

SEANKELLY

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Art in Review

By KEN JOHNSON

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LEANDRO ERLICH

Swimming Pool

P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center

22-25 Jackson Avenue, at 46th Avenue, Long Island City, Queens

Through April 13

Leandro Erlich created his magically confounding walk-in construction "Swimming Pool" in 1999, and it was included in the 2001 Venice Biennale. Installed in P.S. 1's two-story Duplex gallery, it offers visitors a delightfully surprising experience. (Spoiler alert: read no further if you don't want to ruin the surprise.)

From P.S. 1's first-floor hallway, you step onto a wooden deck that surrounds a small, fully equipped swimming pool. It has an aluminum ladder and glowing lights built into the aqua walls illuminate the watery depths below the gently churning surface. The urge to jump in is almost irresistible. Strangely, however, you may see fully dressed people walking around under the water, perhaps looking up at you.

A flight of stairs leads down to where an open door allows you to see into the pool from the side, as if through a pane of glass. It turns out, however, that there is no glass and no water, either. You can walk through the door right into the pool, where, looking up, you discover that the apparent surface of the pool is just a thin sheet of water flowing over a plexiglass ceiling. With woozy light coming through from above, the effect is dreamy. It is like being under water, yet the space is dry and empty.

Mr. Erlich's construction is a trick, but it is a good one, and its trippy play with dualities like illusion and reality, above and below, fullness and emptiness and wet and dry lingers vividly in the mind. KEN JOHNSON