

Interview

Art

FORDPROJECT'S BEAUTIFUL DARK TWISTED FANTASIES

By ELIZABETH JANOFF 01/12/2011



PANNI MALEKZADEH, PEEP SHOW

"Fairytale life stories" was the first thing that popped into the head of independent curator Lara Pan when she was asked to propose an inaugural art exhibition for Altpoint Capital Partners' new contemporary art space, FordPROJECT, located in a sprawling penthouse on 57th Street above the Ford modeling agency's women division. "I was inspired by the

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history of Ford [Models]," explains Pan in the context of her show, "When the Fairy Tale Never Ends," which opens January 20. "But I didn't want to treat it though the fashion—I wanted to find something new."

Through the work of both emerging and established artists—Henry Darger, Kenny Scharf, and Gretchen Ryan—Pan's show explores "fairytale universes," focusing on the realities that ground fantasy. Entering the lavishly designed art space, three of the exhibition walls are covered with child's nursery-room wallpaper distorted by artist Robert Lazzarini. Many of the art works are hung on it, including Panni Malekzadeh's naturalistic painting, *Peep Show*, depicting the inside of a brothel. Hot-pink neon lights read, "Girls, Girls, Girls," disturbingly juxtaposed with a toddler girl, playing with her doll.

"It's kind of a mind game," Pan says. "The exhibition is meant to stimulate both the conscious and subconscious response of the viewer." In painting, video, sculpture, and performance, most of the works depict the darker side of fairytales, exploring their naiveté, materialism and misrepresentation of women. carabello-farmen's *Midnight*, for example, a box with a video projection of Cinderella inside, repeats on a loop the moment she transforms from maid to princess, and emphasizes her entrapment. Paintings by artist Gretchen Ryan realistically depict four- and five-year-old beauty pageant contestants—who, according to Pan, "are already in the universe of a fairy tale; they're living in a fantasy world."