

JULIE NORD (f. 1970)

In Julie Nord's Alice in Wonderland-inspired universe, which has been created with the aid of basic implements like pen and paper, a great many delicately 'tooled' pictorial elements are placed side by side. The elements are borrowed not only from illustrations found in children's books, abstract Rorschach patterns, cartoon-strip aesthetics, botanical plates, illuminated manuscripts and the space of everyday life but also from Gothic horror tales, movie posters, vanitas motives and tattoo art. In the midst of this veritable swarm of visual impressions, we meet Nord's heroine: the precocious girl who in spite of her tender age has witnessed virtually everything and is moving with utter naturalness into the vague and undefined field situated between an ingenuous childhood's fantastic – momentarily nightmare-filled – microcosmos and a somewhat less spontaneous and unsophisticated adult world's different kind of unceasing ghastliness.

As a consequence of being situated in this border region between illusion and reality, innocence and experience, vulnerability and strength, the girl frequently makes her appearance as a hybrid form or motific clone between animal and human being. She stands as the very incarnation of the ambiguity that permeates the pictorial space and compels us to take an extra glance, not only at the drawing but also at the reality in which we move around in our everyday lives: is this reality really as rational and logically organized as we ordinarily assume it to be? And are we managing to keep our gaze open for the many pathways along which we might proceed, or are we blindly following the one trail we chose once upon a time?

Julie Nord is more than suggesting that it is indeed worthwhile, every now and then, to hold the 'adult' way of looking at things up to the light of scrutiny and render it 'childlike'. In doing so, room is created for a refreshing sense of wonder and uncertainty and for the possibility of seeing the world 'from scratch'. Only by 're-setting the dials' every now and then – only by stepping into or out into the empty void – do we get a chance to discover the illogicalness in that which we perceive as being coherent. And vice versa. What Nord is doing and what she is doing so persuasively is to pull the rug out from under all that which, from a rational perspective, makes sense and present us instead with unorthodox and surprising genre admixtures and casual relations that run contrary to reason. The pictures thereby come to manifest themselves as illustrations of untested ways of looking and untrodden ways of mentally organizing reality. They serve to remind us that there is no definitive conclusion to history.

Julie Damgaard
