

## Olivia Jia *Perimeter*

Margot Samel is pleased to present *Perimeter*, a display of paintings by the Philadelphia-based painter Olivia Jia (b.1994, Chicago IL). This is Jia's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

Painted in what the artist has described as a 'nocturnal' palette, these works have a somnambulant quality, appearing as if scenes encountered in a state between sleep and waking. Each is constructed around a tableau that the artist has arranged, often incorporating material collected by herself, or in the possession of family members. Ideas of kinship and heritage – in this instance informing Jia's own diasporic identity, as the child of Chinese immigrants to the United States – are negotiated through the constellations of elements she gathers together in her compositions. Staged in a studio workspace, depicted either late at night, or in an imagined facsimile of that location, these paintings act as tools with which a greater degree of self-recognition might be arrived at.

It could be said that our sense of belonging is partly understood in relation to our belongings, and the belongings of those closest to us. This is a principle that Jia employs to reconcile personal narratives with broader cultural dynamics. Artefacts resembling family heirlooms, lost during periods of political upheaval, are sought out in the annals of art history. Genres, be that of the Still-life, Huaniaohua, the Chinese tradition of 'Bird and Flower' painting, or American Naturalist illustration become prospective frameworks to be infused with anecdote or biographical allusions, and mined for accidentally shared motifs. What is being honed in these paintings is an iconographic system, one that reflects on the points at which individual experience intersects with collective accounts.

Images, carefully folded for storage, and books left open at resonant pages, frequently act as framing devices within Jia's compositions. These devices draw our attention to the mechanics of printed reproduction, and its capacity as an authoritative repository for knowledge. What they also highlight, however, is how affect can be produced through combinations of such factual information. The sombrely lit surfaces upon which these objects and images are depicted are at once tabletops or pinboards upon which objects might be placed, and psychic spaces onto which desire might be projected. Here, the act of painting itself is presented as analogous to the nature of Jia's arrangements of collected material: as it too constitutes an archival structure in which the objective properties of documents and the subjective nature of memory are able to coalesce.

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- Neil Clements

# Margot Samel

Olivia Jia (b. 1994, Chicago, IL) lives and works in Philadelphia, PA. She received a BFA from the University of the Arts in 2017. Honors include the Ellen Battell Stoeckel Fellowship to attend the Yale Norfolk Summer School of Art in 2015 and the President's Award at the University of the Arts. She has recently exhibited at venues including Margot Samel in New York, Yee Society in Hong Kong, Nathalie Karg in New York, Mana Contemporary in Chicago, Dongsomun in Seoul, South Korea and Commonweal Gallery, Tiger Strikes Asteroid Marginal Utility, New Boone, and Space 1026 in Philadelphia, PA. She recently had a solo exhibition at Workplace, London. She has an upcoming solo exhibition at 87 Gallery, Hull, UK.

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