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MARGARET CARRIGAN  
MARTA RINIKER-RADICH: "EVERY  
HOME A FORTRESS EVERY HEARTH  
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NOVEMBER 2, 2016

# Marta Riniker-Radich Makes Her US Debut at the Swiss Institute

BY MARGARET CARRIGAN | NOVEMBER 02, 2016

Just days before the highly divisive 2016 US election comes to a head, Swiss artist Marta Riniker-Radich is debuting a body of new work that says to hell with politics all together. "Every home a fortress every hearth a blossom" — which is the artist's first solo show in the US and opens at the Swiss Institute in New York on November 2 — takes as its theme the rural American anti-government organizations that have become increasingly visible over the past several years. Through her hallmark vibrant colored pencil drawings, as well as sculptures and architectural mediations in the gallery space (such as filters over the windows), the artist explores the anxieties and aspirations that fuel American secessionist impulses.

Although born in the Swiss capital of Bern in 1982, Riniker-Radich spent her formative years on a US military base in Panama, thanks to her stepfather who was a teacher there, before returning to French-speaking Switzerland when she was 12. Her brief stint as an "Army Brat" comes through in the perfectly perspectival architectural spaces rendered in her small drawings, which depict bunker-like rooms colored a military-drab green and gray. These spaces starkly contrast the flat foreground objects they contain: bright, ornate frosted cupcakes and painted eggs that ooze delicacy and refinery. The sweetness of the desserts and the fragile, progenitive quality of the eggs evoke a sense of tenderness amidst the armory of their backgrounds, perhaps to remind us of the comforts of home and the niceties of life worth protecting.

The question that permeates the show, however, is what exactly do we need protection from? Although Riniker-Radich doesn't define the threat, you get the sense that the enemy may as well be everywhere. The artist installed frosted contact film to the gallery's windows sizable street-level back windows to block out the outside world — a detail that may be lost on new or unobservant visitors to the gallery, but that undeniably changes the feel of the space. DIY water filtration systems ominously hang by climbing straps from the ceiling throughout the gallery, slowly dripping Hudson River water through a ceramic filter, reminding you that freedom from the collective comes with a price — like basic municipal utilities.

The artist takes isolationism beyond the infrastructural to the corporeal with her custom-fabricated earplugs — a staple for avid gun users — cast in epoxy resin specifically to her ear shape in fleshy hues of pink and red. They are arranged in small groupings throughout the exhibition, but the most striking cluster of them is in the gallery's preexisting fireplace: What would be the communal hearth of the room where everyone comes together to talk and commingle is now cold and empty save for the small ear plugs that are designed to keep out the voices of others.