

## Pick of the Week: Roland Reiss

### Diane Rosenstein Gallery

by Cole Sweetwood | May 26, 2021

If the uncanny valley had an interior decorator, their name would be Roland Reiss. The recently departed artist has a new exhibition at the Diane Rosenstein Gallery, featuring not only a host of recent works but also Reiss' ground-breaking installation, *The Castle of Perseverance*. Through his moralistic and post-modern approach in depicting modern life, Reiss not only blurs the division between reality and unreality, but reminds us the importance of truth in the face of falsehood.

I've just recently commented on this divide between the real and unreal in a review of Richard Nielsen's show "Past Imperfect," but unlike Nielsen, Reiss extends the argument even further. Beyond illustrating the divide as a reflection of our current moment, Reiss physicalizes the division and invites you to immerse yourself in it.

*The Castle of Perseverance* (1978) is a particle board recreation of a 1970s living room, right down to the curved bar, copious ash trays and cigarettes, and vintage tv stand. The more time you spend in Reiss' castle, the more you are drawn into its world, and the less you question real vs. fake.

In time, the question becomes who are the people who occupy this space, and what are their stories? Why are there loose pills, and loose firearms? Who needs this many keys (I counted at least ten!) The narrative which is simultaneously hidden and yet made so evident is the heart of Reiss' works, in which falsehoods become so realistic that it is impossible to separate them from reality itself.

This effort is enforced with his work in miniature and diorama, of which many of his series are on display from throughout his career. An original diorama from the 1980s, *Adult Fairy Tale: Language and Myth* (1983), shows a well-dressed man and woman arguing in a traditional office space, while a third woman looks on, disapprovingly. It's unclear whether this third woman will act as arbiter or merely observer. This vignette brings the themes of the *Castle of Perseverance* to life, underscoring important lessons about the necessity of objective truth and the danger of being caught up in a glass enclosure – or a particle-board world.