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Critics' Picks: Ariana Papademetropoulos at Wilding Cran Gallery

by Natasha Young
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Ariana Papademetropoulos, *spirit of Elvis be my sugar daddy*, 2017, oil on canvas, 60 x 60 inches.

LOS ANGELES
Ariana Papademetropoulos
WILDING CRAN GALLERY
1700 South Santa Fe Avenue Unit 460
September 16–October 26, 2017

Los Angeles–based artist Ariana Papademetropoulos recasts the cult of domesticity as hallucinatory fantasy: Watermarks tear Lynchian portals into her oil-on-canvas re-creations of photos depicting retro-kitsch interiors. A bedroom suffocated with royal-purple floral fabric appears in psychedelic relief in Best thing about not dating a scientologist is that I can do acid again (all works 2017). A bile-green aperture is superimposed over a bathroom with gaudy wallpaper, golden drapery, and a porcelain throne—rather unlike the one Presley died in—for 'spirit of Elvis be my sugar daddy.' In this lineup, Holy Water is a breath of fresh air: The watermark disintegrates the walls of a grand venue, opening it up to a misty mountainscape; chandeliers hang from the blue gauze sky; the empty theater seats are turned away from the natural splendor.

On a platform upholstered in plush magenta, Women Running Away From Houses displays an array of gothic romance novels whose covers portray women escaping from mansions, villas, and castles. A shrunken doorway in the gallery leads into a space reminiscent of a bedroom (Secret of Pale Lover), evoking the illusions of growth and shrinkage endemic to any acid trip. Here is a giant tennis racquet, a leveled bed with swan-shaped posts and mussed satin sheets, and a tiny chair. A ladder leads not to a window or an exit but to a vanity mirror, and a vintage exercise bike is poised near a TV encased in mossy plastic stone—a nod to Pippa Garner's absurdist installation Thoughtspace, 1984. The tube plays a film of the artist exploring a mansion in a giant hamster ball. As Richard Lovelace wrote: "Stone walls do not a prison make / Nor iron bars a cage."