

## GLADSTONE GALLERY

Edith Newhall, "New art to see in Philly this month: at Eastern State Pen, the Art Museum...and on napkins," *The Inquirer*, May 9, 2018

# The Inquirer

Entertainment — The Arts

## New art to see in Philly this month: at Eastern State Pen, the Art Museum ... and on napkins

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by Edith Newhall, For The Inquirer

### Rachel Rose at PMA



 COURTESY PMA

A still from Rachel Rose's "Wil-o-Wisp" at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art's new video installation *Wil-o-Wisp* is remarkable in at least three respects.

There's the video itself, of course, a dark fairy tale that could have borrowed its stylistic cues from Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*, Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby*, and any number of silent films.

And there is Rachel Rose, the young artist who conceived, directed, and shot it. Since earning an M.F.A. from Columbia University in 2013, Rose has been given solo exhibitions at London's Serpentine Gallery and the Whitney Museum of American Art. In addition to *Wil-o-Wisp* at the Art Museum, she has works in the collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, London's Tate, and Japan's Ishikawa Foundation, among others.

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Third is the arrangement that brought *Wil-o-Wisp* to Philadelphia.

Rose's exhibition marks the inauguration of Future Fields Commission in Time-Based Media, a shared initiative of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin, Italy, that will support the production of a new video, film, sound, or performance work every two years. The two institutions will exhibit those future commissions and acquire them for their collections.

*Wil-o-Wisp* is in the same large gallery that hosted the majority of Bruce Nauman's *Contrapposto Studies* last year, but is shown on a screen in the middle of the rectangular gallery and can be viewed from behind as well as from the front. The video is projected on semitransparent projection scrims that create a shimmering effect of moiré patterns. Viewers can stand while watching the video — it's just over 10 minutes long — or sit on cushions and carpeting that are part of Rose's installation. Viewers' footprints have already left moiré-like patterns in the carpeting, echoing the patterns made by the scrims.

At its core, Rose's video tells the story of Elspeth Blake, who lives with her family in rural 16th-century Somerset, England. The protagonist undergoes a tragedy and is thought to have died, then reemerges in another village as a mystic and healer, where her practice of magic lands her in trouble.

Blake's trajectory, compelling as it is, is also a thread to connect Rose's multiple references. It unfolds in chapters like silent films of old, with musical scoring and sound effects that bring to mind contemporary movie features. The video concludes with appropriated early 20th-century footage that purported to show light-filled fairies at night. It's a fitting finale for this transporting collage of image, sound, history, and place.

*Through Sept. 16 at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2600 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Sundays (Wednesdays and Fridays to 8:45 p.m.). Information: 215-763-8100 or [philamuseum.org](http://philamuseum.org).*