

Patti Heid and the Dark Territory of Childhood

Our culture sentimentalizes childhood and brutalizes children. In the media, children run the gamut from innocent victims of titillating abuse to cold blooded killers of other children. Meanwhile, in the real world, politicians pay lip service to family values while children comprise the biggest segment of the population below the poverty line.

Drawing on the contradictory images provided by art and popular culture, Patti Heid's digital paintings conjure hallucinogenic vision of American childhood. This body of work is inspired, in part, by concerns for her own small daughter, born during the Rodney King riots, who is threatened by social and medical forces that imperil her psychological and social well-being. It also embraces the larger theme of the vulnerability of children in an all too adult world.

In these luscious paintings, little girls are presented in all the conflicting roles assigned them by our culture. They are imperiled innocents, wanton vixens, mischievous pixies, unsuspecting prey, and wounded casualties. They quiver with sexuality they cannot understand and clutch at a sense of security which is lost forever. They stare at us with terror, unnatural understanding, entreaty, desire and power.

These images are presented in a style that is part surrealism, part psychedelia, and part MTV which Heid refers to as Video Impressionism. Electric colors, digital overlays and horizontal scan lines all create a sense of anxious artifice as if the scene before us could disintegrate at any moment into a chaotic jumble of video interference patterns.

In Heid's hands, girlhood is both a dark and terrifying territory and a realm of fantasy and transformation. Her diminutive subjects hover between childish naivete and adult awareness, on the brink of a journey replete with both potential peril and magical rewards.

--Eleanor Heartney

Eleanor Heartney is a contributing editor to *Art in America* and author of *Critical Condition: American Culture at the Crossroads*, published by Cambridge

Mehandi Freckles

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36" x 48"

Acrylic airbrushed digital output on canvas