

Gothic Fictions Dylan Hausthor Rory Mulligan Tereza Zelenkova

About the Artists

Dylan Hausthor (born 1993) was raised in southern Vermont. His work has been exhibited and showcased nationally and internationally by Film Festivals, the Anamorphosis Prize, Photocopy Club, Humble Arts Foundation and select galleries. After graduating with his BFA from the Maine College of Art, he founded the art book publishing project Wilt Press in the Spring of 2015 and currently works as a bookmaker, photographer, and chief editor of Wilt Magazine from a small island in Maine.

Rory Mulligan (born 1984) received a BA from Fordham University and a MFA from Yale University in 2010 where he was awarded the Ward Cheney Memorial Award. His work has been exhibited both nationally and internationally and is included in the permanent collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Mulligan's work has been published by J&L Books and Blind Spot Magazine.

Tereza Zelenkova (born 1985 in Czech Republic; lives and works in London, UK) is an artist working mainly with black and white analogue photography. Her practice often deals with mysticism, ranging from abstract ideas about death and the sacred, to documenting concrete locations tied to local mythologies or mysterious historical events. Her inspiration often comes from literature and philosophy, but she also embraces coincidence, intuition and analogy as essential working methods.

Gothic Fictions

David Oresick
Executive Director,
Silver Eye Center
for Photography

"Monsters are real, and ghosts are real too. They live inside us, and sometimes, they win." —Stephen King

The title of this exhibition refers to a long narrative tradition, whose lineage includes romantic and Victorian stories from Mary Shelley and Edgar Allan Poe, the southern gothic tales of Flannery O'Connor and Truman Capote, and our contemporary cultural fascination with horror and true crime narratives in film and television. We know intuitively the elements that form this genre: foreboding and ancient settings, supernaturally powerful villains, prophecies of doom, tragically flawed heroes, and final girls. The themes of these tales are second nature to us: a fascination with death, the persistence of evil, and the triumph of chaos, violence, and madness over order, science, and religion. These stories are full of symbols and allegories, cautionary tales to warn us of the dangers of the age. These stories should scare us, of course, but only because we want to be scared, and because in seeing what we fear, somehow, we are delighted. Gothic fictions combine a creeping, dreadful terror, and the unstoppable giddy pleasure we take in that terror.

Visually, we have come to understand these stories through the language of horror films. In the past ninety-some years of the genre, its aesthetic has become defined to the point of becoming vernacular. Dark and stormy nights, lurching demons, creepy kids, and athletic, amorous teenagers are all staples--cliches even-- of these movies. Yet unlike photographs, stories and movies move through time; they begin and then they end. Films can have creatures suddenly jump out of nowhere, monsters can chase the victim through the woods, and our hero can slowly descend into an obviously haunted basement. This sense of building anticipation and sudden change is difficult to convey in a single still frame, but photographs can create their own unique sense of dread. It is a dread that is rooted in stillness and in the viewer's understanding that all of the questions they have about the image will not be answered. The viewer is left to twist alone, because photographs keep their secrets. They have no beginning or end, and this timelessness can be terrifying.

While photographs don't tell clear stories, they can build extensive worlds, visually define characters, and set palpable moods. Dylan Hausthor's series *Past the Pond*, *Setting Fires* takes place in a

verdant and isolated New England forest. On the surface, this forest appears innocuous, but it holds horrible things in its depths. Based in rural Maine, Hausthor uses local legends and gossip to create images that contain mythological grandeur and a gritty malevolence. The first image in Hausthor's photographic sequence, a picture of towering hedges called *My Finger Joints Are Too Cold*, is an invitation to enter his dark fairy tale. At the base of the hedges is a small, dark opening, one barely big enough to crawl through. You can almost smell the wet soil and feel the cold earth on your hands and knees.

Hausthor drew inspiration for this series from the story of a friend's doomed quest for revenge. A young woman wanted to punish another woman who had been spreading rumors about her, so she lit the gossip's barn on fire. The arsonist was eight months pregnant when she set the blaze, but after a few minutes of watching the fire envelope the old barn she felt her water break, and went into labor four weeks early.



Images from left to right: *Dead Men Look At Me*, Dylan Hausthor, 2018, Archival Inkjet Print, courtesy of the artist, *Michelle*, Dylan Hausthor, 2018, Archival Inkjet Print, courtesy of the artist. Cover image: *Mike Black Mask*, Rory Mulligan, 2015, Silver Gelatin Print, courtesy of the artist.

She ran across the street to the property owner's house and demanded a ride to the hospital as her crime burned behind her. This tale in turn sparked more gossip, and become a local legend. Hausthor's image *I Live At The End Of This Road* dramatically imagines this barn burning, while *Inbred*, *Again* lends a mythologic presence to the story.

Hausthor's forest is haunted and haunting, full of baleful spirits, and people who teeter on the edge of madness. An older shirtless man moves like a wiry animal, running on his hands and feet. A black snake slithers through bright, white grass. A young woman stands calmly while her hair burns. An old woman, seated on the ground, eerily glows in the dark forest. There is something utterly cursed about these woods. Like the young woman who burned the barn, these monsters seem trapped by their own wickedness. Their evil seductiveness is so beautiful that you are drawn into it, helpless. Yet it is not all darkness and despair in Hausthor's forest. *In Dead Men*, *Look At Me*, an enormous white stag rests gently on the forest floor, a righteous and gentle forest spirit. The woods shimmer around him with magical energy while he rests, powerful yet vulnerable.

Rory Mulligan's series *Sam I Am* explores the violent history of the Hudson River Valley in Upstate New York. This is too is an area that teems with dark tales, from the fiction of Washington Irving and John Cheever, to the real life horror of the Son of Sam murders, to more recent incidents like a train derailment at Spuyten Duyvil and a macabre scene in 2014 in which the twenty-five cats were found killed, hanging in plastic bags in a park in Yonkers. The incidents Mulligan references are not only connected by geography, but the fact that these violent and traumatic acts are all committed or narrated by men. According to Mulligan, "the strong connection between men and violence is complicated, but undeniable."

Mulligan shows us many abandoned parts of the Hudson River Valley that are visually striking and subtly disturbing. The photograph *Columns* depicts a park in winter time. Mulligan's vantage point shows steps surrounded by columns, the roof they once supported now long gone. Unicorn shows a sculpture of a horse in relief set into a crumbling wall. It's head has fallen off--or was it decapitated? Were these the sites of unspeakable tragedy? Is this where they found all of those cats? These places are so beautiful, and still they are full of peril.

Sam I Am darts between history and fiction. The stark and subtle images hint at a narrative that centers around an elusive and evil

masculine force. This villainous force is embodied in several images by a man Mulligan calls Mike. *Mike Black Mask* shows this character sitting nude wearing only a plain, smooth, shiny mask. He sits at ease in an overstuffed chair, his flesh pasty white and slightly chubby, one arm across his body. Although he is not wearing clothes he does not seem at all vulnerable—in fact he oozes power, menace, and control. This picture is simply terrifying. We see Mike’s face in other images, but he is always naked, his middle aged body hairless and smooth. He looks like something between an unstoppable deranged serial killer, like Hannibal Lecter, and an evil apparition, not even real. He stalks coyly through a field in one image, and crouches at a window while looking sternly at the camera in another. Mulligan’s painstakingly composed photographs are racked with anxious tension.

Tereza Zelenkova’s series, *The Essential Solitude*, shifts from a masculine to a feminine presence. This body of work centers around a single figure who is either a prisoner or a recluse. Stuck in a room, endlessly alone, she reads and dreams, completely shut off from the world. Though the room has a victorian sensibility, but its decayed walls and furnishings suggests a crushing amount of time has passed since the woman began her seclusion. For Zelenkova, this room is the 20th century answer to Des Essientes, a decadent character from J. K. Huysmans



Images from left: *Fluff*, Rory Mulligan, 2014, Silver Gelatin Print, courtesy of the artist, *Columns*, Rory Mulligan, 2015, Silver Gelatin Print, courtesy of the artist, *I am the Sun*, Tereza Zelenkov, 2017, Archival Inkjet Print, courtesy of the artis, *Oh Mirror!*, Tereza Zelenkova, 2017, Archival Inkjet Print, courtesy of the artist.

infamous novel *A Rebours*, who transformed his house into a sensual feast by surrounding himself with historic interiors, carefully arranged objects, and an array of smells and sounds. Huysmans describes how travel and interacting with the world struck Des Essientes “... as being a waste of time, since he believed that the imagination could provide a more-than-adequate substitute for the vulgar reality of actual experience.”

Zelenkova’s striking, nearly life-sized image *I am the Sun* shows the lone woman standing in her deteriorating room. Her back is turned to the camera and her wavy hair is so long that the ends drag along




the floor. As with every piece in this series, the details are meticulous framed and tack sharp. We can see the plaster flaking, the threadbare baroque draperies, the velvet curtains fraying, the chair cushion cratering inward, dust covering everything. Even a gargoyle statue looks ancient and exhausted. The weight of time in this photograph is enormous. Everything is worn to tatters, and the lone woman's hair grows and grows.

Like other characters in this exhibition, the lone woman exists on the cusp of the worldly and the supernatural. She is either simply a woman out of step with her time, or is she an immortal, trapped forever: languid, languishing, cursed and exiled. In one photograph her face is shown, but her eyes are closed, and she remains unknowable to the viewer. We see details of her life in the pieces of the world she has collected: victorian candlesticks, a daguerreotype of a handsome young man, books, pearls, and lace. Two images of dried out poppy plants suggest she is drugged into a stupor. *The Essential Solitude* shows us the pleasures and terrors of a life lived in the imagination, apart from the world.

Each of these three artists conjures worlds within the framework of the Gothic to create harrowing scenes. Horror stories like these are often used as a societal mirror, to reflect our deepest collective fears, anxieties and desires back to us in a form we can relish, thereby concucuring our demons. There are so many possibilities for real-world analogs to the mythical terrors these artists depict that it's impossible to know where to begin. The experience of adding meaning to these myths is different for everyone because the things that haunt you are yours alone. The villains, curses, and calamities we see are only rivaled by our desire to be close to them, or at least close to their image. That is the real and enormous pleasure of photography: that we can stand safely looking, lingering as long as we like, removed in time and distance from the horrible things we love to see.

	Dylan Hausthor	<i>I Live At The End Of This Road</i>	2016 Archival Inkjet Print 11×15' Edition of 6+2AP	\$900
	Dylan Hausthor	<i>Inbred Again</i>	2016 Archival Inkjet Print 21×16' Edition of 6+2AP	\$1200
	Dylan Hausthor	<i>Ann</i>	2018 Archival inkjet print 53×40' Edition of 6+2AP	\$1400
	Dylan Hausthor	<i>Beatrice</i>	2018 Archival inkjet print 11×8' Edition of 6+2AP	\$400
	Dylan Hausthor	<i>Dead Men Look At Me</i>	2018 Archival inkjet print 41×31' Edition of 6+2AP	\$1400
	Dylan Hausthor	<i>Michelle</i>	2018 Archival Inkjet Print 15×11' Edition of 6+2AP	\$900
	Dylan Hausthor	<i>Death Cap</i>	2018 Archival Inkjet Print 11×8' Edition of 6+2AP	\$600
	Dylan Hausthor	<i>My Finger Joints Are Too Cold</i>	2017 Archival Inkjet Print 41×32' Edition of 6+2AP	\$1400
	Dylan Hausthor	<i>Owl</i>	2017 Archival Inkjet Print 11×8' Edition of 6+2AP	\$600
	Dylan Hausthor	<i>Shedding</i>	2018 Archival Inkjet Print 21×16' Edition of 6+ 2018	\$1,400
	Dylan Hausthor	<i>Web</i>	2018 Archival Inkjet Print 11×8' Edition of 6+2AP	\$400
	Dylan Hausthor	<i>Snake</i>	2018 Archival Inkjet Print 18×24' Edition of 6+2AP	\$900

	Rory Mulligan	<i>Waterfall (i)</i>	2014 Silver Gelatin Print 21×25' 3+2AP	\$900 Unframed / \$1,200 Framed
	Rory Mulligan	<i>Columns</i>	2015 Silver Gelatin Print 21×25' 3+2AP	\$900 / \$1,200
	Rory Mulligan	<i>Curtain</i>	2013 Silver Gelatin Print 21×25' 3+2AP	\$900 / \$1,200
	Rory Mulligan	<i>Elephant Ear</i>	2018 Silver Gelatin Print 31×38' 3+2AP	\$1,800 / \$2,300
	Rory Mulligan	<i>Man At Eagle's Nest</i>	2016 Silver Gelatin Print 21×25' 3+2AP	\$900 / \$1,200
	Rory Mulligan	<i>Mike at Window</i>	2014 Silver Gelatin Print 21×25' 3+2AP	\$900 / \$1,200
	Rory Mulligan	<i>Mike Black Mask</i>	2015 Silver Gelatin Print 31×28' 3+2AP	\$1,800 / \$2,300
	Rory Mulligan	<i>Fluff</i>	2014 Silver Gelatin Print 12×15' 3+2AP	\$900 / \$1,100
	Rory Mulligan	<i>Hogtie</i>	2015 Silver Gelatin Print 12×15' 3+2AP	\$900 / \$1,100
	Rory Mulligan	<i>Garden Pool</i>	2014 Silver Gelatin Print 21×25' 3+2AP	\$900 / \$1,200
	Rory Mulligan	<i>Sam and Lion</i>	2014 Silver Gelatin Print 21×25' 3+2AP	\$900 / \$1,200
	Rory Mulligan	<i>Unicorn (i)</i>	2015 Silver * Print 21×25' 3+2AP	\$900 / \$1,200

	Tereza Zelenkova	<i>Daguerreotype</i>	2017 Silver Gelatin Print 23×20'	On request
	Tereza Zelenkova	<i>All that I see</i>	2017 Silver Gelatin Print 23×20'	On request
	Tereza Zelenkova	<i>As above</i>	2017 Silver Gelatin Print 23×20'	On request
	Tereza Zelenkova	<i>I am the Sun</i>	2017 Silver Gelatin Print 59×39'	On request
	Tereza Zelenkova	<i>Oh Mirror!</i>	2017 Silver Gelatin Print 23×20'	On request
	Tereza Zelenkova	<i>Oratory</i>	2017 Silver Gelatin Print 37×47'	On request
	Tereza Zelenkova	<i>Poppy head 1</i>	2017 Silver Gelatin Print 23×20'	On request
	Tereza Zelenkova	<i>Poppy head 2</i>	2017 Silver Gelatin Print 23×20'	On request

* Some prints are available in different sizes and framing option than are listed in this guide. Additional works from these artists may also be available. Please ask our staff for details.

Silver Eye Center for Photography
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