

MIT List Visual Arts Center  
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[listart.mit.edu](http://listart.mit.edu)

## Carissa Rodriguez: The Maid

May 18–July 29, 2018



ALL IMAGES: *The Maid*, video still, 2018, 4K video with sound, 12:22 minutes  
Courtesy the artist and Karma International, Zurich/Los Angeles



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# Carissa Rodriguez: The Maid

Carissa Rodriguez examines the material and social conditions in which art is produced and reveals how the canonical figure of the artist is reflected in—and reproduced by—the products of her labor. At the center of Rodriguez's exhibition is *The Maid* (2018). This video work follows a selection of American artist Sherrie Levine's *Newborn* sculptures throughout the course of a day in various residences, private and institutional, from New York to Los Angeles. Levine made the works in crystal and black cast glass in the early 1990s, molding them after Constantin Brancusi's marble and bronze sculptures of the same name from 1915 and 1920. By featuring not only Levine's sculptures, already appropriations of another artist's work, but also capturing their contemporary environments, Rodriguez engages the conditions and settings in which art circulates, proposing that the futures of artworks are inherently speculative.

Taking its title from a 1913 short story by Robert Walser about a devoted maid searching for a lost child who has been put under her care, the film similarly follows its subject toward a resolution that is more cyclical than gratifying. After searching around the world for the child for over twenty years, the maid in Walser's story finally finds her in Paris—and immediately dies from joy. The enigmatic story becomes a parable that frames the exhibition, as it tackles the complexity of care-based relationships forged through time and follows Rodriguez's ongoing artistic exploration of subjecthood.

Another recent work, *The Girls* (1997–2018) revisits hours of Hi8 video footage captured in a Chinatown park in the 1990s, when Rodriguez moved to the New York City neighborhood as an artist in her twenties. Catching the eye of several young girls playing outside, Rodriguez trains her lens on them for an extended duration. *The Girls* crystallizes the proto-digital era the artist was working in and casts the children—now young adults—as unwitting protagonists who mark the passage of time. The video further captures a moment in a neighborhood that has since undergone radical transformation by developers and real-estate markets, as well as a generation on the cusp of new technologies that would make the visual documentation of everyday life an integral aspect of living.

A series of silver gelatin prints titled *All the Best Memories are Hers* (2018) serve as "portraits" of embryos taken with an EmbryoScope. The resulting images are created from a hybrid of digital and analogue techniques. Whether used for assisted reproduction or stem-cell research, the embryo holds a legally fraught status between "person" and "property" as its regenerative potential is increasingly advanced by biotech industries.

Together, the works speak to notions of time: suspended, potential, and actualized. By placing technologically mediated biological time alongside the proposed eternal life of the art object, Rodriguez finds momentary intersections in the disparate qualities and conditions of human and non-human "life," renewing meaning in both.

Reference Gallery May 18–July 29, 2018

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Carissa Rodriguez (b. 1970, New York) lives and works in New York.

*Carissa Rodriguez: The Maid* is presented in collaboration with SculptureCenter, New York, and curated by Ruba Katrib. The Cambridge presentation is organized by Henriette Huldisch, Director of Exhibitions & Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center. The video commission, *The Maid*, is underwritten by Valeria Napoleone XX SculptureCenter.

## PUBLIC PROGRAMS

### Public Reception

Thursday, May 17, 6–8 PM

**All programs are free and open to the general public. RSVPs are required.**

For more information about upcoming events and to RSVP, visit: [listart.mit.edu/events-programs](http://listart.mit.edu/events-programs).



## SUPPORT

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