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INDRIKIS ĢELZIS
NIGHTBALL EFFECT
September 14 – October 21, 2018

Lengths of steel form shadow boxes, then populate them with ribs and joists, some minimally upholstered in polyethylene sleeves, with cast-offs for fiberboard carpentry wedged among the bars. These structures begin as free-hand drawings in CINEMA 4D, an application typically used for motion graphics and modeling. They are then transcribed to notebook paper in graphite—mechanical drawings to aid in their construction. The clean lines and unlikely junctures suggest the computer with which they were conceived, but belie the hands that gave them form. There is still touch here: on the steel, welded, treated with oils, burned to a jet-black patina; on the polyethylene tubes, painstakingly stitched, tousled just so; on the furniture plates, with false wood-grain melamine applied to every surface.

The works in this show, Latvian artist Indriķis Ģelzis' first solo exhibition in the United States, are small, dense, and shallow, hung from the wall. The palette for each is limited to stark silvers, blacks, and whites. Their uniform size and coloration create the sense of décor, that which shores up setting and scenery on the sly, not necessarily announcing itself.

Within each frame, one is tempted to find headless figures, all limbs and spines, cuddling or copulating, at work and play, in prayer, airborne, fixing a leak in the sink. They elbow for room in the composition, on the bed, at the table, in the doorway. Their backs curl, constrained by the warped picture planes of their enclosures. These frames are gentle traps, the bait and barbs working on their object with alternating care and force. There is the sense of being held for examination (as the mouse is given maze) or for correction (as the mouth in the midst of orthodontic apparatus).

There is a moment after the trap has sprung and before we realize we are caught. In this stillness, an image accumulates. Ģelzis' figures are eerily archaeological, suggesting the bodies of lovers found in bed under many layers of ash and earth. As a condition of their capture, they are frozen in time.

— Maxwell Paparella