

Exhibition Press Release

21 March 2014

The UIC School of Architecture presents an exhibition by Molly Hunker, recipient of the 2013–2014 Douglas A. Garofalo Fellowship:

Myth

April 1–May 10, 2014

Public exhibition opening on Tuesday, April 1, 5:30pm

Exhibition on view Monday through Friday, 9am–5pm

Molly Hunker's fellowship research during the 2013–2014 academic year has centered on kitsch artifacts and their potential to recalibrate contemporary notions of atmosphere and engagement. Hunker's culminating fellowship project, *Myth*, focuses specifically on the religious genre of the home shrine, re-envisioning the richly decorative and kitsch assembly through the lens of the architectural installation.

The extraordinary variety of home shrines, as well as the variety of objects and materials that make them up, narrates a story of relationships and beliefs unique to each creator. Historically, home shrines have been constructed with objects that are handmade, found, recycled, inexpensively purchased, or passed down from the older generation. The artistic production of the shrine tends to be read as kitsch, but it is based on a sincere decoration strategy in which display and adornment have no limit, for it is a sign of the devotion of the family.

In addition to questions of quantity (the belief that the more objects employed, the stronger the power of devotion) and visual intensity (achieving a huge visual payoff from an inexpensive kitsch sensibility), home shrines describe an active relationship between ornamentation, object-hood and the architectural interior. The interior architectural space of the shrine becomes defined not by the envelope containing it, but rather, by the collection and accumulation of decorated objects therein. Not unlike the excessively adorned interiors of Baroque and Rococo religious spaces, home shrines utilize accretive ornamentation for more than just mere decoration—it is employed for emotional and spiritual power and devotion.

Myth uses the decorative prayer candle as the primary object through which to explore how home shrines can provoke new understandings of visual and atmospheric opulence in the architectural interior. The project suspends hundreds of handmade wax container-candles on cotton wicks, creating a semi-enclosed shrine-space by the accumulation of the colorful objects. While the overhead candles are geometrically simple, the candles closer to the ground are increasingly articulated with a grotesque featuring strategy inherent to the transformation of wax from liquid to solid. This articulation technique partners with a gradient of increasing color saturation and shimmering cosmetic in order to engage with a kitsch sensibility that provokes greater emotional resonance with visitors.

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Reflecting on her experience as the first Garofalo Fellow at UIC, Hunker states, *“I feel tremendously lucky to have been given the opportunity to develop my research in the context of the inaugural Douglas A. Garofalo Fellowship. It is humbling to be supported by so many members of the Chicago architectural community who knew and loved Doug. The UIC School of Architecture has developed a fellowship environment that would be a productive place for anyone in their early academic career.*

“I have, at once, felt supported, challenged, encouraged, and motivated. It has been an important year—perhaps the most productive of my career so far—as the fellowship platform has allowed me to launch a body of work and research that has already proven to be profoundly valuable for my developing practice and early academic career. I have learned so much, and I am grateful for the experience.”

About Molly Hunker

Molly Hunker grew up in Wyoming. She graduated from Dartmouth College with a degree in urban geography and studio art. Later, Hunker earned a Master of Architecture degree from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Molly Hunker has worked for architecture studios and art workshops in Seattle and Los Angeles, and in 2010 co-founded the design collaborative SPORTS with Greg Corso. She previously taught at UCLA and Woodbury University.

About the Douglas A. Garofalo Fellowship

Named in honor of architect and educator Doug Garofalo (1958–2011), the Douglas A. Garofalo Fellowship is a nine-month teaching fellowship that provides emerging designers the opportunity to teach studio and seminar courses in the undergraduate and graduate programs and conduct independent design research. The fellowship also includes a public lecture at the Graham Foundation and an exhibition at the UIC School of Architecture in the spring.

The Douglas A. Garofalo Fellowship is made possible through the generous support of individual and corporate donations, as well as grants from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and the Nathan Cummings Foundation.

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