

ARTNEWS

ARTISTS — HABITAT

L.A. HABITAT: LARA SCHNITGER

BY Katherine McMahon POSTED 06/10/16

L.A. Habitat is a weekly series that visits with 16 artists in their workspaces around the city.

This week's studio: Lara Schnitger; Glasell Park, Los Angeles. "We bought this building 5 years ago," Lara Schnitger told me one afternoon in her expansive Los Angeles studio. "It was owned by a pavement company. They were driving trucks in here—the floor was really dirty." The artist's large industrial space is surrounded by those of other artists; the back of her studio is designated as a workspace for her husband Matthew Monahan, while the front of the building, once occupied by the pavement company's offices, now functions as studio space for a handful of artists and designers. "In L.A., there's not much of a community, so we wanted to create a bit of that. You're not too alone, but you can be alone if you want to. It's nice if you ever feel like showing your work to somebody, or if you ever want to talk about it. It's a great mix of all of us here together."

Schnitger, originally from Haarlem, Netherlands, has lived in Los Angeles for 15 years. Within that period of time, Schnitger has noticed a number of changes, including the recent influx of museums and galleries. "There's a lot more going on now," she said enthusiastically. One of the benefits to living in the city's subtropical climate is the omnipresent sunshine, which, besides making for agreeable weather, has helped to curb Schnitger's electricity bills and carbon footprint. "We put in solar panels recently, which was a nightmare to install, but we're completely solar-powered now. Because it's an industrial building, you need to pay in an industrial way. I drive an electric car, which I also charge here. We use a lot of sun energy here. It's just the way the city works." Before moving her workspace to Glasell Park, Schnitger maintained a studio on Ford street, which is located downtown in the city's Skid Row neighborhood. She tends to maintain a 9-5 schedule. "My most creative, boldest moves always happen around 2 or 3 p.m. Maybe that's because I'm warmed up."



Lara Schnitger in her Glasell Park studio.

©KATHERINE MCMAHON

At the time of my visit, Schnitger was working on an installation for the then-upcoming "Revolution in the Making: Abstract Sculpture by Women 1947-2016" show at Hauser Wirth & Schimmel. "I'm not 100% sure what I'm doing for the show yet. I might end up working in the space and making a piece within the space," she said, adding that she always maps out the size of her designated space before beginning new work. "A few of my works are separately made, but the space directs their size." (Her piece *Folie a Deux*, crafted from nylon, chopsticks and wood, debuted in the show earlier this year)

Schnitger was also preparing for a trip to Cambodia the next day. "I'm trying to finish stuff up before I leave. When you're in the flow of making certain pieces, it's very hard to pick that up again." On the other hand, she was looking forward to experiencing a feeling of creative refreshment upon her return. "You're not cluttered by old ideas. You feel detached from the work that you're making," she explained, adding that the trip might cause her to see things in a new way.

Below, a look around Schnitger's Glasell Park studio.



Schnitger in her studio. "I see them as parasites sometimes, especially some of these works made from stockings. They can't really stand on their own; they need the space to live in. Without this space, they'd just be like jellyfish on the floor."



A building mockup created for Schnitger's first solo show in France, "Suffragette City," at the Frac Champagne-Ardenne in Reims. "The show was based on female rights. The ground floor held all the sculptures, while all the Slut-sticks were saved for the top floor. We did a whole procession. A lot of this show was inspired by the time I spent protesting on the street."



A storage room in Schnitger's studio.



A portion of Schnitger's textile collection, which she has built up over the years. "I'm also really into resin and stencils right now, which I use for the quilts. I get most of my fabrics downtown—it's a great area for textiles. Sometimes I even find them at thrift stores."



More fabric and materials from Schnitger's collection.



Schnitger's studio in Glasell Park.



"The tension is spread across so many points. It's very delicate," she said of her stocking works, adding, "If you put too much tension on them, the stockings will run, and I'll have to replace them."