

ARTFORUM

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INTERNATIONAL

ENRIQUE MARTÍNEZ CELAYA THE PEARL

SITE SANTA FE
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By Ana Finel Honigman

Enrique Martínez Celaya's "The Pearl" is an affecting meditation on nostalgia. Martínez Celaya constructs this exhibition like a tightly composed narrative poem involving a small cast of characters—a boy, a fox, a gaggle of different kinds of small woodland birds, and a German shepherd—depicted through paintings, chintzy figurines, sculptures, and installation. Nothing feels extraneous in Martínez Celaya's dreamlike vision of a lost home and distant boyhood. His surreal narrative unfolds through a series of installations that viewers explore from room to room by following a clear hose hung from the ceiling. It is safe to say that this prosaic hose acts as a metaphor for Martínez Celaya's memory, linking him back to his youth and the meaning behind all the melancholy totems in the show.

The exhibition opens with a white cloth curtain near the entrance, on which is projected a film of the German shepherd devouring a house made of dog food. Although the dog initially destroys the home, he is a protective force elsewhere in the show, particularly for the boy (spoiler alert: the dog kills the fox). The dog is also not the only part of the story that embodies contradictory meanings. A lighthouse, for example, which is first encountered as a tarred and feathered



wood sculpture in an installation with a similarly desecrated rescue boat, is seen as a helpful presence in the background of a series of framed photographs hung on an adjacent wall in the same room.

Throughout the installation, the same forces can be alternatively redemptive, protective, and destructive. Fire both cleanses and destroys chairs and trees, while water is also shown to purify and corrupt. In their totality, all of these elements are deftly employed to symbolize change, our tenuous grasp on cherished memories, and the necessity of accepting loss.