

**PRESSBOOK**

Iván ARGOTE

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## A Shrine to the Sweet Potato Inaugurates Galerie Perrotin's Massive Lower East Side Space



Portrait of Iván Argote by Claire Dorn. Courtesy of Galerie Perrotin.

After moving out of its Upper East Side home this past December, Galerie Perrotin—like many of its peers—is now resettling on New York's Lower East Side. The new location, at 130 Orchard Street, is a 25,000 square-foot, five-floor property that formerly housed the fabric company S. Beckenstein Inc. (The gallery plans to maintain the original, historically rich facade.) The growing Perrotin empire also has locations in Paris, its formal headquarters, as well as in Hong Kong and Seoul—and there are plans to open a Tokyo outpost in the coming months, motivated in part by one of the most prominent artists it represents, Takashi Murakami. Perrotin first came across the available Orchard Street site in 2015, when the gallery used the space for a one-month pop-up screening of *ELLIS*, a short film that artist JR made in collaboration with Robert DeNiro. Perrotin jumped at the chance for a fresh exhibition context for its roster, an eclectic group that includes KAWS, Hans Hartung,

and Pierre Soulages.

The space debuted last week with a politically aware, technically impressive solo exhibition from Colombian artist Iván Argote, recently shortlisted for the Future Generation Art Prize. The centerpiece is a film in seven chapters, *As far as we could get* (2017), for which Argote visited two cities—Palembang, Indonesia, and Neiva, Colombia—which are antipodes, located on exact opposite ends of the Earth.



Iván Argote, *As Far As We Could Get*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Perrotin.

He trained his camera on scenes from everyday life and sought out individuals in each city who were born on November 9, 1989, the day the Berlin Wall fell. (There's also ample footage of basketball games taking place in both places.) "My idea was to prove that this idea of the 'other' is pointless," he says, "that even if you go to the farthest place from where you are now, life's pretty much the same."

On the back wall Argote has hung a series of concrete sculptures that he terms "excerpts," meant to resemble segments of walls. They're each covered in text—bearing messages like "we didn't go to find otherness, but rather sameness"—that calls back to themes in the film. Nearby are several collages that sample historical propaganda slogans. And in the center of the gallery space is a giant aluminum sculpture of a sweet potato, adorned with glimmering gold leaf.

Why this particular vegetable? "Instead of using, for example, an apple," Argote says, alluding to the fruit as a symbol for knowledge, "I wanted to show this root—which is weak, imperfect." The sculpture points to the sweet potato's South American origins, its importation and shipping across the globe, and its role in helping various nations out of poverty. "It's like a kind of divinity, a Saint Potato," he says with a smile.



Installation view of Iván Argote, “La Venganza Del Amor,” 2017. Photo by Guillaume Ziccarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Perrotin.

For Argote, it’s a unique honor to be inducting Perrotin’s splashy new Lower East Side home. The 33-year old artist first met owner Emmanuel Perrotin when he was a student—Argote boldly introduced himself at an opening. He’s been showing with the gallery since 2009. “They have such great artists, such a great history,” Argote reflects, “and being included and spotlighted in this history is flattering.”

—Casey Lesser