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TCG
TRISH CLARK GALLERY



HEATHER STRAKA | Isolation Hotel
November 22 – December 21, 2024

Press Release



TRISH CLARK GALLERY PRESS RELEASE:

HEATHER STRAKA | *Isolation Hotel*
November 22 – December 21, 2024

Trish Clark Gallery is pleased to present Heather Straka's solo exhibition, *Isolation Hotel*, the acclaimed series' first presentation in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Heather Straka's insightful explorations, through her different approaches in the dual mediums of paint and film, have created a significant body of compelling and often controversial work. With an MFA in Film, Straka demonstrates technical control of her medium and coupled with a finely modulated handling of her contentious subject matter, she deftly questions tradition, challenges the politically correct, and subverts expectations.

Originally conceived as a SCAPE project and installed at the Canterbury Museum in 2022, *Isolation Hotel* navigates time and distance, of relatively short duration but severe implications, that populations endured in pandemic times. With her characteristic wit and piercing insight, Straka positions her lone protagonists in carefully constructed film sets, portraying with a remarkable depth of feeling the alienation of isolation.

At the Canterbury Museum, *Isolation Hotel* was interactive, with Straka inviting the audience to participate and become part of the artwork. A commentary on social connection, conceptions of autonomy and liberty in response to the dissociation caused by the global pandemic, Straka pushed the conceptual ideology of art as a mirror to the greater socio-political context further than she had before. Here, the participants who graced the elaborately constructed tableau act as cyphers for Straka's ongoing interests in perceptions of culture, discourse around gender, art and the conditions of contemporary society. Straka achieved this complicated balancing act by carefully and strategically selecting every detail that comprises each image; every corner and facet that filled the pictorial plane has been considered for its symbolic potential to fulfil the narrative.

Graduating BFA in Sculpture at the University of Auckland's Elam School of Fine Arts in 1994, Straka honed an acute attention to detail later carried through to her painting practice, developed over several years spent in France. Straka returned to New Zealand to her first exhibition of paintings in 1998, later graduating with an MFA in Film from Canterbury University's Ilam School of Fine Arts in 2000. Since then Straka has been awarded several scholarships and residencies: in 2002 she was presented the Pierce Low Award for Excellence in Painting from the Royal Overseas League, London; was awarded New Zealand's esteemed Frances Hodgkins Fellowship in 2008; and the William Hodges Fellowship in 2011. Her work is held in all New Zealand's major public collections.

Heather Straka lives and works in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Aotearoa New Zealand.

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