

Sarah Jones

The Jerwood Space  
London

Sarah Jones's work is engagingly enigmatic. Her images, carefully lit, loaded with colour, and floating unframed on the wall, tease and frustrate. These pictures reveal both the real world of the adolescent, and childhood's own claimed spaces where fantasy can be acted out. The conflicting emotions between these sites, together with inertia and stasis have been caught by Jones's camera.

*The Wall (I)* has overtones of Pre-Raphaelite painting. Camilla's trailing hand and posture reminiscent of both Henry Wallis's *Death of Chatterton* and Millais's *Ophelia*. The girl becomes a fantasising teen soap opera star caught up in the ultimate romantic role. Although this is a dark vision, here as elsewhere Jones purposely allows us to weave our own stories, to identify connections with our own adolescence and the uncanny places and states that we inhabited. If this reverie is disturbed, the scene will change. This is childhood as theatre. The actual and imaginary, the permanent and temporary, the hiding places, polished reflective surfaces, oneiric states and awkwardness of the adolescent body are posed attitudes rather than traditional portraits.

In *May Tree (Francis Place) (I)*, the threatening sky - as much a filmic trope as the blank Hitchcockian stare of Camilla's "dead" eye in *The Wall* - is kept at bay by the walled garden. Threats are being kept out, but at the same time something strange is being held in. Although there is an artificiality in her lighting, Jones does not alter these environments. Her photography exists in the volatile space between fact and fiction. There are hints of Angela Carter's gothic strain of magic-realism and Victorian fairy tales. The familiar here can suddenly become something very nasty.

The bourgeois trappings, lowering skies, warm brick walls, consulting couches and suburban gardens reveal homeliness as well as sinister Freudian undertones. This excellent exhibition bursts with metaphor. The closer one looks the more tangled the references and unbidden thoughts.

Jean Wainwright



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*The Wall (I)*, 1999 C type print on aluminium  
Courtesy of the Jerwood Gallery