



PHIL DAVIS

MTV2

January 27—March 4, 2017

Night Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition by Phil Davis, titled *MTV2*. Davis is based in Los Angeles and this will be his first exhibition with the gallery.

A group of friends come together to perform a “play.” Each person attempts to play a character imagined specifically for them, in a screenplay written by Phil and Nate titled *Salem’s “Trapdoor”*. No one has previously seen the script. They only know that it is supposed to be evocative of a 1990’s American high school murder mystery à la Wes Craven’s *Scream*. A basic wardrobe is provided, consisting of football jerseys, camo shirts, turtlenecks, and rugby shirts, among other items. The script is read cold and only once, while Phil photographs the reading. The actors are told the photographs could be used to make paintings for a show at Night Gallery in January.

While taking photographs, Davis attempts to record the spectrum of artifice occurring in the room. The photographs aim to show the moment of attempted conversion from “real self” to a component of a stylized narrative, as the actors alternate between self and artificial character, self-consciousness prevailing to differing degrees, depending on the actor. The photos point explicitly to the line between performing what each person has come to know as their natural, actual self, and slipping into character. They are acting! That’s what it is, a body of work dedicated to that moment when a person becomes something else, a character. This moment is ubiquitous, seen constantly, as major parts of our perception are involuntarily shaped based on the narratives and simulations seen in film and television.

The absurdity of this pose, the attempt to distill a character’s entire life and imagination of their own personhood into a facial expression or uttered sentence, is accompanied by the absurdity of the ancillary stuff associated with a typical script / film. Promo stills, merchandise, social media—the amount of energy that goes into these side items. Energy of a different tempo goes into the paintings, a slower processing of the moments when the words from a script become performance, and are no longer written words on physical paper. A reaction to the proliferation of branding that would typically accompany this type of project, a case study for a meditation on noise.

Phil Davis (b. 1988, Pasadena, CA) received a B.A. from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 2012. His solo exhibitions include Phil Gallery in Los Angeles, and the Mountain View Mortuary in Altadena, CA, and his work has also been shown at Nara, Tokyo, and Ms. Barber’s, Los Angeles. In 2015 he ran Blood Gallery in Brooklyn, NY, with Philippe de Sablet and Lydia Glenn-Murray, and most recently organized an exhibition along the Lower Arroyo Seco trail in Pasadena, CA.

