


ANTHONY KIENDL

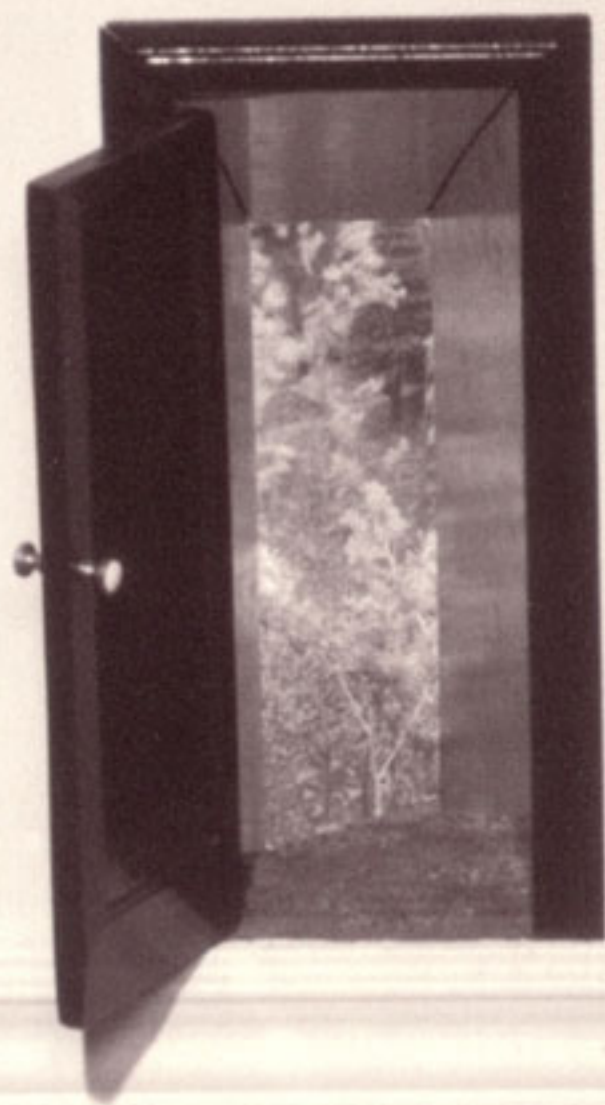
Little Worlds

IN LEWIS CARROLL'S well-known tale *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice confronts a world of variable dimensions: "...she came upon a low curtain she had not noticed before, and behind it was a little door about fifteen inches high: she tried the little golden key in the lock and to her great delight it fitted. Alice opened the door and found that it led into a small passage, not much larger than a rat-hole: she knelt down and looked along the passage into the loveliest garden you ever saw."⁴⁵

45 Lewis Carroll, *The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass* (London: Penguin Books, 1960), 30.



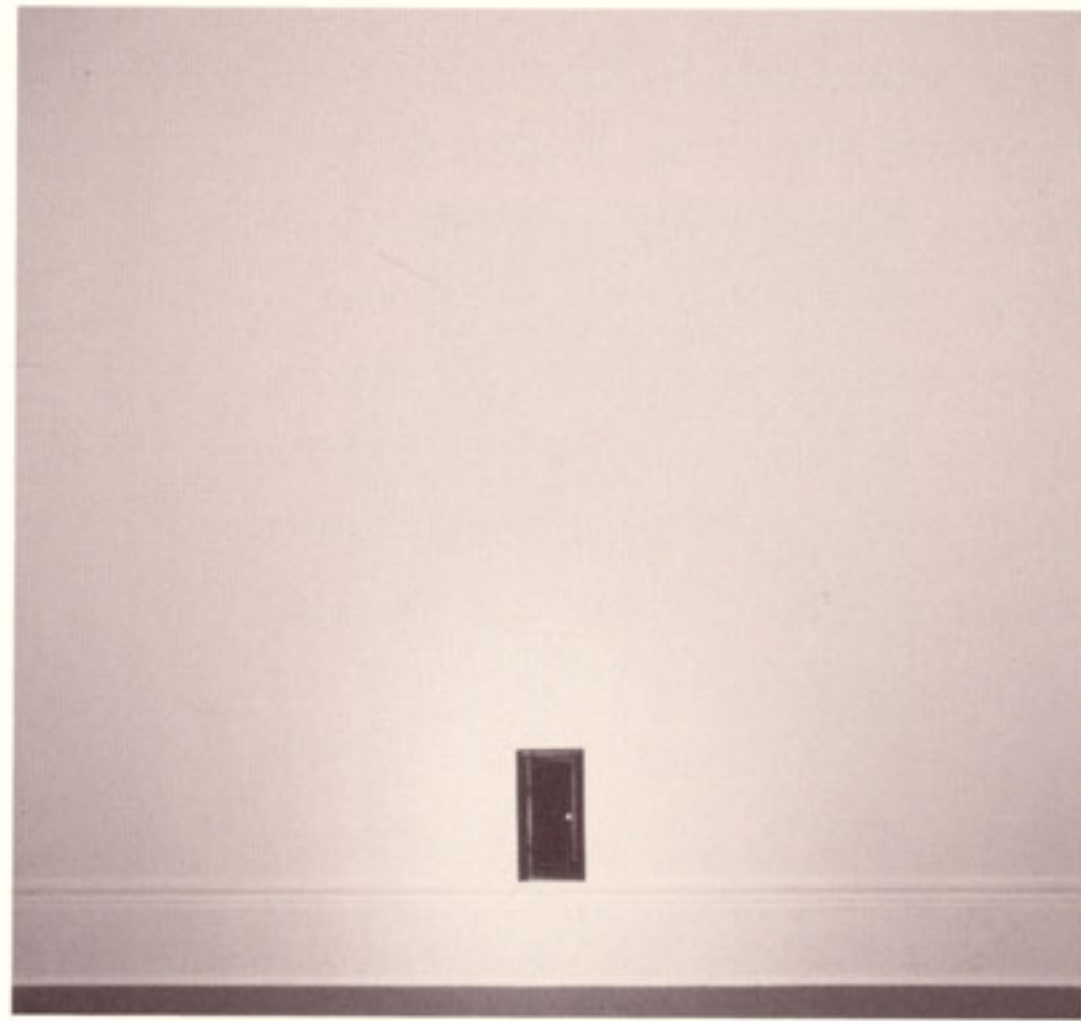
Lyla Rye's installation *Paradise* formally echoes this fictional encounter, and in the process unpacks the mechanics of fantasy space. *Paradise* takes the viewer by surprise, as a 27.5 centimetre door on an otherwise bare wall. A large baseboard runs the length of the wall, and the door rests on the lip of the baseboard. The door is modelled with care and minute detailing. The viewer can swing it open. Upon first encounter the closed door is framed by a blue glow that seeps out from around the casing. The viewer must bend down to peer inside, and it is the effect of this physical action that underscores the size relation of the viewer to the piece, reminding one of their own physicality. But what is inside diverges from Alice. Rather than a manicured garden, the viewer finds a northern, forested terrain. One cannot enter, and in this way it becomes a conscious act of fantasy. Usually



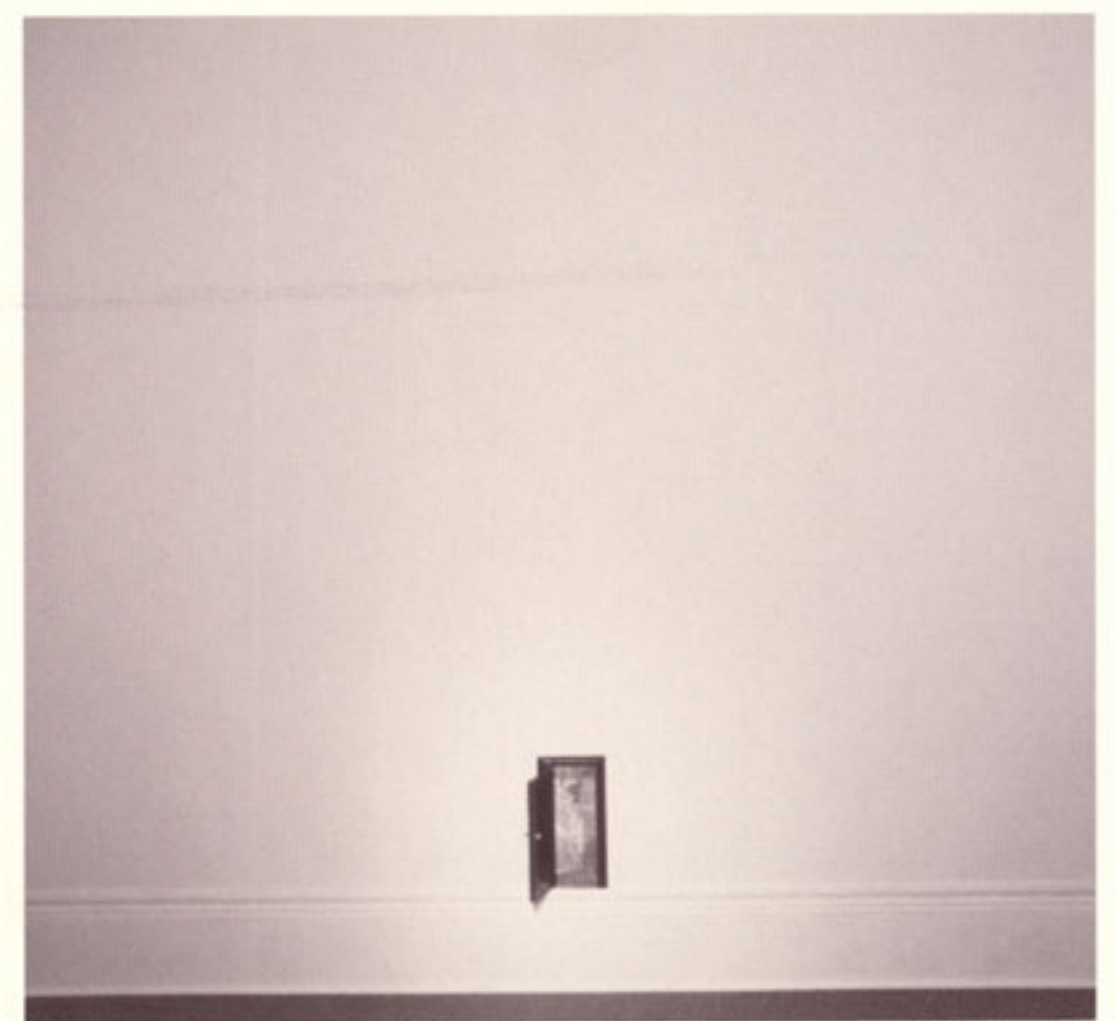
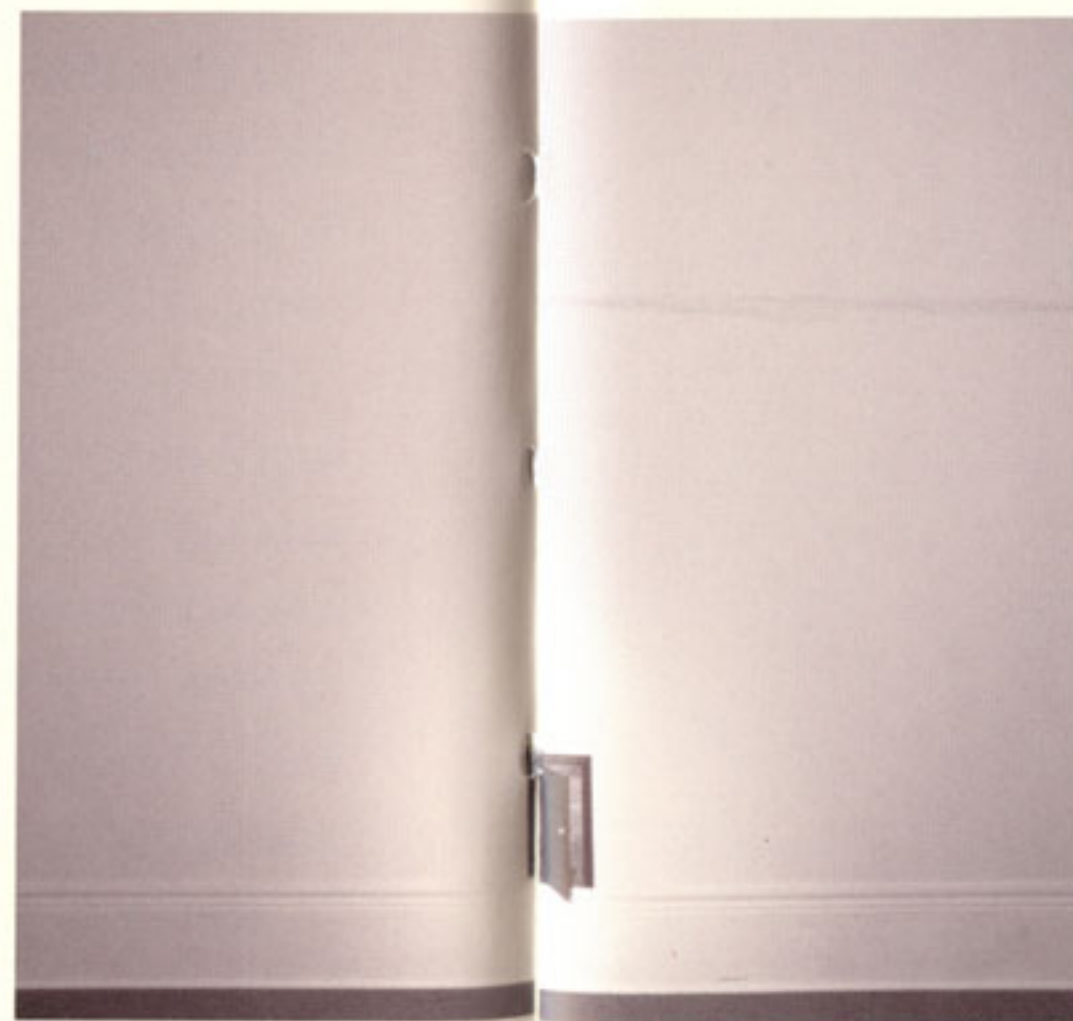
houses keep the outside out, and here the outside is kept in.

Paradise draws attention to the frame — the wall that surrounds the door. Externally, it is almost all frame, that which is neither completely the object nor completely separate “background.” As much as this artwork focuses on the detail of its subject, it draws attention to the plane of the wall, a vast, open nothingness that provides a contrast to the excess of its interior scene. The “frame,” or wall, demarcates the limit between the work and what is beyond.

Inside is a dream world of detail. Following a green path downwards, the eye is led to a forest. Light profusely emanates from this forest scene, which appears endless. Beyond the foreground, trees proliferate infinitely, as they reflect off multiple mirrored surfaces (through the looking glass). Yet this conceit is



subtle. The forest appears to exceed the logical dimensions of this interior Arcadia. The wall separating the interior from the exterior



creates a surplus interior that exceeds the proportion of what is "possible." This interior exterior is a potent, infinite space for reverie.