

COFFEE in the
DEEP END



A Dietrich Sieling SOLO Exhibition

The way food is arranged in our refrigerators is, for most of us, purely practical if not incidental. The fluctuating composition of leftovers, condiments, and other perishables typically goes unappreciated as various goods are plucked out and others shoved in.

In Dietrich Sieling's world, however, the fridge becomes a frame and the stuff within it savored for not just taste but also color, shape, composition and spirit. The frigid white box acts as a white cube, its whirring sound the holy motor that welcomes you in like a church choir. The possibility of that whooshing *whowiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii* (add the word 'sound' after whowiiiiiiiiii) is Dietrich's favorite part.

Everyday delights become holy relics in Dietrich's exhibition *Coffee in the Deep End*, opening April 4 at Summertime. Fridge interiors appear alongside portraits of friends, ceiling fans, green lights, coffee cups, oreo cookies, and swimming pools. The gallery will be transformed into a community center-style pool inspired by Dietrich's favorite YWCA decked out with electric blue paint, backstroke flags, and the squeaky clean scent of chlorine. Coffee will be available in both the shallow and deep ends, per Dietrich's wishes.

For the past three months, Dietrich has been a virtual artist-in-residence at Summertime, working from his home studio in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Drawn from photos snapped on his digital camera and printed at a local Walgreens, Dietrich works in densely coated (applied) Prismacolor pencils, taking around two weeks to complete a piece. His trusted beverages of black iced coffee and Grape Waterloo seltzer propel him through the process. For Dietrich, coffee is a symbol that subtly reappears in his work as a floating brown shape. These easter eggs suggest that the beverage, for him, is a sign of life, a caffeinated halo anointing the image around it, a signal that whatever the subject, it gives him a buzz.

In Dietrich's loving tributes to the people and places that surround him, family and friends are cast as melting Byzantine icons with matchstick teeth, looping nostrils, zig-zaggy bodies and lizard green eyes. Ears are a series of concentric horseshoes; chest hair a labyrinth of swirling lines. Seen through Dietrich's magic mirror, objects are not only closer than they appear, they're smushed right up against the glass. Drawings are topped off with Dietrich's oversized signature, which shape shifts between cursive, constellations, and cyrillic script. Flat, happy, and otherworldly, his characters' piercing eyeballs clock you with surprise and delight. When you open your fridge to grab the milk, this is how the milk sees you.

A centerpiece of the exhibition is a portrait of a YWCA swimming pool in Oklahoma. Rendered from a bird's eye view, the pool resembles a church, with bold cross-shaped lanes demarcating the shallow and deep ends. In his exhibition, however, shallowness and depth aren't so easily recognizable. Collapsing three dimensional space into warped treasure maps, Dietrich plays with our conceptions of depth, finding beauty in both the deepest recesses and surface-level pleasures, scrambling our associations of both. Lucky for us, whether wading into the shallow or deep end, coffee is a guarantee.

SUMMERTIME GALLERY