





**RACHEL LEE HOVNANIAN**

THE WOMEN'S TRILOGY PROJECT



(THE RAY LEE PROJECT, VOL. 1)

*NDD*

Immersion Room



FUCK MY LIFE  
NO WIFI

FMLNWF

# (The Ray Lee Project, Vol. 1) NDD Immersion Room

LAURA FEINSTEIN

Rachel Lee Hovnanian's work serves as a mirror of our inner longings, biases, and hidden addictions. Utilizing a color palette of Arctic whites, her installations, sculptures, framed works, and even the gallery walls themselves, seem dipped in milk, providing a stark but inviting canvas on which to project an emotional context.

Over the last decade, the New York-based artist has examined the digital world's growing influence on how we interact with our culture, skillfully synthesizing issues of gender, technology, and personal autonomy. In *Perfect Baby Showroom*, an installation created for her *Plastic Perfect* series, Hovnanian molded row after row of "designer babies"—identical models foreshadowing a tech-driven future of artificial reproduction and promised manufactured perfection. *Foreplay*, a video projection placed on a vertical bed, shows four couples tangled up in the sheets, staring at screens while casually ignoring each another. The scene manages to be simultaneously humorous, bleak, and entirely too familiar—a common sensation throughout Hovnanian's work. She is adept at crafting conceptual worlds that both refract and mirror our present.

*(The Ray Lee Project Vol. 1) NDD Immersion Room* at Leila Hellery Gallery, the first in her three-part *Women's Trilogy Project*, was created under a male pseudonym in response to frequent gender bias. She dares us to enter a rare, technology-free meditative state and rediscover both nature and our subconscious desire to unplug. *NDD Immersion Room* was inspired by the concept of Nature Deficit Disorder, an expression coined by American journalist and author Richard Louv to describe a form of "human alienation from nature" and its resulting depressive state.

Hovnanian's aim is to offer a remedy in three stages. The first is represented by a minimalist waiting area with only furniture and phone charging stations for entertainment, mimicking both the daily anxieties and slow morphine drip of 24/7 smartphone use. On the wall, a neon sign says "Fuck My Life, My Battery's Dead" over the iconic Apple battery symbol, eliciting an easily identifiable cortisol spike of panic.

In the second area, adorned with white birch wall decals, we're asked to step into an immersive pod, either with our phones or a loved one, enabling us to feel protected within our little bubbles. The final room, Hovnanian's "forest," is inspired by a tomboy childhood spent in the Texas woods. Here, participants are asked to surrender their beloved phones in a lockbox, and step inside with just an LED lantern to experience the fragrant scent of pine trees and the sounds of crickets (both real) while leaves crunch under city shoes.

There's a temptation to turn back—it's dark, and you are truly alone. But visitors who walk further can find a makeshift campfire tableau and are able to gaze at the "stars" installed on the gallery's ceiling, a moment of calm in the middle of downtown New York City. Many who emerge describe flashes of childhood memories—weekends camping or summers upstate—but no one comes out unmoved.

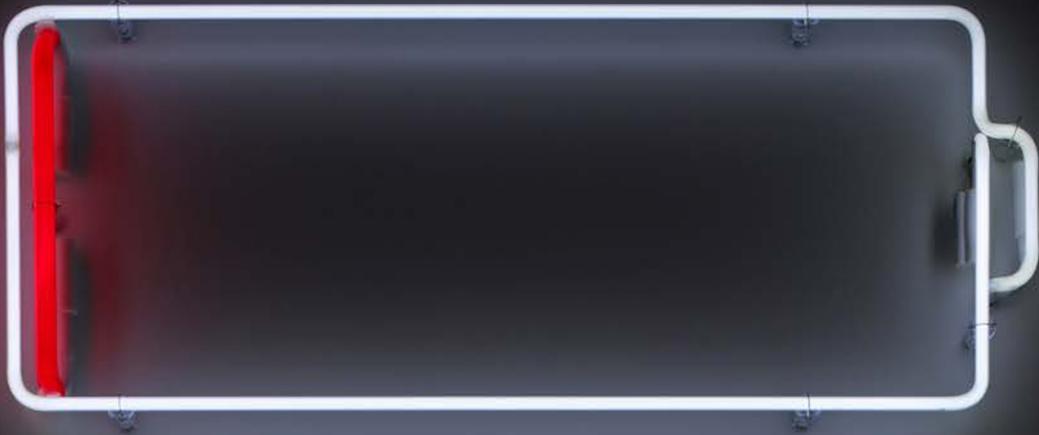
Ultimately, how you experience the *NDD Immersion Room* is a litmus test of your ability to appreciate nature and the peace it offers, as well as your willingness to be alone with yourself, cut off from the false security our network of support that smartphones and social media offer. If 100 people entered the immersion room, ultimately there would be 100 unique experiences, making it indeed a rarity in our modern age.



FUCK MY LIFE  
MY BATTERY'S DEAD

FMLMBD





FUCK MY LIFE  
MY BATTERY'S DEAD

FMLMBD







































# Prescribe Nature

DR. SAMANTHA BOARDMAN

*The enjoyment of scenery employs the mind without fatigue and yet exercises it; tranquilizes it and yet enlivens it; and thus, through the influence of the mind over the body gives the effect of refreshing rest and reinvigoration to the whole system.*

— Frederick Law Olmsted

There is a consistent positive relationship between being outdoors and subjective experiences of vitality. Nature is where we feel most engaged and alive. The effect appears to be independent of physical activity. In other words, just sitting on a park bench and taking in the beauty of the trees or lying on the ground and gazing up at the stars is revitalizing and conducive to well-being.<sup>1</sup>

People who have had surgery recover more quickly if they can see trees from their window.<sup>2</sup> They require fewer painkillers and call for the nurse less often. Children with ADHD improve in the countryside.<sup>3</sup> The “greener” a child’s play area, the less severe their symptoms.<sup>4</sup>

Nature helps buffer against stress, especially for urban dwellers. The pace and pressure of city life takes a toll on mental health. In fact, metropolitan populations are more likely to suffer from mental illnesses than rural ones. Green spaces take the edge off of anger and irritability.<sup>5</sup> They are antidotes for our Wac-A-Mole lives.

Negative thoughts and rumination decrease when people spend time in the great outdoors. It provides a positive distraction from endless worry and obsessive rehashing of all the things that went wrong or could go wrong.

Being outdoors makes people happier, healthier, and nicer. It is even good for relationships. A recent study shows that when mothers and daughters take a walk in the park together instead of a trip to the mall, they get along better and feel more deeply bonded.<sup>6</sup>

Nature sustains us. We crave it. It is Natural Prozac. Pulitzer prize winning evolutionary biologist E.O. Wilson calls this yearning for nature, “biophilia”— an inherent love and attraction to natural environments.

Without it, we are at risk of developing what author Richard Louv describes as Nature Deficit Disorder (NDD): “Nature deficit disorder is not a formal diagnosis, but a way to describe the psychological, physical and cognitive costs of human alienation from nature.”<sup>7</sup>

According to a recent survey, 75% of children spend less time outside than the average prison inmate.<sup>8</sup> Yes, that means Bernie Madoff gets more fresh air than most kindergarteners. Adults aren’t any better. On average, Americans spend 87% of the time indoors and 6% in an enclosed vehicle, probably with the windows up.

There is a cost to all this time spent between four walls. The good news is that the cure for NDD is just outside your door. A dose of nature is just what the doctor ordered.





NDD

Immersion

Room

# Immersion Room



























# RACHEL LEE HOVNANIAN

Born in Parkersburg, WV

Lives and works in New York, NY

## EDUCATION

BFA, University of Texas, Austin, TX

Post-Grad, Parsons School of Design, New York, NY

## SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 *(The Ray Lee Project Vol. 1) NDD Immersion Room*, Victori + Mo, Brooklyn, NY
- 2016 *Perfect Baby Showroom*, Public Installation, Dallas Art Fair, Dallas, TX
- 2014 *Plastic Perfect*, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, NY  
*Plastic Perfect*, Pechersky Gallery, Moscow, Russia  
*New Year's Feast: Beijing*, Joyce Gallery, Beijing, China
- 2013 *Rachel Lee Hovnanian: Power, Beauty, Narcissism and Other New Work*, Imago Gallery, Palm Springs, CA
- 2012 *Mud Pie*, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, NY  
*Too Good to be True*, Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong
- 2011 *American Beauty: Too Good to be True*, Foundation Pons, Barcelona, Spain
- 2010 *American Beauty: Too Good to be True*, Aina Nowack/AAC, Madrid, Spain  
*Too Good to be True*, Carrie Secrist Gallery, Chicago, IL  
*Power and Burden of Beauty*, Galerij ARTRA, Kalmthout, Belgium
- 2009 *Power & Burden of Beauty*, Jason McCoy, Inc., New York, NY  
*Power & Burden of Beauty*, Meredith Long & Company, Houston, TX
- 2007 *Rachel Hovnanian: Preservation of the Narcissus*, Jason McCoy, Inc., New York, NY
- 2005 *Preservation of the Narcissus*, Meredith Long & Company, Houston, TX
- 2001 *Isolation Beauty*, David Beitzel Gallery, New York, NY
- 2000 *Isolation Beauty*, Meredith Long & Company, Houston, TX

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2018 *Tick Tock: Time in Contemporary Art*, Lehman College Art Gallery, Bronx, NY
- 2017 *Fool The Eye*, Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn Harbor, NY
- 2016 *Summer Group Show*, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, NY  
*Feast for the Eyes*, Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn Harbor, NY
- 2015 *Seeing Now*, 21c Museum Hotel, Durham, NC  
*Summer Show*, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, NY  
*ART AM 3 (Artisti Americani e Non)*, Galleria Spazio Soncino, Soncino, Italy  
*Sweet Sensations: UConn Reads the Omnivore's Dilemma*, The William Benton Museum of Art, Storrs, CT
- 2014 *Look At Me: Portraiture from Manet to the Present*, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, NY
- 2013 *Dis-semblance: Projecting and Perceiving Identity*, 21c Museum Hotel, Cincinnati, OH  
*Bass! How Low Can You Go?*, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, NY  
*Transparencies: Contemporary Art and A History of Glass*, Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, IA
- 2011 *Tender is the Night*, Marine Contemporary, Venice Beach, CA  
*Leila Heller Summer Show*, South Hampton, NY  
*January White Sale*, Loretta Howard Gallery, New York, NY  
*Public Exhibition*, Manarat al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
- 2010 *East Meet West on the East End*, Tipoli Gallery of Contemporary Art, South Hampton, New York, NY  
*Black and White*, Jason McCoy Gallery, New York, NY  
*Think Pink*, Gavlak Gallery, Palm Beach, FL
- 2009 *Parades and Processions: Here Comes Everybody*, Parasol Unit Foundation for Contemporary Art, London, England
- 2007 *Flowers*, Leila Taghinia-Milani Heller Gallery, New York, NY  
*Options within Realism*, Jason McCoy Gallery, New York, NY
- 2006 *Black and White, Old and New*, Leila Taghinia-Milani Heller Gallery, New York, NY  
*Winter, Gallery Group Show*, Meredith Long Gallery, Houston, TX
- 2003 *Target Benches for Central Park*, Christie's Auction House, New York, NY
- 2002 *Landscapes, Gallery Group Show*, Meredith Long & Company, Houston, TX

# LIST OF WORKS

*NDD Immersion Room*, 2018

Installation of pine trees, leaves, cot, campfire, tent, bugs, sound, felt, fiber optics

*Waiting Room*, 2018

Installation of plaster bunker, furniture, mops, resin sconces, lanterns, charging stations and helmet

*Natural Fractile Series (Oval II)*, 2018

Wood, gesso, plaster, paint, resin, cotton, paper  
41 x 35 inches

*Natural Fractile Series (Oval III)*, 2018

Wood, gesso, plaster, paint, resin, cotton, paper  
41 x 35 inches

*Natural Fractile Series CH I*, 2018

Wood, gesso, plaster, paint, resin, cotton, paper  
20 inches diameter

*Natural Fractile Series CH II*, 2018

Wood, gesso, plaster, paint, resin, cotton, paper  
20 inches diameter

*Natural Fractile Series CH III*, 2018

Wood, gesso, plaster, paint, resin, cotton, paper  
20 inches diameter

*Natural Fractile Series CH IV*, 2018

Wood, gesso, plaster, paint, resin, cotton, paper  
20 inches diameter

*Natural Fractile Series CH V*, 2018

Wood, gesso, plaster, paint, resin, cotton, paper  
20 inches diameter

*Natural Fractile Series CH VI*, 2018

Wood, gesso, plaster, paint, resin, cotton, paper  
20 inches diameter

*Natural Fractile Series CH VII*, 2018

Wood, gesso, plaster, paint, resin, cotton, paper  
20 inches diameter

*Natural Fractile Series CH VIII*, 2018

Wood, gesso, plaster, paint, resin, cotton, paper  
20 inches diameter

*Natural Fractile Series CH IX*, 2018

Wood, gesso, plaster, paint, resin, cotton, paper  
20 inches diameter

*Natural Fractile Series CH X*, 2018

Wood, gesso, plaster, paint, resin, cotton, paper  
20 inches diameter

*Natural Fractile Series CHB I*, 2018

Wood, gesso, plaster, paint, resin, cotton, paper  
81 x 48 inches

*Natural Fractile Series CHB II*, 2018

Wood, gesso, plaster, paint, resin, cotton, paper  
81 x 48 inches

*Natural Fractile Series CHB III*, 2018

Wood, gesso, plaster, paint, resin, cotton, paper  
81 x 48 inches

*Natural Fractile Series CHM*, 2018

Wood, gesso, plaster, paint, resin, cotton, paper  
32 x 23 inches

*FMLNWF*, 2018

Neon mounted to metal  
36 inches diameter

*FMLMBD (AP II)*, 2017

Neon mounted to metal  
40 x 60 inches

# FOOTNOTES

SAMANTHA BOARDMAN

- <sup>1</sup> Richard M. Ryan et al. "Vitalizing Effects of Being Outdoors and In Nature." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 30 (2010). 159-168.
- <sup>2</sup> Deborah Franklin. "How Hospital Gardens Help Patients Heal." *Scientific American*. March 1, 2012. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/nature-that-nurtures/>.
- <sup>3</sup> Nancy M. Wells. "At Home with Nature: Effects of 'Greenness' on Children's Cognitive Functioning." *Environment and Behavior* 32, no. 6 (2000). 775-795.
- <sup>4</sup> Andrea Faber Taylor, Frances E. Kuo, and William Sullivan. "Coping with ADD: The Surprising Connection to Green Play Settings." *Environment and Behavior* 33, no 1. (2001). 54-77.
- <sup>5</sup> Andreas Meyer-Lindenberg. "Urban Living Raises the Risk of Emotional Disorders." *Scientific American*. March, 2013. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/urban-living-raises-risk-of-emotional-disorders/>.
- <sup>6</sup> University of Illinois College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences. "A walk at the mall or the park? New study shows, for moms and daughters, a walk in the park is best." *ScienceDaily*. November 17, 2017. [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/11/171117190705.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/11/171117190705.htm)
- <sup>7</sup> Richard Louv. "No More 'Nature-Deficit Disorder': The 'No Child Left Inside' Movement." *Psychology Today*. January 28, 2009. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/people-in-nature/200901/no-more-nature-deficit-disorder>
- <sup>8</sup> Damian Carrington. "Three-quarters of UK children spend less time outside than prison inmates – survey." *The Guardian*. March 25, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/mar/25/three-quarters-of-uk-children-spend-less-time-outdoors-than-prison-inmates-survey>



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RACHEL LEE HOVNANIAN  
(THE RAY LEE PROJECT VOL. 1)  
NDD IMMERSION ROOM

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