



Miles Coolidge: *From the Home of Alex and Joan Utas*, 1992, C-print, 42 by 65 inches; at Casey M. Kaplan.

Miles Coolidge at Casey M. Kaplan

Cruising down any suburban street on a Sunday, you're bound to see a typical scene: kids wheeling around on bikes or tricycles, teens and adults washing the family car and doing yardwork. The hub of activity is usually the garage, with its door yawning open, displaying a trove of belongings that presents a voyeuristic temptation. Peering into someone else's domain creates a sense of intimacy, albeit false.

In his first New York solo show, Miles Coolidge taps into that sense of false intimacy in his 1992 series of large, lush photographs of garage interiors. Presented here were three photos each of two very different L.A. garages (their left, center and right walls); one garage

belongs to a single guy in his 30s (Haig Balian), the other to a middle-aged couple (Alex and Joan Utas). Each garage seems to provide a sort of composite sketch of the owners. The spic-and-span white garage of Balian reflects a highly organized, even obsessive person. All the neatly categorized cans and gadgets on the utility shelves are arranged so that the labels and brand names are visible. Sports equipment and jerseys are proudly displayed. (Apparently, while Coolidge was taking the photos, Balian removed the cover on his jet ski. One photo shows the jet ski full on, while in another, its still-covered nose peeks in from the side.) Balian is a handyman superjock, and he wants everyone to know it.

In marked contrast, the Utas's garage is dark and cluttered. It's a storage space for old furniture, boxes, tools, the lawnmower and an exercise bike that speaks of good intentions but, alas, a lack of commitment. It reflects a lifestyle change (marriage and maybe kids), years of accumulating and little time to organize. Perhaps their garage is what Balian's will one day become.

The garage photos convey a sense of human presence and personalities. Coolidge's subsequent series—for example elevator interiors in L.A. buildings and prefabricated structures in the eerily vacant Safetyville, California—are increasingly detached from these personal referents. The large format, crisp detail and formality of the garage photos had many viewers mistaking them for Photo-Realist paintings. But they are more akin to conceptual works like Ed Ruscha's book *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*.

—Stephanie Cash