

# LOIS LAMBERT GALLERY

at Bergamot Station  
2525 Michigan Ave E3  
Santa Monica, CA 90404

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Maria Guerrero  
Assistant Director  
maria@loislambertgallery.com  
310.829.6990



"Reece Mews Reno",  
Oil on canvas, 60" x 48"



"Green and Pleasant Land",  
Oil on canvas, 30" x 24"

## RIKKI NIEHAUS Swedish Landscapes

July 14th, 2018 – September 1st, 2018

Opening reception Saturday, July 14th, 6-9pm

SANTA MONICA, CA – Lois Lambert Gallery presents the work of artist Rikki Niehaus in her ongoing series, "Swedish Landscapes", a collection of portraits posed inside the home-interiors of an IKEA store. This collection of oil paintings may seem benign, but they are in fact eerily engaging and humorously critical.

The suited gentleman who serves as the subject of the paintings is a perfect fit for the setting. In fact, he is just another shopper, stopping to sit on a chair or a sofa. The series serves not only as a critique of consumer culture, but as a mirror to its artificiality and the illusions that we accept and desire, as reality.

Rikki Niehaus is a figurative painter and portraitist who works in oil on canvas. Rikki states: "Painting is, for me, a direct connection to the past, a chance to 'time-travel' and relate immediately to the whole of artistic tradition that preceded me." Often Niehaus will compose her paintings in conversation with an iconic painting in the canon of Western Art history. In the painting "Reece Mews Reno", the title refers to Francis Bacon's studio, located in Reese Mews, Kensington. The shapes of the cube frame, circular carpet and seated figure mirror Bacon's portrait of Pope Innocent X.

In the painting, "Green and Pleasant Land", the viewer sees a man dressed in a grey suit sitting on a green mid-century chair. It's a convincing early 1960's portrait of an executive leisurely sitting in office or study. It's not until after an initial few seconds that one recognizes the plastic price tag for \$149 hanging off the chair. The viewer then becomes aware of the reality that this is not a home or office, but the inside of an IKEA showroom.

It becomes obvious that not only is the man in the fake living room posturing: everyone outside of the painting may also be posturing to suit their surroundings.



"Reservations",  
Oil on canvas , 36" x 48"



"Eclipse",  
Oil on canvas , 36" x 48"

"There is a sense of potential in each little 'room', this could be our home in some place other than where we are now", says Rikki. That sense of hope is part of the allure of the megastore. It is the idea that life can be significantly improved if you purchase the sliding door closet kit or the modular storage unit. Niehaus' own ambivalence towards IKEA and consumerism at large is present in the work, but not without humor.

The model for the character in the paintings is improv performer Ryan Timmreck. Timmreck was as much model as performer: his facial expressions and mannerisms brought an emotional charge to the series. However, his character often displays a blank expression that suggests that he is never quite happy in his environment. For Niehaus, the scenes depict a character from a science fiction movie trapped inside IKEA's showrooms, reminiscent of a Twilight Zone episode. As in the Twilight Zone, there is always an unforeseen consequence-in return for living in a world of perfectly decorated organization, the character is doomed to an eternity of isolation, trapped in a warehouse store showroom. Science Fiction offers us apt metaphors for our reality. Perfection is unattainable; perfection is not for sale. Bourgeois materialism is a trap. Niehaus likens this to the dream of fresh furniture in a neatly curated space that is shattered when Ikea shoppers descend to the flat-pack warehouse. The promise of orderly perfection and fresh beginnings is replaced by profound disappointment when shoppers must negotiate transportation, assemblage, packaging, and then are forced to see their purchases in the stark reality of their imperfect homes.

Rikki Niehaus is based in Los Angeles and has participated in many exhibitions in California. Niehaus studied at Art Center, Otis School of Art and Design and LAAFA. Rikki's work can be found in various personal collections in the US and UK.