

Rolf Nowotny – Dapper Peepers

November 16th – December 22nd, 2023

Reception: November 16th, 2023, 6 – 9 pm

No Gallery – 105 Henry Street #4 NYC

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“Does a firm persuasion that a thing is so, make it so?” –William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

The child awakens and in the darkness sees a wall eroded by a nightmare which has boiled over into the real. It has become porous, like a membrane, something to be punctured, penetrated, transgressed. The enforced materiality of his four walls gives way to a new type of poetry, a world where the substance and function of furniture is replaced by the infinite possibilities of a child’s desire. A music box plays on its own, a chair rocks rhythmically in the attic, a ball rolls down the corridor, bounces down the stairs and lands at his feet. In what reality are our objects anchored, or are they anchored at all? As vision sharpens the wall solidifies and acts as it’s meant to– a stanchion between a dream world and absolute reality. The day will come when he knows with certainty that behind the drywall are simply studs and plywood. This imposed truth is frightful in a different way– in its lack of possibility, all fear and no fun.

In the uncanny auditorium of the home, objects struggle to perform their assigned identities. The table is where the family eats, where the man works, where the child draws. Upon a table is also where surgery is performed. In *Dark Places*, Barry Curtis writes “houses are deeply implicated with humanity, and yet they are not human. The tensions arising from that anomaly stress

borders and distinctions in ways that activate acute anxieties.” Our homes mirror us, and when we find ourselves altered— through illness, fear, loss, or the brutality of time’s forward march, so too do our homes lose meaning. Color is drained, trinkets desaturate, the air between walls and ceilings absorbs absence. We are the spirits haunting our homes. Are we in a bad dream or are we a nightmare the house is having?

In the 1972 BBC horror teleplay “The Stone Tape,” a team of scientists tasked with the invention of a new recording medium take up residence in a Victorian mansion. In recent renovations, construction workers exposed the original stone structure of the building, rousing a powerful energy. Apparitions are seen, screams are heard, and a sensitive researcher named Jill discovers that the stones hold hundreds of years of tragic death, with each event written over the previous like a magnetic recording tape. In 1842, John Rodes Buchanan coined the term psychometry— soul measuring. Members of the Center for Psychical Research adopted this belief in place memory: that a person could receive encrypted knowledge of an object’s history through touch alone. Today, the “Stone Tape Theory” popular amongst some paranormal investigators hypothesizes that the raw building materials of a place are analogous to tape recorders, on which ghosts and other residua of the past have been recorded and therefore have the ability to be “played back.”

The latent bloodstain detector BlueStar glows in the dark, without the help of blacklight, when it comes into contact with hemoglobin. Surfaces on which blood has been spilled will begin to glow when sprayed with the chemical reagent, regardless of how many years have elapsed. Like a Stone Tape, the house’s memory is played back by a talented individual. A phantom pain echoing through the ether, proof that the past is never dead, it isn’t even past. The house has a story to tell if you know where to spray.

There are houses that drip blood, houses with watchers in the woods, houses chillingly wrong in all dimensions, houses built on top of pits whose inhabitants begin to covet what they see everyday, who stalk and lurk through night-vision goggles; there are houses built on sour ground where dead is better, there are last houses on the left where springs flow from virgins. These houses are neighbors to us, sitting directly behind our world, attached to the backs of our playable character’s heads. If you’re not careful and noclip out of reality in the wrong areas you might find yourself there.

Rolf Nowotny (b. 1978) lives and works in Copenhagen. He graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 2009 and has since exhibited widely in Denmark and abroad, including at Arken in Ishøj, Kunsthall Aarhus, Museo Pietro Canonica in Rome and at Momentum – 9th Nordic Biennial for Contemporary Art in Moss, Norway. In 2014 he received the Niels Wessel Bagge Art Fund’s Legacy and in 2021 the Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen’s Legacy. Rolf’s works are included in the public collections of The National Gallery of Denmark, the Municipality of Copenhagen, Nonas Foundation of Italy, and the New Carlsberg Foundation. Nowotny was also the recipient of the Franciska Clausen Medal of Honour for his exhibition NOCLIPLILT at Simian (DK).

No Gallery is an ambiguously commercial gallery space established in 2019, located in the lowest of the Lower East Side, Manhattan. Founded with the intention of curating exhibitions capable of pushing the boundaries of contemporary programming, *No* presents works dedicated to a nuanced exploration of extant social, personal and cultural paradigms.