

Art in America

NE

Q

REVIEWS APR. 07, 2009

Nick and Sheila Pye

WASHINGTON D.C.,
at Curator's Office

by Kriston Capps



The young career of Nick and Sheila Pye has spanned video, performance, installation and photography, incorporating such tried-and-true genres as still-life and portraiture, and the narrative structures of filmmaking. In their new exhibition “Vanitas,” the married artists explore facets of their own relationship in an 11-minute video (2007) and six related photographs (2008).

In the video, *Loudly, Death Unties*, the third part of a trilogy, the artists play characters who might be isolated siblings or frustrated lovers; they find themselves in a cabinlike lodge that bears some similarity to the elaborate, shabby-chic sets used for the previous installments, *The Paper Wall* (2004) and *A Life of Errors* (2006). Here the pair must grapple with the unfortunate event of the woman’s death and departure from the mortal plane, signaled by the appearance of a banshee (played by a small girl) and symbolized through various interactions. The woman—Sheila—begins to float toward the ceiling, prompting Nick’s character to grab her by the legs and secure her to a chair with a rope. When the two give up the metaphoric fight to keep her anchored on the side of the living, Nick delicately places two fingers under the leg of a prone Sheila and slowly lifts her as if in a game of “light as a feather, stiff as a board”—a perfect encapsulation of the Canadian artists’ dark, twee sensibility.

The photographs complement the video with more self-serious and pedigreed death imagery. Highlights of the show included a memento mori still life enhanced by chiaroscuro and digital manipulation as

Art in America

NE

Q

have provided an unfolding portrait of their marriage in occasionally confrontational physical interactions that have seen the artists share spit, urine, hair and fingernails. Death, then, is a natural subject for them: it is the only thing that guarantees to do them part.

Above: *Loudly, Death Unties*, 2007, video, 11 minutes; at Curator's Office.

Related Articles



NEWS

Baltimore's Contemporary Museum Reopens with New Director

by Kriston Capps

When Baltimore's Contemporary Museum suspended operations in May 2012, it was running "Baltimore Liste," one of its most popular exhibition series. It was midway through this multi-venue,... [READ MORE](#)



NEWS

The Rubells Capitalize in DC

by Kriston Capps

Don and Mera Rubell are expanding their footprint in the nation's capital with the purchase of a former school—a site where the art collectors will build a contemporary art museum and hotel.The... [READ MORE](#)



NEWS

ArtLA President Stephen Cohen Says His Fair Will Regroup

by Kriston Capps

With evidence of an economic turnaround still in question at the start of a new year, one Los Angeles art fair has decided to pull up stakes. The sixth edition of the artLA fair, scheduled for...

[READ MORE](#)



NEWS

Washington, DC: 36 Artists in 36 Hours

by Kriston Capps

Still shy of 7 AM on a Saturday morning, Adam de Boer had just opened his Chinatown warehouse studio to art collector Mera Rubell. For a young artist like de Boer—a 25-year-old figurative painter...

[READ MORE](#)

comments powered by Disqus

Art in America



Current issue

Richard Aldrich, Carolee Schneemann, Nicholas Krushenick, Rene Ricard

SUBSCRIBE



[CONTACT US](#) [ADVERTISER INFO](#) [TERMS OF USE](#) [PRIVACY](#) [SUBSCRIBE](#)