

Art Basel 2019 | Statements

Hall 2.1 | Stand N2

For this year's Statements sector, Galerie Max Mayer is pleased to present a new five-channel video by **Melanie Gilligan** (b. 1979 in Toronto; lives and works in New York), which is embedded in a context-specific installation.

Gilligan works in a variety of media including video, performance and installation. She sees critical writing as an essential part of her practice, contributing to publications such as *Texte zur Kunst*, *Mute* and *Grey Room*. Her long-form video works investigate sociopolitical conditions, especially the systemic relationships between labor, economy and politics, as well as the individual's role within this network of relationships. Gilligan's focus is to represent aspects of the capitalist economy through fictional situations. These concerns have been a long term inquiry for Gilligan, and now result in a new body of work for which the artist studies socioeconomic as well as political processes in specific U.S. communities and from this develops fictional scenarios. For the series' first part titled *Crowds*, a five-channel video installation, the artist focuses on the service industry in Orlando.

The city of Orlando and its economy reliant on low wage service work reflect changing socioeconomic structures throughout the U.S. and elsewhere. The living and working conditions in Orlando are intolerable for the majority of people living there: If you make a low income wage in Orlando, you must navigate spaces picked to pieces by entertainment behemoths, littered with box stores and fast food chains, never planned to incorporate normal daily working routines, but only made for tourism of bought experiences. The city's crisis of low income housing, its landscape of streets built for cars and not people, and its network of private spaces make life on a low income much harder. Gilligan spent time in Orlando learning about its social and economic conditions and contradictions. These observations were transformed into fictional scenes that play out across the city. In these scenes, Irene, the fictional protagonist of the film loses her job and then takes on a series of different temporary job positions within the city's service industry landscape.

The artist's concerns presented in the film are reflected in the site- and context-specific installation: the interiors of the service work sector at Art Basel are incorporated into the installation in which the individual videos are embedded. Furniture such as counters, café tables and chairs, are brought into relation with the working environments depicted in the film. Such interwovenness of the fictional and the real is also made apparent through Gilligan's use of the pattern of Orlando's public transport seating, which appears in the film, printed on fabric that covers the chairs in her installation.

Melanie Gilligan is interested in different moments and modalities in people's lives: how specific problems they face relate to a larger picture of the whole, and how their lives are impacted by systemic forces which are collective and social in nature, e.g. economic, technological, medical, social and governmental forces. However, what Gilligan aims to show are social systems how they relate to individuals such as Irene.