

LOWELL RYAN PROJECTS



Erin Trefry. Happy phantom

22 Jan — 2 Mar 2024 at Lowell Ryan Projects in Los Angeles, United States

2 FEBRUARY 2024



Installation view: Erin Trefry, Happy Phantom. Courtesy of Lowell Ryan Projects

Lowell Ryan Projects is pleased to present Happy Phantom, an exhibition by Los Angeles-based artist Erin Trefry. Comprised of a series of eleven figurative paintings in muted tones, Trefry continues her exploration of sentiment, time, and figuration particularly about familial narratives and relationships.

In this exhibition, Trefry presents her great-grandmother's paintings, which were created in the late 19th century, and depict figurative scenes of romantic settings, exotic locales, and fantastical narratives. These works were passed down through the

LOWELL RYAN PROJECTS

generations eventually landing in Trefry's possession. The family does not know much about their late relative's motivations; however, they are aware that she was self-taught and that the paintings were shown at carnivals and hung like tapestries. In *Happy Phantom* Trefry subverts the imagery of her late relative, the paintings are presented stretched in reverse so that the viewer is only able to see the backside of the works where the paint has bled through the fabric. Behind the paintings, a layer of muslin conceals the surfaces of the original paintings.

With *Happy Phantom*, Trefry poses questions. How do we understand and make sense of our history? How do we understand cultural trends through the context of their era? How do we interpret modern-day moral and societal critiques in light of our familial histories? What are the implications of concealing the past? Who do we grant the power to tell these narratives? These artworks elevated to the status of visual artifacts, resonate with avant-garde principles reminiscent of Dadaism and Duchampian conceptualism. Blending joy with mystery and critique with homage, Trefry contemplates prevailing philosophical questions through a sentimental whisper of the past.

Erin Trefry lives and works in Los Angeles, CA, and received her BFA from Maryland Institute College of Art. Trefry's personally charged practice includes painting, sculpture, and assemblage that combine ceramic, inherited objects, and clothing to create paintings, totems, mask-like wall pieces, and transient structures.

Trefry has exhibited at galleries and institutions including Lowell Ryan Projects, Los Angeles, CA; Altman Siegel Gallery, San Francisco, CA; No Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; TSA LA, Los Angeles, CA; o-o LA, Los Angeles, CA; Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA; Monte Vista Projects, Los Angeles, CA; ODD Ark•LA, Los Angeles, CA; Eastside International, Los Angeles, CA; Big Pictures Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA; there-there, Los Angeles, CA; and Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) Los Angeles, CA. Trefry's works have been reviewed and discussed in publications including Artforum, The Los Angeles Times, LA Weekly, and Art and Cake.