

Maggie Lee
Fufu's Dreamhouse
April 2 - May 1

Maggie Lee wants to remember everything. She is a storyteller: collecting the scraps, collaging the memories, building a vitrine for us to peer into. Fufu's Dreamhouse, Lee's first solo show in New York City, is a new body of work which is the next chapter for her: it focuses on the progression of her adult life, her dreamy, delirious and sometimes twisted emergence from childhood. Each stage of this emergence is embodied by Jenny Dolls, a toy she played with as a child, given new life by being placed in environments which represent highly specific eras of her transformation from girl to woman. She is allowing herself to play in these environments, touching on the whimsical aspects of growing up while simultaneously addressing the pain of maturation. Part of becoming an adult is mourning the loss of our childlike ways ultimately allowing us to accept our own mortality. Lee faces these challenges with a playfulness that makes it accessible for the viewer. We want to engage in the fantasy, we relate to the wistful longing and punk rebelliousness associated with the imagery of youth. Lee's work is often diaristic in nature and it is this vulnerability that makes it so engaging.

Lee recalls that as a child she played with Jenny dolls well into her adolescence. One day she came home to find that her mother, assuming she was too old to be interested in them anymore, had given them to her younger cousins. It was a sudden reminder that she was to shed the trappings of her childish life, though at the time she probably wasn't aware that this is what she was facing. Now as an adult woman she is at once grieving this loss and giving it new life.

Youth culture, especially that of young girls, is a common motif in Lee's work. There is a rich private world which is encapsulated in a girls room. It is where the transformations of adolescent life are often processed, whether it be dancing alone to a favorite song on repeat, filling journals with confidential thoughts, blogging memories and fantasies, sneaking out or sneaking in, trying on new outfits or simply just enjoying or wallowing in times alone. Lee is creating rooms and environments which represent these times and she is permitting us access to this secret universe. They are each displayed in either tanks or cages, touching on the idea of the dolls as half pet half girl. The girls are precious, doted on, dressed up and kept like anecdotes of past lives.

Fufu's Dreamhouse invites us to tap into this fantastical world that is both innocent and naughty, psychedelic and sexy, dangerous and ethereal. It is autobiographical in nature yet we feel a part of it, it invokes the pain and beauty of youth, and the dazzling dreams of the future.

~ Alex Patrick Dyck