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“Critic’s Pick: Lena Daly”
by Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer

Lena Daly

VARIOUS SMALL FIRES 812 North Highland Avenue November 5–December 17

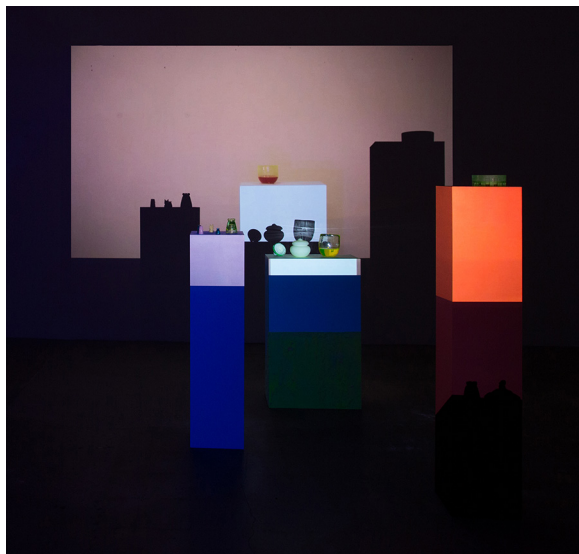
Before the show comes into view, a nearly imperceptible sonic undercurrent of low drones, subtle swells, and clanging bells layers with the loud rush of street traffic on Highland Avenue. The spectral static of the gallery’s sound corridor clues us in to a ghostly alterity waiting within “Night Bell.” Lena Daly’s solo debut toys with the limits of sound and vision, opting for the hypo and the hyper, the ultra and the infra. She limns the vibratory thresholds of the extra-visual and subsonic realms, braiding their intersections into synesthetic contaminations.

In contrast to the glaringly sunlit courtyard just outside, the gallery’s interior is shuttered in darkness, where we encounter the buzzing shadowed side of things. The surfaces of geometric wall works and a freestanding sculpture of two leaning plinths, *Uneasy Listening*, 2015, are colonized by the bacteria-like accumulation of UV-reactive paint and phosphorescent powder; they glow in the dark like bioluminescent creatures. Antique vases, bowls, and dishes molded in slightly radioactive uranium glass are arranged throughout on a collection of painted platforms and pillars, forming an assortment of highly luminous tabletop still lifes that cross a Victorian haunted-house vibe with forensic, night-vision versions of Morandi. Creating a dizzying hall-of-mirrors effect, several of the pedestals and their arrangements reappear in two large video and sound projections—*Ambient Trix* and *Trix R,G,B*, both 2016—as props that the artist manipulates by mysteriously extending a hand to tweak the position of a vessel or lightly rim a bowl of fluorescent water.

The atmosphere is aqueous and nocturnal, punctuated by cobalt and jellyfish blues, battery-acid greens, highlighter yellows, and neon-coral pinks. Charged up like batteries, Daly’s sculptures and projections suggest ineffable phenomena at the far reaches of human perception, but now, post national debacle, they also read as emergency night-lights and beacons—positing a model of how bodies might generate, radiate, and emit light from within an environment of extreme darkness.

—Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer

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Lena Daly, *Trix R,G,B*, 2016, video and ultrasound projection, UV-reactive paint, wood pedestals, uranium glass, UV-reactive water, flock, HD projection, HSS speaker, LED UV light, dimensions variable.