

Hanna Liden
"Ghost Town"

May 2nd - June 16th, 2012
Opening Reception: Wednesday, May 2nd from 6-8 pm
Gallery Hours: Tues-Sat, 10-6 PM

Not everyone notices a thud. It could be a lot of things - a truck passing by, a neighbor upstairs. Some people's first clue is a faint ringing in the ear: I've heard them complaining of a tinny buzz that rises when I'm nearby. Others are more sensitive to unexplained creaking in the floorboards, footsteps where nobody's walking. There's definitely a certain type who can't ignore a draft, who starts looking for the source of the chill as soon as I show up. I watch them move about the room searching, sometimes finding a half-closed window or a crack in the building structure to explain it away. Or they give up, silent and annoyed.

I live among the tenants and they know it. That's not how they'd answer if asked directly, but it's as tacit as the parts of the lease that nobody reads: I'm here. While they're at work - serving drinks, selling clothes, working at desks and in studios - I'm doing my job too, polishing myths, dusting memories, and haunting. Yeah, I've seen you around. But when you've been here as long as I have, it's not just you, it's years of yous, or very-much-like-yous. This city breeds yous: hey yous, me and yous, sick of yous, fuck yous. As I'm sure you can understand, I gave up on names a long time ago.

I've gotten to naming people by the look in their eye, the clunk of their boots or the crush of their leather jacket. That blunt flash you get when he's talking to someone else leaving a club, everyone tossing out laughter and piling into the warm cab like heavy dumb rocks.

More drinks. A thin guitar riff battering along to a quick scratchy drum beat, a bitter laugh like the ancient staleness of Chinatown: warm and musty, old and toxic, malignant as rust chewing up the metal fire escapes, under red or green or black paint. Cut flowers dipped in water and painted like eyelashes shining with mascara. Walking up narrow stairs to an attic with dim yellow light and cobwebs in the corners.

Drunk in the dark, I'm asleep with one eye open, your hair soaked into my pillow. A wool mask pulled snug over a disembodied head, dreaming of runaways and creeps. Slimy, evil, eyeless things that want and demand. Pests and vermin drowning in cancerous blocks of resin. Century-old skin fragments and toenail clippings gathered along cracks in floors and under pasted linoleum tiles. Syrupy flypaper covered in tiny grains one hundredth of an inch thick. The hugeness of the past lurking like a vulture, here with me.

Try never sleeping and always moving: it deletes thought. Images mark time like pins on a map: tangled, drifting links in a chain. Sometimes I don't know if I'm passing through walls or they're passing through me. Passed over, passed out: a body buried under the sidewalk, memory corroded and threaded dully along, dug up and packed away in a cement knapsack. A cold case. A thud of recognition in a heart cut out and stained deep black. I'd prefer not to remember anyway.

Not to worry, I'll catch up with you guys later.

-By Kayla Guthrie

Maccarone
630 Greenwich St.
New York, NY 10014
tel 212 431 4977
email:press@maccarone.net

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