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Press Release

Rachel Simon Marino: Foul Play

March 10 – April 2, 2022

Opening: Thursday, March 10th, 5:00 - 7:00 pm

Venus Over Manhattan

120 East 65th Street

New York, NY 10065



(New York, NY) — **Venus Over Manhattan** is pleased to present **Foul Play**, an exhibition of new paintings and works on paper by San Francisco-based artist **Rachel Simon Marino**. Comprising eight large-scale paintings and a smaller group of works on paper, the presentation grants entry to a set of imagined spaces, whose patterned walls and surreal scenarios suggest the interiors of an amusement park funhouse. The exhibition marks the artist's debut solo presentation in New York and will be on view from March 10th through April 2nd.

Rachel Simon Marino's paintings and works on paper engage the tactics and visual strategies of carnival funhouses. So named for their literal form – the earliest versions were houses or large buildings constructed to include a variety of amusement devices – funhouses are participatory attractions that guide visitors through a series of features designed to distort perception. Typically staged in a manner that incorporates lurid colors and arresting patterns, funhouses harness the properties of distorting mirrors, false walls, optical illusions, and forced perspective to achieve their desired effects. Many of Marino's works arrange depictions of these features into dizzying compositions that replicate these disorienting environments. By rendering on canvas these three-dimensional spaces, Marino exploits the conventions of illusionistic space to create impossible scenarios, like spacious rooms inside that yawn behind flat surfaces, and staircases to nowhere. In Marino's work, the funhouse is both an armature for her compositions, and a metaphor for painting more generally, wherein a set of illusions conspire to create a totalizing experience.

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Beyond their status as carnival attractions, funhouses retain a position within a wider cultural imaginary, which Marino engages in her work. The innocent deceptions of trick mirrors and trap doors provide context for innumerable ghost stories and horror films, firmly associating these environments with notions of the haunted and the uncanny. In *Foul Play*, Marino inflects her compositions with a recognizable disquiet, established through images like unexplained footprints and disembodied limbs. Stretching from playful and spooky, these thematic underpinnings are perhaps most apparent in Marino's omission of full human figures, which the artist cites as a method for exploring the power of suggestion. Staged to revolve around people, like theatre sets awaiting actors, her paintings burst with "the implication of disaster, without the figures in crisis." Marino's work draws upon other cultural references and art historical precedents to establish these scenes, particularly vintage comics, and animated television shows. On the influence of cartoon imagery in her work, she states: "I love the way old cartoons can approach you with a playful situation and then, all of a sudden, it's a murder scene—like offering you a homemade pie filled with dynamite." Such influences connect her work to earlier movements, including Chicago Imagism and Bay Area Funk, whose members similarly cherished cartooning and animation.

Foul Play primarily comprises large-scale canvases rendered in oil and demonstrates the artist's considerable facility with the medium. "I wanted to go big enough that you could walk into the paintings," the artist describes. "I want them to be overwhelming or claustrophobic. I want you to be able to fall into the space. Or have the space fall onto you." To develop these compositions, Marino produced a series of three-dimensional models, from which she worked to capture the specific qualities of light and dark rendered in these scenes. In her velvety application of color, theatrical positioning of light and dark, and surreal compositions, Marino transforms these models into complicated scenarios that reward sustained looking. In Marino's own words, "I like to think each piece started out with the potential for a happy ending but got caught in a disaster along the way."

About the artist

Rachel Simon Marino was born in San Francisco, in 1989. She attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she received her BFA in 2011. In 2019, her work was the subject of a solo exhibition at Hit Gallery in San Francisco. Her work is frequently featured in group presentations in the United States, including recent exhibitions at the De Young Museum (San Francisco), Evergold Projects (San Francisco); Guerrero Gallery (Oakland); and Rena Bransten Projects (Chicago). *Foul Play* is her first solo exhibition in New York. In addition to her studio practice, Marino has a significant history in illustration and prop design. Marino lives and works in San Francisco, California.

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120 East 65th Street
New York, NY 10065

Gallery hours:

Tuesday - Saturday, 10 am - 6 pm

To ensure the health and safety of staff and visitors, masks and social distancing will be required in accordance with public guidelines. Maximum of six people admitted at a time.

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For further information about the exhibition and availability, please contact the gallery at info@venusovermanhattan.com

Image credits:

Rachel Simon Marino, "A Hoax Unquestioned," 2021. Oil on canvas; 78 x 72 in (198.1 x 182.9 cm). Courtesy the artist and Venus Over Manhattan, New York.
Rachel Marino, "The Trail," 2021. Oil on canvas; 72 x 96 in (182.9 x 243.8 cm). Courtesy the artist and Venus Over Manhattan, New York.