

Nightmare: Fairy Tales (Haunted Attraction Review)

Written by Samuel Zimmerman
Wednesday, 12 October 2011 12:16



The Halloween season is a celebratory time, and one that just isn't limited to marathon film viewings. It's a cause to venture out with your friends and for many horror fans (like me), to distressingly experience the distinction between that on your screen, and that which is in your face. For years now, New York City has played witness to Nightmare, what's become one of the most notable haunted attractions, defined by its ever-changing themes and theatrical sensibilities. This year's edition (on now at New York City's Clemente Soto Velez Cultural and Educational Center at 107 Suffolk St) sees its creators present a warped view of the fairy tales we've all grown up with, and it's entirely spooky and full of nasty, nasty fun.



Taking inspiration primarily from the Brothers Grimm, Nightmare abstains from the traditional conceit of taking a tour of a haunted manor. Instead, through gorgeous and eerie design, presents a wicked, evil forest to wander through, taking you to a host of familiar fabled destinations, like the homes and settings of Snow White, Hansel and Gretel's witch, Rumpelstiltskin, Rapunzel and Pinocchio (one of the very few non-Grimm characters on hand). Of course, the forest itself constantly evokes "Little Red Riding Hood", as all shapes and sizes of wolf-like creatures serve to guide and unnerve throughout your hike.

What's most admirable about Nightmare and its creators Timothy Haskell and John Harlacher, is that the production is seemingly much more concerned with unsettling its attendees than the ever-startling, "boo". Of course, the classic scenario of a pitch-black environment and someone lurking around every corner is very present here, but each destination also serves to provide skewed and pernicious re-tellings of classic tales we've all found comfort in as children. For example: out of context, it's wildly devious and undoubtedly affecting to see Snow White force the hot iron shoes onto her stepmother, or Hansel and Gretel to overzealously burn witches at their pleasure, or the gross and silly revision to Rumpelstiltskin that's been crafted.

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A fabulously interactive and varied journey, Nightmare forces visitors to don blindfolds, isolates members of groups for some quality alone time and utilizes seriously cool puppetry in addition to the physical performers. It's also turned to eleven, so as usual, once a scare is successfully pulled off, it all seems a bit silly; especially the second attraction, dubbed "The Experiment". "The Experiment" is more of a stage piece than the main portion, with two lab technicians subjecting members of the audience to some tests of fear. For the subjects, it looks incredibly harrowing. For the audience, it's absolutely hilarious and repulsive, which is a nice way to sum up Nightmare in general; imaginative, and yes, hilarious and repulsive.

Nightmare runs until November 5. For tickets head to its [official site](#).

