

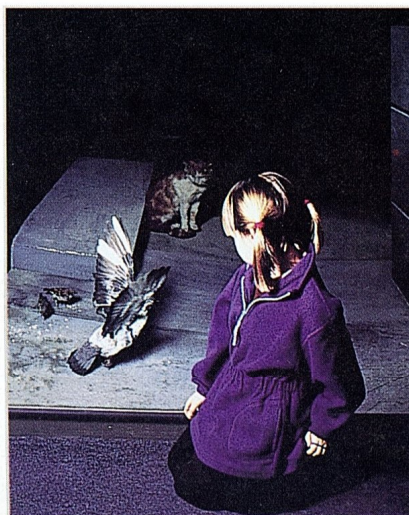
# WENDY McMURDO

## Laurent Delaye Gallery London

Wendy McMurdo's work has often been associated with the uncanny. Her digitally manipulated photographs are altered in a seamless way to provoke suggestions of the paranormal and Unheimlich. Why the images work so well is the intangible. Her latest 'tableaux vivants' place children in situations where they are performers, or interact with exhibits in museums. Poignant memories transmute into mini narratives as the figures of the children are frozen in digital time. In *Solo Violin: St Mary's Music School Edinburgh*, the 'stage' is a school for musically gifted children. A young girl plays her instrument, totally absorbed in her musical utopia. The photograph is a double narrative, for in the real world the instrument has been digitally removed and its transportation into a hypothetical cyberspace is a metaphor for children's transportations. In *Cat and Pigeon Museum of Childhood Edinburgh, 2000* McMurdo has digitally removed the exhibit's glass casing. The preying cat therefore appears reanimated, the dead display literally given life by a child's flight of fancy'.

These works affect a symbiotic relationship with the surreal world of childhood, where inanimate objects transmutate. *Early Flight Workshop Museum of Flight East Lothian, 1997* continues the theme of play acting, this time with sinister overtones. Four youngsters gaze down at the prostrate figure of their fellow playmate, the title providing an enigmatic twist. In contrast *Gail (Craigmillier Castle Drama Workshops Edinburgh)* stares out of the image with a relentless gaze, dressed in her costume. Although her demeanour is not threatening there lurks the subliminal memories of Carrie and the exorcist, the undertones of e.s.p and the possessed. These are works which are laden with cultural contexts, where absence can become presence and learning through play takes on its own overtones. McMurdo taps into the innocence of childhood that is often seen to be violated. It is appropriate that so many of the images extrapolate the theme of flight as both a metaphor and fact.

Jean Wainwright



Wendy McMurdo  
*Cat and Pigeon, Museum of Childhood, Edinburgh, 2000*  
Colour neg print Courtesy Laurent Delaye Gallery