

Will Sheldon
Luxury Loneliness
23.04.-04.06.2022

Oskar Weiss and Oliver Falk are delighted to announce Will Sheldon *Luxury Loneliness*, Sheldon's first solo exhibition at the gallery.

LUXURY LONELINESS

I remember Will Sheldon's *Luxury Loneliness*. Was it in 2022? It was so hard to keep track of time back then because everything had gone severely bonkers.

Those huge clipper ships on stormy seas, probably towards the climax of some doomed voyage in search of plunder – death ahoy! And then the pictures of fairytale staircases in cough syrup purple... I still think they're beautiful paintings.

They weren't set within the non-specific yore of Excalibur or whatever, like Will's other stuff, but it was still a magic dressing-up box version of history. Pirates and princesses, fantasy zones, but rendered through a kind of disorientating and spooky mirage, like how those My Bloody Valentine songs about heartbreak are coated in reverb and distortion. They look like something you can't even really remember: a dream or an old tale somebody told you a long time ago. Almost not there at all; ghosts, all eerily glowing and woozy and sinister...

One of art's big tricks is that it allows you to time-travel back to the past, even a phantasmagorical one that didn't totally happen, whether that's through Karen Kilimnik's portrait of Mary Shelley in the middle of a thunderstorm or a VHS of Steven Spielberg's Hook. It's fun to ditch the present and all its mortal horrors but with that comes the spookiness of bringing the past (even a phantasmagorical one that never really happened) back from the dead.

That's where it turned gothic because Will was showing you this vision of the past, extreme in haunted-ness with all the apocalyptic Arthur Pinkham Ryder weather and the castle rooms that remind me of the interiors of tombs, as a way to render psychic stuff, that which you feel inside. A lot of it is melancholy: the big gothic mood. Everybody's like you're barely here at all, like Will's clouds of dissociated fog, or eaten up by sorrow, like the ship in that gloomy green painting yielding to the waves. And the phantom protagonist at the foot of the stairs might be you craving escape, a new way to get high.

I remember feeling weirdly peaceful when I looked at the paintings. I never imagined a bloodthirsty Bluebeard would descend the stairs. I think because they glow. Even with the ships, too... Like a lot of otherworldly stuff that gives you goosebumps it's also luring you inside: somewhere to zone out, transcend, somewhere to disappear.

Charlie Fox