



TOMATO MOUSE

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Rebecca Bird Dull Roar

October 18 – November 18, 2023
38 West 28th Street, New York, NY

Reception Saturday November 4, 6-9PM
Open hours: Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday 2-6PM

Tomato Mouse in conjunction with 326 Gallery presents a selection of recent paintings by Rebecca Bird at 38 West 28th Street, New York. Bird's recent painted autofictions constitute a self through shadows, reflections and lenses that stare back. Thirteen works in oil paint on wood examine observation as an act that unites viewer and artist, the tension between communication and privacy, safety and connection.



In "Self Defense" the artist is depicted hanging a security camera in the foyer of their studio. The turned back and soft focus make reference to Gerhard Richter's "Betty", but here the author is also the subject, inviting and turning away from our voyeurism. The camera points back out at us, closing the circuit. The painting itself an act of self-defense. This is the actual state of affairs, both event and description. Bird's painting "Appetite" postulates a disembodied narrator whose shadow becomes the viewers', as if the artist is compelling them occupy her position, to empathize. "My Narcissist" and "The garden at night" examine one's own attached limbs as if they were either alien appendages or the only thing that can be known with certainty. These works are set in the home studio where they were made, a space permeated by its sole occupant; the subject demonstrates themselves using shadows or reflections as evidence of their existence. The artist is pushing against self-abnegation that was never explicitly enforced but very much encouraged.

"Keep it down to a dull roar" means, keep it quiet, but also suggests a something violent held at bay. Bird's recent paintings track personal events in real time, applying the slow material process of painting to the instantaneous digital timeframe. In part this is in response to what she takes as an acceleration of literary autofiction and wondering if description is slouching ahead of the events. She maps the material world in precise detail in an effort to determine what is real and factual, always inevitably reaching some limit of physical ability to record that replicates inability to know. Mirrored works present two slightly different versions of situations, suggesting fallibility of memory or plausible deniability. The works are in pencil, oil paint and acrylic paint on unprimed wood panels whose surfaces remain visible through the transparent rendering. A student of Northern European painting and Nihonga, Bird's marks at once form illusions and sit as themselves.

Rebecca Bird's work has been supported by a 2023 Gottlieb Grant. Primary a painter, her interventions into the public realm include animation, performance, public works, and founding the non-profit space Tomato Mouse. This is her eleventh solo exhibition. She has received numerous grants and residencies and has work in collections including MOMA, NY. She attended the Cooper Union, Yale Summer School and was a Fulbright Fellow to Japan. From 2007 to 2011 she drew Middle Kingdom relief fragments for the Metropolitan Museum on site in Dashur, Egypt. She has painted many carousels for amusement parks around the world.