

Andrew McLeod

b.1976

Bachelor of Fine Arts: Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland

Andrew McLeod is an artist who uses drawings, paintings and computer graphics to portray the interior world of his mind. Whichever medium McLeod chooses, random objects float in an imaginary world where perspective, weight and shadow don't exist. McLeod calls this particular painting a 'landscape', but it is more like a mindscape – a world that is illogical and impossible. Like the Surrealists, McLeod is interested in provoking the viewer with bizarre visual juxtapositions. But unlike the paintings of Salvador Dali or Giorgio de Chirico, whose odd combinations of objects are all painted in a consistent, realistic style, McLeod throws different subject matters and different styles into the pot, to create a strange brew of images.

In this painting, childish renditions of trees – which look like cardboard cut-outs covered in plastic oranges, and 'toy town' brick houses, share the same space as a beautifully rendered female nude. It's almost as though paintings by very different artists have been cut up and pasted together – McLeod paints this nude with a great deal of skill, but interestingly, he leaves in sketchy drawing lines around her, as if to re-emphasise that even a painting can still be a 'work in progress', an unfinished exploration in which the ideas are still unfolding.

Childhood seems to be a big theme in McLeod's paintings. Born in 1976, his first impressions would have been affected by the tastes and styles of that decade – macramé pot hangers, rainbow decals, crystals and auras, lino in headache-making patterns, women with long hair and guys with afros, and these images work their way into McLeod's artworks time and again, particularly that of the rainbow. Perhaps the artist was inspired by the old British children's television show *Rainbow*, or maybe by the album cover for Pink Floyd's *Dark Side Of The Moon*. In fact there's a direct link to album cover art in this painting. The nude has been copied from a Frank Frazetta illustration (Frazetta is an important 20th century illustrator), which has appeared on a number of album covers. The strange yellowish-green tint is like the colour of faded posters and photographs, adding to the sense of nostalgia. Rainbows also symbolise hope, and there is a kind of joyful optimism in the work. The title says it all – it's a painting about love.

But just what kind of love, is harder to tell. McLeod re-lives some of the sensations of his youth, combining the innocent, colourful simplicity we associate with childhood, with a more

sophisticated knowledge of sexuality. Many of McLeod's paintings are quite erotic – because the interior world of anyone's mind is going to contain a large chunk of sexuality. On the other hand, the wording of the title is ambiguous, for it's almost as if landscape itself is the thing that McLeod loves. And in this case, not the 'landscape' of the great outdoors, but the landscape of painting itself. The 'love' in the title could be the love of a painter for colour, for light and form on the canvas, for the freedom of self-expression that painting can give.

Tessa Laird

Artist website:

www.andrewmcleod.co.nz

Galleries and museums:

www.aucklandartgallery.govt.nz

www.bowengalleries.co.nz

www.brookegiffordgallery.co.nz

www.govettbrewster.com

www.ivananthony.com

www.niagara-galleries.com.au

www.wattersgallery.com

Web search:

Salvador Dali

Giorgio de Chirico

Frank Frazetta

Surrealism

