

Emergentes



Fernando David Orellana (El Salvador/EEUU El Salvador/USA)

8520 S.W. 27th Pl. v.2, 2004

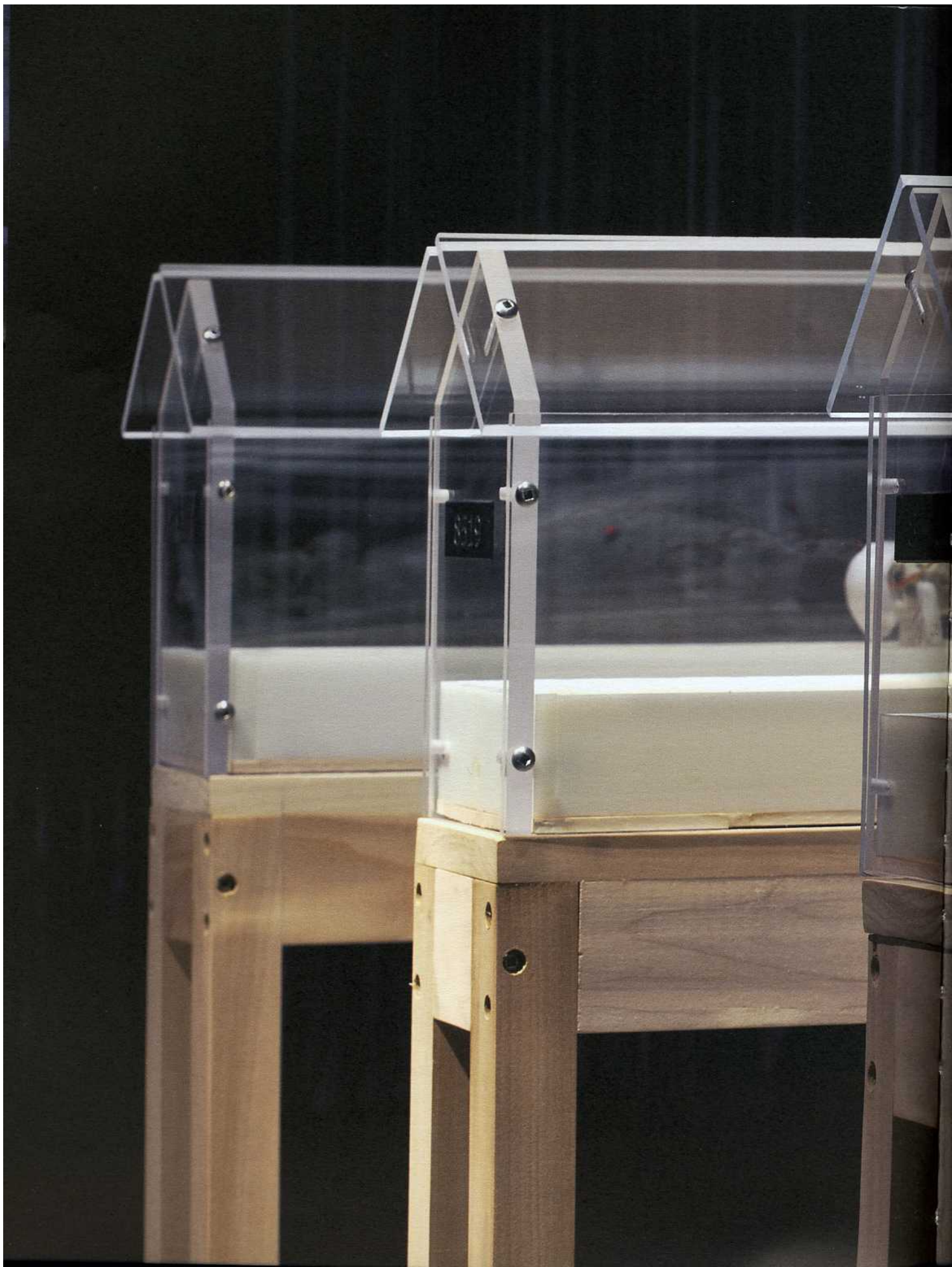
Escultura robótica. Robotic sculpture

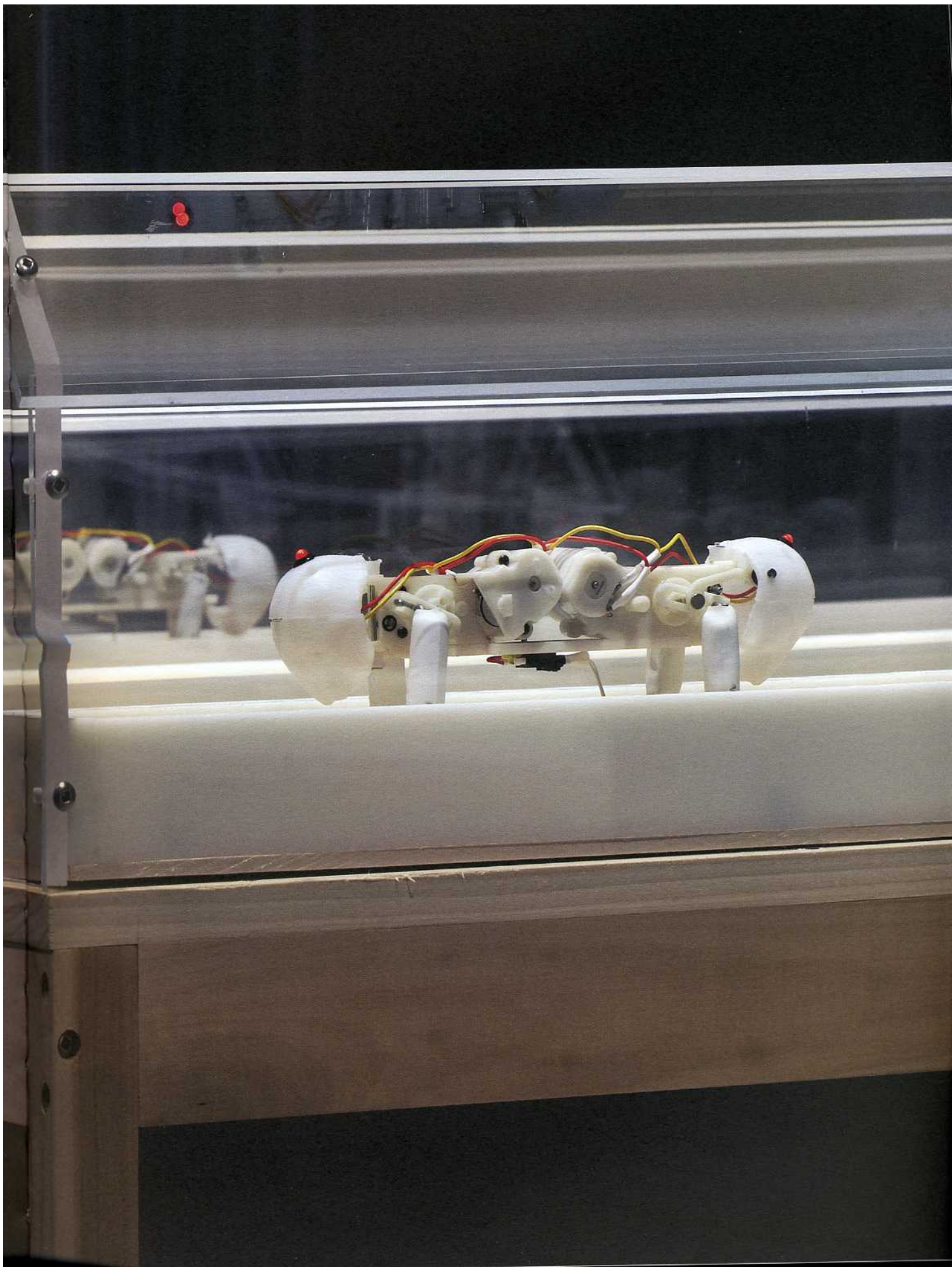
Dimensiones variables. Variable dimensions

Cortesía del artista. Courtesy of the artist

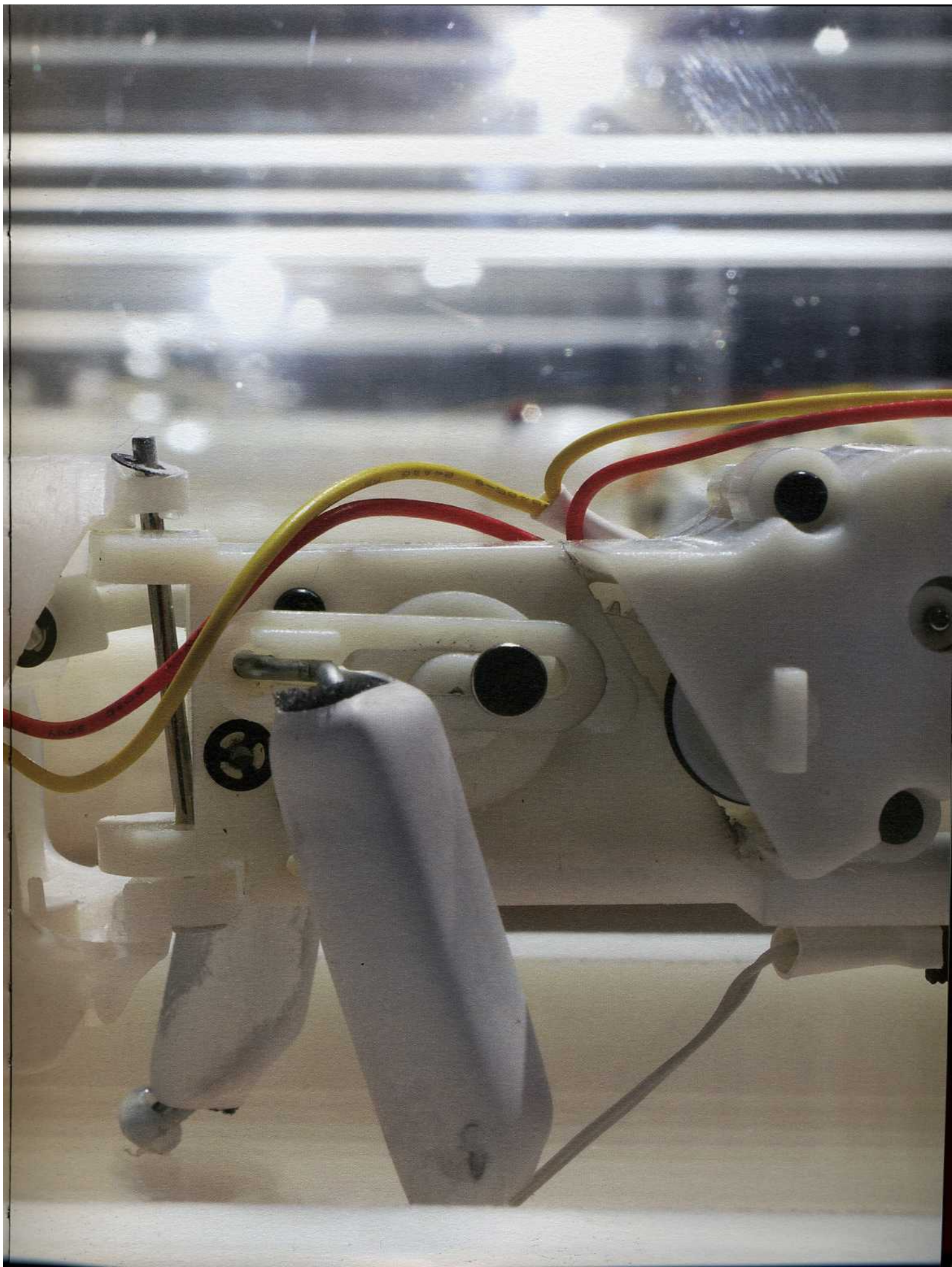
8520 S.W.27th Pl. consta de seis piezas o esculturas robóticas independientes pero con un mismo funcionamiento. Se trata de una obra que intenta simbolizar el proceso humano de toma de decisiones. Seis robots bicéfalos de apariencia idéntica recorren viviendas individuales y transparentes de construcción tubular, de tipo laboratorio o incubadora. Estas estructuras restringen sus movimientos a un desplazamiento lineal, hacia adelante y atrás. Unos sensores regidos por un algoritmo de números aleatorios e instalados dentro de cada pieza controlan los recorridos de los robots: hacia delante, hacia atrás o una cuasi inmovilidad vacilante. Unas luces intermitentes colocadas en sus cabezas indican el esfuerzo que les implica definir sus acciones. *8520 S.W. 27th Pl.* obtuvo una mención especial del jurado en el Concurso Internacional sobre Arte y Vida Artificial, Vida 8.0, organizado por Fundación Telefónica en 2005.

8520 S.W.27th Pl. consists of six robotic sculptures with a shared rationale. The work seeks to symbolize the human process of decision-making. Six two-headed identical robots explore individual and transparent tubular structures that resemble labs or incubators. These structures limit the robots to a linear movement, backwards and forward. A sensor operated by an algorithm of random numbers and installed inside each piece controls the movement of the robots (forward, backwards or an almost unsteady immobility). A flickering light on the robots' heads indicates the efforts made in defining their actions. *8520 S.W. 27th Pl.* was awarded with a special mention in the Art and Artificial Life International Competition, Vida 8.0, organised by Fundación Telefónica in 2005.









Fernando David Orellana

Born in El Salvador in 1973. Due to political reasons, his family had to emigrate to the United States when Fernando was just six years old. He is a remote descendent of Francisco de Orellana, who arrived in America in the 16th century with Francisco Pizarro. According to the Orellanas' family history, their distinguished ancestor discovered the Amazon river while looking for a way towards the ocean. While pursuing that enterprise, he found a tribe of extraordinarily tall women. At least, that is what Fernando was told as a child by his parents.

From his years spent in El Salvador, Orellana recalls the constant presence of body guards and an urban landscape dotted with armed men. He claims that his family owned a large extension of land that the State took away from them in the late 1970s. That, together with the fact that his father was a political figure who became the target of a succession of threats, encouraged the family to move to Miami in 1979. For years, the parents forbid their children from talking about their origins or from wearing Salvadorian emblems.

The Orellanas were a well-off family, so they enrolled Fernando in one of the city's best private schools. At the time, Miami did not have the large Latin American community it has today, therefore his colleagues were mostly whites, many of them of Jewish descent. He recalls just one Latin classmate, Óscar, who he talked in Spanish with. He felt like a foreigner, always as if looking in from the outside, and longed for easy communication with the other kids. With the passing of the years, Spanish was relegated to the sphere of the family. That is why he claims that he speaks Spanish like a twelve year old boy who never matured linguistically. When he was thirteen, the family visited El Salvador for the first time since they had left. Paradoxically, he also felt a foreigner there, sensing that he did not belong in the country or in its customs. However, he felt that physically he blended in smoothly among the country's population, that in El Salvador he was just like everyone else, with similar looks, similar features, the same colour of skin.

His father had been a painter as a young man, and had been part of the Salvadorian art scene before becoming a businessman. He had a collection of works that he had acquired over the years and that he took with him into exile in the United States. Many years later, on a journey to El Salvador, Fernando saw works by those same artists in a museum. As a child he used to draw all the time, and his father gave him his old painting materials and taught him about composition, textures and other formal issues. It was with his father that he had existential conversations as a teenager about the meaning of art.

When he was eleven or twelve, he was enrolled in painting classes that proved to be unbearable to him. The teacher was academic and traditional, and his classmates much older than him. He was bored to death and soon left. But Fernando continued painting despite that failed experience. Besides, he became an art lover who read artists' biographies and was specially fascinated with Surrealist painters. So, when at the age of sixteen he decided that he would pursue an artistic career, he believed that he was already very old, and that all great painters had developed their vocation when they were much younger.

In 1992, the year he finished secondary school, his family was in a difficult economic situation and he started his university training at the Broward Community College. There, he followed a computer art programme that introduced him into the world of electronic media. The lecturer had set up a computer lab for artistic purposes, where the students could learn to use a number of graphic applications. On his teacher's recommendation, he applied to The Art Institute of Chicago. He was accepted and in 1994 he moved to that city. That same year, his parents separated and his father returned to El Salvador. Since then, Fernando has travelled there regularly.

Fernando says that he was not really aware of the importance of The Art Institute of Chicago until he graduated there. He experimented with various supports, disciplines and media. The students attended the courses they were really interested in, and he took an introduction to video course while continued painting. Meanwhile he thought that it would be worthwhile to acquire some technical skills, and he spent two years learning animation. He was much more interested in the study of movement and kinetics that animation in itself, so he enrolled in a course given by Ken Rinaldo on microprocessors and robotics. He was totally fascinated with the subject and began to study mechanics and later physics. He graduated in 1998 with a major in Art and Technology.

He followed all his studies with the aid of a grant, rounding off his income by working as a waiter. However, a few months before his graduation he managed to get a position at (art)n Laboratory (<http://www.artn.com/>), the organisation directed by Ellen Sandor, where he would spend the following four years working intensely. He learnt the art trade there, producing his own paintings, sculptures and his first machines that could draw by themselves. Ellen funded and bought some of his works.

In 2004, he completed his master at the Ohio University under the supervision of Ken Rinaldo. During the two years of the programme, he experimented with various techniques and ideas, drawing prototypes of works he would later develop. After that, he worked at the studio of Ann Hamilton, first as project assistant, and later as coordinator. Although he cannot find the right words to explain it, he claims that working with Hamilton had a definite impact on his own art. He currently lectures at Union College. He creates electronic art and paintings, and truly believes now in the existence of a common link between the two media. He lives in Troy, New York.

Selected Exhibitions Tang Museum of Art, Saratoga Springs, New York, USA, 2007; Glass Curtain Gallery, Chicago, USA, 2006; *Goggle Works*, Reading, USA, 2006; Nova Space, Chicago, USA, 2005; The Ark, Dublin, Ireland, 2005; Biennial of Electronic Art, Perth, Australia, 2004.

Selected Awards Honorary Mention, Concurso Internacional Arte y Vida Artificial, Vida 8.0, Fundación Telefónica, Spain, 2005; Honorary Mention, Concurso Internacional Arte y Vida Artificial, Vida 7.0, Fundación Telefónica, Spain, 2004.

His works are included in various collections such as the Richard and Ellen Sandor Family Collection Chicago and the Leslie Lerner Collection Kansas City.