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Pierre Ardouvin

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AUTHOR: MARA HOBERMAN

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In the mid-1990s, French anthropologist Marc Augé coined the term *nonlieu* (nonplace) to refer to nondescript settings like supermarkets and airport terminals wherein one experiences an eerie combination of déjà vu and alienation. Evoking a similarly odd mix of familiarity and foreignness, Pierre Ardouvin's oeuvre could be described as a series of nonlieux. But whereas Augé's nonplaces are real-world banalities, Ardouvin's paintings, drawings, sculptures, and installations are Lewis Carroll-esque limbos that mingle reality, collective memory, and pure fantasy.

Ardouvin opens this exhibition in typical dramatic fashion with *Helpless*, 2013, a bejeweled floor-to-ceiling black velvet curtain out from which peeks a spotlight taxidermied fox. Like Carroll's White Rabbit, Ardouvin's enchanted creature initiates the viewer into a series of dreamlike tableaux. Disorienting large-scale installations conceived especially for this show include *Ohlala*, 2013, a colossal plaster tooth lassoed to a full-size jungle gym; *Roue de la fortune* (Wheel of Fortune), 2013, a circular tablecloth comprising twenty-four multicolored sectors, on a giant lazy Susan that spins to a mash-up of French hip-hop and circus music; and *Le Vide emplit mes yeux* (Emptiness Fills My Eyes), 2013, an empty room architecturally modified with a drop-ceiling pierced with three porthole openings.

Recent two-dimensional works are also uncanny amalgams of authentic, nostalgic, and make-believe imagery. "Inclusions," 2012–13, is a series of vintage postcards wherein each idyllic (if campy) vista is marred by an overlaid resin-preserved insect. Another series, "Ecrans de veille" (Screen Savers), 2012, similarly transforms tranquil landscapes into scenes of impending doom. For each work in this series, Ardouvin juxtaposed two postcards, aligning the top edge of one with the bottom edge of the other. He then used a sparing amount of paint to blend the edges of the images together, and finally he scanned and printed the resulting hybrid topography onto a large canvas. Subverting appropriated romantic imagery, Ardouvin creates foreboding environments where waves plunge from the sky and volcanic stalagmites of lava threaten to penetrate a tourist-filled beach. This type of dramatic reversal, achieved with relatively minimal intervention, highlights the porous line between fantasies and nightmares.

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