

Survival On Land & Sea

The title of John Neff's project - Survival On Land & Sea - is also the title of a survival manual issued to his grandfather by the U.S. Navy during his service in WW II (Pacific Theater).

In the exhibition, a wood stud wall runs 2/3rds the length of the gallery. Positioned across from the gallery's entrance, there is a doorlike opening in the wall. A mink coat that belonged to Neff's grandmother, and later his mother, hangs in that opening. The artist's grandfather's U.S. Navy knife hangs from the ceiling on a chain.

On the long wall of the exhibition space hangs a set of photographs in clip frames. Shot on an iPhone, the photographs depict rat holes. JN: "Chicago, where I live, is a city of alleys. It's also a city with lots of rats. The rats chew through garbage cans left out in the alleys."

Affixed to the shorter wall is Neff's contribution to the ninth issue of the journal Portable Gray, published in October 2022. Edited by Seth Brodsky, the issue was titled "Arts of Psychoanalysis."

The Gray piece documents Neff's mother's open heart surgery and the infestation of her childhood dollhouse by mice. The dollhouse, a replica of Neff's mother's childhood home, was designed and built by her father.

The exhibition also includes a set of sculptural objects by Thomas Love collectively titled Cock-of-the-Rock (all 2023). These include Lek, a bird carved out of limestone, and a series of stacks of cast-resin fake rocks cast titled Cairns. Such resin rocks are typically used to hide keys around the exteriors of homes. A text by Love, available in the gallery, forms the third component of Cock-of-the-Rock