

Who/What/Where/How?
by Ana Finel Honigmann
ArtSlant
posted June 8, 2009

Some Observations
Elly Brose-Eiermann Gallery, Berlin
May 20 - June 20, 2009

Linda McCue's surreal large-scale oil or pencil-and-watercolour on paper paintings resemble leaves from a graphic novel, though her narratives remain compellingly mysterious. The forty-five-year-old Canadian artist's uncanny images are especially disquieting because of her technical precision. For example, in „The Flimsy Disguise (III)“, a person sits at a large table holding to their face a sheet of plain paper with basic facial features drawn in. Other sheets of paper are scattered around them and behind them is a vast expanse of blue decorative wallpaper, with the ghostly image of a boxer pummeling another appearing like an elaborate water-stain on a back wall.

Images like this recall the gothic frights of classic tales of terror like „The Yellow Wallpaper“ or stories by Poe. Yet ironically, narratives are easier to construe in McCue's abstract works than in her brilliant collage-like compositions. „Farbspektrum und andere (I)“ is entirely abstract. Yet despite lacking recognizable figures, the painting sparks a spooky sense of empathy and association with a dense group of rainbow stripes of colour clustered on the bottom half of the canvas. The rainbow forms, which resemble classroom aids used to teach children about the colour spectrum, appear to be marching towards the edge of the painting's tan lower half. And if the painting does have a narrative, it would be that the rainbows were marching lemming-like to the end of a cliff and falling into nothingness. McCue's paint could be a recruitment poster for a society of pessimists, as the pretty symbol of hope, diversity and happiness tips into total blackness, leaving only the bland tan ground underneath. Somehow the hopeless mood in this painting is even more upsetting than the other ones' more overt creepiness.