

 **VIDEO:** "The Paper Wall"

Nicholas Pye & Sheila Pye

To Saturday, Dec. 20, at Curator's Office

By Maura Judkis

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Photographers Nicholas and Sheila Pye are together for better and for worse, in sickness and in health, in a marriage that has always provided fodder for their art. In “Vanitas,” their new exhibit at Curator’s Office, the Pyes move beyond the typical relationship tug-of-war depicted in their previous works to a place far more spiritual—and grim. A set of portraits of the artists face off along the walls with telling titles. On one side, they pose with bouquets, heads bowed, for “Vanitas,” Latin for “emptiness” and a word describing 17th century Dutch paintings about the passage of time. Opposite it is “Animism,” for which the Pyes have covered themselves with leaves and branches, peering out from underneath as if they are god and goddess of the Earth. A fifth photo, “Memento Mori,” emulates the classic Dutch still life with bones to remind us of the brevity of life. In the Pyes’ film, *Loudly, Death Unties*, they part. The pair plays a couple living in peaceful isolation until a child disturbs them with haunting violin melodies. The woman finally falls prey to the death-melody of the child, a banshee, and her partner must let go of her so she can levitate toward the sky. Set to a beautiful soundtrack, it’s symbolic of a relationship in peril, and one wonders if the Pyes, like their female lead, can stay afloat.

THE EXHIBITION IS ON VIEW FROM NOON TO 6 P.M. WEDNESDAY THROUGH SATURDAY TO SATURDAY, DEC. 20, AT CURATOR’S OFFICE, 1515 14TH ST. NW. FREE. (202) 387-1008.