, a timestamp, an extract of an abstract existence, with the potential for replication.

Artnet News, 2020

Mermaid Tails, Haunted Snow Globes, and the Myth of the American Dream: The Distinct Millennial-Defining Art of Olivia Erlanger

The 30-year-old artist is showing her quarantine-era work at Soft Opening in London.

Taylor Dafoe, October 21, 2020

Olivia Erlanger, 2020. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Bobby Doherty.

Three years ago, artist Olivia Erlanger rescued actress Aubrey Plaza from a marijuana farm run by nuns in the dusty heart of California.

Erlanger was at work on what would become *Garage* (2019), the documentary film follow-up to her book of the same name about the history of the titular suburban enclave—birthplace of countless bands, businesses, and forgotten home gyms. The artist was in search of characters to portray what she and her co-author, architect Luis Ortega Govela, had identified as the seven archetypes of garage users when she met the Sisters of the Valley, members of a feminist permaculture collective that launched a marijuana company in the name of boosting land ownership among women.

Artnet News, 2020

“Olivia’s work investigates how the different kinds of collapse in economics and ecologies influence the recent fracturing of identity,” summed up curator Attilia Fattori Franchini, who worked with Erlanger on a installation at Frieze London in 2017 that emitted blue light and fog in response to fluctuations in the price of oil. “She is exploring American folklore and symbols of the middle class from a feminist and cinematic perspective.”

Olivia Erlanger, *Soft Kiss* (2020). Courtesy of the artist and Bel Ami.

Erlanger was born in New York, the daughter of a couple in finance. When she was a child, her family decamped to a commuter town in Connecticut—a paradigmatic suburban experience that would come to cast a large shadow over her artistic output.

Erlanger was born in New York, the daughter of a couple in finance. When she was a child, her family decamped to a commuter town in Connecticut—a paradigmatic suburban experience that would come to cast a large shadow over her artistic output.

In an elementary school art class, she recreated—to exacting degree—an Absolut Vodka ad. Her parents were called in. “They were actually very proud of me,” Erlanger said with a smile. “They told me that this was a sure sign that I was destined to be an artist because I had started a conversation—and a little controversy. After that, I knew what I wanted to do.”

Artnet News, 2020

"I think we all were envisioning the *Sound of Music* at a lush weed farm," Erlanger told Artnet News over video chat in October. "But what we found was a shared compound, a small garden with a few marijuana plants, and some women dressed as nuns drinking out of red solo cups. We didn't know what was going on."

Adding to the strangeness was the unlikely presence of Plaza, far from Hollywood and stoned out of her gourd. There to promote her new film about nuns by lighting up with the Sisters, she approached Erlanger's team and asked them not to leave without her. "I told her we were staying at a Best Western around the corner and she was like, 'Perfect. Take me with you,'" the artist recalled.

The day ended okay; Plaza sobered up, and the nuns—who, if you haven't guessed by now, weren't *actual* nuns—earned a starring role in Erlanger's documentary. (Plaza made an appearance, too.)

We begin here because this story, while entertaining, is also pure Erlanger.

A movie star in a Steinbeckian pocket of California, a bizarre entrepreneurial scheme devised around an illegal cash crop—it all smacks of the strange recipe at the heart of Erlanger's art. There's a healthy dose of American mythology, some environmental economics, and a pinch of Lynchian theater.

Erlanger, in other words, is the quintessential artist for an era we've come to describe as surreal because we don't have a better adjective. Born in 1990—a time of prosperity and belief in the American Dream—she witnessed that promise get punctured by the Great Recession and the rise of Donald Trump.

Her work embodies the experience of a millennial who has seen the rules of the game change without warning.

The American Dream, Deferred

Erlanger, now 30, is effusive and easy to talk to. She spoke with us from a friend's plant-filled apartment in Brooklyn, just after the launch of her new show at Soft Opening in London. After several years living in LA, she's found herself without a permanent address. The peripatetic setup is a reminder of how young the artist is—something that's easy to forget given the sophistication of her work, and the sheer amount of it she's produced over the past seven years.

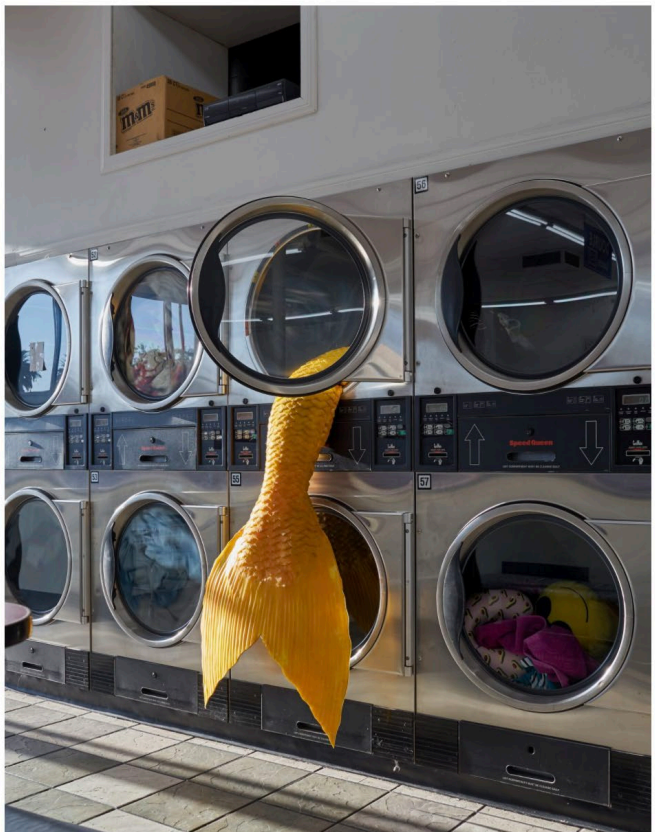
Her father patented IP around a new marketplace designed to increase transparency in home loans and lines of credit—a precursor to what would become blockchain technology. But the burst of the housing bubble hit her family hard, and they sold their Connecticut home around the time Erlanger headed to college.

"I grew up with a conceptual conversation around the home as a financial instrument," she recalled, "while actually experiencing the fallout of the home as a financial instrument on a global scale."

In college, at Lewis & Clark—then, briefly, Parsons, and then Lewis & Clark again—she studied sculpture and literature. After graduation, Erlanger traveled on a whim to Berlin, hoping to meet several artists she knew only through Facebook. It led, circuitously, to her first significant show, at Fluxia Gallery in Milan, in 2014. She was just 23.

She returned to New York and took up a pair of jobs: one as a bookkeeper for an architectural firm, and another as an assistant to artist Anicka Yi. (She helped collect samples for Yi's breakthrough 2015 show "You Can Call Me F," in which the Korean-American artist synthesized biological material from 100 women into a single, backlit bacterium.)

Erlanger's artistic career began to pick up speed in 2016, when she secured solo shows at What Pipeline in Detroit (she showed "raft" assemblages made of resin, bee pollen, and blinds) and Mathew gallery in Manhattan (for which she created a filing cabinet filled with mud and red light that varied in intensity according to fluctuations in the Mercantile Stock Exchange). But her big breakthrough did not come until she moved to Los Angeles the following year.



Installation view of "Olivia Erlanger: Ida," 2018. Courtesy of the artist and Mother Culture.

Artnet News, 2020

Through the Looking Glass

In LA, Erlanger seized on another middle-class space, the laundromat, to stage what would become her most recognizable—and certainly her most Instagrammed—project to date. Inside a modest storefront, she created a surreal tableau: silicone mermaid tails dangling lifelessly from washing machine and drier doors. (The project, mounted by the experiential art space Mother Culture in 2018, has been revived at Frieze New York in 2019 and at the Daelim Museum in Seoul, South Korea this year.)

The scene feels more like a trippy funhouse than a reference-laden cultural commentary. But it is emblematic of the way research forms the backbone of Erlanger's work. The installation was inspired by an essay that posits *The Little Mermaid* as a feminist metaphor for female hysteria. (The show was titled *Ida* after Ida Bauer, a patient of Sigmund Freud's who was diagnosed with hysteria after losing her voice—just as Ariel does in Disney's interpretation of the Hans Christian Andersen tale.)

Erlanger's not dogmatic: she seems open to all readings of her work, and for the magical realism in *Ida*, there must be many. The idea itself came from a playful *mis*reading of a wall-mounted sculpture of a pair of snake tongues in Erlanger's show at Mathew. A friend's child identified them as mermaid tails.

"I had just never perceived them that way," Erlanger said. "It's as simple as the conversation around the work led me to a new way to access thinking through the pieces."

Installation view of "Olivia Erlanger: Split-level Paradise," 2020. Courtesy of the artist and Bel Ami.

Looking Ahead

Erlanger's 2020 is bookended with a pair of shows that similarly marry the fantastical with the domestic—and they feel almost eerily quarantine-y.

"Split-level Paradise," her show at Bel Ami gallery in LA that closed the week the country went into lockdown in March, comprised three snow-globe-shaped sculptures the size of La-Z-Boys. In the top half of each orb sits a two-story, ticky tacky home painted in wan colors—an almost comic literalization of the phrase "housing bubble."

Fake snow pools at the bottom, ready to be jolted into a winter wonderland. But the sculptures aren't shakable; the snow is stuck and the homes suddenly read as Truman

Artnet News, 2020

Fake snow pools at the bottom, ready to be jolted into a winter wonderland. But the sculptures aren't shakable; the snow is stuck and the homes suddenly read as Truman Show-style traps. It's not a stretch to project the artist's own suburban experience onto them.

"I think that was at the core of it: how do you make a memory?" Erlanger mused. "How do you make an art that is a memory and how do you examine the ways in which we protect those memories, creating idealized or perfect moments? The myth of home ownership in America is very much tied to that same protective measure of a fascination with an ideal that truly no longer exists and is contested throughout the history of the development of suburbia."

Olivia Erlanger, *11:34 AM, 2020* (2020). Courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening.

Six and a half months separated that show and "Home is a Body," her new exhibition at Soft Opening. That was enough time for a virus to take hold of the world and force us all inside our own little bubbles, and the new series reflects that sense of isolation.

Lining the gallery walls is a suite of domed sculptures that resemble both apartment-door peepholes and human eyes. Each is named after a different time of day and inside are different domestic scenes—a disheveled basement, a bare-bones bathroom—devoid of inhabitants.

"There's always a flirtation with the uncanny in Olivia's work that I think is immediately recognizable," said Antonia Marsh, Soft Opening's director. "I'd spot her self-aware engagement with the American Dream turned delusion—imagery that might seem to reflect a picture-postcard America but with a distinctly dystopic, Ballardian twist."

While Erlanger emphasizes the research that goes into her work, she acknowledges it's driven by a desire to mine her own history. "How else do you become obsessed with examining the idea of home and the American Dream," she asked, "without a personal relationship to it?"

frieze

On Our Radar: Highlights from Frieze Week

From Olivia Erlanger's aspirational interiors to Juliette Blightman's Dorothy Iannone-inspired Tarot deck, here are the best shows in and around London

BY **MIMI CHU** IN **CRITIC'S GUIDES** | 13 OCT 20

Olivia Erlanger at Soft Opening, London

Olivia Erlanger has furnished Soft Opening with the trappings of an aspirational household – plants, Evian bottles, an Isamu Noguchi coffee table – all replicated in miniature and magnified under Plexiglas dome-eyes. Made during lockdown and taking the form five uninhabited rooms, 'Home Is a Body' continues the LA-based artist's investigation into the psychic terrain of domestic life with a newfound, eerie slickness. The show is on view until 7 November.

Olivia Erlanger, *11.34 AM*, 2020, installation view at Soft Opening, London; photograph: Theo Christelis

ArtReview

No Space, Just A Place: Seoul's Alternative Art Scene

ArtReview Video 14 May 2020 artreview.com

An exhibition at the Daelim Museum in Seoul, powered by Gucci, celebrates the city's alternative art scene and speculative futures

A largescale exhibition at the Daelim Museum in Seoul, powered by Gucci and its Creative Director Alessandro Michele's reflections on eterotopia, and curated by the Renaissance Society's incoming executive director, Myriam Ben Salah, sees ten of the city's independent art spaces sharing a platform with five international artists to explore the catalytic value of creative disruption and to offer a vision of brave new worlds.

Works by Meriem Bennani, Olivia Erlanger, Cécile B. Evans, Kang Seung Lee and Martine Syms sit alongside installations that were created or displayed in the meatyards, warehouses, private residences or abandoned shops that house Seoul's alternative art scene, in an exhibition that celebrates both the local and the global, via the social, cultural and creative forces that transform space into place. A new video produced by *ArtReview* for Gucci allows viewers to tour the show and meet the people, artworks and experimental practices that made it happen.

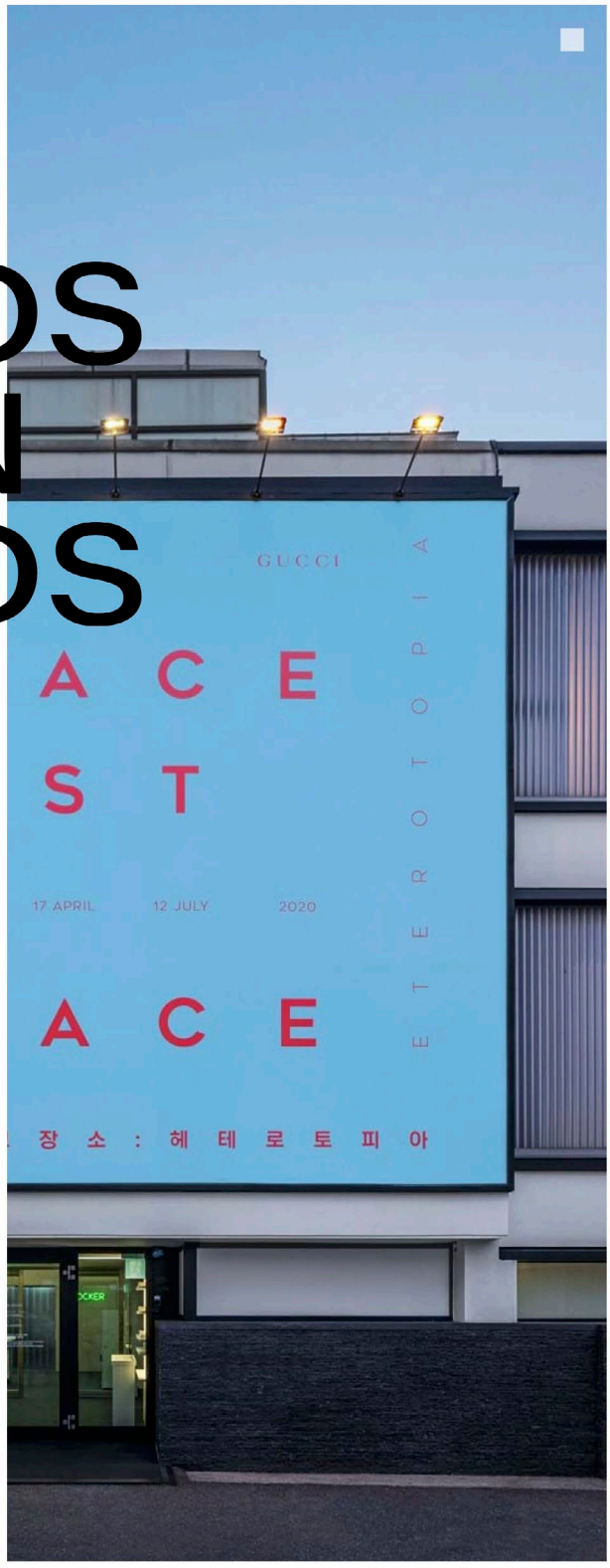
No Space, Just A Place
Eterotopia
17th April – 12th July 2020
Daelim Museum Seoul
Powered by GUCCI
Curated by Myriam Ben Salah

An ArtReview Production
Narrated by Andy St. Louis
Filmed by Aaron Choe
Cinematography by Seongil Lee
Translations by Vicky Won

ArtReview Video 14 May 2020 artreview.com

WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS

Gucci's *No Space, Just a Place* invites us to consider the radical potential of "other spaces"



TANK, 2020

Utopias are defined by their placelessness. They are ideal images of society that float free of any actual location. To this hard contrast between the placeless fantasy of utopia and the ordered space of reality, the philosopher Michel Foucault added a third kind of the space: the heterotopia (or *eterotopia* in Italian). Heterotopias are "other spaces" somehow isolated or opposed to what surrounds them, worlds within worlds where conventions are inverted and unlikely encounters can take place.

The possibilities offered by these other spaces form the organising principle of Gucci's exhibition *No Space, Just a Place*. Curated by Myriam Ben Salah, the exhibition brings together presentations from ten alternative and independent galleries from Seoul within the Daelin Museum alongside five additional immersive installations from Meriem Bennani, Olivia Erlanger, Cécile B. Evans, Kang Seung Lee and Martine Syms.

A mosaic of superimposed spaces and voices exploring overlapping but not identical concerns of identity, hybridity and displacement, the exhibition provides a platform in which alternatives to our present reality can be imagined through collaboration and conversation rather than isolated escapism. Ben Salah cites the ancient Greek concept of *proxenia*, which describes the care of those from other places, as another key reference. Through bringing together disparate perspectives, the exhibition seeks to create "a new definition of 'being together' while not being one thing". ◉

Dream Bubble: Olivia Erlanger

Laura Brown

Olivia Erlanger has been taking up various forms, filling and then unraveling them like conspiracies. For *Split-level Paradise*, her recent exhibition at Bel Ami, Los Angeles (2020), she nominated a series of snow globes as a potential and possessive form of space—in her words, "a movie director's dream, constructed from every angle."

Around the same time that Erlanger's exhibition opened, I had the unexpected fortune of watching the Alexander Payne movie *Downsizing* (2017). Deep in snowy Norway, a scientist formulates the possibility of miniaturizing living things—first a rat, then humans—as a solution to the global ecological crisis. The invention is publicly unveiled on a Las Vegas convention stage, from which dozens of five-inch-tall people smile and wave. Their combined waste fills half of a sagging garbage bag, displayed alongside them.

Ten years later, the sales pitch has transformed into a lifestyle dream. Tiny colonies with names like Leisureland offer a life of endless recreation in giant mansions (relatively speaking). Once you decide to physically shrink, your equivalent wealth shall inversely expand by a factor of around eighty. This mini land is insulated by an ever-present ceiling of netting—a security feature preventing inhabitants from being catastrophically pierced by regular-size mosquitos. Almost a sci-fi drama, although more of a comedy, it is all fantastically mundane. In *Split-level Paradise*, each large plastic dome functions something similar to the *Truman Show* like mosquito-net ceiling, pressing an awareness of inside and outside as you gaze into them. There are three works in total, varying by subtle house-paint hue. In each, an architectural model of a split-level home floats on a thin, tilted surface. A large hole appears in this plane—a sinkhole? A loss? A portal? Above and below, artificial snow rests in silent banks.

In Erlanger's recent collaborative project with Mexican architect Luis Ortega Govela, *Garage* (2018), which took the form of a book published by MIT Press and a documentary film, the garage became the central architectural element. Symbolizing a nostalgia for suburban entrepreneurship, as in the mythical origins of Apple, we find the garage to be an invention in itself. Erlanger also began thinking about the car that lives in and leaves it, delivering the moving world through a curved glass windscreen. With *Ida* (2018), she installed a number of protruding mermaid tails inside a Los Angeles laundromat, surrounded by the pulsating faces of washing machines. Now, in *Split-level Paradise*, the snow globe encloses the entire family home, including its garage, car, and front-load washer. We can imagine further possible screens inside of it, like the doors of a shower or a microwave oven.

Down one side of each modeled house the paint appears darker, as if to suggest a certain orientation and time of day. Erlanger cast into her memory of her childhood home to construct these split-level structures. Like the apparitions inside a snow globe in a film—Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941) being paradigmatic—this childhood memory functions as a form of nostalgia, which itself revolves as a construction of movies and television. Erlanger's attempt roughly parallels Mike Kelley's *Educational Complex* (1995), wherein Kelley recalled and combined the layouts of his suburban schools, approaching the gaps in his memory as representations of trauma. Erlanger also finds precedent in Julie Becker's extensively sketched and modeled *Researchers, Residents, A Place to Rest* (1993-1996), through which the artist sought a transformative process of identification with fictional spaces and people. With *Split-level Paradise* Erlanger reaches into the alternative dimensions of pop-cultural reality stored in one's own mind. The snow globe turns into a crystal ball.

In a conversation with her mother, Erlanger realized that her memory was invented: the family home never had a second floor. Absent of people, latent movement underpins these works. Under snow and lichen, a road stretches a surreal map from edge to edge. Beneath the blue house, *Soft Kiss* (2020), a second hole appears, finally opening up a full circulation. Erlanger's sculptures become much like movies in themselves, continually constructing the direction of memory as we peer into them mesmerized, waiting.

57 Olivia Erlanger, *Mr. Held's Class*, 2020. Courtesy: the artist and Bel Ami, Los Angeles. Photo: Paul Salveson

58 59 Olivia Erlanger, *Split-level Paradise* installation view at Bel Ami, Los Angeles, 2020. Courtesy: the artist and Bel Ami, Los Angeles. Photo: Paul Salveson

Mousse, 2020

Mousse, 2020

Flash Art, 2020

Feature 88—95

WELCOME TO SUNNYDALE

Mining the American suburban fantasy through a widely varied output, Olivia Erlanger expands the limits of sculptural thinking

by Franklin Melendez

Flash Art, 2020

Flash Art, 2020

Olivia Erlanger politely asks me to hold the call while she scrolls diligently through her screen cap folder. The lengthy silence that follows attests to the sizeable archive, newly expanded by the flurry of unexpected reactions to her most recent sculptural outings, but she repeatedly assures me that the image will be worth the wait. Lo and behold, it decidedly is when it materializes in my text messages a few moments later: a screen grab of an effusive DM accompanied by a picture of a tattoo modeled after one of the silicone mermaid tails initially displayed at a laundromat down the street from the Los Angeles project space Mother Culture in September 2018. "It's not necessarily about me or my art or my practice," she adds with a tone of curiosity. "It's more like this particular sculpture has generated its own fans and has a public life that's independent from me. I find that distinction really interesting."

> While some artists fastidiously monitor the discursive parameters through which their work is filtered and framed, Erlanger seems more than happy to embrace these types of unexpected and oftentimes rhizomatic deviations. In fact, they might be as generative and constitutive of the practice as the base matter itself. Case in point: the series began as a funny misreading when a friend's toddler was playfully asked to choose a favorite work at the opening of her 2016 New York solo exhibition "Dripping Tap." The child paused before pointing to the twin, forked-tongue sculpture *Slow Violence* and gleefully exclaimed: "I love the tails!"

"That stayed with me," notes Erlanger. "I loved the idea of these protrusions as shape-shifters. It resonated with the research I had been doing on the status of women's bodies and domestic spaces. All of these mythical chimeric figures but also a woman with her head in the oven..."

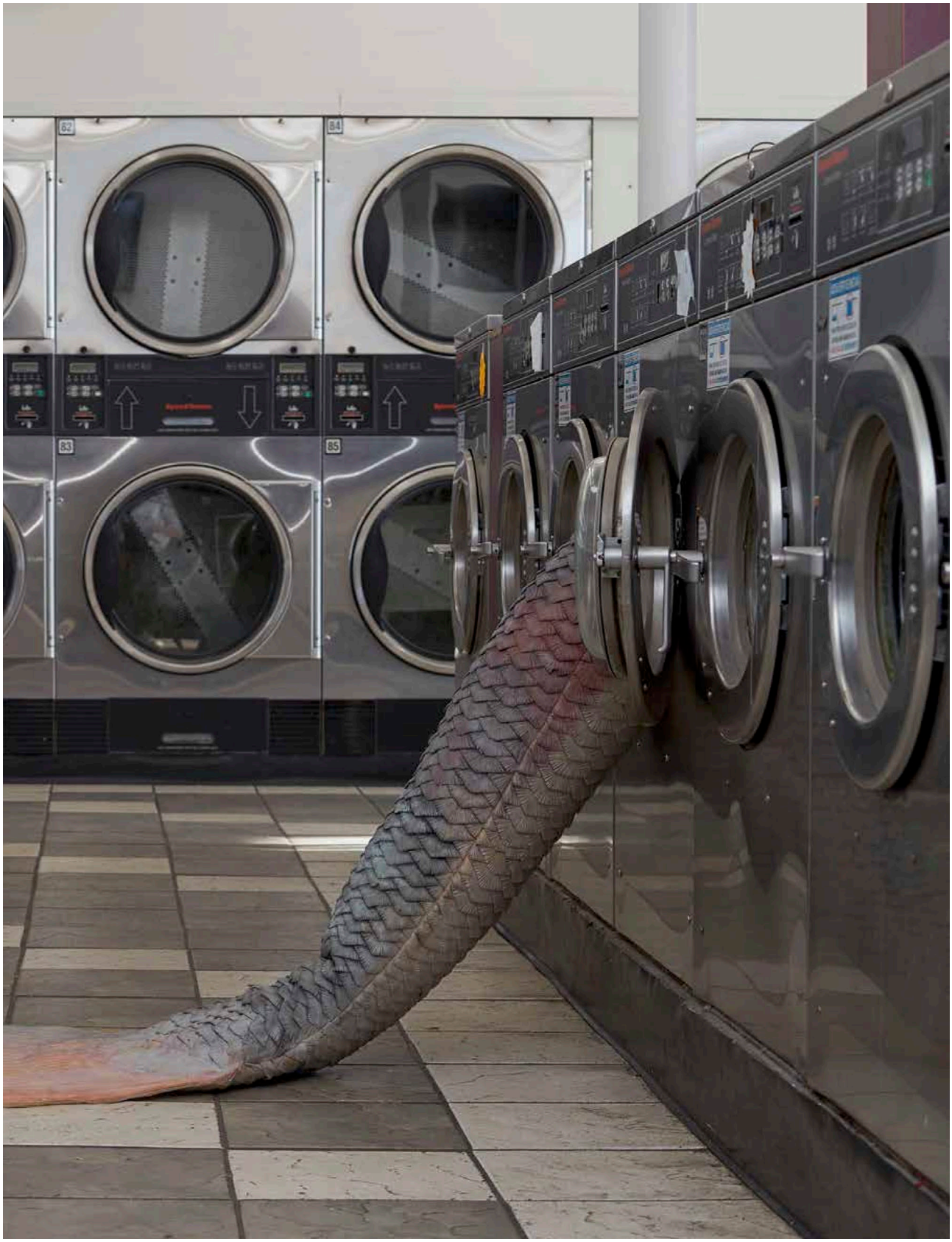
It is worth pausing here and noting that research forms the core of Erlanger's larger intellectual project; it both animates her wide-ranging output — from sculpture and installation to writing and filmmaking — and supersedes it. Specifically, it's her sustained and open-ended investigation of American postwar suburbia: its material roots and development, its objects and accouterments, its architectural legacy (such as the advent of the attached single-car garage), its gender and racial divides, as well as the unseen power structures, fantasies, and projections embedded therein, which remain lodged within our cultural imaginary. Since 2013 this undertaking has unfolded as a protean impulse and yielded manifold physical manifestations. These include discrete exhibitions, such as 2015's "Dog Beneath the Skin," which traced the lineage of totemic middle-class objects, from the Victorian parlor piano to the modern garage door. Following the same historical thread is 2016's "The Oily Actor," in which modular sculptures evoke the floor plans of prefabricated model homes. Bringing together a wide array of highly symbolic materials (from felt to pollen), the pieces map out an allegorical topography of the forces that converge around the contemporary housing market — from the micro to the macro. The resulting edifices are at once imposing and tenuous, underscoring the fissures where aspirations meet material limits while foregrounding a sculptural logic that is associative rather than descriptive, linguistic rather than purely optic. One corner nook nestles a large slab of shea butter embedded with mini-maquettes of a manor-like home. The ghostly outline appears as a greasy fossil; when pressed it reveals itself as a miniature of Wyndcliffe Mansion — the palatial nineteenth-century home erected in Rhinebeck, New York, for socialite Elizabeth Schermerhorn Jones. Sparking a wave of imitators in the surrounding area, the home is credited with coining the phrase "Keeping up with the Joneses," which continues to have currency to this day.

> Sometimes these historical threads define the parameters of immersive environments such as *Body Electric*, developed for Frieze London in collaboration with BWM's Open Work in 2017. Featuring video, a reactive soundtrack, and a fluctuating light system, this durational sculpture traces the vicissitudes of the luxury car — the ultimate middle-class status symbol — in relationship to a live and interdependent global oil economy. This automotive shift might have also anticipated the publication of *Garage* (MIT Press, 2018), co-authored with Luis Ortega Govela. This critical tome traces the evolution of the humble home appendage from its initial design by Frank Lloyd Wright to its near mythic status in the 1990s and early 2000s as a crucible for American ingenuity, from garage bands to start-ups. This project has itself undergone its own transformations, spawning a series of lectures and being adapted by Govela and Erlanger into a full-length future documentary and individual chapters available through the viewing platform DIS.art.

iii

Flash Art, 2020

Flash Art, 2020



Flash Art, 2020

Elastic and constantly permutating, this wide spectrum of activities vacillates between contingency and material specificity. In doing so, it also attempts to circumvent the trap of didacticism by posing forth material propositions rather than crystalized resolutions. This questioning is unruly resulting in its own chimeric guisesbut in so doing I also tests out new positions for the role of sculpture in our contemporary world. How is it received and consumed? How can it be read? What spaces can it occupy? And, perhaps most alluringly, can it reach out beyond the insular bounds of the gallery world? It is a sustained working through more indebted to the associative interventions of the Surrealists than the structured semantics of relational aesthetics. It also remains conscious of its own baggage.

Much of this informs the exhibition "Ida," which introduced the now-infamous series of mermaid tails and was originally slated for the "main" space of Mother Culture, the art incubator/gallery founded and run by Milo Conroy and Jared Madere. While visiting the space, the trio also ducked into the laundromat a few doors down, where the gallerists also did their weekly wash. Immediately the format activated the lingering play on tongues/tails, the symbolic status of the home washer-dryer, as well as a photograph by Dora Maar, *Untitled (Shell hand)* (1934). Installed in unused machines, the tails were both hokey and wondrous, haphazard and deliberately staged — their dual function to transform the appliances into portals but also call attention to the space surrounding them. In many ways, this is a contemporary re-harnessing of the surrealist ideal of the "marvelous." As Hal Foster puts it in *Compulsive Beauty* (MIT, 1993), this notion is pledged to "the re-enchantment of a disenchanted world, of a capitalist society made ruthlessly rational. [It] also suggests the ambiguity of this project."

This ambiguity is inherent to the laundromat itself, which is underscored by the intervention: it is ostensibly a democratic space — open to all, but overdetermined by class and race. After all, the American middle-class dream of home ownership already comes as a package deal with a washer and dryer; to have to go without and venture into the outside already says a lot. Further still, this space is also the theater for the clashing forces of gentrification (who's doing their wash, when, and why?) as they come into contact with the specific history of the Arlington Heights neighborhood in Los Angeles.

What was perhaps not expected was the way in which these objects, deployed into the world, came to exceed the bounds of the original gesture, taking on a life of their own — fueled by specific interactions, circulation in social media, and coverage by the local news. "Even Drew Barrymore posed about it," recalls Erlanger with a laugh. Indeed, detached from their original site, the tails become free-floating signifiers — not a meme, but an image placeholder where different meanings can be projected. In a way, they provide a litmus test for different ways of connecting to an audience while maintaining no control over the image — but then again, think of the primary ways art is consumed at any given art fair. Click, point, selfie. For some this is a fatalistic endpoint, the evaporation of the art object and its integrity. But for Erlanger it represents different possibilities between cracks and fissures, unseen endpoints that, she readily admits, cannot be planned.

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Olivia Erlanger' solo exhibitions include "Soft Opening," London; and group exhibitions at the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas; Kunsthalle Charlottenborg; and Daelim Museum, Seoul (all forthcoming in 2020). Olivia Erlanger and Luis Ortega Govela co-wrote Garage (MIT Press, 2018), a secret history of the attached garage as a space of creativity, from its invention by Frank Lloyd Wright to its use by start-ups and garage bands.

Franklin Melendez is a writer and independent curator based in New York. He is the co-founder of DM Office.

i *Ida*, 2018. Detail. Silicone, polystyrene foam, mdf, plywood. Dimensions variable. Installation view at Laundry Zone, Los Angeles, 2018. Courtesy of the artist and Mother Culture, Los Angeles.

ii *Soft Kiss*, 2020. Detail. Architectural model, artificial snow, lichen, moss, hair, urethane resin, charcoal, carbide grit, dibond, plexiglass, MDF, paint. 43 × 30 × 30 in. Courtesy of the artist and Bel Ami, Los Angeles.

iii *Soft Kiss*, 2020. Architectural model, artificial snow, lichen, moss, hair, urethane resin, charcoal, carbide grit, dibond, plexiglass, MDF, paint. 43 × 30 × 30 in. Courtesy of the artist and Bel Ami, Los Angeles.

iv *Ida*, 2018. Silicone, polystyrene foam, mdf, plywood. Dimensions variable. Installation view at Laundry Zone, Los Angeles, 2018. Courtesy of the artist and Mother Culture, Los Angeles.

v, vi Olivia Erlanger and Luis Ortega Govela, *Garage*, 2019. Documentary. Stills from HD Video. 55 mins. Courtesy of the artists.

PIN–UP

Still from a series of educational infomercials based on the book *Garage* (2018). Courtesy Olivia Erlanger and Luis Ortega Govela.

A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT GARAGES EXPLORES UNORTHODOX SUBURBAN IDENTITY

By Drew Zeiba

“There's many layers of gossip that lead to its origin,” Olivia Erlanger explained about the starting point of her still-in-progress film, a collaboration with Luis Ortega Govela that would preview later that night at London’s Institute of Contemporary Art. Sitting by the pond in the nearby Victoria Park, I offered the journalistic safeguard that any of this chatter which informed the film could be told to me “off the record,” but Erlanger was adamant that nothing needed to be kept clandestine. “Print it! Tell them all!” she exclaimed. “With names please,” Ortega Govela added. Who knew the story of the garage, that banal architectural appendage of the suburban home, would be so juicy!

The film *Garage*, which shares a title with the pair’s book, published by MIT Press last October, explores the origin of the garage and its impact on the American non-city and psyche, tracing a narrative from Frank Lloyd Wright (and even Jesus Christ) to the present, stopping along the way to pick up characters like Steve Jobs and Gwen Stefani, and connecting them in a conspiratorial web of American mythmaking.

Pin Up Magazine, 2019

The film is similarly a strange amalgamation of characters: weed-dealing nuns, actress Aubrey Plaza, and a live-in sex slave all make appearances even just in this rough cut, around half the running time of the eventual feature. But what do drug nuns and *Parks and Rec* stars have to do with architecture, you might be asking? According to Erlanger and Ortega Govela, quite a lot.

"The garage is the id of the home," Ortega Govela contended. Often windowless, it's where the excess of a home spills into, squirreled away into cobwebbed concrete corners. Though designed "for" the car, it is often misused, so to speak, making it a sort of anti-programmatic space, one both of and separate from the normative family home. It's where disaffected dads can form maladapted masculinities and grunge rock teens can delude themselves into thinking they're counterculture, which is to say in this space of difference, the sameness of the white hetero-patriarchal family may in fact be formed.

"Ultimately *Garage*, the book, is an exploration of the spaces where family is created and where family lives," Erlanger explained, discussing how its film adaptation, though punctuated by historical anecdotes dramatized through uncanny improv skits, remains firmly rooted in the present. "I think the way that family lives today is very represented in the media. If you think about the Kardashians, you consume family as an entertainment symbol." According to this logic, the garage is an image and ideology as much as it is an architectural form.

Pin Up Magazine, 2019

While *Garage* the book argues that the garage and its attendant material and political concerns — from zoning laws to automatic doors — were a product of the normalization of a heterosexual white suburbia, the film picks up this narrative in our current era when homeownership is on the decline. According to Erlanger, the adaptation is about “the underside of life and the characters are all people who are overlooked.” Fourth-wave garagedom is not for cars, and not exactly for upstarts or bands either, but for that which can’t fit in the home. “There's a lot of different people who look to the garage as a space of refuge because their identities never fit into a mainstream,” continued Erlanger. “So naturally in making a film about a garage we are going to meet people who don't fit into that norm. And it really is gratifying because I just think that we're giving space and platform to people who are complex.” And, while the book focuses on the patriarchal power of the garage, the film examines American lifeways that they believe are increasingly “matriarchal.”

Erlanger and Ortega Govela propose that the women who today find refuge in the garage (and the final film will primarily, though not exclusively, feature women) engage in the strategic mode known as Reality Distortion Field (RDF), which has a decidedly masculine legacy spanning Lloyd Wright, Jobs, and even Kurt Cobain. A term that Apple employees borrowed from Star Trek to describe Jobs’s ability to state objective falsehoods in order to make people believe them enough to make them real, in this context RDF refers to how the film’s subjects are using the garage as architectural and ideological modes of projecting their own non-realities.

The filmmaker duo is interested, as well, in how these reality distortions extend beyond the garage. Plaza is, of course, an actress; which is not to say she’s fake but rather that her career is predicated on faking it for others’ entertainment. The Sisters of the Valley, it seems, do not in fact grow their marijuana as they claim, but import it from Colorado. And what do dominatrixes traffic in if not fantasies? Slippery, these stories are always shifting, like a concrete garage floor slick with oil from a car long out the door. Erlanger and Ortega Govela even put RDF to work themselves when they went around telling friends and potential funders they were making a film without any concrete plans — Erlanger claiming (perhaps as an act of mythmaking) that she’s barely held a camera besides an iPhone.

Pin Up Magazine, 2019

The most traditional hobbyist garage project has always been construction of the self, according to Erlanger and Ortega Govela. After all, branding and mythmaking is the central American mass-delusion, one that more or less must be engaged in to survive under the extremities of this era's particularly coercive and isolating form of capitalism. Garages, the architectural spaces that held the cars that made suburbia and the entire white-picket fence American Dream possible quickly revealed themselves as everything but stables for automobiles. Erlanger and Ortega Govela insisted in their book that that the garage is not just a physical space, but an ideological device: one that helped make the "all-American" nuclear family and the white flight suburb as much as it made Nirvana and Hewlett Packard. Now in their film that same architectural and ideological typology gets a second, very 21st century wind, serving as a place that allows weed-cultivating nuns to flourish and kinksters to live comfortable (and profitable!) lives.

Text by Drew Zeiba.

Videos and stills courtesy Olivia Erlanger and Luis Ortega Govela. Extended cuts will be released on October 28th with DIS.

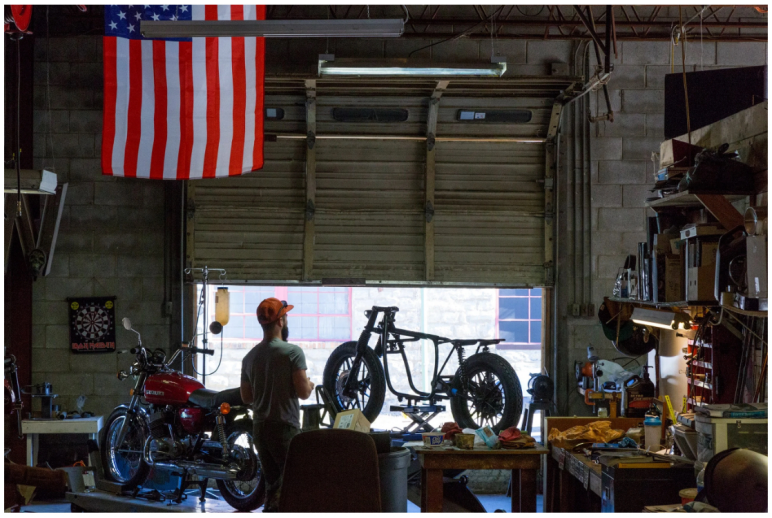
THE NEW YORKER

DEPT. OF DESIGN

HOW THE GARAGE BECAME AMERICA'S FAVORITE ROOM

By Nikil Saval

January 14, 2019



The true revolution took place when the garage became an essential part of the house, attached and connected by a door. Photograph by Ed Kashi / VII / Redux

In Philadelphia, where I live, a menace has invaded city streets. A number of new town houses, clad in nostalgic, deferential brick, have put at their bases a yawning portal: the garage, an offensive import from the suburbs. Parking in a dense city is always a testy, teeth-grinding experience. But the street-facing garage turns it into something like a crawl through endless desert, each oasis of space a mirage that evaporates as a shutter comes into view. Some of the developments have tried to remedy this problem by creating new streets altogether, perpendicular alleyways that face the garages and are sometimes segregated behind a gate. These succeed only in diminishing the street life of the city.

The New Yorker, 2019

No one truly needs a domestic garage to park a car; space is available, if not readily, on city streets. So why do garages exist? The reason may have nothing to do with parking. In their recent book, "Garage," Olivia Erlanger, an artist, and Luis Ortega Govela, an architect, coin a term, "garageification," which describes a strange excrescence, initially unrelated to the central functions of the home, acquiring a life of its own and beginning to blend previously separate realms. Garages were, of course, designed to house cars. But they soon became much more: storage spaces, offices, man caves. Entire companies were concocted in a garage, and several styles of music were named after it. The authors of "Garage" locate themselves in the tradition of the German critic Walter Benjamin, who speculated for more than a thousand pages on Paris shopping arcades as emblems of the nineteenth century. For Erlanger and Ortega Govela, who speculate with more brevity, the garage is a latter-day arcade, a symbol of modernity—or maybe postmodernity.

The extravagance and curiosity of the early American garage was symbolized, the landscape historian J. B. Jackson noted, in the borrowing of what was obviously a French word for an American phenomenon. Modelled after stables and coach houses, garages were initially detached, for sanitation reasons, from the main home, and could be constructed in the fancy styles of the day; a 1906 *House Beautiful* issue laid out Colonial, Tudor, and Craftsman garages. Often, a second story housed the chauffeur (another French borrowing). But many house designs took pains to hide the garage at the end of a long driveway, or behind a wall. Around the time of the First World War, American cities began to have more prosaic garages, lined up along service alleys, often ransacking the space back yards once occupied.

The true revolution took place when the garage became an essential part of the house, attached and connected by a door. This made it all but another room. Erlanger and Ortega Govela, looking for the origin of the contemporary garage, find it in an unexpected place: Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House, one of the architect's original Prairie-style homes, which was completed in 1910 and is still standing, on the South Side of Chicago. Frederick Robie was an entrepreneur, the son of a bicycle manufacturer; his wife, Lora, had come across Wright's work in

House Beautiful and insisted that the two meet, with the hopes that Wright might design their new home. They shared an enthusiasm for new technology: Wright was an early adopter of the automobile—when he went to meet Robie, he drove his custom-built yellow Stoddard-Dayton, a low-slung motorized canoe with tall wheels and cartoonishly eyelike headlamps—while Robie wanted his father to turn to car manufacturing. For Robie's house, Wright did away with the habitual front porch and stable, and instead placed, right up front, what may be the world's first attached three-car garage. The house announces its integration of the automobile. Erlanger and Ortega Govela note that Wright also eliminated much of the closet space from the house, foreshadowing the eventual move of most storage into the garage, "the American consumer's preferred landfill." For Erlanger and Ortega Govela, Wright's garage was ahead of its time, an autonomous object, freighted with ideological momentum, that paved the way for the reshaping of cities around cars and the expansion of the suburbs. This theory counters more common forms of historical explanation—federal subsidies in the form of highways and suburban housing, for example—but captures something of the monstrous, devouring nature of the American garage.

Just as basements became game rooms, garages, too, became multipurpose. After the Second World War, public transit declined, tracts began to sprawl, and households felt the need to acquire more cars, but home-delivery services also decreased, which meant that houses had to have a washer and dryer and freezer, and an easy way to ferry increasingly larger loads of groceries. Human beings, not designers, changed the meaning of the garage. "Once home and work are garageified there is an erosion between the domestic and productive spheres, where the dichotomy, language, and aesthetic of home and work borrow from one another," Erlanger and Ortega Govela write, with academic portentousness. The garage was transformed into a place for storing old bicycles, family albums, and one's bulkier board games. It was also foundational to the mythos of Silicon Valley, a retreat for nerds like William Hewlett and David Packard to develop the audio oscillators that gave amplitude to Walt Disney's "Fantasia." (The HP Garage is now a private museum, in Palo Alto.) Garages, which once stored the vehicle that took you between work and home, became workspaces that one had *at* home, if not quite *in* the home.

"Garage" aggressively meanders, in the lurching, free-associative style of cultural studies, from the Robie House to the myth of Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, both of them alums of Hewlett-Packard, concocting the first Apple computer in a garage. (Wozniak disputes this story, sourcing most of the original work to his apartment and Jobs's bedroom.) Garage rock, and Gwen Stefani and No Doubt rehearsing in a garage, are also name-checked, as is the garage as gym, where the last rites of American masculinity are conducted in sweaty privacy. "The garage without a car lost its prescribed use and became a *deprogrammed* room, a raw residential space that could be easily appropriated for a new set of codes and behaviors that weren't particularly domestic," Erlanger and Ortega Govela write. In a move at once strange and predictable, they conceive of the Internet as essentially a giant garage. "The garage was a technology that displaced the home and its subjects," they write. "Now domesticity is being reformatted once again through technologies that detach the home from the house." Suggestive as the comparison is, they miss the opportunity to comment on the Internet's general atmosphere of garage-ness, with its dank memes and moldy conspiracies.

For Erlanger and Ortega Govela, the garage is an emblem of suburban privatization. But the future of the space may well be in cities, where the number of cars has far exceeded population growth. As the transportation consultant Bruce Schaller noted in a recent article, the growth in urban households that are "car-free" is being outpaced by those that are "car-light" (owning one car) or "car-rich" (owning two or more). Many of these households are in cities where public-transportation options exist alongside the heavy use of "ride-share" services like Uber and Lyft, which seem to have contributed to the rising number of cars. "From mid-2000 to 2012, transit ridership increased while car ownership grew slowly, if at all," Schaller writes. "But now car ownership is expanding faster than population. Add in ride-hailing services, and the glut of motor vehicles makes it more difficult to give buses, bikes, and now e-scooters the road space they need to be speedy, safe, and comfortable." Rather than becoming less dependent on cars, cities have become filled with them. And, just as privatized forms of transportation have ballooned, so might private forms of parking. A civilization that has grown up with garages will not, it seems, dispense with them easily.

Nikil Saval writes about cities, architecture, and design. He is an editor of n+1 and the author of "Cubed: A Secret History of the Workplace."

Los Angeles Magazine, 2018

Los Angeles MAGAZINE

ART

Surprise Mermaids Have Appeared in One L.A. Laundromat

Artist Olivia Erlanger's sculptures fracture everyday reality

By Brittany Martin - September 12, 2018

Most people walk into a laundromat thinking they're going to do a routine chore. But what if laundry day became an opportunity to encounter something thought-provoking or surprising? Thanks to artist Olivia Erlanger's installation at the Laundry Zone in Arlington Heights, customers are being confronted with life-size mermaid tails emerging from certain machines.

"I hope that the mundanity of the everyday can be fractured for a moment," Erlanger says of the project.

Los Angeles Magazine, 2018

PHOTOGRAPH BY ILIA OVECHKIN

The show was organized by gallery and arts platform Mother Culture, which is based a few blocks from the laundromat. Erlanger had mentioned to Mother Culture founders Milo Conroy and Jared Madere that she was interested in working on a project around mermaid tails, building off a sculpture of large-scale forked snake tongues which she showed at Mathew gallery in New York in 2016.

It was Conroy and Madere who suggested the installation might find a home in the laundromat rather than a traditional gallery space. They pitched her on the idea in spring of this year, after stopping in to do their own laundry.

“My practice is extending into creating environments, so it felt like a natural experimentation to inhabit a public space,” Erlanger says.

Customers have been coming into the laundromat, not knowing to expect the art pieces, and reacting with curiosity, surprise, and delight, the artist reports–but mermaids inspire her for reasons that go beyond the merely whimsical.

“I’m interested in mermaids as a kind of pre-gender or genderless archetype, a representation of a chimeric existence that I feel we each take on as different environmental pressures effect a transformation of sorts,” she says. “When they are presented as female, mermaids bring up many questions of mobility, not only in a physical sense, but also ones around agency. Ariel, for example, gave up her voice to walk on land.”

Ida by Olivia Erlanger is currently on display at Laundry Zone, 1600 6th Ave., Arlington Heights.

Mousse Magazine

CONVERSATIONS

Garage: Luis Ortega Govela and Olivia Erlanger

Share

Luis Ortega Govela and Olivia Erlanger in conversation with Attilia Fattori Franchini

Attilia Fattori Franchini: In October 2018, MIT Press will publish *Garage*, an extended version of the book *Hate Suburbia* you self-published in 2016. How did the book first start?

Luis Ortega Govela: It was in 2012, and I wanted to get away from the London Olympics, so I did a road trip through the California desert up to Silicon Valley. When I got to San Francisco, I stayed with a friend in the Mission District who was then working at the Googleplex. She commuted in one of those Google buses that had not yet been protested. I took the trip with her one day listening to Lana del Rey's Born To die, there was this palpable tension between the city, the pastoral corporate tech campus, and the suburban homes surrounding the office park. These three zones were eerily connected, and illustrated uncomfortable truths about American life, just like Lana Del Rey in our soundtrack, you could feel the decline of a middle class and its culture. At the same time it was wild to think that the "tech revolution" had been planned and invented inside one of these prototypical patriarchal homes.

It was then that I became fascinated with the myth-fact that most technological advancements that were appearing on the market—also changing the ways we inhabit space and communicate—had emerged from a garage in a more sub-than-urban Bay Area. That tension simmered in my head for a while. When I went back to do my final year of diploma at the Architectural Association there was a big wave of encouragement to sort of deal with your hometown. Faculty always pushed students to concentrate on sites that had a connection to their past, so the obvious choice for me was Mexico. But my approach has always been sort of contrarian, reacting against my fathers, so to speak, so I sat down for my interview with Pier Vittorio Aureli and explained how I wanted to fuck with Americana, to challenge it by taking the garage and the foreclosure crisis and explode it as a cultural artifact with imperial colonial power. Expressing something about these structures could help get to the roots of the internet era. So I wrote a queer-Marxist thesis on the garage, a history of it, uncovering that Frank Lloyd Wright was the first architect to attach a garage to a home.

Around the same time, Olivia was doing a booth at Frieze London and needed a place to stay for a couple of nights. She arrived with a huge crate and stayed for two weeks. After that, we were talking on the phone every other day. Mostly about our teen angst, which turned into a collaborative editing project and our first book, *Hate Suburbia*, and now four years later the conversation has expanded into a film and a second book with MIT. The idea, coming as it does from two different vectors, really is about our friendship and this world we have constructed together, through years of hanging out.

When we were working on *Garage*, we both moved to Los Angeles and lived in the same city for the first time (we almost killed each other in those first few months, filming and trying to finish the book). If before, my writing was done from a critical distance sort of fed through the image presented in pop culture, this was written from within. I wrote most of the book in my husband's garage in Highland Park, which incidentally became the cover of the book. My husband sent the photo as a joke to my editor, and a focus group liked it so much that we were bound to that decision! It's sort of embarrassing to be on the cover of the book like a Kardashian, but ultimately it reinforces the main thing the book talks about, which is the distortion of the American value system of individuality. Maybe it's even meta.

Olivia Erlanger: My work investigates how the different kinds of collapse in economics and ecologies influence the recent fracturing of identity. In many ways I am exploring American folklore and symbols of the middle class. The garage as a subject came up through my personal history with the space. The garage is emblematic of my teen angst. At thirteen I stole my parents' car and drove through their garage door. There was a tin can in the back corner where I used to hide weed. I remember distinctly the feeling of anticipation and thrill of sneaking outside through the side door of the garage to smoke my first cigarette. It was the space in our home that I retreated to, to get away from my family, to disappear. I found refuge in the garage.

The garage is also a site of aspiration and consumption. In the bedroom community I was raised in, how many garage doors you had indicated your status. One-, two-, or three-car garages all had very different implications, and even as children we knew how to read this secret language. And in terms of a mythology, I think all American kids come preprogrammed with the Apple narrative, of Jobs and Woz tinkering away in their garage working toward a future no one but them could envision. These two self-made kid geniuses—and potentially cold-blooded narcissists—created the Ouroboros of devices that perpetuates a radical individuality, one that is without responsibility to a greater whole. If the garage gave birth to Apple, then its founders and the space of these technologies' gestation are in part responsible for our hyper-capitalist, consumerist culture.

In 2015 I opened the show *Dog beneath the Skin* at Balice Hertling's midtown Manhattan space. The show included a sculpture titled *Palimpsest*, which was a garage door with holes drilled through it. The show opened the same week as Luis's thesis presentation, and we realized the strength of our shared interests in class, identity, and architecture. Afterward we decided to write an essay, which turned into the first book we self-published, *Hate Suburbia*. From there I felt confident enough to cold call Roger Conover at MIT. I got his number off their website and left a voicemail: "Hi Mr. Conover, my name is Olivia Erlanger. I wrote a book with my friend on garages and I think it's pretty good." The rest is herstory!

AFF: Luis, you are an architect, artist, and critical writer, and Olivia, you are a visual artist and writer. How have your different backgrounds impacted the final outcome of *Garage*?

LOG: Actually I have a love-hate relationship to architecture. It's conservative, boring, straight, elitist, and for me things and my thinking really started with dance, choreography, social behaviors, design, film, music. Architecture is the last thing that came into the picture, but it was very clear that this was the framework that I could use to construct my practice. I always think about writing as the glue that ties all of these things together, and also allows for my frustrations with architecture to be expressed. To a certain degree it also allows for these ideas to exist outside the hands of private collectors. But maybe this is coming from spending time in China and romanticizing mass production.

OE: Art making and writing requires thinking about the production of images, space, and objects in relation to narrative or larger historical context. I write from a critical framework that is rooted in this ability to create, consume, or dissect objects and images, while Luis's background in architecture and art, predominantly installation, lends itself to a spatial history and typological reading of space that was integral to the construction of the argument. This is represented in the book through the images of work I made over the course of working on this project, and Luis's mood boards, which he uses in his personal practice.

Architecture has always been of interest to me and percolates throughout my work. I've built structures to house smaller objects, thinking of them as systems or scaffoldings for storytelling. I think this is in part because I was grew up with Randian narratives of the romantic idealism of the architect. My father studied at Ayn Rand's school of Objectivism, and *The Fountainhead* (1943) was one of the first books I remember connecting to.

That said, I think it is a strength of the project and of our friendship that we inevitably find a bridge between the vision of both artist and architect. The book is written from two perspectives: one inside the space, and one outside of it. This fluidity and permeability of perspective also allows us to tackle more difficult issues around identity and its construction, as our voice becomes a kind of melding of the two. Personally, my favorite kind of work moves between the rational and the subjective. I think the *Garage* project achieves this. Its strength is that it traverses many worlds and dialogues. If the garage is the most democratic space in the home, then the first book on it should be, too.

LOG: Working with Olivia is great. Sometimes with other architects I don't feel like sharing my ideas in such a way, but with Olivia it's different. It's also interesting in that she grew up in a Connecticut suburb, and I grew up in northern Mexico with a very clear image of America coming from a huge parabolic antenna attached to the pitched roof of my house. This satellite was feeding my home in Mexico the symbolic language of propaganda as reality—shortening the cultural distance between one country and the other but also functioning as a colonial tool of supremacy. I remember how glorified the United States seemed when I was a child—the economic stability, the cultural exports, the way of life. All of these were obviously facades and screens, veils of a national identity that were being consumed in the States but also in my home and many other homes in Mexico.

There was a distance imposed by language, but these images exported under the guise of entertainment made the border feel like a permeable thing. So I grew up with these two faces, one of America and one of Mexico, that are not cleanly separate but wrap around each other, poke through each other, dissolve into one another, as though the official body of the state were slowly revolving to face me. In a sense that's how I think about my collaboration with Olivia. It allows me to physicalize these two faces. The schizophrenia exists but I can disentangle mine onto hers. Hers is an experience of being inside this construct, while mine has always had the position of outside and against. This perspective shifted when I moved to Los Angeles last year to write this version of the book and make a film, and came to the realization that America has always been a culture of aliens.

AFF: *Garage* takes the architectural innovation of the garage as a symbol of the distortion of the deluded American dream, analyzing its genesis in Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture and its evolution through the American imaginary. Can you tell me more about this?

OE: As with everything, it begins with the attached garage. If Wright attached the garage to his Robie House, then it's impossible to separate progeny from progenitor. Wright was notorious for revising his personal history as well. The attached garage is imbued with this legacy of self-alteration and adaptation. The space naturally comes with a kind of transfiguration programmed within for others' use.

LOG: It's been a decade and a century since Frank Lloyd Wright erased the dates on his drawings for the Robie House and replaced them with a lie, obscuring the invention of the attached garage. The Emersonian ideals that Wright implemented in his designs reflected a transformation in American identity—one that was increasingly reliant on corporations and hyper-individuals. Since then, what one finds in the architecture of the deprogrammed garage is the ability to self-mythologize an obsession that has generated fictions more powerful than facts.

Within this short history one can trace a trajectory of capitalism as a force of expansion, and the garage functions as an apparatus for the spread of this ideology. These structures were produced as an extension of heavy lobbying from car manufacturers. To create a clientele, they had to make America into a motor-centric culture, and proposals for public transport were thwarted in favor of the car. This "neutral" container, created by Fordism, shifted the production of capital from industry toward a new frontier.

OE: I was indoctrinated with propaganda. America is the best country in the world, land of the free, home of the brave. Manifest destiny. With hard work and determination, you can achieve your dreams. And yet the reality of living here is that that dream has been deferred and perverted. Social mobility is increasingly difficult, and in the age of Twitter tyranny and alt facts, this legacy of transformation found within the garage has perpetuated the ability to distort reality toward that of self-indulgence rather than mutual reliance. The garage, as a temple to the self, is totemic in a society that thinks constantly of individual success over collective success. To access the dream, that of aspirational transformation, with the knowledge and experience of America's reality—this is the delusion we are referring to.

What I've found fascinating is the parasitic way that the architectural innovation of the garage evolved, first attaching itself to the Robie House, and then entering into the first tract housing developments through Joseph Eichler, to becoming a kind of appendix. It's so ubiquitous that people don't question the need for it; rather, it is as elemental to home design as a pitched roof. With models of car ownership shifting and the weatherization of the vehicle itself, the garage stands free, unoccupied. While usually empty, it is now occupied more by mythologies of self-realization and potential transcendence. It is a space waiting to be appropriated, and as with the little surviving civic space in most American cities and suburbs, it becomes occupied by escapists, idealists, and freaks.

LOG: The suburbs were impenetrable zones that talked a lot about freedom and democracy, but their reality was a trap for emotional and intellectual impoverishment. In both their physical and their figurative construction, they embodied the American dream and its wreckage. These were the lands of the individual, in which the outdated yet ever-present dream of owning a home came to exist. These homes proliferated as identical objects with unmitigated ordinariness, distinct from each other through a picket fence, presenting an ownership model that disbanded the collective into single families. Their banality is a rather disguised form of urbanism that creates a powerless and strange geopolitical location to inhabit and be active from, further dividing families into individuals. In those areas, identity is created through the consumption of goods. This is the American Delusion, a chronic disorder based on the distortion of a logic that was made for an expanded economic space and applied to life itself. This seemingly autonomous project has transformed into a state of serial narcissism and over-identification with one's occupation, obliterating any inclination toward the collective. The American mythos created by this delusion already burst a housing bubble; it's only a matter of time before the start-up economy, in which valuation is not based on real revenue, will go through its drought.

AFF: The book analyzes in particular the centrality of this annex space in the perpetuation of neoliberal narratives within the domestic. Two chapters in the book are titled "Domestication of the Garage" and "Garageification of Space."

LOG: The phrase "domestication of the garage" comes from a J. B. Jackson essay with the same title. His piece talks about the importance of looking at the everyday, the critique of which is the only way to understand a society. He describes the garage as an American vernacular. Jackson expressed an innate confidence in the ability of people of small means to make significant changes in their surroundings. But I have problem with this self-reinforcing narrative of the ordinary turned extra. In a way, choosing that title was a way of rewriting that history that Jackson lays out, or his position even, so in our version what is exposed is the dark history of how the garage came to be, rather than its status as cultural marker. We talk about how corporations and covenants created the racially secluded zone of the suburb.

The invention of the architectural technology of the garage and its spread as a suburban necessity just points at how shallow American history actually is. It also roots the white heterosexual male in the neoliberal narrative of the *ordinary* American that falls through the automatic garage doors with hopes and dreams to come out as a capitalist hero thirsty for liquidity. This is a poisonous myth that constantly gets mistaken for reality. The swindle is always in the *ordinary*; the self-made entrepreneur is never particularly self-made. The notion of an ordinary American as a white man is not the reality now, and it was not the case in the 1970s, either. But this pervasive narrative has turned the space into the id of America, in which the real personality of the home lives.

Garageification is a term I came up with in my thesis to talk about a suburban postindustrial society in which the language and aesthetic of home and work borrow from one another. It described the process of appropriating leftover industrial spaces as a means to define a new way of life, one that defied the system from which it originated. But it also points toward a larger symbiotic condition in which home and work entangle, blurring the lines between industrial and residential space.

OE: Domestication, the process by which you take a wild animal and tame it, is the same process that the garage underwent as it moved from a stable for a horse and carriage to a bedroom for the car. As we shifted away from agrarian lives with farms that would be tended to by many hands, to homes that did not necessarily need to be productive outside of sheltering the nuclear family, the needs of the individual superseded those of the collective. This perpetuates or potentially aids in the development of neoliberal ideologies of radical individualism. When you only have to tend to yourself, the narrowness of survival becomes tantamount. The garage itself is a blank canvas of sorts, a kind of haptic architecture waiting to amplify its users' projections. The ability to garageify space is best highlighted by Steve Jobs, who was known for his ability to distort reality. In this way the garage also teaches its users how to garageify other spaces, and the devices created within, mythologically born from the space, perpetuate this reality distortion.

AFF: Steve Jobs and Apple, HP, Gwen Stefani, Kurt Cobain, and the development of rock music are used as cases to investigate the strong correlation between counterculture and post-capitalism via the garage.

LOG: I like to think that this idea of being punk and its relationship with the mass became a vortex in a very exciting way. I mean, I can sit here and tell you about how counterculture is always transforming into the predominant mainstream production of capital and depress the shit out of you, but honestly everyone wants to dip their toes in the currents of the mainstream. What is important is how far away from yourself you will let them take you. I think it's incredible—I'm addicted to these moments by which things shift. Yes, maybe they make the system stronger or whatever, but these stories sketch out tactics, ways of being outside, carving out a new way of being even if for a short moment. The garage scratches the underbelly of the outside.

OE: We both started with the question: What is counterculture anymore? Identity has become so inextricably linked to commodity that people are their brand, and their lives function only as their brand narrative. Where can subversion, or an existence outside a constant stream to a public of intimate moments and "shared locations," live? With garage bands and surf and skate culture you can see how these small dialogues among kids, who band together to create new sounds or modes of transportation, become co-opted by the mainstream. The garage is the space to incubate and grow together. But what starts as fringe always moves toward the center. I see this accelerated through our interconnectivity, as we are increasingly more aware of and knowledgeable about each micro shift in culture. It feels as if culture is ever differentiating, becoming increasingly more nuanced just to become commodified again through our participation in the production of these miniscule boundaries.

AFF: *Garage* is also a documentary film, premiering in October at the ICA London. What is its relationship with the book?

LOG: Adaptation—a change in environment and context. We began filming while we were writing the book, so the processes influenced each other. The garage is such a cultural construction, with cameos in film and TV, and presenting itself as a central space for deviation in American mythology. This multiplication of an icon, far from diluting its cultic power, rather increases its fame. So it's interesting to then document and record how that image has influenced the contemporary American psyche. What's blown me away is how most of the people we've talked to have connections to the historical characters we sketched out in the book: a power to distort reality. But honestly being able to spend time with people who are actually still using their garages for other purposes—starting businesses or feminist permaculture movements, finding ways of surviving—was inspirational to see and be surrounded by while writing. It cast a positive light on what in my mind was a defunct space that was perpetuating a culture of despair. Amid the cheesiness, there seems to be hope.

OE: What the book achieves so perfectly is a nonlinear history of the garage. As we discussed turning the book into a documentary film, it was clear that the most important contribution a documentary could make would be to make visible contemporary users of the space. I realize the strength of this narrative is as much within the people who use the space as in the architecture itself, and suggested the film be character driven. We set out to outline seven archetypes of garage users. In the end we found subjects whose identities and lives are more complex and thrilling than either of us could have ever imagined.

The people we interviewed, our garage-subjects, contest the idea of the suburbs as a predominantly white, heteronormative space. Neither of us is charmed by the current nostalgia for a 1950s *Leave It to Beaver* suburbia, and in fact it never existed. We are representing complex men and women who, rather than be seduced by the American dream, have to engage with the delusion for their own survival. They are struggling with pressures we all face, financial and familial, that are extremely relatable and sometimes disturbing. The documentary dives into the multiplicity of identity and touches on pertinent themes around religion, family, feminism—all by just asking, what is in your garage?

AFF: What's been your favorite part of the entire project?

LOG: Focusing on the things that I believe in.

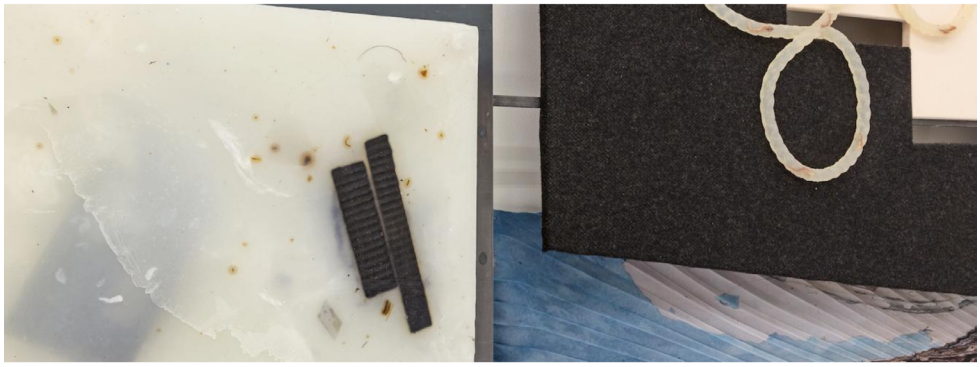
OE: This project hijacked my life, and thank god! I moved across the country to finish both the book and the documentary, and started working in an entirely new medium, film. My favorite part of the book when we explicate the Conspiracy of the Garage.

Frieze

20 JUL 2017

World Premiere of BMW Open Work at Frieze London 2017

Olivia Erlanger to create a new multimedia artwork, for the inaugural BMW Open Work curated by Attilia Fattori Franchini



BMW and Frieze enhance their long-term partnership with a new artistic initiative to be premiered at Frieze London 2017. Curated by **Attilia Fattori Franchini** and emerging out of Frieze Sounds, BMW Open Work brings together art, design and technology in pioneering multi-platform formats, inspired by BMW technologies. The artist chosen to create the first BMW Open Work for Frieze London 2017 is **Olivia Erlanger**.

The Concept
Curated by Attilia Fattori Franchini, BMW Open Work annually invites an artist to develop a visionary project that creates an immersive experience for the viewer. Drawing inspiration from BMW design, engineering and technology, commissioned artists will consider current and future technologies as tools for innovation and artistic experimentation. Premiering annually at Frieze London, the artwork will have the potential to unfold across physical spaces, such as the fair's BMW Lounge and Courtesy Car Service, as well as digital platforms.

The initiative's title 'Open Work' is inspired by Umberto Eco's literary essay 'Opera Aperta' (1962) which proposes the idea that artworks are constituted in part by the public or by chance, and are therefore open to a wide range of interpretations.

Franchini has selected international artist Olivia Erlanger for the inaugural BMW Open Work commission.

About the artist
American artist Olivia Erlanger (born 1990) is the first artist to be commissioned for BMW Open Work. Known for her sculptures, Erlanger's work has been exhibited in a variety of solo and group shows. She recently coauthored *Hate Suburbia* with Luis Ortega Govela, the second edition of which is forthcoming in Fall 2018. Titled Body Electric, her concept for BMW Open Work proposes an immersive, sensory exploration of natural phenomena and their relation to humankind's technological achievements.

'As humans begin a mutative synthesis with our machines, *Body Electric* considers the changing relationship that we have to the environment, as our embodied experience of the "natural" becomes increasingly mediated and distorted by objects of our own design', Erlanger said of her creative approach. She is now beginning to develop and produce her commission for BMW Open Work, which will be premiered at Frieze London in October 2017.

About the Partnership
Further information on BMW Open Work here.

OLIVIA ERLANGER

BY CLÉMENT DELÉPINE

In 1972, the English novelist J.G. Ballard journeyed through Germany. Driving an old Mercedes along the Rhine River, he explored the suburbs which started sprouting up shortly after the war ended. Passing the opulent houses and the cars bought to match, the motorboats sitting on their trailers, Ballard couldn't help but notice the obsessive cleanliness of these areas. Not a cigarette butt to be found on the sidewalk. It was as if a leaf falling from a tree might have been too much of a nuisance.

Fascinated by this world under control, where happiness seemed to be replicable and consumerism limitless, he imagined the future as a suburb of Düsseldorf.

Born in New York in 1990, the American artist Olivia Erlanger partially grew up in suburbia. Her memories are tainted with feelings of alienation and isolation in an area where the lack of culture was only matched by the lack of people. Her work investigates how the different patterns of collapse in economics or ecology systemically influenced the recent fracturing of middle class identity.

In the context of her 2015 exhibition *Dog Beneath the Skin*, at Balice Hertling's project space in New York, Erlanger installed a full-size garage door in the gallery space. Facing the entrance, the work appeared like a portal to an intimate dimension, reminiscent of Dan Graham's *Homes for America*, a series of photos documenting serial houses in New Jersey and Staten Island, that examined the permeable frontier separating the private from the public.

Titled *Palimpsest*, evoking something reused or altered but still bearing visible traces of its earlier form, this work questioned whether the garage attached to suburban houses could function as a place producing discourse and identity. Beyond its primary function, Erlanger identifies the garage as a territory where one can potentially express his or her idiosyncrasy by rehearsing with a punk band, playing video games, maybe running a gallery, or inventing the computer.

In fact, in the past two decades, Silicon Valley, start-up culture, and MTV have consecrated the garage as the true birthplace of American genius.

A common friend, knowing their shared interest for urban problematics and the avatars of domesticity, sent a photograph of *Palimpsest* to the architect Luis Ortega Govela and encouraged him and Erlanger to exchange ideas. This dialogue led them to co-write *Hate Suburbia: The Conspiracy of the Garage*, a book published in 2016 which retraces the history of the garage and analyzes its influence on the fabrication of a cultural identity.

Their research identifies Frank Lloyd Wright as the first architect to attach the garage to a home, specifically for his client Frederick C. Robie, whose eponymous house was built in 1910. Now a landmark, this house epitomizes the Prairie Style, the first architectural style considered uniquely American, and essentially introduces the concept of suburbia in general.

In his research, Ortega Govela found that the footprint of the Robie House was later used by the real estate developer Joseph Eichler to construct a lot of similar houses across California. Erlanger, whose work circles around network culture and the use of digital technologies, became enthralled when they discovered that it was within the footprint of one of these houses that Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak assembled the first personal computer and founded Apple.

CURA, 2017

CURA, 2017

The myth surrounding Jobs was that he had the ability to distort reality. One of the original members of the Apple Macintosh design team coined a term to describe this ability: *reality distortion field*, or RDF. Jobs, with a subtle mix of charm, charisma, and bravado, could notoriously make an audience, as well as himself, believe that what seemed impossible was in fact possible. Through RDF, he could generate desire and build support for his ideas.

Erlanger later argued that all the tools Steve Jobs ended up creating allow us to further distort reality, and observed that the financial demise of the garage is now propagated through technology that was created within it. The tools allowing for the digitization of currency which were created in a garage turned out to be instrumental in manufacturing a massive crisis of the housing market and home ownership.

Erlanger developed this reflection in the work *I Am No Viper, Yet I Feed*, a sound piece created for her 2016 exhibition, *The Oily Actor*, at What Pipeline in Detroit.

Programmed to pick up data from the real estate valuation website Zillow, the work collects daily the five most recent data points (i.e. number of rooms or square footage) for foreclosed homes within the boundaries of the city where it is installed. These data points then speed up or slow down a musical playlist of twelve songs, each of them released on a year that legislation was passed to indirectly facilitate the 2008 financial crisis.

Titled after William Shakespeare's play *Pericles* and referring to the incestuous relationship between King Antiochus and his daughter, *I Am No Viper, Yet I Feed* denounces the cannibalistic nature of capitalism as a system eating its young. Automatically adjusting to the area where the work is exhibited, the program translates physical and long-lasting space into something ephemeral, therefore echoing the instability of home ownership.

Translation of materials, space, and data, are recurring interests in Erlanger's practice. Data translation was further explored in the work *April Heat*, shown in her 2016 exhibition, at Mathew NYC, *Dripping Tap*.

The sculptures, office-like filing cabinets meant to preserve both private information and public records, are partially cut out to expose their components. These do not emit sound, however, they have a breathing mechanism and use the same engineering at the core of *I Am No Viper, Yet I Feed*. Although the principle doesn't change, this time the program is calibrated on the price of oil and the red light emanating from the sculpture adjusts to the variations of its market value.

In 1973, a year after Ballard's exploration of the German suburbs, the world's economy was shaken by its first oil crisis. It led the writer to conclude that the American dream "ran out of gas" and that the one certainty about the future was that it would be boring. Ironically, for the following generation of suburban teenagers, the sole means to escape boredom was, as Erlanger would put, "maybe the inside of a car. Driving somewhere and getting high or driving somewhere to get away from parents, teachers, and ultimately ourselves."

In whatever way, the system doesn't let go. Addressing the cyclicality of capitalism, Olivia Erlanger often compares this phenomenon to an *ouroboros*, a symbol dating as far back as Egyptian iconography, which depicts a serpent eating its own tail.

In *Dripping Tap*, the visitors were also confronted to a pair of forked tongues coming off the wall. Maximized vipers tongues, petrified yet intimidating, sensing their surroundings, possibly for a prey to catch, just like snakes use their tongues for olfactive purposes. Titled *Slow Violence*, this sculpture reminds us that the ferocity of a system might be discreet, that fury can be quiet, but mostly that if the threat is only coming slowly, it surely keeps getting closer.

Slow Violence, 2016 (opposite page) Sideways Time, 2016 (p. 110) Raft for Lotophagi, 2016 (p. 112) Raft for The Doll in Glass, 2016 (p. 113) All images Courtesy: the artist

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