

TITLE MAGAZINE

Black Hole Saga – Rubens Ghenov

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at [Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York](#)
through December 23

by Gabriela Vainsencher



As Rubens Ghenov tells it, the mystic poet Angelico Morandá goes to the woods to stand, covered in a sheet with his ears sticking out of ear-holes, between two natural objects: a tree and a rock. He listens to them, and sometimes adds his own pre-recorded sound loops to the mix. [An Unevening Raga, Accoutrements for an Aposiopetic Précis, vol. 3](#), is the third installment of exhibitions Ghenov has made revolving around Morandá, and the first in which the character is presented as fictional.

Standing in the gallery's small project room, where there are nine paintings on view, I found that like the listening poet, I had to turn my attention away from the visual stimuli to really hear the sound work that shares the exhibition space. Emanating from a bit of driftwood perched very high up on the wall in its nest of laminate wood shelving, the sound is a soft percussive undercurrent; gurgly, echoing, pulsating. It sounds like a tinny, fake sort of nature, and like it might be talking.

And so do the paintings. Many of them look like echoes of places, the exoskeletons of simplified rooms draped over dehydrated paint puddles and trompe-l'oeil wood grain. While all the works in this show are preoccupied with layering, both in paint and in sound, the layers never seem to cover up a pervasive emptiness. This void is embodied by the linen of the paintings that shines from under the meticulously taped-off painted areas. Someone once told me that one of the ways a black hole can be detected is if a star appears to be orbiting nothing. The title of the show, also a layered affair filled with tweaked 5-Dollar words, essentially tells us here are the tools, the remnants, and the artefacts of a spiritual-artistic practice. Here are the footsteps left behind, but not the feet that left them.

Gabriela Vainsencher is an Argentinian-born Israeli artist who moved back to Brooklyn a year ago after living in Philadelphia for two years. She is an MFA candidate at Hunter College and has been making a lot of video and ceramics recently. In January 2015 Gabriela will be teaching a class on narrative in visual art at Williams College, in Williamstown, MA.